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THE LABOUR QUESTION IN BRITAIN





# THE LABOUR QUESTION IN BRITAIN

BY

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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TRANSLATED BY

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## PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION

DAWN is preceded by twilight. Something is in the air of which we are vaguely conscious long before we can definitely make out what it is. There are hints to-day of a new method of treating social phenomena, by presenting an accurate picture of them with a view to demonstrating the laws which determine and govern them. Man, it is thought, can thread his way through the midst of these phenomena and handle them with all the certainty of precise knowledge. A great revulsion of feeling has taken place. Until recently the mere idea of the scientific and methodical observation of social phenomena encountered the most determined opposition on all sides. No one would admit that a man who devoted himself to studies of the kind, however rigorous his methods might be, could succeed in disentangling some threads of the huge and complex web of society. Only the wiser heads of politicians, from their heights of power or speculation, were considered qualified to grapple with the problem and to offer to the rest of the world such solutions of the ever-changing riddle as time and place seemed to require.

Thus the true method of all reliable knowledge was reversed, that method which, instead of proceeding from a confused and summary view of a vast whole to the consideration of the part, proceeds from the study of the most minute part to that of a contiguous part, and thence little by little, without risk of error, to that of the whole. Experience and reflection, however, have borne fruit. Amid the ignorance of the real bearing of the difficulties presented, which

such unscientific prejudices fostered, statesmen and theorists have tried, by every means and in the most opposite directions, to mould the course of events to their will. The result has been, in every case, failure. Events have persisted, with lofty independence, in following a wholly unforeseen course, daily forcing all parties to admit their surprise, leading perforce to new developments, steadily checkmating headstrong endeavours and assertions, and giving them the lie without fear of contradiction. Thus the wisdom of the wise has been confounded and it has gradually dawned upon the world that circumstances pursue a course of their own, independent of any human will.

No one now leads the world, either from above or from below. A great event occurs which gradually reconciles the most opposed sentiments. Who did it? No one and yet every one, not through any conscious desire preceding and preparing the issue, but through some need which demanded a solution and through the satisfaction which greeted it when found. Powerful forces are at work, overruling the will of the masses as well as of the classes, and pointing to the influence of the laws which shape the conditions of human life.

We are now beginning to understand that our task is not to make the present world to our liking, but to learn how it is made, and that we have, not a given combination to discover, but a phenomenon to observe which, if we would understand it aright, must like all others be observed scientifically. Indeed, in questions of social science, the public is now as suspicious of partisans and agitators as it was formerly prejudiced in favour of politicians and distrustful of painstaking research, and turns for information to patient and earnest observers, upon the results of whose studies, conducted with scrupulous precision, it bases its own opinions. It is the precision and certainty of their observational methods which has won general confidence in the results. Thus, gradually, after long ostracism, a justly conceived social science has received the rights of citizenship by public acclamation.

In any science, however, it is less important to argue about the best method of observation than to put it to good use and show the results obtained. The value of a method is sufficiently demonstrated when an observer in the course of his exposition displays a minute, full, and lucid knowledge of

the object under observation. This will be found in M. de Rousiers' book, wherein the method of investigation is even more important than the question with which it is concerned. M. de Rousiers has taken pains to explain fully and exactly what his method was, and here it will be sufficient to recall the principle of all scientific observation, which consists in studying in the environment to be observed some subject whose conditions have been determined with exactitude, and noting what modifications are directly brought about by some influence exerted on it. The results are verified by varying the subject, and the surroundings are also progressively changed so as to produce a regular succession of phenomena.

In applying this method to the investigation of social phenomena there is no need for the observer to interfere with individuals, or create a new kind of laboratory, or resort to artificial conditions for carrying out his social experiments. The required conditions are furnished by persons who place themselves of their own accord in the environment to be studied, and what the observer has to do is to ascertain with all the rigour of the sociologist's method—not superficially like a tourist or an impressionist, but with the precision of a man of science—what results follow from this choice of situation. Instead of transplanting a man or a family into a given environment, the observer chooses among those who have been led thither by their own inclinations such subjects as will furnish an exact, definite and graduated series of observations. It is a pleasure to note the precision with which, throughout his work, M. de Rousiers brings out the shades of difference in each of the cases observed, grouping them in an order so natural, and yet so simple, that they almost seem to have arranged themselves of their own accord. The attention is never fatigued nor the memory overburdened, and yet, in spite of the infinite variety of conditions presented by the working classes of England, the picture is accurate in detail and harmonious in its entirety. It is a pleasant task to penetrate the mysteries of the Labour Question in Britain under the guidance of M. de Rousiers, to see each point in turn illuminated and brought into focus, and to discover by degrees that the resulting images are but varied aspects of the same phenomenon.

And what is this phenomenon? It may be stated thus: the only true solution of the problem of how to ensure the permanent well-being of those who have no resource but the labour of their hands, is to be found in the modification of the worker in a direction parallel to that of industrial changes. This is not merely a generalisation based on experience, but a logical deduction from the premisses, just as the principle of Archimedes, that a body loses in water a weight equal to the weight of the volume of water displaced, is at once an observed fact and a mathematical consequence of the doctrine of equilibrium. Any attempt to solve the problem in the opposite direction, by checking industrial changes in order that the worker may remain what he is, is not a solution but a compromise, with all the disadvantages of a compromise. A state of equilibrium is certainly produced between the condition of the worker and the condition of industry, inasmuch as the evolution of both is arrested and remains stationary at the same point, but such equilibrium is necessarily unstable. The two forces concerned tend in opposite directions: the transformation of industry, artificially arrested in its natural development, to become more sudden and sweeping as time intensifies the results of its retardation; the worker, artificially protected against the necessity for change, to become the slave of habits too strong to break, and more and more incapable of change, as the gulf between himself and the accelerated rate of progress widens. If, on the contrary, the worker sets about modifying himself to correspond with new industrial conditions, both forces tend in the same direction, and there is no antagonism between them. The man speedily proves that he can change with even more rapidity than the methods of labour. He begins to anticipate their development, and is ready for any contingency. But this is only stating in abstract terms what M. de Rousiers has shown over and over again by a wealth of concrete examples independent of theoretical considerations.

This conclusion is enhanced in interest by the fact that this transformation of the worker is shown to be a sign of racial progress. Notwithstanding the advantage of higher wages, it has long been feared, and not without some appearance of reason, that the new methods of labour might tend to

the deterioration of the workers. The first recruits under the new system found little scope for the exercise of the manual skill which had hitherto been their principal qualification, and seemed to have sunk to a lower level. Set unexpectedly to work of a kind for which they had never been trained, they were deficient in the qualities which would have enabled them to succeed along the new lines. Their position was not unlike that of those pioneer emigrants who start a colony with insufficient preparation, and are ill fitted to turn to account the great but unfamiliar resources at their disposal. Though their life is in reality easier, their position is apparently less good than in the mother country, and it looks as though the colony would never produce anything but an inferior race. Others, however, follow, who recognise what was lacking and attack the task in a different way. The colonists of the new generation achieve a marked success, and far outstrip all who preceded them. What is required from the worker to-day is not so much the special aptitude for a particular trade as the qualities which go to make a man, and this it is which constitutes the superiority of the new requirements of labour. Competition and the progress of invention are tending to make industry as variable as commerce has ever been, and just as the trader has always depended for success on his inherent capacity for trading in any kind of merchandise, so the worker is coming to depend for success on his inherent capacity for engaging in any branch of industry. The man whose mind and body are so specialised as to be adapted only for a single kind of work, which may be swept away to-morrow, has been trained for the workhouse. Almost all industries formerly called for specialisation of this narrow kind, but a gradual process of elimination is at work, and among those which have in turn availed themselves of machinery the difference tends to be one of degree only. It is therefore of great importance, not merely for the worker's own sake but also for industrial progress, that he should be able to regulate his work to suit any branch of industry, according to the varying success of different enterprises. In order to do so he must be generally rather than specially capable, and possessed of virile qualities rather than of technical skill.

Nor is it only for the sake of adapting his working powers

to the varying requirements and manifold resources of modern industry that it is so essential for the worker to be first and foremost a man, but still more for the sake of ordering aright his material, intellectual and moral life, of forming just views, of estimating his interests accurately, and of organising their defence effectively, amid economic conditions for whose complexity and variability no parallel can be found in the stable, simple, naïve, and I might almost add childish, conditions of the older industrial system.

But although such a change in the worker may be both necessary and beneficial, will it not be extremely difficult to bring about, and does not our solution of the problem consequently break down at this point? To make a man, and a man for times like these, is a more complex task than to make a specialist adapted to the old methods of labour.

In this respect, more than in any other, the example of England is of the greatest value. M. de Rousiers chose England in order to observe the modern industrial system in its most intense form, for it is an axiom of the scientific method to select the phenomenon where it is best marked. Nowhere, and at no period of the world's history, has there been an industrial power to match England. America, vast, energetic and adventurous, has not equalled it, notwithstanding the colossal scale of all she undertakes. Between the old continent and the new, the British Isles form the great central factory of the world, and other manufacturing countries are but subordinate industrial suburbs. The shores of these islands have become the great commercial quays of that River Ocean which, as the ancients fabled, encircles the world, and their merchandise penetrates wherever the ocean penetrates. There is no nation, small or great, to which the commerce of England is not either a boon or a menace.

But what strikes the observer even more than England's power—and more especially after what has been said of the dangers of this new industrial phase—is the co-existence and interdependence of two phenomena which have been supposed to be mutually opposed to one another: the greatest development of modern industrial methods, and the most advantageous position of the workers.

Astonishment gives place to hope, and hope to enthusiasm



born of conviction, when these two phenomena are seen to be intimately connected with a third, which gives the clue to a clear and simple solution of all the rest. This unknown factor, which we should least have suspected to be what it is, and which we should have considered not only highly improbable but also highly illogical, is that England is the home, not only of the most complex methods of labour, and of the most advanced working class, but also of the most simplified form of education—a fact which is beyond dispute. It is, then, by simple methods of education that the difficulties of the present day must ultimately be solved.

This is the thunder clap which precedes the lightning flash.

In France the education of all classes is radically and appallingly wrong. No class, from the working class to the middle class, from the middle class to the intellectual class, from the intellectual class to the man of the highest intellectual development, has escaped the effects of a most disastrous error. This is essentially the source, not only of the Labour Question, but of the whole Social Question. The real point at issue, the cause of the whole difficulty in all cases, from the simplest farming to the most complex industrial and commercial undertakings and the administration of political and religious affairs, is what is known as the question of the *personnel*. This has been called the Social problem, because it affects the *personnel* engaged in every section of human activity and is not confined to one or even to a few classes. Neither knowledge nor appliances are wanted for material, mental or moral action, and both are progressing from day to day. It is the man that is lacking, the man to match such knowledge and appliances. The real problem of modern times is the question of human development, arising in due course after that of the development of other natural forces. A great enterprise has grown up, but there is something wrong with its working. After blaming all the forces of nature, and after appealing to all of them, it has at last been realised that what is wanting is the man.

England has not suffered from this disadvantage. England and France are near neighbours, separated only by a narrow strait. France thinks that she understands England because there is little difference in the mode of dress, the manner of life, the products of the soil and industry, and never suspects

that England is in some respects profoundly different. There is, therefore, a certain feeling of astonishment at the sight of this people, believed by its neighbours to be rather boorish, neither refined nor well instructed, and but summarily educated, coming to the front everywhere, not by force of arms—for your Englishman is not a fighting man and does not boast of cementing society by blood and iron<sup>1</sup>—but by persistent, prompt, daring and intelligent action in every direction. As manufacturers and traders, Englishmen have surpassed Carthage or Venice or any other power that ever was, and at the same time they are pioneers and colonists of the first order. The empire of Britain has grown, unnoticed by the world, until it surpasses the vastest which have existed. Not one empire, but a series of empires, has arisen as if by magic in the most distant parts of the globe, founded by the unfettered enterprise of British colonists, without the earth trembling or the sea groaning beneath the weight of armies or men-of-war. Never before have such freedom and such dispersion and yet such unity of views and action been seen in any people, without fixed plan, without centralised administration, and unassisted in any way by official control. The whole is but the natural outcome of the individual organisation, which to a French eye seems so uncomplete. This great work has really been done by these ignorant, half-educated barbarians! Then let us see the schools where they lose the colour of health in poring over codes, and the systems of apprenticeship at which men grow old learning the elements of their trade. That is impossible. England has conceived education as a simple thing. Her characteristic method can only be described as an endeavour to make men, as the prime element of all prosperity. England is first and foremost a great school for men.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to the profoundly suggestive words recently used by the German Emperor on Prince Bismarck's eightieth birthday, 26th March 1895: "I cannot present you with a better gift than a sword, the arm *preferred* by the German, the symbol of the instrument which your Serene Highness aided my late grandfather to forge, to sharpen and to wield, the symbol of that powerful *epoch of construction when blood and iron were the cement*, that unfailing means, which in the hands of kings and princes can, if need be, preserve internally the unity of our fatherland which it formerly created externally."

<sup>2</sup> "If I am asked what is the bias of Englishmen I am puzzled to answer. It is not war, nor birth, nor promotion, nor success with the fair, nor the sweets of court favour; rather they would that men be men."—Montesquieu, *Pensées diverses*.

Men of the type grown there cannot be driven, classified, penned up and enslaved, but are free agents, capable of individual action and responsibility. France, though increasingly concerned about perfecting the means of production in agriculture or in industry, and eager to discover the secret of those who are ahead, whether across the Channel or across the Atlantic, adopts a different course when it is a question of training men. Then she temporises, and refuses to be guided except by the traditions of a past which, however recent, is none the less past and gone, or resorts to new theoretical inventions and combinations, instead of laying to heart the experience of those who succeed where she fails. The result is usually the adoption of methods which oppress, and crush, and overdrive, or debilitate and exasperate. Had England tried to develop the modern type of worker by equally complicated and laborious means she would have failed to solve the labour problem. But what I have said elsewhere, somewhat paradoxically it may be, I quote here against such methods. "The true strength of the Anglo-Saxon system of education lies in turning out a splendid savage, who differs from other savages and from the barbarians of old in being able to endure, sustain and promote civilisation in every form. His physical training is intelligent, ample and not exaggerated on any side. The other points on which his education lays stress are absolute freedom of mind; the preservation of the native freshness of his faculties into the prime of manhood; an earnest desire for palpable and powerful verities; a fundamental honesty, conscious and deliberate; and an inherent tendency to be sufficient to himself and to use instead of husbanding his resources. As the savage is reared amid the natural forces of the steppe or the virgin forest, so the Englishman is brought up amid the prodigious phenomena of modern activity and intelligence, and looks upon them as the savage looks upon the elements, as primal conditions from which his task is to make a living by rendering himself their master. Accustomed from infancy to this condition of affairs, he looks upon it as the initial one, the primitive state in which he has awakened. Therefore he feels neither astonishment nor apprehension, he sees only powerful resources as yet fresh and imperfectly explored, he feels that the world is young, that there is nothing which may

not happen, and that the path of progress lies not backward, but forward. Such a training does not fit him exclusively for one special profession, but equips him, physically and morally, for mastering without difficulty the methods of any undertaking. No matter how new or complicated they may appear, he soon shows that there is scope for simple, adequate and decisive methods. He migrates from trade to trade without apparently changing his essential qualification, the power of making the most of himself, which is everywhere the most indispensable and certain condition of success. After he has tried his hand successfully at a dozen different things and worked vigorously for half a century, he is still young and fresh, and ready for fresh departures. Thus, by the very simplicity of its education, is fashioned that splendid national character which makes civilisation a servant instead of a master."

France is justified in borrowing from her neighbours improvements in their industrial and commercial methods, but she is in danger of forgetting the essential and determining factor, a method, simple and yet not without a greatness of its own, of training men and workmen in such a way as to raise them to the level of the changed conditions of labour and the new means of human activity. There is the less excuse for hesitation because this is what is most necessary and best worth adopting. Let France echo the sentiment of the Englishman who stood on a foreign shore, and tasted the sea water and cried, "This is salt, this belongs to us," and say, "This is indispensable, this is excellent, this is intelligent, this is ours."

HENRI DE TOURVILLE.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE work here presented to the public is the outcome of some months personal inquiry in England and Scotland, and does not claim to be more than an orderly exposition of its results.

The order in which the phenomena observed are arranged is directly due to a cause which is not difficult to discover, and which this inquiry shows to be of the greatest social importance. This cause is the modern evolution of industry and commerce.

We all know that machinery tends to replace manual labour in the various branches of industry, and that the industrial system is being constantly modified in this direction. All branches of industry, however, are not equally advanced along these new lines. There are survivals of the old system of organisation and the small workshop which have resisted the introduction of machinery, and we still find blacksmiths and cutlers working without the assistance of any motive power. Other trades, though largely modified by the economic conditions of to-day, still to a certain extent retain the same tools as in the past. Take, for example, the extraction of coal, where the work is actually performed in an extremely primitive fashion by the miner's pick, but which owes its development to the growth of the factory system and of steam transport. Lastly, we have the industries which have reached the furthest point of evolution as yet known, where great factories represent the type of organisation and where machinery plays an ever-increasing part in the production of goods for widespread consumption. The textile industries may be taken as an example.

