

to 1840 some 600 to 800 allotments existed in the county; in 1871 there were 9,000; in 1885, 14,700, and in 1889 nearly 18,000. The average wage of ordinary farm workers was between 8s. and 9s. per week in 1850, from 10s. to 11s. in 1867, from 12s. to 14s. in 1875, 13s. 3d. in 1881, about 11s. to 12s. in 1886, and 12s. in 1891. As the rate of wages fell after the rise during the 'seventies, the demand for allotments increased; also while wages fell the labourers were careful to secure shorter hours of labour. There is evidence to the effect that the working day in Oxfordshire diminished by one and a half hours, or nine hours per week, during the later 'eighties. The Royal Commission on Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture had reported in 1867 'that the best method by which the pecuniary condition of the agricultural labourer, where low, can be improved, and to which the legislature could give a salutary stimulus by simple and unobjectionable means' was 'a more general adoption of the practice of attaching such an amount of land to the labourer's cottage, or, in default of that, in assigning to him such an amount of land as near his dwelling as possible as will profitably employ the leisure hours of himself or his family'. After the breakdown of the efforts of the labourer to improve his condition in the 'seventies, this expedient was adopted by landlords, farmers, and the State. It was in this way that the system of employing men on a weekly engagement, for short hours, and on low wages, allowing them to increase their income by allotment cultivation, was established.

This connexion between allotments and low wages raises a grave question both for the farmer and the State. Farmers in the county admit that rates of wages are low, but in defence state that hours of labour are shorter and the rate of working slower than in counties where higher rates prevail. This statement raises many problems, amongst others that of the relative efficiency of employers in high and low wage counties, especially in the management of labour and the provision of efficient tools, machinery, and horses. There is little reason to doubt that more horses and