Thus there are three stages in the evolution of industry, which must be carefully distinguished from each other, because in each the Labour Question assumes a special form. The three parts of the present work correspond to these three stages, and deal with the Labour Question in the small workshop, in mines, and under the factory system.

The small workshop shows us trades of the ancient type confronted by the industrial and commercial evolution. In mines we have a particular case of evolution, an organisation resembling that of the factory, and a worker of the ancient type. The factory system brings us to trades where the evolution is an accomplished fact.

The summary at the head of each chapter will help the reader to seize more readily the link connecting the facts observed, and to follow the phases of evolution which have been taken as the basis of the classification.

## NOTE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

IT has been found desirable to omit a few sentences in the English edition of M. de Rousiers' book on the Labour Question in Britain. The omitted passages consist, in most cases, of explanations of English customs and objects in common use, which M. de Rousiers inserted for French readers to whom they might be unfamiliar. In one or two cases allusions which would have been unintelligible or uninteresting to English readers have also been omitted.

I have to express my thanks to M. de Rousiers, who has very kindly read the whole of the English translation in proof, and to my husband, Mr. A. J. Herbertson, Lecturer at the Owens College, Manchester, for help of every kind.

F. L. D. H.

MANCHESTER, *January* 1896.





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PART I

THE LABOUR QUESTION IN SMALL WORKSHOPS

TRADES OF THE OLD TYPE AND THE INDUSTRIAL AND  
COMMERCIAL EVOLUTION



## CHAPTER I

### THE PERSONAL EVOLUTION OF THE WORKER WHO ESCAPES THE CRISIS OF THE TRADE

#### *A BIRMINGHAM TOOL-MAKER*

THE Labour Question may be discussed in general terms, or an attempt may be made to throw light upon it by the study of facts. The second course is at once the wiser and the more fruitful in results, but it gives rise to a difficulty. Facts may either be observed haphazard and grouped arbitrarily, or they may be investigated in the order of their natural grouping, that is, in their true and vital relations. Observation, unless it is brought to bear on living organisms, and unless it exhibits the play of social forces as it occurs in real life, gives but scanty results, and even in these there is always a risk of error.

Hence arises the need for monographs of families; for the family is the essential and primordial organism of all society. If we wish, for instance, to estimate the present position of small workshops of the old type in England, and of the successful competition of the great factories equipped with mechanical power, it is not enough to content ourselves with such generalised information as is furnished by statistics, but we must put ourselves, as far as possible, in the place of a workman in one of these small workshops, we must penetrate his family life, understand his difficulties, share his hopes, and appreciate his means of action. Thus we get to know the Labour Question as it concerns him. If he succeeds in his

enterprises, and in providing for his family, he will be able to teach us at the same time how he settles the Labour Question for himself.

Such is the interest of a monograph, and such is its scope. Therefore, without further justification, we shall plunge at once into the heart of our subject.

### I. *The Workshop of Joseph Brown.*

My first interview with Joseph Brown was brought about by a curious coincidence. I had informed my Birmingham friends of my wish to enter into personal relations with a workman belonging to one of the small workshops still so numerous in that town. One evening the mistress of the house said to me, "I think I have found what you want. My nurse has a brother who has a little forge, where he makes various tools—pincers, hammers, etc.; she has spoken of you at my request, and he is quite willing to receive you, and to give you any information you may need." Next day I took the Nechells omnibus to Carlton Street. I found a gate on which was painted the name *Carlton Works*. Entering, I found myself under a porch looking into a long narrow court, at the bottom of which was a small building two storeys high, whose blackened walls were illuminated by the red glare of a forge. Thither I directed my steps, and as I crossed the threshold a little man who was hammering on the anvil stopped his work and came towards me. "Mr. Joseph Brown?" "Yes?" "I have come from your sister, Mrs. D——'s nurse." "You are the gentleman, then, of whom she spoke?" "I am." The little man wiped his forehead, on which the sweat stood in great beads, put on his jacket, and was ready to let me see his establishment. He was, in fact, at home, for the workshop, the other buildings surrounding the court, the shop which bounded one side of the porch, the neat, well-cared-for dwelling, the little bit of garden with its walls covered by creepers, were all his own property. All this he had built and organised, and had earned it all too. "I have never had a penny from anybody," he said; "neither from my own parents nor from my wife's." My first impression was that the trade was a good one, and afforded a good living.

Brown had brought up a family of eight children, had acquired property, and become an employer. Obviously he is a type of the prosperous workman.

Let us enter the workshop. The ground floor is occupied by three or four forges with their anvils, at one of which Brown was working when I arrived, for though he has become an employer, he still remains a workman, and though he is fifty years of age, he still flatters himself that no smith in Birmingham can turn out better or quicker work. Ascending to the first storey we find no forges: this is the finishing department. A man is filing a pair of strong pincers in order to polish them, another is cutting unequal teeth on a steel ring meant to enter into the composition of a tool for a saddle and harness maker. Brown explained that he worked a good deal for saddlers and bootmakers. He manufactures a great number of different patterns, and declared his readiness to execute any of which a design was supplied. Six men are at work in the upper workshop, making ten perhaps in all, but he has often employed as many as two-and-twenty. At present he has not many orders in hand.

All the men are skilled workmen, and those who make the bigger tools have to be smiths. I saw Brown and his assistant forging long and stout pincers of a particular shape. These, when closed, have a hollow groove at the end, of the exact diameter of a gas-pipe. They are for gripping pipes when fixing or removing them, and are indispensable to gasfitters. They are also used for fixing and repairing water-pipes. The largest size in use is only worth a shilling; this is the one which I saw made. A dozen pairs were lying on the ground to cool at the foot of the anvil, representing a morning's work.

However, everybody works very quickly here; the men move quickly and efficiently. There is no effort wasted and no talking. French workmen, so energetic by starts, would find it difficult to equal the rate of production. I made this remark to my friends in Birmingham. One of them, of French origin, a merchant of precious stones, told me he had often tried to introduce French workmen into one of the numerous jewel manufactories in Birmingham. The experiment had never succeeded: the masters found that the work was not turned out fast enough.

Brown's workmen are paid by the piece. Work begins at seven every day except Sundays, and leaves off at seven at night except on Saturdays, when it ends at two. It is a general custom in England to work only half a day on Saturday, and on the other days work is interrupted for two hours, to give the men time for meals and for a little rest. Thus there are five days of ten hours and one day of five hours, or fifty-five hours a week.

However each workman does not make up this number of hours of work every week. One, for instance, never arrives before nine o'clock; others occasionally extend the Sunday holiday until Tuesday or Wednesday, if last week's pay is not completely exhausted. Brown complains greatly of these irregularities, but bears them in silence in order to keep his men. As I have said, they are skilled workers, and not to be replaced by the first comer, and rare, for apprenticeship no longer exists in the trade. Consequently smiths profit by the situation to act as they like, knowing that the employer cannot easily do without them.

Naturally, under these circumstances, wages are high. I was shown the pay-books of the workmen, and noticed weeks at £2 : 8s., while nearly all came to £2 for regular workmen. It is highly paid work. Brown explained to me that, yielding to the request of his men, he had for several years allowed a bonus of 5 per cent on the prices fixed for piece-work. Thus, for example, if a workman has done work to the extent of £2 a week, he is paid £2 : 2s.

"Your men should be in comfortable circumstances with wages like this," I said. "Not a bit of it," he replied. "I don't know one who has a shilling in hand, and they are all married. You see how it is. When they have a little money, it goes in eating and drinking, and as soon as they feel they have a few shillings in their pocket they leave off work. Then there is also a great deal of gambling and betting. Last year a queer thing happened over this. My son Joe, who is with me here, has the most enterprising mind I know for a lad of nineteen, and never loses a chance of doing a good stroke of business. An idea occurred to him which I'll tell you. My men often talked of their sporting tastes before him, and regretted they had no ready money to put on horses

they fancied. 'Would you like me to advance it,' said Joe one day. 'You can let me have it back on pay-day with a small commission.' No sooner said than done, and so great was the attraction of ready money for these improvident fellows that Joe found the number of his clients increasing every week. Luckily I happened to put my hand on the note-book in which he set down his banking operations, and asked for an explanation, which he gave me quite frankly, saying that after all it was their business if they agreed to exorbitant interest. I was obliged to read him a sermon, and forbid him for the future to exploit men in my employ. This will show you what these men are."

Brown does not seem to be an indulgent employer in speaking of his men. At bottom he has but a poor opinion of men who find it hard to make a living for themselves and their families in a trade where he has been able to raise himself and his family to a good position. This feeling is very general among small employers who have sprung from the working class, and still in part belong to it. Knowing the right way to succeed, and still faithful to the same mode of life as their men, they pay little attention to their claims, and never willingly pity them. The head of a large concern, even when he too began as a working man, more easily loses sight of the working-class life and adopts different habits, which render him comparatively sympathetic towards the narrow conditions of a working man's life. The same phenomenon is seen everywhere. In the country districts of France, the peasant who has enriched himself is, generally speaking, far harder to the working man than the great landowner. The small employer is more exacting than the head of a factory would venture to be, the non-commissioned officer is generally more inflexible than the officer, and so on.

This circumstance is particularly noticeable in Brown, because he is of a naturally kindly disposition. At my first visit, seeing I was really interested in his work, he took a liking to me, and in our subsequent relations neither his kindness nor his good-humour ever flagged for an instant. When he spoke of his wife, it was with a warmth which was very pleasing in a man who had been married more than five-and-twenty years; his children speak to him with confidence and

without constraint. Nevertheless, towards his men his attitude is not fatherly.

No agreement binds them to him for more than a week. He regulates their number according to the orders he receives; in practice this number varies from ten to twenty-two. The workmen, on their side, do not always observe even a week's bargain. When it suits them they stop away from work for a day or a couple of days, or when they come they come late. Brown complains of their irregularity. "But why," I inquired, "do you not dismiss them in such a case? Does not their bargain oblige them to give you a week's work, as it obliges you to furnish them work for the same period?" "Of course, but if I did so I should not get others. What can't be cured must be endured. I must tell you," he added, "that master smiths are rare here. You already know that for some years we have had no apprentices. I do not train any myself, nor do I want to. I should have a great deal of trouble to find any, and if I found them they would ask too high wages. I was seventeen myself when I learned the trade, and I had previously worked in railway workshops, so that I was not without experience. From seventeen to twenty I only earned 12s. a week, and 14s. from twenty to twenty-one. Now a lad of eighteen would ask £1 a week, and I should lose by it. That is the reason you see no apprentices in my shop; and yet I have trained a good many men in my time, and I do not think it is exaggeration to say that seven of the best workmen in Birmingham came from my hands. However, times are changed."

"Then, when trade is very brisk, you must have some difficulty in getting good workmen?"

"That is so; there is so much difficulty that we get them taken away from us. Here is a case that happened last week. A Sheffield employer, who was short of men and could not get any on the spot, came and hired one of my best finishers and took him away with him."

"Then he pays at a much higher rate than you?"

"Not exactly, but he advances ready money. Generally—for the case is a common one—the man gets £20 on loan, and travelling expenses for himself and family, as compensation for removal. Then they go to a solicitor and enter into a contract



in due form, the workman agreeing to work four or five years for his master. All mention of the money lent is carefully omitted, for English law would refuse to recognise an engagement agreed to under such circumstances. The man gives his employer an acknowledgment of the £20 and the thing is done. There would be only half the mischief if the man used the money well, but nine times out of ten he spends it on drink and amusement, supposing he does not go to the seaside for a holiday with his wife and family. When he is drained dry, he goes to his new work loaded with a debt which he rarely manages to wipe out, and which puts him at his master's mercy."

It must be admitted that this new circumstance confirms in a very striking manner Brown's unfavourable judgment on the improvidence of his men. It also denotes a disquieting state of things in his trade. It is obtaining no fresh recruits, and master smiths are becoming a rarity, and profit by that to dictate terms to employers. The employer, in his turn, charges a higher price to his customers, who leave him directly a competing firm offers less prohibitive prices; so that the workmen's demands ultimately deprive them of work. The more intelligent among them will come to see this. Quite recently one of Brown's men said to him, when he came for his week's wages, "Trade is very bad, isn't it?" "Very." "It has always been so, hasn't it, since we got that rise of 5 per cent?" "I made no answer," said Brown when he told me the circumstance, "because I did not wish to discuss the matter with him, but the man was quite right. When they came and asked for the rise I had a large number of pressing orders, and could not refuse. All I said was, 'I don't mind giving you this 5 per cent, because, of course, I shall make my customers pay; but if orders fall off I shall not keep you at work to encumber myself with stock.' And as the Sheffield men had not asked the rise, the triumph of the Birmingham men on this point did them the greatest harm."

Neither Brown nor even his men, it will be seen, are under the illusion that the Labour Question is limited to the conflicts of capital and labour: they have a clear and precise understanding that both capital and labour, employer and workman,

are dominated by a third factor, which in the long run decides—the consumer.

## II. *The Consumer and the Articles produced.*

In the present case it is easy to find the link uniting the consumer and the producer. We have seen that the trade is getting in no fresh blood, that workmen are tending to disappear. Let us follow Brown into the shop where he sets out his produce, and learn from him how customers are lost. This is the cause of all the rest, for if there are no more workmen it is because consumers are diminishing.

Here, as elsewhere, cheapness is the first consideration. On the whole, the demand for carefully made tools, wrought entirely by hand by the same workmen, is giving place to a demand for a common tool, made wholesale in a factory.

“Everything I make,” said Brown, “is of good quality. I sell no rubbish, and this is the only way that I manage to make headway, for a common article can be made by machinery at a cheaper rate than I can make it. Still, they are getting to produce a better and better quality, so that the demand in my trade is always decreasing. See those rows of cards of pincers, pliers, hammers, awls, chisels, etc. I remember a time when I hardly ever kept a dozen of an article in stock, and when I had the greatest difficulty in executing the orders which flowed in. Evidently we are destined to disappear before long. Machinery is killing us.”

“Is it really machinery only which is killing you? Do you not find yourself placed at a disadvantage in comparison with large manufacturers in the purchase of raw materials, for example?”

“No doubt; but the consequent disadvantage is not very considerable. If I manufactured on a large scale I should send my orders for the purchase of iron and steel to some big ironworks in Sheffield or Birmingham. For that I should have to order ten tons at once. This quantity would be too much for me, so I go to an agent, who gets a commission of about 6d. a ton. That is a mere trifle, as you see, and is certainly compensated for by the advantage I gain by superintending my whole workshop personally, and by avoiding the expense of subordinates, storekeepers, foremen, etc. With the

help of my son, who is nineteen, I manage the whole business. I give him a salary of 30s. a week, and he takes my place and superintends when I am obliged to be absent. In particular, he relieves me of the commercial part. These are favourable conditions, but I repeat, we have a terrible foe in machinery, which will make smiths disappear before long. The quality of the goods will suffer, but our customers are willing to sacrifice quality to cheapness."

While we were talking thus the gate opened, and Mr. Joseph Brown jun. came in, driving a light two-wheeled cart, drawn by a Welsh pony. He had just been delivering goods to customers in Birmingham. This is one of his functions, to supply customers himself. This is an additional advantage for his father, who is thus saved the cost of carriage, and has also an additional guarantee that orders are well executed, that the exact amount is paid in, and so forth. It is obvious that Brown's business is conducted under the most favourable conditions permitted by the existing organisation of the trade. It is nevertheless insecure, and consequently it must be the trade which is going down.

I examined the little cart. It was strongly built, and capable of carrying about  $\frac{1}{2}$  ton of goods. It was nearly new, and had cost 16 guineas. The horse cost £24 five years ago, and has other uses beside distributing goods. It is often harnessed to a neat pony-cart, that its master may get a little fresh air on the outskirts of the town. Thus the cost of distribution is reduced to a very trifling sum.

But by far the most interesting figure of all was the son, a good-looking lad, whose appearance was prepossessing and intelligent. He received me with ease and without embarrassment. He has gone through some apprenticeship in his father's workshop, but did not devote himself to the heavier work of the forge, for which he was barely old enough. However, he knows the secrets of handling and working iron and steel, and he showed me a light bicycle he had made, and reasoned out its construction with considerable ingenuity. Brown does not intend to apprentice his son to the smith's trade: he is too alive to the inevitable decadence of the trade to compromise his son's future in a branch of industry which is already condemned. That is why he has put him into the

commercial part of the business, where what he learns applies not to this or that special trade, but to business in general. If his father were to retire to-morrow, the son would find himself quite fit to enter business either in an iron-foundry or in any other branch, either at Birmingham or elsewhere. His father has a high opinion of him, and expressed himself to me thus: "Whatever article it is, Joe can tell you at once where you will get the best quality in Birmingham, at the lowest price."

Such a young man is unquestionably fit for business. He it was who thought of organising the little bank already mentioned to exploit his father's men. He loses no chance of profit, and detects chance as an experienced hunter detects the presence of game. In short, as his father says, he is a smart fellow. Brown is no stranger to his son's commercial aptitudes. The decay of his trade has turned him from technical specialism: he no longer believes that a workman is sure of a living if he knows a trade well, and is perfectly well aware that to-day an old trade disappears without difficulty before some new invention, and that security can be found only in the power of prompt readjustment, and in the ability to pass from one occupation to another as circumstances require. Business lends itself marvellously to these sudden changes, and Brown is so conscious of this that he often says, by way of practical advice, "Buying and selling is the best trade."

Further, as an employer he is obliged to engage in transactions for the purchase of raw material and the sale of articles manufactured. This has been an apprenticeship to business. He often travels to look up his customers, make offers, and receive orders. He has thus worked up a business which he reckons he could sell for £600. There is only a step from this to trade pure and simple, and this step Brown frequently takes. On occasion he undertakes commissions for Birmingham wares, kitcheners, stoves, fireplaces, iron beds, etc. He even recognises that transactions of this kind, when he devotes himself to them, bring him more profit than his smithy. "I should earn more," he said, "by travelling for a large house, but I am too old now to give up my trade, my independence, and my home." What he himself cannot do his son will do, and he finds in his father's shop a school which gives him the business education necessary.

Thus Brown draws from his trade all that can be drawn from it. He has found in it the means to raise himself, for at it he has gained everything he possesses; and now that the trade is decaying and is on the point of disappearing, he still finds in it the means of providing for his children's future. At the present moment it is Joe who profits. Before him, two other brothers now in New Zealand, and a third, employed in business in Birmingham, have similarly profited, as will his two younger brothers, if their father lives.

This sounds simple enough, but nevertheless it is not simple. Other workmen hang on in desperation to a declining trade, insist on severe regulations for the protection of their trade, have recourse to public agitation and to complex organisations, in order to maintain by artificial means a state of things which is disappearing, and, after all, they fail. Brown asks nothing of any one: he recognises that his trade will not be worth to his children what it has been worth to him, he has made up his mind to leave the trade before the trade leaves him, and is seeking a future for his children elsewhere. Only, like a practical man, he avails himself of the favourable conditions offered by his trade to prepare them for another.

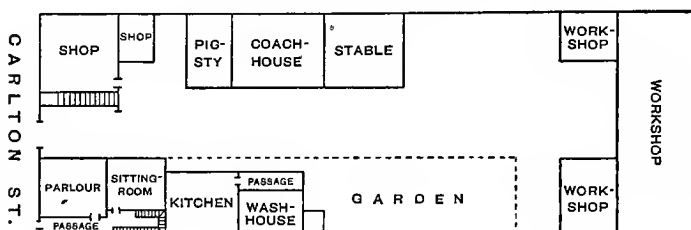
Without appearing to do so, this man has quietly and completely solved the Labour Question so far as it concerns him. I might add the social question too, *his* social question, and that is why he is specially interesting. His life is a lesson, which we might relate to many English and foreign workmen, and say "*Et nunc erudimini,*" if it were still the fashion to speak Latin. Even outside the working class many people might find a lesson in it. For my part, I declare I have learned much in Brown's school, and I sincerely wish to inspire my readers with the impressions which I experienced as I listened to him. And now that we know him in his workshop, we will penetrate into his home and enter his private life. It is, in fact, necessary to see how he has organised his family life, if we wish to understand the causes of his success.

### III. *Joseph Brown at Home.*

Brown's dwelling adjoins his shop, and is separated from

his workshop only by a little strip of garden taken off the court. Brown told me that the ground had originally been sold by a building society in three separate lots—one to him directly, the other two to persons who were unable to use them for building, and who sold them to him on favourable terms. There had been enough ground for three working men's houses, and the three lots together allowed him to build everything he required. The land cost him, on an average, 6s. 4½d. a square yard, and measured 760 square yards (46 yards long by a frontage of 16½ yards on Carlton Street); the total cost in round figures was about £240. To-day, the same ground would be worth far more owing to the building of Nechells. "All that used to be fields," he said. One may judge of the difference by the fact that, after spending £1000 in building, he values the whole at £1400.

PLAN OF BROWN'S PREMISES.



Glancing at the plan of the ground, we are struck by its preponderating length. It must be noted too, that it is three times as wide as the plots originally bought for workmen's dwellings, for which a frontage of 5½ yards is the ordinary one. That is sufficient to allow room for a front door opening into a narrow passage, and for a room with one window. Brown's house, which is built on this plan, occupies only a third of the Carlton Street frontage. The remaining 11 yards give room for the gate and the shop. Plots of ground for working men's dwellings are generally long narrow slips like this, and the arrangement I remarked in Birmingham may be found in a number of other English towns, while I have also noticed it in the United States, where the same size of frontage is common. It allows a working-class family to add to the dwelling-house proper a number of out-buildings for washing and drying linen,

and occasionally a little garden. There is also the advantage that free circulation of air is set up between the rows of houses, and this is a condition of health. It must be understood that all Birmingham workmen are not thus placed: the old quarters in the heart of the town too often present a scene of frightful overcrowding. Even in recently built houses there may not infrequently be remarked an arrangement more economical, but far less happy. I allude to courts, an arrangement which permits of the accumulation of a series of little houses or even of working-class tenements, while giving each family a separate entrance. This is perhaps better than the Continental system of huge barracks, six storeys high, with a common entrance and staircase, where promiscuity begets conditions of physical and moral disease, but it is a far lower type than the other.

Here, we are in the home of a specially prosperous working man, inasmuch as he has become a master workman, but nevertheless his mode of living differs little from that of the other well-to-do workmen I visited in England. He lives like a working man, and not in the style of the middle class; consequently, he is a good type to study from this point of view.

It had been arranged that I should spend an evening at his house, and so about eight o'clock I rang at his door. It was opened by Mrs. Brown, who invited me to walk into the parlour to await the return of her husband, who had been obliged to go out. She herself was preparing to go out, and asked me to excuse her. She had her bonnet on—a black bonnet trimmed with flowers. Her dress was carefully chosen, and not very different from that of a Frenchwoman of the same class. It consisted of a dark blue woollen skirt, with a bodice of blue and white spotted foulard, kept to her figure by a yellow leather belt. To go out, she put over her shoulders a black cape trimmed with jet. Her general appearance gave an impression of neatness, care, and kindness, and moreover she was attractive.

While I was alone in the parlour I had time to look at it well. The room was nearly square, about 12 feet each way, and well lighted by a window looking on to the street. The floor was covered with carpet, and from the middle of the

ceiling hung a chandelier with three burners. The wall opposite the door was occupied by a white marble mantelpiece with a cast-iron grate; over the fire was an overmantel of wood. A suite upholstered in horse-hair looked like good solid family furniture, and consisted of six chairs, a sofa, and a low chair. There were two tables, covered with cloths. One stood in front of the window, and held a china flower-pot in which a fern was dying, the other was covered with books and albums. A mahogany chiffonier with glass panels and shelves completed the furniture. Photographs were scattered about on the mantelpiece and tables, and there were two or three indifferent pictures on the walls.

While waiting for their father's arrival I talked to the two little boys, who came and examined me with curiosity. The younger, a little man of eight, showed me a handsome book containing pictures of different kinds of animals, which seemed to afford him the greatest interest. He told me about the habits of the rhinoceros, and we turned over the book together, exchanging ideas about the lion, the jaguar, the eagle, the chamois, and becoming the best friends in the world. His brother, two years his senior, cultivates accomplishments in his odd moments. He brought me a violin from which he extracted some sounds bearing a distant resemblance to the scale of C, and explained that as yet he had only had one lesson. That was obvious, but I exhorted him to perseverance. It was needless, for, young as they are, these boys are English, and bring a profound seriousness to all they do. Even at this tender age they are in earnest, and if it made me smile as I talked jaguar with one and the violin with the other, it must not be forgotten that there nevertheless is the germ of a quality which will make men of them later. It is not far from the child of ten to the young man of nineteen, and Joe, who is nineteen, is a man.

While we were chatting thus Joseph Brown arrived, but no longer the workman of the morning, with his leather apron and his braces hanging down behind. He took off a light overcoat—the summer overcoat worn by all Englishmen and all who borrow their fashions—and appeared in a well-cut gray suit. His hands and face were perfectly clean—a commendable state of things in a blacksmith—he wore a pair of good



and well-blacked boots, a gold watch-chain adorned his waist-coat, and he was smoking a big cigar. Fortunately, he retained under this conventional attire, as under his working clothes, the courteous and cordial manner which had led me to augur well of my quest in the morning. I accepted a cigar, Brown prepared two glasses of whisky and soda, and the conversation began.

I first complimented my host on his place, over which he offered to show me, from the sitting-room behind the parlour to the wash-house and kitchen. We also went upstairs to the rooms on the floor above. They were a little narrow, but well-furnished and clean. The bedroom occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Brown contained a large wooden bed, a marble washstand, a chest of drawers, the top of which Mrs. Brown had fitted up as a dressing-table, and a cupboard. Two daughters slept in a room containing two beds. It was carefully kept, and the walls were adorned with a profusion of pictures and nick-nacks. Two rooms had fireplaces. I explained to Brown that it was necessary for my purpose to know the value of the different articles of furniture, and he very kindly took no offence at my impertinent questions.

“As to furniture,” he said, “you can get goods now at all prices. You will have no difficulty in Birmingham in finding a parlour suite consisting of six chairs, two arm-chairs, and a sofa, at 6 guineas. Of course it is poor stuff, but it is showy. It is furniture made of unseasoned wood by cabinetmakers in Whitechapel, and upholstered in Birmingham. Many young couples buy one when they set up housekeeping, and at the end of five years not a single chair is sound. Now, compare our old chairs in the parlour which have seen twenty-seven years’ service. They cost 22 guineas when new, but our children rolled on them and climbed on them to play at ‘family coach,’ and they are still in good condition. In the sitting-room, where we have meals and where we spend most of our time, the furniture is a little rougher, but very solid too; each chair cost £1 : 5s. and the sofa 7 guineas.”

“As a rule, my wife and I have always thought it was worth while to pay more and get a good article. The chiffonier opposite the window in the parlour cost 15 guineas, but see how well it opens. The overmantel cost 7 guineas; it is a luxury, of course, but it is a constant pleasure to have one’s home nice.

The marble chimney-piece cost 6 guineas; when I built the house the contractor had not allowed in his estimate for such an expensive one, but we made ourselves a present of it, as an extra, to beautify our parlour. By the way, I do not recommend the grate which is put in; it is an old pattern, but the low price—£2—is compensated for by a great waste of coal. I keep it because we do not always have a fire there, but in the sitting-room I have for the same total cost a marble mantel-piece at 4 guineas, and a grate at the same price, and I do not burn more than 2s. worth of coal a week with a fire going all day in winter,”—and Brown, who is very well up about everything made in Birmingham, discussed at some length the merits of his different grates. In his bedroom the fireplace was entirely of cast-iron, and worth about £2:10s. There was another, quite small and unpretentious, in his daughters’ room, which cost only 8s. There are even some to be had, it would seem, at 6s. All this information was useful to enable me to determine with precision the exact material position of Joseph Brown; and of interest too, because it gives a general idea of the cost of setting up housekeeping in the working class. English industry has devoted much attention to the manufacture of cheap articles of every kind which are sold at a price within the reach of a very large class of customers. Sometimes the result has been that quality is sacrificed, as in the case of furniture; sometimes an article has been invented combining good value with a low price, as in the case of the little fire-grates. It is no small matter for a working-class family to be able to afford, at a trifling cost, the comfort of a well-warmed room, which, in case of illness, will afford favourable conditions of temperature and health in this damp and bitter climate. These are trifles, but they put very appreciable advantages within the reach of all.

The visit to Mrs. Brown’s kitchener was interesting from this point of view. It is a marvel of ingenuity, capable of cooking the family meal, of heating irons, of drying linen, of providing a constant supply of hot water, and all in a very small space and with a trifling expenditure of fuel. It was rather dear, £8 for the kitchener and £1 for fixing, but the saving of coal largely compensates for the outlay. It burns only about 2s. worth of coal a week.

I asked Brown what sum would enable a young working-class couple in fair circumstances to furnish.

“As a rule,” he replied, “to furnish two rooms downstairs and two bedrooms, about £30, if they buy cheap. Of course I do not include house-linen, which is extra. If they want a good quality this sum must be multiplied by three or four. Nowadays many capital articles can be bought at a lower price than formerly. Iron beds, for instance, are better than the old-fashioned wooden beds. They are more lasting, easier to keep clean, and good ones can be bought from 6s. to £20.”

There is, of course, a great difference between the bare necessities of a young couple and the way in which a house like Brown’s is furnished. It is true that it is intended for a large family, that it is of good quality, and that it includes a certain number of fancy articles, among which may be mentioned a very indifferent piano in the sitting-room, on which the eldest daughter plays waltzes; but from the prices he mentioned, I estimate that he must have spent about £200 to buy the furniture new. Of course it was not all bought at once, but since he set up housekeeping—that is to say, in the course of twenty-seven years—he has found means to buy ground for building at £240, to spend £1000 on building, and £200 on furniture, to make a business worth £600, and at the same time to bring up a family of eight children. Moreover, he admits with a smile that he has invested “a little bit of money here and there.” He has also insured his life at a fixed term of twenty years, and has already paid fifteen annual instalments. This is the capital he has acquired by the product of his labour and the profits of his business.

To-day the value of his furniture has depreciated through wear, but, on the other hand, his buildings have risen considerably in value, owing to the growth of Nechells. I have already said that he values his premises at £1400, and his business at £600. Valuing his furniture at £80, we get a total of £2080, to which must be added the sum of his investments, and the capital assured by the fifteen annual premiums, as to which two items I have no exact information.

We must now obtain a general idea of his annual expenses, in order to estimate the resources furnished by his own labour and his business. At the same time, we shall find ourselves

initiated into his everyday life : we shall see how he and his family live, dress, their recreations, and how they are cared for in illness. We shall have the material aspect of his life ; its setting we have already described.

Of his eight children five only live with him. Two sons have settled in New Zealand ; another, who is engaged in the wholesale fruit-trade in Birmingham, does not take his meals at home. There remain, therefore, Joe, two sisters—one seventeen years of age and the other fourteen—and the two little brothers.

Joe, who is old enough to keep himself, and who, moreover, receives a salary of 30s. a week from his father, pays his mother 10s. a week as his share of the housekeeping expenses. This covers his board, washing, lighting, and the storage of his belongings. It is important to remember the figure, because it gives us a base of estimate for the budget of the family expenditure.

In the Brown household, as in all English working-class households, there are several meals. In the morning, before seven o'clock, there is breakfast, consisting of coffee, bread and butter, and meat, generally bacon ; about twelve there is dinner, consisting of some kind of meat, beef, or mutton, with the unvarying boiled potatoes ; at four o'clock tea—one or two cups of tea, with bread and butter ; and in the evening, about eight or nine o'clock, there is supper, which is not so solid a meal as dinner, but which brings meat on the table for the third time.

Of course all Birmingham workmen do not live as well as this. Many of them do not eat meat every day, or eat it only once a day, but in that case they think themselves on short commons. Their standard of diet tends towards what I have just described ; they adopt it as soon as their means permit, not as a luxury, or as a matter of taste, but as a normal, reasonable, and understood thing. From this point of view they differ sensibly from the French workman. With him, too, no doubt, an improvement in his means expresses itself most frequently by an improvement in his living, but when he is steady he would not consider it justifiable to spend so much upon meat.

It is true that meat is not dear in Birmingham. The free

importation into England of meat from all parts gives full play to competition and makes prices low. Thus Australian meat, transported by sea in freezing chambers, is retailed in the Birmingham market at  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. a pound. Mrs. Brown does not like this frozen meat: she maintains that it has less flavour, and she never buys it. She prefers real English fresh meat, although she pays almost double the price—9d. a pound for mutton for the best cuts, and  $8\frac{1}{2}$ d. for beef for the best cuts, and only 6d. for beef for boiling. So, while allowing themselves the luxury of fresh meat, they manage to have something to put in the pot without great expense.

Further, the money is not thrown away. Not only does the workman who is well fed work better and enjoy better health, but he is less ready to desert his home for a public-house. Mrs. Brown asserts that if housewives knew how to manage, many a one who complains of her husband might keep him at home by looking after him well. "It takes less time to go to a public-house and spend fivepence or sixpence on ale than to cook a piece of meat of the same value at home. But what a difference in the result! With this piece of meat a small family can make a good, comfortable meal, while the ale ruins the stomach, and only makes a man thirsty. Beer is the ruin of people," she says, as if to sum up, "and I have often seen women drink the money which would have kept their families a whole day without leaving the bar."

Nevertheless, Mrs. Brown is not a teetotaller, in proof of which it may be remarked that, as we listen, her husband and I are enjoying our whisky and soda without incurring her indignation in the least. At meals, however, the family drink nothing but water, except at breakfast and tea. This is not an exceptional thing in England, but rather the rule; wine is considered a luxury, and beer a bad habit. In summer Brown often refreshes himself between meals, more especially when working at the forge, with home-made lemonade—a drink which would seem insipid enough to a French workman. Sometimes too, but very exceptionally, he has an 18-gallon cask of ale, for which he pays only 17s., obtaining it direct from the brewer.

The considerable saving effected by these habits of sobriety permits of the greater expenditure in meat. We have

already spoken of the low price of butcher's meat, and bacon, which is much eaten, is also very cheap. In Birmingham American bacon may be bought from 3d. to 5d. a pound, according to quality, and it is this American bacon which is chiefly used for breakfast in Birmingham.

"At one time," said Brown, referring to this subject, "pigs were largely kept in Birmingham, but you would not find one to-day where you would have found a thousand a few years ago. In the first place, since the town has grown and spread into the suburbs, there are police regulations forbidding pigs to be kept except under certain sanitary conditions which the greater number of poor folk cannot fulfil, especially as owing to the increasing value of land the houses are more closely crowded. In the next place, families who have room enough to devote themselves to this occupation generally find a more remunerative way of employing their time in some other occupation. You saw in the court beside the stable a wooden pen. My second son, now in New Zealand, used to keep a sow there, and by selling the young ones he made a little money. I myself have fattened pigs, and have sometimes made as much as £20 a year, but it is too much trouble and not worth it."

In a large commercial and manufacturing town, which offers at the same time a large variety of well-paid employment and a well-provided provision market, the working-man finds himself obliged to lay aside the small accessory sources of profit to which he would have recourse in the isolation of a small town. His time becomes too precious to be squandered in rearing pigs: he can do better, and, moreover, American bacon can be bought ready at a low price at the nearest grocer's. So he willingly gives up the task of raising his own provisions, not because he thinks it beneath him—the young Browns would go and raise pigs at the Antipodes if it would pay—but because he has a rational idea of employing his time to better purpose.

This well illustrates what may be gained from the growth of a town by an intelligent working man, who, without belonging to the picked few, is capable of turning to account the advantage of higher wages and multiplied forms of employment.

Fish and vegetables, like meat, are cheap. Cod costs  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d.

a lb., salmon 10d., and a sole of medium size 3d. As a rule the Birmingham market is well supplied with fish.

Vegetables are abundant, but cabbage and potatoes are the only ones which habitually form part of the family diet. Cabbages were dear in 1893, owing to the drought, and cost as much as 3d. each, but as a rule they cost 1d., and two are enough for a meal. New potatoes, which are eaten with the meat, boiled like cabbage, were selling that day (8th June 1893) at 2d. a lb.

Charles, the son engaged in the wholesale fruit-trade, gave me some interesting information about the imports of his firm. "We have just received," he said, "3000 baskets of cherries from France. About 60,000,000 French eggs are imported every week. We also get a great many vegetables from France, and especially from Brittany. Saint Malo supplies cauliflowers." England offers such a market for all these products that ultimately they become so abundant that their price is not increased.<sup>1</sup> One detail I might mention. England is one of the countries where the greatest number of oranges and bananas are eaten. Every climate and country sends its products into the docks of London and Liverpool. Fresh apples can be had in May; they come from Australia, and the voyage takes six weeks.

Milk, which is largely used, does not stand a long journey unless it is sent in a concentrated form. However, the English pastures are fairly good, and the cultivation of fodder has developed sufficiently for the establishment of a number of dairy farms, which despatch innumerable milk trains daily to all the large towns. The police regulations as to adulteration are extremely strict, and the low price is due entirely to competition. The best milk costs 3d. a quart.

Tea and sugar are also not so dear as in France. The duty on the first is moderate, and on the second there is none. Loaf sugar costs  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. a lb., and lump sugar 3d. Tea may be had at all prices. It is one of the articles over which the English passion for advertisement has risen almost to fury. "TRY OUR TEA, IT IS THE COMFORT OF THE HOME, THE JOY OF THE

<sup>1</sup> Much the same thing occurs in Paris, where the great central markets (Les Halles) enable housekeepers to buy every kind of poultry, fish, vegetables, and fruit at a moderate price.

FAMILY, THE FATHER'S REST, THE MOTHER'S HEALTH." Frequently this regenerating, exhilarating tonic is nothing but a worthless colouring powder, but one can enjoy many cups of it without being ruined, for it may be had at 1s. a lb. Mrs. Brown does not buy this tea, which she declares to be execrable; she pays 2s. a lb. for hers, and I can say from experience that it is excellent.

Still, tea at this price is a cheap drink, even after buying sugar at 3d. a lb. But the English, not content with buying tea in China, have become tea-planters, and in Ceylon, for instance, great quantities are produced. Hence the decrease in price. Brown told me that when he was a boy his father sent him to the grocer's to buy tea, and he got a pound of green tea at 5s. a lb., and a pound of black at 4s. This mixture, then in favour, cost 4s. 6d. a lb., or more than twice as much as what I found excellent at his table.

English cookery, as every one knows, is extremely simple. Boiled, roast, or grilled meat, fried fish, vegetables boiled in water—none of the elaborate made dishes and varied combinations which French housewives willingly undertake. The pudding is the only effort of English imagination in this direction. It is prodigious as a combination of elements of all sorts, but in families of the working-class it is reserved for high days, Sunday for example. Consequently it is not a great addition to the ordinary cares of the household. Formerly, however, these were rendered very heavy by the custom of baking for the family daily. Until a dozen years ago Mrs. Brown still discharged this daily and time-honoured duty. She has now given it up, finding it far more convenient to let the baker bring a 4-lb. loaf, costing  $5\frac{1}{2}$ d., than to make and bake her own bread every day as she used to do. This 4-lb. loaf represents the consumption of seven persons for a day, making a little over half a pound a head. A French family would need more than twice as much, but in England bread is little more than an excuse for eating butter.

I do not pretend to estimate minutely the quantity of meat, fish, vegetables, etc., consumed by the family annually; but judging from the information I received, and the amount paid by Joe for board, I do not think I should be far from the truth in allowing £120 a year for food.

As to clothes, Brown and his wife agreed in saying that



they can probably be bought more cheaply in Birmingham than in any other town in England. The custom of a town of 500,000 inhabitants is considerable enough for the establishment of very large shops, and the proximity of the textile factories of Lancashire enables them to be supplied on favourable terms. It is well known that in France at the present time many tailors send orders received in Paris or in the provinces to be executed in England, and find it to their advantage to do so, even while they offer their customers the imported article at a lower price. In Birmingham men's clothes cost about half as much as in Paris, and if the difference is not so great on boots and shoes, it is still greatly in favour of England. The eldest daughter, who is a teacher in a school in town, showed me a pair of stout boots she had had made by a cobbler, which had cost only 7s. Mrs. Brown estimates that a young woman engaged as a teacher or in business can dress very suitably for £10 a year. She would consider this a maximum. Certainly the total expenditure on clothes of Brown, his wife, his two youngest sons, and his two daughters should not exceed £50 a year. It should be said, however, that Mrs. Brown has a sewing-machine, with which she makes a good deal of underlinen, and that I never saw her without a piece of work in her hand. In this she is somewhat of an exception, for Englishwomen seem, as a rule, to despise needlework. This is greatly due to the cheapness of the articles shown in the large shops; and an equally important factor is that young girls work in factories until they marry. After her working day in the factory, and with her day's wages earned, the working girl prefers to rest. However, there are other reasons too, for Scotswomen, under the same circumstances, have retained in a greater degree the custom of the small domestic occupations, and more especially of knitting. One cannot imagine a Scotswoman without her woollen stocking in her hand, while among Englishwomen it is extremely rare. The former, generally more isolated than the latter, thrown less completely into the modern movement, in a sense more patriarchal, remains more attached to these time-honoured accessory occupations. Knitting is certainly to be regarded in this light in a country where the whole textile manufacture is so enormously developed.

The washing is done at home in this family as in many English families. An old woman of sixty-three comes once a week to wash, and is paid 1s. 6d. a day and her food. She does a day's washing, ironing, or cleaning for the same price. In a word, she is Mrs. Brown's lieutenant in her household duties. She comes about ten times a month, and, estimating her keep at 1s. a day, this is an annual expenditure of £15.

When her children were young, Mrs. Brown employed a woman continually, but she did without her as soon as she could, and was anxious to do so. "Servants are such a plague here," she said. "They want three free evenings a week, and half a day on Sunday. They often insist on an hour for practising on the piano, and they consider themselves entitled to ten days' holiday a year." That is the masters' side, but of course there is the servants'. Brown's sister, my friend's nurse, never fails to take her yearly holiday, and that year, it would appear, she was going to spend it at the seaside with a friend. In this way she would spend perhaps half her wages (£18 a year), but that is not thought so unreasonable in England as in France. The idea of saving is very rare. Her mistress told me that when this girl entered her service she stipulated that she should not be required to wait at table or to wear a cap. These conditions proposed, accepted, and observed, she is an excellent servant, and devoted to her employers, with whom she has remained ten years. It is extremely probable that servants expect so much in England chiefly owing to the facility with which young girls find in factories employment which leaves them their own mistresses after working hours. They are so attracted by this freedom that almost all rush into factories as soon as they have passed their standards and fulfilled the conditions required by the laws which safeguard the employment of children. Those who go into service wish to assure themselves at least a minimum of freedom, and speaking generally it cannot be said that they abuse it. They make their lot less narrow, nothing more.

Including the details given above with regard to heating, it is easy to reckon the amount expended on coal—2s. a week for the kitchen all the year round, 2s. for the sitting-room during eight months, an occasional fire in a bedroom or the parlour, a fire every week for washing—say 4s. a week for

fifty-two weeks, or about £10 : 10s. a year. It should be said that Joseph Brown buys the same coal for his workshop and for his house, and so gets the advantage of the wholesale price.

Lighting is done almost entirely by gas, which is supplied at 2s. 7d. or 2s. 9d. (according to the quantity consumed) by the town, which has municipalised its lighting. In Paris the Gas Company hands over half its profit to the town, and is consequently obliged to increase the price of gas by that amount. At Birmingham the municipality has recently decided to make and distribute the gas itself, not in order to wring further revenues from the ratepayers, but, on the contrary, to admit them to a share in the saving effected in the shape of a reduction in price. The Brown family spend about £3 : 10s. in gas for the family consumption.

Drinking water is also widely distributed by the town to its inhabitants. Brown contributes £2 a year, and can use as much as he pleases. At the present moment (1893) the municipality has undertaken the task of bringing water from the Welsh mountains to Birmingham, a distance of 200 miles.

A moderately heavy item in the family budget is that of amusements. As an Englishman, Brown believes that in order to work well one must know how to rest and amuse oneself from time to time, and that this is, in a sense, a duty to oneself. "Although I have been through some hard times," he says, "I have always lived comfortably and allowed myself a little pleasure, as a Christian should do." This expression, in his mouth, seems to mean not only that his pleasures are lawful, but also that he rests from a profound conviction of his dignity as a man and a Christian—that he does not work himself to death like an animal, but allows all his faculties full play, and so keeps himself in good form. The idea is thoroughly English. Every year he and his wife take some weeks' holiday, at the seaside or in Ireland; once they even crossed the Channel and spent a fortnight at Boulogne-sur-Mer, where Brown was delighted with the French cookery at the hotel. We have already seen that he likes to drive in the outskirts of Birmingham. His little trap cost him £24, and he calculates that the pony's keep amounts to 12s. a week, or rather more than £30 a year. As the chief use of the pony is to serve the customers, this item should not figure

in the list of personal expenses, but as part of the working expenses. The holiday expenses must, however, be included in the family budget. They amount to about £20 a year.

The expenses incurred for medical attendance have been heavy, as his wife's health has recently necessitated the best of treatment. He has sometimes after operations paid bills amounting to £50. From what he told me, his average annual expenditure under this head for the last ten years might be fixed at £15 a year.

His religious convictions also make no light claim on him. He is a Roman Catholic, and as this church wins adherents chiefly among the indigent Irish, it has no need in England to dread the corruption due to wealth. Consequently those of its members who are better off must make some sacrifices for its support. Brown is churchwarden of his parish, and pays £3 a year for three sittings for himself and his family, that is, £1 each. Further, he gives 30s. a year towards wiping out the church's debt. The church (St. Joseph's) owes £1800, on which 4 per cent interest is paid. In order to increase the income a bazaar is organised every year, in connection with which he takes an active part, and to which he usually contributes a box of tools, without mentioning the money he spends there. Finally, he gives to the offertory; so that the annual expense in connection with their religion must amount to about £8 a year for the family.

As may be seen, Brown is a zealous Catholic. I ought to say that this circumstance made me hesitate at first to make a careful study of him. I saw the disadvantage of selecting as a type of an English working-class family one professing a different religion from that of the majority. If I did not yield to this consideration, it was because Brown, good Catholic though he is, does not in the least represent the ordinary type of English Catholic workman. He is not of Irish origin, his parents did not even belong to any of those little groups of Lancashire Roman Catholics found, for instance, about Preston. His father and mother embraced Catholicism, but came of a Saxon and Protestant stock. Further, the Anglo-Saxon strain is so strongly marked in all he does, and so completely absent is any Celtic trait, that my scruples were overcome. In the course of this study we shall see a procession of Protestant

English workmen and of Irish Catholics, and it is easy to see to which social type Brown belongs.

We have concluded our examination of the expenditure of Joseph Brown but for the taxes, which form a compulsory addition. First of all there is the income tax. For a long time he paid nothing under this head, but since he became an employer, and his position as such was recognised, he receives an income-tax paper every year. He never fills it up, and makes no declaration, but he is officially assessed as having an income of £200 a year, and this assessment he accepts. Consequently his proportion of the income tax is £2.

He also pays a property tax, as his rent exceeds £20. His rent is assessed at £65, and he pays 6d. in the £1, amounting to £1:12:6. There remain the local rates, which are heavy, and amount to a total of about £4.

Recapitulating the various items enumerated in this budget, we get the following table:—

Food . . . . .	£120	0	0
Clothing . . . . .	48	0	0
Service . . . . .	15	0	0
Heating . . . . .	10	10	0
Lighting . . . . .	3	10	0
Water . . . . .	2	0	0
Doctor and Chemist . . . . .	15	0	0
Amusements . . . . .	20	0	0
Religious purposes . . . . .	8	0	0
Taxes . . . . .	7	10	0
		<hr/>	
Total . . . . .	£249	10	0
		<hr/>	

It must be noted that, as the owner of his house, Brown has no rent to pay. If we add that, besides meeting his annual expenses, he has succeeded in acquiring property and in making some advantageous investments, that he has in some degree assisted the sons who emigrated to New Zealand in settling, his average annual income cannot be less than from £360 to £400.

It is obvious that it would be impossible for me to enter into details with regard to his business profits. These are secrets which no business man willingly makes public, and rightly so. What was important for us to determine with precision was in the first place the style of living of the family,

and the net proceeds which Joseph Brown acquired by his labour. This end is now attained. But it is further necessary to have a complete account of the family, and through it of the working-class milieu in Birmingham. As yet, we know only the material base on which its life rests; we have not estimated its energy nor spoken of its educational work. So far, we have done little more than fix the data in a problem which appears insoluble, so contradictory is the appearance of the two terms given. On the one hand, Brown is engaged in a declining industry, and on the other he enjoys in tranquillity the fruits of his labour, rears a large family, lives in comfort, and is happy. How can these two propositions be reconciled? It is true that we have already a hint of the solution, for we know that Brown's children do not wish to carry on their father's business, that they find other outlets for their activity, and are ready to go as far as the Antipodes in search of them. But how is this accomplished? How is it that, side by side with so many who declare things difficult, with so many workmen who clamour for a higher intervention to protect them, we find young men without many relations, without capital, with only an ordinary education, who nevertheless succeed in making a place for themselves in the world? How has Brown himself attained his position? This is what we require to know in detail in order to understand the power of this type. We shall understand it by laying our finger on the little traits of home education, by listening to Brown as he describes how his children were settled, and the vicissitudes through which he himself has passed. Then we shall know what a child ought to get in his education in order to develop into an enterprising young man like Joe, and later into the head of a family like Brown—a truly independent man.

#### IV. *The Past and Future of the Brown Family.*

The contrast I have just indicated between the impression of happy stability, of confidence in the future, and of prosperity presented by this family, and the instability of their occupation, its uncertainty in the immediate future, and the pressing dangers which threaten it, is rendered still more marked by the history of their life. Brown was not educated from child-

hood to the particular calling he follows ; he has not followed a course laid down beforehand ; on the contrary, he has had to find out his course for himself, and at times he has taken a false step. The trade which seems on the eve of slipping from him has not been in his case a time-honoured refuge, in whose shelter he grew to manhood, but merely an opportunity of which he availed himself, as he would have done of any other.

And while the contrast thus becomes greater and more marked, it begins to suggest the explanation. If Brown accepts the present state of his occupation without bitter recrimination, if he looks the future in the face without dismay, although he foresees the decay of this industry, it is because he has already extricated himself from difficulties of the same kind, applying his activity and faculties in different directions according to circumstances, and because he is accustomed to rely upon himself and not on the fortunes of his trade, on his personal rather than on his technical aptitudes. The future can present to him only such obstacles as he already knows. At any given moment he will surmount them.

His father lived at Birmingham, and was a clever mechanic with a large family. Joseph was still quite a child when his mother died, leaving ten children, the youngest of whom—the sister who is now nurse—was only fifteen months old. The father soon married again, and had five children by his second wife, so that the children of the first marriage were somewhat neglected. It was desirable that they should leave home as soon as possible, and make a start where they pleased. Joseph was apprenticed at the age of eleven in a smithy connected with the railway company. He had received very little education, his attendance at school had been very irregular, and he would have remained an indifferent scholar all his life if the idea had not occurred to him, when he was twelve or thirteen, that he would never do anything unless he possessed a thorough elementary education. Spurred already by the legitimate ambition to rise in the world, he became a regular attender at evening schools, and there acquired enough education to enable him to conduct his correspondence, keep his books, read a book or newspaper with profit ; in short, enough to prevent the lack of education from thwarting him

in the development of his enterprises. Henceforward, he was capable of modifying circumstances, of shaping his future, and of correcting what was defective or insufficient in himself. He knew that the best instrument of success was himself, and he had so strong a conviction of this that at an age when most children think only of prolonging to the utmost the hours of liberty, he willingly undertook additional work.

At eighteen, Brown left the railway company's workshops and apprenticed himself to the smith's trade with a small employer, in order to work at tool-making. I have no positive information as to why he decided on this change. Undoubtedly he saw before him in the service of the railway company no other profession than that of a mechanic without independence. He already cherished the project of setting up business on his own account, for at one-and-twenty, as soon as he had completed his apprenticeship, he began to undertake contract work, which he executed with the assistance of two less skilful assistants, keeping the more delicate and difficult parts for himself. Even then he was attempting the part of employer, of an industrial head.

It was then that he married, extremely young it will be seen, with some money in hand, but with no other resources than his own labour. In order to add to this a little, he thought of keeping a public-house, which his wife could manage while he was at work. At the end of six months the experiment did not appear satisfactory, and he gave up the lease.

He then entered the employment of Timmins and Co., the well-known Birmingham firm, with whom he remained for two years. Then, seeing that wages were not high, that his family was increasing (he had already two children), and that he should have some difficulty in bringing it up, and as, moreover, he possessed some small savings, he decided to start for himself. His relations with the firm of Timmins remained excellent, and it was from his former employers that he received his first order.

The next thing was to find the capital. He thought he could not get on without a working or sleeping partner, and advertised in the local newspapers. As his references were good, he soon heard of more than twenty persons desirous of



treating with him. "One," he told me, "would have suited me very well. He had enough capital and he proposed to become a sleeping partner. "Do you keep accounts?" he asked. "Yes, after a fashion, so as not to pay twice over." "Well, show me your accounts." After examining them, the applicant offered to find the money and keep the books. "It was just what I wanted," said Brown, "but unfortunately for me there came along a gunmaker with £500 in ready money. I closed with him, and soon found he was the greatest rascal I had ever met." At the end of twelve months the money he had put into the business was lost, and Brown found himself without a farthing, and with a wife and four little children. He was then about eight-and-twenty.

This is, I believe, the only incident in his life of which he speaks with bitterness. I rarely had a conversation of any length with him without the subject of the partner coming up. "The profits of eight years of hard work lost," he would say: "the best years of my life lost. It was a hard blow for me. I could have realised a fine income long ago without that disastrous partnership."

In his distress two precious possessions remained to him, his personal aptitudes and his good character. Thus while from a material point of view his ruin was so complete that he was obliged to buy on credit the tools necessary for his work, his moral position was so little impaired that he was able to set up again on his own account without working for others. A firm to the head of which he was personally known sent him a standing order for tools of some sort. Orders flowed in, and Brown, with only his two assistants, set to work with an energy which may be imagined. His personal worth, and the esteem in which he was held, had sustained him through this hard trial. He emerged from it with the twofold conviction that one should mistrust unknown partners and that the best capital a man can have is himself. The lesson, hard though it was, was perhaps worth what it cost. Henceforth Brown could advance through life with a confident step, and gradually attain the position we have seen.

The experience has not been of use to himself alone. Indirectly his children also profit by it. Their father not

only affords them an example of a hard-working, upright workman, rising by his good conduct to the rank of employer, but he is also there before their eyes as a model of energy, since he has been forced to put it to the proof, and he can teach them what life is, for he has experienced its hardships as well as its sweetness. The counsels he gives them, the ideas he inspires in them by his deeds or his narratives, have a manly ring. There is none of the milk-and-water stuff with which many excellent parents stunt the mind and heart of their children; none of that passive and flabby virtue whose total inefficiency young men soon learn in the school of life; a discovery which often leads them to feel a contempt for virtue, because it has been presented to them under false colours. Brown does not bring up his children in the belief that good little children who do as they are told will be rewarded later by growing up good little workmen who will marry good little wives and have a good little life, and all this in virtue of the intrinsic efficacy of their good little sentiments! Even if he wished to preach this narrow and enervating doctrine, his own example would be enough to give it the lie. What he does say, and what his example says still more eloquently, is that each man's life is a problem of which he must find the solution; that this solution does not exist apart; that each man must seek it for himself; that no one can dispense another from this responsibility; that if one solution gives a wrong result, there is nothing to do but to think of another; that when a solution which has proved satisfactory for a time ceases to be so, a man must discover this in time, leave it, and adopt a new one; that consequently there is no solution which is good once for all, and which dispenses a man once for all from the task of shaping his life. Through the difficulties he encountered at the outset of his career, through the complete check given to his first enterprise, through the present decadence of his trade, Brown has been constantly made aware of these truths, and he is so thoroughly permeated with them, that he inspires a conviction of their truth in those around him by putting them into a concrete shape as living realities. The education of his children bears the impress of them.

On my first visit to Brown, I saw in his office one of his

younger sons engaged in dusting the room. It was Saturday morning, a holiday in English schools. "Every Saturday," he said to me, "he cleans my office. I give him a few coppers for the job, and in this way he gets a little pocket-money. In his Whitsuntide holidays, he and his brother asked to be allowed to polish some tools which were being sent out of the workshop. I was quite willing and they polished two gross, for which I paid them the legal price."

Brown showed an evident satisfaction in telling me this, and I was struck by the earnestness with which he told me. I remembered the just reflection which my friend M. de Tourville had made in my presence some time before: "England does not know what childhood is." There are no children there: children are treated as men. Their little ambitions are not laughed at, nor is the spring of action broken by the words, "You are only children." On the contrary, they are always treated as grown-up persons.

Thus they all serve an apprenticeship in determination and responsibility, and in this lies the secret of English education. When, at ten years of age, a child thinks of polishing tools, and when he is determined enough to polish a gross, or when at twenty a young man thinks of starting business at the Antipodes, and is determined enough to devote his energies to this end and to find the means of succeeding in it, surely the phenomenon is one and the same, and who shall say which is the most precocious?

Brown's children have been put to work young—directly they leave the elementary school at the age of fourteen. At this age Joe was sent into a shop, where he earned 5s. a week by doing errands. Joe did not care for this occupation, and as his father needed an assistant he soon returned to the workshop where we saw him. On the other hand, Charles, who is in the fruit trade, never tried anything else. He has succeeded very well, has already accumulated a fair capital, is shortly to be married, and thinks of setting up for himself. His sweetheart is the daughter of a Birmingham clockmaker, a German friend of his father's, accustomed to mind her father's shop and help him in keeping his books, and quite ready to do the same for her husband. The young man told me with much satisfaction of the com-

mercial aptitudes of his intended wife, on which he founds, and not unreasonably, his hopes of the future. It should be remarked that they have been manifested hitherto in an entirely different line of business from that in which she would have to employ them later if her husband quitted the wholesale house where he is employed to start a retail shop, but the aptitude for business is general, and if one has a knowledge of business it is easy to pass from one branch to another.

The history of the two sons who went to New Zealand is more stirring, and enables us better to lay our finger on the processes of home education, and on the way in which the children made a start in life. Dick, the younger, was the first to emigrate. He was then eighteen, had worked with his father, had tried another trade, but saw no future before him in Birmingham. He was, moreover, a good workman, clever, industrious, very enterprising, and more disposed to mould circumstances than to yield to them. Why did New Zealand attract him? No doubt because of the enthusiastic accounts and glowing descriptions which every New Zealander sends home of his adopted country, and which are readily published in English periodicals. In England there is so much talk about Japan, Australia, the Cape, Vancouver, or Calcutta, that the idea of going to live no matter where grows as naturally in a young English head as the idea of going to Paris and having a good time grows in a young French head. A lad of eighteen thinks of trying his chance in New Zealand, in France he thinks of becoming a soldier and doing something brilliant; only the brilliant action does not always present itself, while one can always try to make a fortune and succeed in becoming independent, provided one has good arms, a clear head, determination, and provided also that favourable conditions are sought where they are to be found.

There was, therefore, nothing extraordinary, unheard of, or anomalous in this decision on the part of Dick. It was not a decision which he was induced to take by the impossibility of making a living in Birmingham. Dick was really making a living, and a good living; he had even put aside about £20, partly out of his wages, partly out of the profit he made by keeping pigs. What drove him out of England was

the desire of doing better elsewhere, not his inability to succeed in the mother country.

With his £20 he had just enough to pay his third-class passage. His father started him with a similar sum to help him in his enterprise, and added to that a very complete assortment of tools, worth another £25. As he knew how to use tools, this present would be of the greatest use to him, and, thanks to it, on his arrival in New Zealand he was able to build his own cabin, and, as soon as he had finished this first piece of work, to contract with a neighbour to fence a certain area. In every agricultural colony the enclosure of land is one of the heaviest as well as one of the most indispensable expenses incurred by the new settler. As the work was considerable, Dick would have been obliged to spend no little time over it if he had done it single-handed, but he had more than one plan in his head. He found a man competent to fence the land who lacked the requisite tools, and so he lent him his own, and handed over the job to him for a consideration of £40. Meanwhile he set about finding something else.

Sheep-breeding and the exportation of wool is one of the great resources of New Zealand. Dick, who had never seen sheep except at the butcher's, nor wool except in a shop, soon learned to wash and dry the fleeces. At the end of six months he was a wool-sorter, his task being to class the fleeces according to quality. Thus from a mere labourer he had risen to a connoisseur, but he was not to stop there. Six months later he bought his master's business, into which he soon introduced new developments. The process of drying the fleeces by exposing them to the air was very tedious in a bad season, and Dick conceived the idea of applying the process of steam drying which he had seen employed in England. A prize was offered to the man who should introduce the best type of dryer. Dick hastened to write to his father, who purchased for him in Birmingham the elementary parts of the machines he had thought out, and sent him at the same time all the smith's tools necessary for setting it up.

Dick has now given up this business, and has started another of an altogether different kind. He manufactures bone black. In this, too, his father has been very useful to him. It was he who bought and dispatched from Birming-

ham the bone-crushing machine used. To judge by some details, the business is important. Dick had to pay an import duty of £60 on the machine, and the cost of transporting it sixty-two miles from Wellington by rail was £20. He is satisfied with his enterprise, and only regrets his inability to develop it further, owing to the lack of raw material. New Zealand produces a large quantity of meat, and consequently of bone, and consumes relatively little, having only a small population. Dick sees with regret the departure of the great vessels with freezing chambers, which carry away the sheep whose bones he could crush to such profit. Fortunately for him, the prosperity of the colony and the constant increase in its population are elements of success in his favour.

I asked Brown whether he dispatched the different machines which his son ordered from Birmingham as presents to encourage him. "By no means," he replied; "the only thing is that I make nothing out of him. Being in the trade, I get a reduction, of which I allow him the benefit, nothing more. I also advance him the purchase-money. At the present moment he still owes me £50 under this head, but it is carried to his account just as in the case of an ordinary client."

This mode of assisting his son is very interesting and very effective. If Dick wishes to work up a thing, he is assisted by his father's purse as well as by his experience; he is aided, nothing more. It was only his departure which induced his father to present him with £20 which he had not earned, and this was to render fruitful an enterprise in view of which the lad had himself amassed a similar sum.

Brown acts in the same way towards his other children. As soon as they are capable of providing for themselves he throws them on the resources of their labour, and teaches them to become capable of providing for themselves as soon as possible. In this there is very little difference between the English and American working-classes. In both there is a deep-rooted conviction that a man with a head and a pair of hands ought to rely on himself for a living.

John, the eldest brother, represents a less accomplished type of emigrant than Dick. He decided to emigrate on seeing the success of his younger brother, and is, so to speak,

acting under his influence. Thus, in many English families, the more enterprising members influence the others to emigrate. John had worked with his father until he was about twenty-two; he was a good workman, a well-conducted, steady young fellow, who had saved a little money, and was already engaged to a Birmingham dressmaker. At a time when things were going far from well, and acting on the advice of his father, who foresaw no possible future in his calling, he resolved to go and join Dick. In order to give him some business experience, his father took him from the anvil and the hammer, and employed him for six months in the commercial part of his work, and then let him embark for Wellington. In order to make up the little bit of money which had been broken into considerably by the cost of the passage, Brown gave him, as he had given Dick, £15 or £20, and wished him good luck.

When young Brown landed in New Zealand his brother promptly told him, "The first thing to do is to learn to milk a cow. When you go and ask for work on a farm they will ask you at once whether you can milk, and unless you can they will have nothing to say to you."

Thus warned, John hastened to learn to milk, and this Birmingham blacksmith soon found a place with a colonist. To succeed over there a man must not cling too closely to his own special line. In the United States, in Kansas, I met a man who had formerly been an assistant in a Paris shop. His first piece of work in America was digging a grave. It was on a lonely farm; some one had just died, and there was neither cemetery nor funeral service. The farmer showed the newcomer a pickaxe and a spade, and asked him to come with him and act as gravedigger. He too found no opening in his own special line.

John did not, however, remain long at agriculture. His brother, after having had a partner in his bone-black business, had become the sole proprietor, and took him into partnership. To-day their success is so well established that Dick wants to see the whole family emigrate to New Zealand. Joe would, I think, be willing enough to join them, but for the fact that his father needs him in Birmingham. Mrs. Brown, it appears, is also quite ready to emigrate, and her husband banters her on her New Zealand dreams. "My wife feels

sure that she would make a capital sheep-breeder; but as for myself, I am too old to begin a new life." The probability is that the Browns will not decide to emigrate in a body, but that the two elder ones will attract some of the others to New Zealand. To begin with, the young dressmaker who was engaged to John is gaily preparing to pack up and keep her troth to the blacksmith turned colonist.

Charles, who is in the fruit trade, is also as we have seen to be married shortly. Brown informed me of his generous intentions to the young couple, to whom he will give their spoons, forks, and knives. He will interfere only to make a present, as on the occasion of the departure of his elder sons for New Zealand, but there is no thought of a dowry.

It is the same in the case of the daughters. "I married my wife without a penny," he says, "and my daughters must marry in the same way. It is not the same here as in Ireland, where parents are in the habit of giving their daughter a dowry equal to what the young man has. A young man with £500 would not marry a girl who had only £450. It is a terrible business in that country to have daughters, or sisters either, for brothers are often obliged to work a long time to turn the girls out."

The eldest daughter is fitting herself to get her own living if she is destined to be an old maid. She is a pupil-teacher in the school where she was educated, and is working to pass the examinations required to qualify her as a certificated teacher. The second daughter is only thirteen or fourteen.

It is clear that these children, though reared in moderate comfort, cannot in any way count on their father's inheritance to enable them to continue to live in the same style. Brown spends more than £240 a year, and cannot leave more than £2800. Thus there is no relation between his expenses and the interest on his capital. It is his labour which makes up the difference, and it is their labour which must provide for them.

I asked him how he intended to dispose of his fortune. "That is very simple," he replied; "I have made my will, and I have directed that at my death my premises in Carlton Street and my business shall be sold, as there is no future there for my children. Out of the money thus realised,



together with some investments I shall leave, the first charge will be a suitable jointure for my wife, and then the children will divide the rest." "And if you felt confident of the future of your trade, if you desired it to be continued by one of your children, how would you go to work?" "In that case I should make arrangements allowing one of them to keep it, but I should not benefit him exclusively: he would have to compensate his brothers and sisters, and to pay his mother's jointure. Otherwise it would not be just to the others."

This answer might have fallen from the lips of a French father. However, many English people in the lower classes think and act thus: it is almost entirely among the aristocracy that the eldest son inherits everything. In France, however, the system of equal division leads parents to the systematic limitation of their family, and weakens the energy of the children. Why is it not so on this side of the Channel? The answer is to be found in the fact just pointed out in the case of Brown, which is true not only of the working class, but of the greater part of the middle class. People do not live on the interest of their capital, they rarely seek to accumulate a capital sufficient to enable them to live without working, and there is no idea whatever of doing this for the advantage of the children. Thus, under an identical form, two diametrically opposite customs are concealed—the French custom, which bases the prosperity of a family on the accumulated labour of a few generations, assisted by the wise administration of those who inherit, and the English custom, which bases the prosperity of each generation on its own toil. What matter, then, that one may divide what is left by this generation as one pleases? It is not on this that the next generation will live. Moreover, the freedom of bequest permits the father to dispose of it entirely at his own discretion, and he can do this without any risk of causing ill-feeling, provided he has any weighty reason, and if he does not violently disappoint the expectations of any of his children. The position of the French father is quite different. He is the administrator of the property he received from his family, and he is bound to transmit it to his heirs.

We now see from what has been said how the future of the family we have studied is shaping itself. The decadence

of the father's trade does not affect it, and the father himself would know how to free himself if this decadence were accelerated. The children are looking in other directions, and those who have reached manhood, four in number, have succeeded in different degrees, and by means of different aptitudes, in making their own way. To meet the economic and technical transformation which is destroying his workshop, Brown has found, for himself and for his family, an excellent remedy, a perfect solution; and this he has applied unaided, without the assistance of any one.

Such is this interesting figure of an English workman. If we judged from this single type, we should form a false idea of the industrial population of these islands, although nothing could be further from my intention. Placed in specially unfavourable industrial conditions, belated in a trade that is doomed, Brown has succeeded in triumphing over these obstacles and in opening out a wide avenue towards the future. He has resolutely embraced the cause of progress, even though such progress is ruining his calling, and has taken measures to escape the disaster which must overtake his trade. Few men are capable of achieving such a master stroke, and there are not many of whom it is required. The trades most menaced by the transformations of machinery no longer attract new recruits ("There are no apprentices now," said Brown), while in the new industries to which the young devote themselves the material conditions of labour push them in the direction of the necessary evolution.

Thus, in their case, the operation which Brown has achieved by sheer force of superior personal qualifications is greatly facilitated. Machinery, in proportion as it gains more complete possession of industry, renders the transformation of the workman at once easier and more general. By despecialising him, it widens his technical aptitudes and multiplies his chances of employment. It furnishes the surest principle of solving the modern Labour Question, by leading the worker to rely upon himself and upon the wider development of his personal aptitudes, instead of upon a special trade. No doubt, as a rule, the workers under our modern organisation of industry are in no special danger of seeing their trade disappear in consequence of a new invention. Although no one

can foresee where the application of machinery will end, it may be admitted that where the industrial evolution has proceeded so rapidly, it will be for some time stationary, and that such a trade will be more sheltered from an immediate crisis than one where this evolution has hardly begun. Nevertheless, there are other dangers to fear. In the modern organisation of industry, over-production, the constant fluctuations of the market, and international competition frequently bring about a strained situation, which occasionally leads to a prolonged cessation of work. The famous textile strike in Lancashire in 1893, the general strike of English miners which speedily followed, and the recent strike of the Scottish miners, proclaim only too eloquently that the great modern enterprises are not guaranteed against long interruptions of work. At every stage of evolution the workman is confronted with the spectre of enforced inactivity, which we call the question of the unemployed. Mere prudence indicates that the workman must be raised to the level of these difficult circumstances, for which no form of Socialism offers an adequate remedy, that he must be able to adapt himself, that he must become mobile and supple, that he must be able to vary his means of existence, and be ready for any emergency. From this point of view Brown is a figure of the heroic age, a pioneer, and as such it is worth while to recount his life.

We must now turn our eyes in another direction. Brown furnished us with an excellent type, inasmuch as he represented in a remarkable degree the spirit of individual initiative. However, very few working men who find their trade threatened accept the situation as readily as he. The greater number grumble, endeavour to limit the number of workers by artificial means while the number of consumers is decreasing from natural causes, form associations of working men for this purpose, or vegetate in isolation and mediocrity. Analysing carefully the causes which rendered Brown capable of detaching himself from his trade, his commercial aptitudes are conspicuous among them. Brown is a skilled workman, consequently he is dependent on his trade, but he is also an employer, that is to say, a trader, and thus he escapes the tyranny of his trade. He could transfer the business experience and the personal qualities which have contributed to his success into a business

of quite a different nature from his own; whereas the workman imprisoned in his specialism cannot disengage himself when his trade fails, and so becomes involved in its ruin. Nevertheless, he does not allow himself to be crushed without a struggle, and we shall see to what means he has recourse for that purpose, and shall thus study an interesting side of the Trade Union movement.

## CHAPTER II

### THE COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE OF THE TRADES CHIEFLY AFFECTED BY THE INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION

CERTAIN trades meet the transformations of modern industry by a special method of resistance, which we cannot study by simply observing a single industrial family belonging to such a trade. To understand aright this movement of resistance we must enter into relation with its official representatives in the various Trade Unions. In such cases it is of little use to penetrate into the home of the worker, to make the acquaintance of his family, his mode of life, and his methods of education. Such a worker does not claim, like Joseph Brown, to solve the difficulties he encounters by his own unaided efforts; on the contrary, he declares this means insufficient, and relies on the combined effort of all his fellow-workers and on the power of the organisation to which he belongs.

It is absolutely essential to examine what can be done by an organisation of workmen when it is engaged in resisting the progress of industrial evolution. This, of course, is only one side of the vast question of labour organisations, and we shall deal hereafter with the part they play in the mines and in the factory, but here we broach a special point without prejudging the question of their general efficacy.

When we are dealing with trades at war with the consequences of industrial evolution, or with mines, or with the factory system, we find *bonâ fide* working men at the head of Trade Unions in England. This circumstance facilitates the task of an observer who is anxious to learn the tendencies of such or such a trade. By addressing himself to the secretary

or the president of the association of that trade, he finds himself brought into communication with a man who expresses with sincerity and accuracy the mental attitude of his comrades, and who is usually willing to explain his programme, his aspirations, and his grievances. This is intelligible, for such a man is in the habit of presenting his ideas to the public, and of creating an agitation around them, and any one, therefore, who comes to him for information, more especially if he intends to make public the information he obtains, is an unexpected ally and as such eagerly welcomed.

This is not the difficulty, which lies wholly in the task of disentanglement among the immense variety of trades which are in revolt against industrial evolution. Run over the long list of Trade Unions, and you will see that a large number of them enact measures tending to restrain competition; to limit the number of members by means of tests, certificates of apprenticeship, etc.; to attempt, in short, under one form or another, to return to the old close bodies, the ancient corporations or guilds. If we content ourselves with reading the rules, the impression of confusion will gain upon us, and we shall well be able to believe that all these analogous measures correspond to an analogous situation. If, however, we lay aside the written documents, and converse with the workers themselves, if we see them at their work and make inquiries from their employers, we shall discover notable differences, and gradually we shall begin to see how to classify this crowd of corporations, all eager to shut themselves within barriers as exclusive as the Great Wall of China.

No doubt they are all trying to carry on the same struggle. Instead of yielding, like Brown, to the force of new conditions, they try to make these conditions yield to their personal convenience, and here we come upon the wholly artificial character of their means of defence. But while some are so far successful in their attempt, or at least derive important advantages from it, others fail completely, and there are even some which admit their defeat, and are only dragging out a miserable existence. This amounts to saying that the new conditions are not identical for these three classes of trades. In the first they are less accentuated, and permit the survival to a great extent of a trade organisation of the ancient type; in the second the

competition of machinery is already making itself felt, and renders the success of resistance difficult; in the third the triumph of machinery has left only archæological evidence of the ancient trade.

These are three phases of a struggle corresponding to three degrees of industrial evolution. It is not enough to say that production by hand represents a type threatened by machinery and ready to disappear. We must distinguish among the different forms of production by hand—those which are still in full vitality, those which are seriously affected, and those which are moribund. This will explain the varying success of the protective measures devised by Trade Unions.

Let us first look at the group of trades which are as yet but little menaced, and which are more or less organised in close corporations.

#### I. *Close Trades as yet but little menaced.*

*The Glassworkers.*—There is no trade within my knowledge which is more strictly guarded against all intrusion than that of the glassworkers. I had the good fortune to be thoroughly informed about the Glassworkers' Union by a most interesting personality, Mr. Eli Bloor, of Birmingham, a working-man magistrate, and a remarkable type of what is called—falsely enough—the old Trade Unionism. He is a clever workman, justly proud of his technical aptitudes, enjoying a most honourable position not merely in his own calling, but among his fellow-countrymen. He is one of those working men whom the Government, acting on an intelligent initiative, has raised to the position of justice of the peace,<sup>1</sup> and who seem marked out by their popularity and tact to fill these delicate functions in towns.

I could not have had a kinder or better-informed cicerone to introduce me into the complicated labyrinth which constitutes the regulations of the United Flint Glass Makers Society.

<sup>1</sup> From September 1892 to September 1893 seventy working men were appointed justices of the peace in England and Wales. This is an unprecedented circumstance. See the Report of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, 1893.

"We work in shifts," said Mr. Bloor, "and each shift consists of five persons—the superior workman, his assistant, one youth, and two boys. To limit admittance to our body we have made an agreement with the employers under which they are not allowed to have more than one apprentice for two shifts, that is, 10 per cent of the staff."

When I expressed surprise at so strict a limitation, Mr. Bloor pointed out that, in spite of what is often asserted, glass-making is a very healthy occupation.

"We have a very low mortality," he said, "and I have seen men work splendidly when over sixty, and sometimes over seventy years of age."

But, as we shall shortly see, the low rate of mortality is not enough in itself to explain why a measure so rigorously exclusive has been introduced and observed. A difficulty suggested itself to me at once.

"If your Union compels the masters to have so few apprentices, do not they run some risk of being occasionally in want of men?"

"The Union provides for that," replied Mr. Bloor. "When an employer requires a man he applies to us, and we undertake to find him one in England, Scotland, or Ireland. The expenses of bringing him over are charged to the Union; we guarantee, in fact, to find any employer the man he requires."

"Then you force on an employer who applies to you such and such a workman. He has no longer the choice of his staff?"

"Not altogether. If an employer knows several men out of work, he can choose among them. We do not interfere on this point, only his choice is of course limited to members of the Union."

This restriction is a real one, and so energetically enforced, that during the forty years he has been at work Mr. Bloor has never met a "blackleg."<sup>1</sup> It is true that the limitation of the number of apprentices to one for two shifts is not very ancient: the agreement enforcing it was signed by the masters at the end of a long strike in 1868.

"At that time," said Mr. Bloor, "there were too many

<sup>1</sup> According to the official documents published by the Trade Union Congress in 1893, the Union numbered 2133 members.



apprentices, and we were unwilling to continue to teach the trade to a swarm of people, to breed competitors for the future."

This reason is one which carries more conviction than that of the low mortality. It should be remarked that the plethora of apprentices in the trade at that time is explained by a simple and well-known fact. The use of gas in England gave rise, during the second third of the century, to a greatly increased demand for gas-fittings, and consequently the demand for globes of all kinds increased considerably for some years, until gas was laid on in all the centres and all the houses were provided for, when there came a lull in the demand. The glass industry, which had admitted apprentices without restriction to supply the needs of its development, now experienced a crisis which led to the strike, and rendered apparent the disadvantage of admitting too large a number of apprentices.

However, this does not explain why the masters consented to tie their hands in this fashion. They must have been at the mercy of their men to sign such terms, or they would simply have changed their staff. How, then, did the workers hold them?

The answer is, by their special skill. Glassworkers cannot be replaced like mere labourers, for the work can be executed only by skilled workmen. It needs an experienced eye and long practice to judge, for instance, what contraction glass will undergo when cooled, and, in the present state of the industry at least, it is impossible to measure or weigh the incandescent paste which waits the workman's breath to give it form. "It is all guesswork," said Mr. Bloor, and he was right. Technical skill is thus absolutely essential, and no inventor of machines has yet found out how to dispense with it.

Thus this trade is in the position of the old guilds before the advent of machinery. If its members constitute a close body, it is because they also constitute a special body, whose special skill cannot be replaced. Thus it is intelligible that the Glass Makers' Union can impose its complex regulations by means of a rigorous discipline.

Nothing better illustrates the specialised character of the glassworker than the rate at which an apprentice's salary

rises. Apprentices usually enter at fifteen or sixteen years of age, and during the first year they are paid only 14s. a week. Then they receive a rise of 3s. a week every year, until the age of twenty-one, when the term of apprenticeship is over, and a man can earn about 35s. a week. I have rarely observed so great an annual rise in an apprentice's salary. The reason is that every year of his apprenticeship the future workman acquires a greater manual dexterity, a nicety of eye, an adroitness, which increase in a very marked degree the value of his services.

This professional knack is so important in a glassworker that the best endowed—those who early display these special technical qualities—may succeed in earning even higher wages than those just mentioned even before they are out of their apprenticeship. Mr. Bloor instanced the case of one of his sons who died young, who, at eighteen years of age, was already earning 35s. a week. "In our trade, you see," he added, "we take into consideration what a man is worth."

So much is this the case that the same kind of work may be paid at different rates according to the merit of the men engaged on it; in other words, the scale of prices is not the same for all workmen. This leads me to say a word about the way in which wages are calculated.

The work of a shift is fixed by the piece, without the power of exceeding the allotted daily task. Only the quantity of paste which has been prepared can be melted and blown, but if the shift does not succeed in finishing it in a day it is paid only for the work actually done. This is the first cause of difference between good and bad workmen, between those who work quickly and those who work slowly. A second is that failures are charged to the workman. A piece pronounced defective is broken, and is not reckoned in calculating the wage due. The work must not only be quick, it must also be careful and competent. The third cause, already mentioned, is that prices for the same piece of work vary according to the skill of the shift at work upon it.

"You see those chandelier globes above our heads," said Mr. Bloor. "For some shifts that represents the most difficult work they can do, for others, on the contrary, it is an easy

matter, and a master will not give them an order of this sort unless he has, for the moment, nothing more delicate on which to employ them. If he does give them the job he will be obliged to pay more for the globes, because a clever workman's time is worth more than that of an inferior workman. In that case, for thirty globes the head man will receive 4s., his assistant 2s. 8d., the youth 1s. 9d., the two boys 6d. each. On the other hand, if the shift can do nothing more difficult, the head will only receive 2s. 6d. for thirty globes, his assistant 2s., the youth 1s. 6d., and the two boys 6d. each. This custom is not merely required by the Union, but the masters also gain by it in a sense, for it is to their advantage, even at some sacrifice, to keep their cleverest workmen, in order to be always in a position to execute any delicate orders received."

Of course these differences in the price by the piece are not in force in manufactories where bottle-glass only is made. There the work is simple and uniform, the workmen all belong to the same professional rank, or rather, there is no distinction of rank among them. Distinction of rank only appears in the varied work which demands from the workman qualities not far removed from those of an artist.

Nor is mere manual skill all. The glassworker must bring the greatest concentration and tension of mind to his work while he is at it. If, for instance, he has to execute a new model, he must bring into play his faculties both of observation and invention.

I asked Mr. Bloor whether the Union agitated for the eight hours day.

"It would be impossible," he replied; "the physical fatigue and mental exhaustion would be too great if we had to work eight hours on end. Further, there is a technical difficulty in our trade in the way of an eight hours day. When the fires are lighted, they must burn without interruption, that is to say twenty-four hours a day, unless there is to be a considerable waste of heat. Four shifts of six hours make up the twenty-four hours, but the number of men employed is only ten, as each man works six hours by day and six hours by night. Thus we have days of twelve hours broken by a rest of six hours, but this only lasts from Monday morning to Friday

morning. From Friday to Monday they are busy preparing the paste for us to bake and blow, and we cannot be in the manufactory while this work is being done."

Briefly, glassworkers work forty-eight hours a week, from which, in the case of each six hours shift, we must deduct an hour for meals, and, according to Mr. Bloor's estimate, a quarter of an hour lost in waiting till the glass is ready. Mr. Bloor estimated the amount of real manual work done in a week at thirty-six hours.

This is all one can reasonably ask of men who perform a task at once so laborious and so delicate. I have given these details to show how very much a skilled workman the glassworker is. He must have strong lungs and a robust constitution to support the labour of blowing and the excessive heat in which he works, and further, he needs in addition to the acquired habit a natural nicety of hand and eye. The gulf which separates him from the mere machine-tender is indeed a wide one.

The position is now clear. The glassworkers are highly skilled experts, men who cannot be replaced, whom the masters cannot afford to lose, and with whom they must keep on good terms, and consequently they have been able to form themselves into a close corporation, entrance into which they jealously prevent. Their success is due to the exceptional position they occupy in the labour market.

But has this apparent success enabled them to attain their end? This success was not their end, these barriers round their trade were originally erected, not from any aristocratic prejudice, but with an essentially practical aim, that of avoiding compulsory idleness. The idea which inspired them in the struggle was this—"The demand for glass is limited, and to maintain equilibrium we must limit our numbers." It remains to be discovered whether they have succeeded in creating this happy state of equilibrium.

That they have not done so is evident from Mr. Bloor's complaints. At the time I met him (June 1893) he was not in full work, and the situation, which had already lasted some time, still threatened to continue. Although the Union can keep the number of its members constant, it is unable to keep the number of orders constant. It is here that it finds

its methods powerless, and as it is a question of keeping a constant ratio between two quantities, one of which increases or diminishes independently of all control, the fact that the second quantity remains constant does not produce any special result. Of this Mr. Bloor is also aware, for he pointed out a number of causes to account for the falling off in the demand for glass, as for instance, that lamps in railway carriages do not need to be replaced so frequently now that the employment of gas has done away with a daily cleaning. Further, he lays stress on the fact that masters do not and cannot any longer accumulate stock, since taste has become both more refined and more capricious.

“At one time,” he said, “you would have found a hundred tons of stock in manufactories where you will not find one to-day. Fashions change quickly, and articles which have gone out of fashion can be sold only at a great loss. This does not apply to our trade only: I have seen electro-plated articles which have gone out of fashion sold for a tenth of cost price.”

Now, without accumulating stock, it is difficult to have regular work. Labour must follow day by day the fluctuations of the demand. When orders fall off the employer reduces his staff, and the fluctuations of trade are felt in all their fulness by the worker. It is through this breach in the high walls erected to shelter and defend a trade that external influences penetrate, and this breach it is impossible to fill.

Thus this close corporation, this body which has not yet been threatened by machinery, which is, from that point of view, in an exceptional and privileged position, nevertheless fails to solve the given problem of equilibrium. It is an attempt in which others have failed, and that too at periods when the general movement of transformation which has agitated humanity from its origin onwards was proceeding with infinitely less rapidity than it does to-day. In the time of Aristotle and Plato men were preoccupied with the attempt to maintain equilibrium between the free and servile populations in the Greek cities, by what means and with what ill success we know.<sup>1</sup> In our days, with new facilities of ascent, with the

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. vii. ch. xvi.; Plato, *Republic*, Bk. v.

increasing difficulty of maintaining a position which has been gained, with a constant modification of tastes, wants, and of the composition of the class of consumers, it is an exceedingly delicate and complex task to produce equilibrium by artificial means, even when one of the two terms remains constant and when machinery has not yet triumphed over old methods of production, but has allowed the worker to retain his character as a skilled workman.<sup>1</sup>

Here, it must be remarked, the enterprise is conducted by particularly prudent and intelligent men, very well acquainted with the commercial as well as the technical necessities of the trade.

“Believe me,” said Mr. Bloor, “if any circumstance whatever were coming to develop our trade, we should be prompt to perceive it, and to modify the severe rules we have framed, and notably to allow masters a greater number of apprentices.”

I quite believe it; it is precisely because the glassmakers are wide awake to possible modifications, because they possess qualities of prudence and foresight, that they succeed in maintaining an artificial state of things with the relative degree of success we have remarked. They are men who, by force of personality, would be completely successful in a more reasonable undertaking. The proof is that their association renders notable and certain services at all points where it does not endeavour to thwart the evolution of industry.

For instance, it assures normal and pacific relations between employers and employed. Whenever a difficulty arises, a joint committee of masters and men consider it and arrive at a

<sup>1</sup> The same difficulties arise in the United States, where the glass industry is organised in the same way. In January 1894 the window-glassmakers of Pittsburg paid £10,000 to a master glassmaker who was on the point of closing his works. As soon as we wish to assure the regular employment of glassmakers in their own line without reference to the wants of consumers, there are no complications and sacrifices to which they are not exposed. Workmen paying an employer to enable him to keep on his business during a period of depression is an unusual sight. It is also, we may note in passing, a definite piece of evidence against the application of the co-operative system to this trade. This Pittsburg Union, which paid £10,000 to the employer, might equally well have bought and carried on the business. If this experiment was not tried, it was because they did not believe in the efficacy of such a plan, and took into account the advantages of a personal and independent management. See *La Réforme Sociale*, 1st September 1894: “Les Syndicats Ouvriers aux Etats-Unis,” by M. Finance, p. 278.

solution. This committee is not a legal arbitration board, but it renders the same services. There is no arrangement beforehand between the association of employers and the Union that every dispute shall be settled by arbitration, but when the dispute does arise the masters' representatives and the men's meet and arrange the matter. Eli Bloor has often taken part in these delegacies, and painted for me very forcibly, in a few words, the spirit which animates them. "Once together, we say to ourselves, 'Well, the matter is in our hands, we must settle it before we separate'; and whatever the difficulty is we settle it in a practical way."

After this, it is not astonishing that the masters are able to bear testimony that the men's Union has been advantageous to their own interests. It is obviously to a master's interest that his staff should be a staff of capable men. Eli Bloor told me that in 1884 he prevented a strike which was all but declared by speaking for an hour and a half at a mass meeting of the men. However good his reasons may have been, such a result can only be attained with an audience of intelligent men.

Further, we are dealing, I repeat, with picked workmen. All have reached a certain level of professional skill; they are not chance comers, they form an aristocracy. Like all aristocracies, they have a desire, unintelligent it may be, for exclusiveness, and like all real aristocracies they do form an *élite*.

Eli Bloor is an admirable representative of this aristocracy of labour. He has managed, not merely within the somewhat narrow limits of his trade, but among his fellow-townsmen, to achieve a position of the highest esteem, of which the strongest proof is his popular title of "Honest Eli." He has a direct influence on labour questions through the organisation which he has introduced among the Birmingham gas-workers. These men used to work twelve hours a day for 5s.; now, through the agency of their Union, they have succeeded in obtaining much better conditions. They now receive 5s. 3d. daily wage, and work eight hours instead of twelve, and they also get a week's holiday every year.

"Since these modifications were introduced," said Mr. Bloor, "they have risen considerably socially, and employ their leisure in an intelligent and useful manner. A great

many of them who never attended any service before are now church-goers; they discuss their interests in a much more enlightened fashion; they follow the meetings better, etc."

In the eyes of Eli Bloor, then, it is not merely a question of obtaining better material conditions for the workers, such as higher wages for less work, but also of teaching them to utilise the leisure procured by better material conditions. Really it is a question of raising them, and the amelioration of the daily toil is but one mode of allowing the elevating influences to act. A man who devotes twelve hours of his day to hard physical work can do little with the rest but eat, sleep, go to work, and come back from it. Further, he is often stupefied by the monotony of his occupation, fatigued by the exertion it requires, and consequently incapable of thought and without the power of making proper use of his mental powers. Hence the need for securing him some leisure to allow his mental faculties freer play. When this result is acquired direct means can be employed. "Every Sunday," said Mr. Bloor, "I speak in some church, or hall belonging to a church, on the raising of the workers." He does more than speak; he himself sets the example of a working man who has raised himself. He is passionately devoted to athletic sports, which make the body vigorous, and, at the same time, he cultivates his intelligence and enlightens his reasoning powers by serious reading. Among the small library which occupied a corner of the room in which he received me, I noticed four or five large volumes of commentaries on the Scriptures, a proof that he is eager in his search for moral guidance. The dignity of magistrate, which has recently been conferred on him, gives a sort of consecration to his position, and the honour extends to all his fellow-workers, and gives a new strength and efficacy to his example. Consequently it is a matter for regret that the trade he has embraced keeps him behind the times in his conception of the organisation of labour, and commits him to a conception so wanting in vigour as that of the close corporation. One would like to see men of his stamp thrown into the centre of the modern arena, where their qualities would find new sources of nourishment and exceptional opportunities of development, instead of being oppressed by the conditions of a trade where the industrial evolution is not yet in progress.



*The Cutlers.*—The Sheffield cutlers, whose Union had at one time a sinister notoriety, inasmuch as it did not hesitate to have recourse to crime to uphold its discipline,<sup>1</sup> are also highly skilled workmen. To-day, although the Sheffield workmen no longer employ similar means, they still live under the system of a close corporation, and there, as among the glass-workers, it is thanks to the survival of old methods of work that it has been possible to preserve this system.

Even in the large cutlery houses of European reputation—in Rodgers and Sons, for example, where seven hundred men are employed—the workshops in no way resemble factories. In a series of low buildings, adjacent to each other, I saw men in groups of two beside a small forge. Each drew from the glowing coals a white-hot bar of steel, destined to be converted under their skilful hands into knife, razor, or scissor blade. Two tiny anvils stood on each side of the forge, and the work was done entirely by hand. It was done in the same way a century ago: the process has not been modified. Farther off other workmen prepared and polished the ivory intended for making knife handles. These are also skilled workmen, who require nicety of eye and care; they use mechanical power for polishing, but not a machine tool which transforms the raw material blindly: the motor economises their strength, but it is they who direct it. It is the same with the men engaged in grinding and polishing the blades; in short, in all the branches the work is executed by simple means, and its skill depends on the dexterity of the workman.

Thus, in the midst of the industrial evolution which has given this century its distinctive character, we find a trade which has preserved the old methods of labour, and consequently there is nothing astonishing if the old organisation of the body of workers has also survived, and if the trade has succeeded in remaining a close trade.

Nevertheless, it has already experienced some rude shocks, and felt the effect of new conditions, against which it has endeavoured to protect itself by artificially increasing the checks

<sup>1</sup> The history of these crimes may be read in the work of M. le Comte de Paris, *Les Associations Ouvrières en Angleterre*. The Union was organised about 1868 as a sort of secret tribunal, and ordered the assassination of members who infringed its rules.

imposed on its members. For if the methods of production are still at the same point, the demand has undergone considerable modifications since the beginning of the century. It is no longer merely English as formerly, nor merely European, but universal, thanks to the extraordinary expansion of the English race in both hemispheres. It is to this that the great Sheffield firms—Rodgers, Mappin and Webb, etc.—have owed their development. With this extension of their market, which was to a certain extent a sudden one, brought about by the transformation in the system of transport, the masters were naturally tempted to increase the number of men and to take apprentices in large numbers, but they encountered a lively opposition from their men, who wished to reserve for themselves the advantages of their special skill. Every new apprentice is one more competitor in the future. The opposition was sufficiently powerful to bring about a strict limitation of the number of apprentices. Only the sons of working cutlers are eligible as apprentices, and any master who infringed this arrangement would find himself boycotted and his works empty.

Such rules can only be enforced by strict discipline—a thing difficult enough to maintain even where men are grouped in large factories, and infinitely more so when, as in the case of the cutlers, a considerable proportion of the trade membership is dispersed in small workshops. Hardly half the total number of Sheffield cutlers are employed by large firms like Rodgers's; the others work at home for dealers who supply them with the raw material, or are organised in groups of five or six under the direction of a small employer. Under these conditions, the observation of rules as to apprenticeship requires minute surveillance, and it is easy to see that a cottage worker or a very modest establishment might evade it. Of course, too, the rule is binding only on members of the Union, and how can men be forced to join the Union. It is done, however, and probably the difficulty of the task explains the criminal methods of intimidation pursued towards non-unionist men between 1850 and 1867, in order to prevent the old methods from being broken down by the extension of the clientèle. In large works the unionist men often force the hand of non-unionists, by refusing to work with them and

boycotting the firms which employ them, and these negative means are usually enough. On the other hand, nothing is easier, with a series of small workshops, than to get together five or six non-unionists to form an independent group. The union men have had recourse to direct means to prevent this. This is probably the explanation—though by no means a justification—of the culpable acts of violence which have left a blot from the beginning on the Sheffield Unions.

To understand the case aright, however, it should be remarked that this violent pressure could only be exercised subject to two conditions: first, the highly-skilled nature of the work, which makes the cutler practically a monopolist; and secondly, what we must now consider, the practical monopoly of the trade possessed by the town of Sheffield.

It would not have been enough, if the Sheffield men had been sufficiently homogeneous to prevent traitors from slipping in, if a rival industry could have been established elsewhere with other elements. Such an undertaking, however, presented great difficulties. The Sheffield masters have long been in the habit of buying up, in advance, in Scandinavia, and especially at Dannemora, the finest steel procurable for the manufacture of cutting tools, and owing to the proximity of Hull, the nearest port to Sweden, to the presence of abundant coal in the neighbourhood, and to the quality of the water used for tempering, Sheffield occupies the most favourable position in England for working up the Swedish steel. It is this sum of favourable conditions which has enabled Sheffield during this century to oust the London cutlery, once so famous. To-day London is only the market for Sheffield knives, and its cutlers are little more than dealers and knife-mounters.<sup>1</sup>

Thus things have conspired to place the Sheffield cutlers in an exceptional position, and to enable them to escape the direct effects of the industrial evolution. Their corporate organisation is a type belonging to the past, and to regard prohibitive measures such as they have enacted as a solution of the future is to turn their backs upon progress. Moreover, the social transformations brought about around them throw into strong relief the contrast between their static occupation

<sup>1</sup> As long ago as 1851 Le Play noted this fact. See *Ouvriers européens*, vol. iii. ch. vi. p. 274.

and the industries where machine power is employed. Thirty years ago Sheffield was almost entirely a town of artisans—skilled workers proud of their address. Except the works of Messrs. Jessop, founded about 1793, there was no industrial establishment of any size. Since then the great foundries and steel works of John Brown and Camel have profoundly modified the general physiognomy of the artisan population. They have caused a considerable influx of unskilled labourers, many of whom come from Ireland, driven out by famine, and contented to work for relatively low wages. To-day there is a very appreciable distance between the high-class workman earning nearly £2 a week and the unskilled labourer earning 30s., but the difference in wages is far from measuring the far more marked difference of social habit. The artisan generally attains a much higher degree of intelligence and respectability; the labourer is obtuse, given to drink, and destitute of foresight.

It would seem, then, at the outset, that the cutler of the old type possesses more power of resistance than the modern type of factory hand, or at least of such as have no special technical qualifications. Nevertheless, while the moral and social amelioration of the unskilled labourer is progressing, while his sons, reared in a milieu of great activity, better educated, and impressed by the example of rising men, are able to lay the lesson to heart and enter the arena with some chance of success, the children of the cutlers, relying on a trade whose whole stay is the unvarying mode of production, are not so well armed for the struggle, and would undoubtedly go to the wall if their trade were some day revolutionised by the introduction of machinery.

I have said that the Sheffield cutlers are exploiting a monopoly. Consequently they come into the category of a privileged class. Now, although privileged classes are often composed of individuals raised above the common from some points of view, they are nevertheless as a rule less energetic, and energetic to less purpose when a sudden event destroys their privileges and brings them face to face with the practical necessities of life. Compare the way in which Joseph Brown has been able to settle his family, the varied means to which under his inspiration his children have recourse to employ their

activity, and the sheep-like way in which a cutler pushes his children into his own trade. On the one side there must be initiative, and not infrequently fruitless and multiplied essays; on the other side it is sufficient to keep in one old groove. A man becomes a cutler because of the circumstances of his birth. Once enrolled, he rises by thrift and by clinging to hurtful traditions, without being obliged to look either to right or left; he goes on between two parallel barriers which prevent him from rising in the world by any short cut. Le Play, in his monograph on the Sheffield cutler, whom he observed in 1851, pointed out that the working cutler gradually attained the position of employer by saving the capital needful for the purchase of raw material, and by taking an apprentice, on whose labour he made about 6s. a week.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it will be seen, only simple processes are involved, requiring nothing but prudence and a sense of order. The master appropriates part of the apprentice's labour, a legal larceny sanctioned by the rules of the Union. Nothing else is needed in order to become a manufacturer, and hence the multiplicity of these small concerns, comprising half the cutlers of Sheffield. Imagine these easy-going small employers flung into the thick of modern competition, outside the barriers behind which they have thriven hitherto, deprived of the sources of profit from methods of doubtful justifiability, and see how insufficient would become these so-called captains of industry, and how quickly the majority would sink to the level of mere artisans. They are at the mercy of an invention, and that in a century where it is no longer possible to keep count of inventions.

The glassworkers and cutlers offer us excellent types of the close trades representing the ancient state of industry. They are witnesses, so to speak, to a bygone age, lost and bewildered in our own, but it is useful to have some idea of their organisation in order to obtain a better understanding of the evolution undergone by all trades in their material conditions, and the consequent reaction on the social position of those employed in such trades.

Two conclusions result from this study: first, that the old trade organisation for resistance, when backed up only by a specialism, must disappear along with these various specialisms,

<sup>1</sup> Le Play, *Les Ouvriers européens*, vol. iii. p. 333.

one or other of which is constantly disappearing ; and secondly, that this old type of organisation has a disastrous effect in keeping the mind closed, that it produces a retrograde tendency among those who uphold it, and that it bars the future for them from a technical point of view, by setting them against all material progress in methods of production, and from a social point of view, by leading them to set their children's faces in a wrong direction—towards the past instead of towards the future. This is, in fact, one of the greatest disadvantages of the system, that it has this injurious effect on the education of young men. Their development tends to take an entirely wrong direction, and they are predisposed to the most dangerous of illusions—that belief in the stability of falling institutions which blinds men to the signs of approaching ruin—and thus their strength is likely to be spent in endeavouring to sustain organisms without life. The subsequent progress of our inquiry will show us the sons of such privileged workers overtaken in a belated attempt to defend a hopeless position.

We have now to look at the fruitless struggle carried on by trades where the old modes of production have been assailed, but which nevertheless persist in clinging to a constitution appropriate to these old methods, but no longer normal under the new methods. This is the second phase of industrial evolution.

## II. *The Menaced Trades.*

Here we still find ourselves concerned with strong Unions. If their success is less than that of the Glass Makers' and Cutlers' Unions, it is not because their discipline is defective, but because their special province has been invaded by the industrial evolution. They defend themselves, in fact, with the energy of despair, multiplying rules and prohibitions, and having recourse to agitation whenever they think it likely to be useful. They are headed by energetic men, well informed as to the state of things in the trade, workmen themselves, and generally picked workmen. Nevertheless some, once powerful, find themselves obliged to renounce their former pretensions ; while others, threatened by new and unsuspected enemies, stretch pleading hands towards the State, begging for protective

legislation, and avowing openly that they have not the power to enforce their rules.

*Typographers.*—Among the trades which have been obliged to open their doors one of the most interesting is the printers. My observations were made at Edinburgh, and concerned the members of the Edinburgh Typographical Society, which is itself affiliated to the Scottish Typographical Association.

Edinburgh furnished me with an excellent type for the study of typography. This city was long considered the intellectual capital of the United Kingdom, and even to-day, notwithstanding the fascination London exercises upon Scotch publishers and the fact that many of them have founded branches there, and in spite of the great development of the book trade in the English metropolis, this industry is still splendidly represented in the Scottish capital. In Princes Street we see at every turn windows filled with books of every kind, and it is delightful to linger and look at the titles, admire the bindings, and form projects for a library. If you go inside to buy a shilling book, or even with no better excuse than curiosity, you are always courteously received, and the assistant hastens to supply you with information about the best edition of Scott, or the best life of Livingstone, or on any other bibliographical subject. There is none of the rush which is so striking in a London publisher's shop. In Edinburgh the assistant is willing to chat with a customer, in London he sells books. The reason is that in Edinburgh the lettered public is relatively more numerous, and the interest in intellectual matters more general, and less a matter of business. Thus, in studying the working printer in Edinburgh, we are, so to speak, in the native land of the English book.

Perhaps this has tended somewhat to mislead the Scottish printers. At any rate, their Union, the Scottish Typographical Association, is organised on the lines of a close body, and the recent checks it has experienced would seem to show they have over-estimated their strength.

The efforts of the Union have been concerned chiefly with the length of apprenticeship and the number of apprentices. An attempt was made to resist free recruiting, in order to lessen the competition resulting from an abundance of labour, and to prevent wages from falling. Consequently, every compositor

must buy the right to work by a seven years' apprenticeship, although no such time is required to learn the technique of the trade. I was told by the foreman of a printing office that a man is often as good a workman at the end of two years, and always at the end of five years, as after seven years of apprenticeship, but the Union is firm about the point. The apprentice, it must be observed, is paid at only half the rate for identical work. This usage is perhaps justifiable enough while the real apprenticeship lasts, that is to say, while the master has to teach the apprentice a trade of which he is ignorant, and while the diminution in wages is set off against a service rendered, which service has been shown by experience to be worth that amount. But, on the other hand, if the apprentice is such in name only, and has long possessed the qualification of a full workman, nothing is more unjust. It is a workman's association, too, which imposes this injustice, and which profits by it, since the employer, thanks to what he makes on the apprentice's work, can afford to pay the full workman at a higher rate, and thus in the long run *the workman gains upon a capable apprentice*. I am glad to point out this anomaly, which is not without parallels in other trades, for these artificial regulations invariably result, at one point or another, in a veritable tyranny.<sup>1</sup>

The Scottish Typographical Association has hard work to maintain the rule of seven years' apprenticeship, because the apprentice in Scotland is not bound to his master by a contract as in England. If the apprentice leaves, his master has no right to claim him, and can on his side, if he thinks fit, dismiss an apprentice. The Union, however, is on the watch for apprentices who have not served seven years under the same master, and if an apprentice were arbitrarily dismissed there would be a protest, which might be followed by a strike, and the employer in question would be boycotted. It is thus the Union, and the Union only, which secures the observance of its regulations as to the duration of apprenticeship.

With regard to the number of apprentices, I do not know of any general rule, but in many offices the master makes a special agreement with the Union and engages not to have

<sup>1</sup> See Le Play, *Les Ouvriers européens*, vol. iii. p. 333.



more than a certain proportion, determined by the number of his men. In the Fifty-seventh Report of the Scottish Typographical Association for 1892, there is an account of a strike at Glasgow in the printing-office of MacLehose, because twelve apprentices were employed, while an agreement made with the Union in 1879 allowed only ten.<sup>1</sup> In a settlement proposed by the *Scottish Leader* to the Union, the master was to fix the number of apprentices at one for himself and one for every three men.<sup>2</sup> Similar arrangements are frequently made.

Thus the Scottish Typographical Association needs to keep a strict watch on its members and their employers. To facilitate the task it has organised a system of grouping and a hierarchy. In every important office the union men form a "chapel" and elect a "father," who is the link between the men and the Association. Any facts of importance to the central body are communicated to him, and it is he who is responsible for its intervention. In return he enjoys undisputed authority, and his orders must be obeyed without question.

All this machinery is imposing, and suggests a powerful league. Powerful it certainly is, since a large number of men treat with it, but my conversation with the foreman I mentioned led me to think that one might nevertheless manage to live outside it. In his office the members do not form a "chapel" nor elect a "father"; there are not enough of them, only about a dozen. Consequently the discipline is less strict, and a "blackleg" is tolerated. These small printing offices are numerous. This one is connected with a stationery and book-binding business, employing two hundred and fifty persons. I visited several establishments of the same kind. There are more of them than are required for the local and national custom, for I was shown ledgers, etc., ordered for Cape Colony, Canada, Chili, Peru, India, and Australia. There is thus a large number of offices where a non-unionist man may easily find shelter and laugh at the rules of the Association. Sheltered from its thunderbolts, he can turn out bill-heads, visiting cards, commercial circulars, counter-foils, etc.

<sup>1</sup> *Fifty-seventh Report of the Scottish Typographical Association*, for the year ending December 1892, pp. 11-13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Further, the Edinburgh newspapers and many other Scottish newspapers will not employ members of the Association. This huge class, which is always increasing, and where cessation of work is unknown, can get on without union men. This clearly shows how exaggerated are the pretensions just considered. In vain is it that at the end of its annual report the Scottish Typographical Association publishes and holds up to public execration the list of "rats."<sup>1</sup> To read this list is to see that the traitors are moderately numerous. Nine men were boycotted in a body for remaining on the *Glasgow Citizen* after ten union men had been dismissed. Ten others were expelled for returning to or remaining in the office of the Aberdeen University Press. Obviously, therefore, a large section of employers will not yield to the demands of the Union.

What is the cause of this sudden resistance on the part of the newspapers in particular, to an organisation of such long standing—the report for 1892 is the fifty-seventh—whose rules have been law for more than half a century in all offices important enough to organise a "chapel"?

The answer is that a modification has recently been introduced into the compositor's task. Machinery has been introduced by the invention of the linotype, and this has deprived the Association of part of its force.

The linotype is a mechanical composing machine, which sets a line of type solid, and casts what it has composed, and which sets about 4000 letters an hour. Very few compositors manage to do this by hand, and consequently its employment is a menace to the trade, and there have been numerous discussions on the subject between the Association and the masters. The lock-out of union men on the *Glasgow Citizen* was on the question of the linotype.<sup>2</sup> In the settlement proposed by the *Scottish Leader*, and refused by the Union, it was specified that the men should offer no objection to the employment of the linotype, nor to the salary of the operator in charge of it. Mr. T. Carlaw Martin, the proprietor of

<sup>1</sup> See p. 154. In the United States the Typographical Union has enacted similar rules. Lists of "rats" and "scabs" are published. See *La Réforme Sociale*, September 1894: "Les Syndicats Ouvriers aux États-Unis," by M. Finance, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> See Report already quoted, pp. 18-22.

that paper, would not promise more than that a man employed at the linotype should be paid as highly as a compositor working by the hour, at the Union rate. He also pointed out that only compositors or apprentice compositors were put at the linotype, so that no blow was dealt at the workman's skill. But he required that he should have the right to an apprentice for every linotype, or, in other words, that each machine should count as three compositors. He gave as his reason the necessity for ensuring the service of his linotypes, and having capable substitutes ready to hand in case of need. Here the Union was aware of a serious blow. Not only would the linotype work faster than an ordinary compositor, but it would furnish an occasion for a master to triple the number of his apprentices at will. This would have been equivalent to throwing down the trade restrictions hitherto maintained, and Mr. Martin's proposals were rejected.<sup>1</sup>

This story of the linotype is full of interest. It is a timid, restricted, very imperfect attempt, it is rather an improved tool than a real machine, and nevertheless it was enough to strike a serious blow at the organisation of the trade, for the artificial regulations of even a powerful association are at the mercy of obstacles as slight as these.

So far only newspaper compositors seem affected, and book compositors still impose their own terms on publishers. But will it last? If the use of the linotype is limited at present to the rapid composition of newspapers, it is because it does not allow of author's corrections, and the vast majority of authors send in badly revised manuscript, leaving themselves the opportunity of making alterations in proof. This luxury is impossible with the linotype, which casts mechanically all the letters in the same line. Editors have not time for touching and retouching, their copy passes at once to the composing room and thence to press. They accommodate themselves to the linotype by giving their manuscript a final revision with the foreman before it is set up. Some day, if the linotype is found to be a great advantage, we may see this same final revision required of authors. At the present moment thousands of newspapers are printed in this way both in England and in the United States, which seems a serious

<sup>1</sup> Report quoted, pp. 16, 17.

argument for the future of the linotype. No doubt *éditions de luxe* will escape, but the newspaper, the review, the cheap book are the mass, and *éditions de luxe* are the aristocracy. It is to the former that the compositor owes his occupation, and it is through them that the trade may enter upon new developments.

In opposing the linotype the compositors were out in their calculations. The linotype, like every machine for reducing manual labour, increases the demand. More printing would be required if the cost were reduced. Now nothing leads to the extension of a trade so much as increased demand, and consequently to oppose the progress of machinery is to compromise the future of a trade, and to act against the interest of the mass of workers for the sake of the privileged few in possession. Nay, even this privileged few would gain by the transformation if they adapted themselves to it, instead of trying to arrest it. To-day, with spinning and weaving looms, far more textile operatives are employed than in the days of hand-looms and are better paid. Everybody gains, for the increased demand which has led to the extension of the trade really means that more people are able to obtain linen, clothes, carpets, etc.

Here we see the barriers of an old close trade falling before a new invention. We shall next consider trades where the skill required by the workman was formerly a sufficient protection, and which, without special rules and entirely through natural conditions, remained in the hands of a limited number of members. Now, in the face of inroads upon them, they are clamouring for legislative protection. In the scale of threatened trades they come below typographers, for they are more gravely menaced, and their special skill is more in danger.

*Plumbers.*—It was in the course of an evening spent at Toynbee Hall, and through the kindness of Mr. Ernest Aves, one of Mr. Charles Booth's most devoted collaborators, that I was enabled to form an exact idea of the means by which the Union of London Plumbers would oppose the transformation which their trade is undergoing. Mr. Aves had asked two plumbers, secretaries of their Union, to be kind enough to furnish him with some information about their association for

an inquiry upon which he was engaged. He asked me whether I would like to be present at the interview, and as I naturally accepted the offer, the four of us met on the day appointed.

These two workmen looked well, they were well dressed, and expressed themselves with ease, more especially one of them, a tall, powerful young fellow, with a voice which should be very effective at a meeting. The other was less self-possessed, more reserved, a little nervous at the beginning, but more precise in his statements, more attentive to the questions put, and less apt to lose himself in irrelevant digressions. The first man had not been introduced to me two minutes before my nationality led him to the question of peasant proprietors in France, and of land nationalisation in England. I was growing impatient when Mr. Aves interposed and called the little meeting to order. Then we set ourselves seriously to our task, on the one side asking, and on the other answering, questions as to matters of fact.

We were informed that there are 3000 plumbers in London, but that there is not work for so many. It is less easy than formerly to find employment.

“Why so? Is not London constantly growing? Do not such inventions as the telephone and the electric light, as well as the ever-increasing use of gas, water, and steam in private houses, continually furnish fresh occasions of work?”

“Yes, no doubt that is so, but what we gain in one way we lose in another, and more. A revolution has taken place in our trade during the last fifteen years; fittings, of which we used to make the greater part ourselves, are now turned out of the factories ready for fixing, and thus a great deal of our work is taken away from us. The branches most affected are the fittings used in lavatories, bath-rooms, etc. Machinery cuts off about two-thirds of the job. To-day I can do in a month what used to take me three months to do, when we made the different parts of our fittings by hand.”

The position is clear. A large number of articles which formerly required the hand of a skilful workman are now turned out by the aid of machinery in great quantities, and at a low price. The progress thus achieved will not be abandoned, and the advantage is the greater because plumbers are now paid higher wages. A good plumber, we were

informed, can earn £2 in a full week of forty-seven hours (five days of eight and a half hours and one day of four hours and a half), or rather more than 10d. an hour.

But the full week is the privilege of only a few. Too many men compete for the work, and among these competitors there are many who do not really belong to the trade. From the day that the factories began to send out apparatus ready for fixing, the plumbers' trade became far less of a skilled trade and far easier, and was suddenly overrun. "In olden times," said Beeston, one of the two plumbers I met, "a plumber used to be a plumber, but now he is only a fixer." Consequently, men who have served only a short apprenticeship can do plumbing work. Scotsmen have set up as plumbers in London, to the great scandal of the London plumbers who have been in the trade for generations. "My father was a plumber," said Beeston, "and so was my grandfather, and I have followed honestly in their steps. And now here are the sons of Scottish farmers coming to compete with me."

The most serious thing is, that owing to the simplification of the trade plumbing jobs are now undertaken by men who are absolute strangers to the corporation. If the working plumber need no longer be a plumber, naturally the master plumber will dispense with technical instruction and long apprenticeship, and will be a business man and not a practical workman. "There are only three houses in London," said Beeston, "managed by real master plumbers; all the others are in the hands of sweaters." This statement was confirmed by his colleague.

Thus from the highest to the lowest of its members the trade is experiencing a crisis. The old organisation is disappearing before a new organisation born of new circumstances, and here, as in the tool trade, machinery is destroying the skilled workman, and substituting for the small workshops the régime of the factory and of centralised enterprise. The problem confronting the London plumbers is analogous to that which our old friend, Joseph Brown of Birmingham, solved after his own fashion. In one way or another the trade is affected and threatens to disappear; only in the tool trade machinery is ruining the old state of things completely,

while in the plumbing trade the necessity for employing men to fix the apparatus sent out from the manufactory has left a certain semblance of the old trading body. This semblance, which Beeston was eager to denounce to me, deceives the workers and hides from them the radical and inevitable transformation produced. It encourages their efforts for an artificial organisation of defence, and makes them forget that the trade as they have known it and practised it is dead, and that neither their sagacity nor their good intentions can succeed in resuscitating a corpse.

Such, however, is the impossible aim which the United Operative Plumbers' Association has in view. The evil against which its efforts are directed is the excess of workers, and it is endeavouring to remedy this directly by barring the door against newcomers. "Formerly," it is urged by the unionists, "there was no entry except after a long apprenticeship: let us re-establish apprenticeship, let us interpose a stiff professional examination as a barrier against intruders, and we shall see our ranks become less dense. We shall then be able to regulate the enrolment judiciously, and shall no longer have to compete with men who do not properly belong to our trade."

Both men were agreed as to the principle of apprenticeship, but Beeston was more exacting as to its duration, which he would fix at seven years, while his colleague would be content with four. It will be remembered that the same man had just said that a plumber was no longer a plumber but merely a fixer. Seven years spent in learning to fix apparatus, and then a professional examination at the end of the seven years as a guarantee that the apprentice really has learned to fix, is almost a luxury in the way of precaution, and the public is certainly thoroughly protected against bad work. Only it is not in the interest of the public that this is done. The public is satisfied with the actual régime, and it is their legitimate attempt to get work cheaply done which has helped the transformation of the trade. The malcontents are the old privileged workmen, who see their specialism menaced, and as this specialism is tending to disappear they try to re-establish it artificially. The trade is becoming easier, let us make apprenticeship more difficult—such is the monstrous outcome of their system of defence.

To enforce this would require a combination of restraints amounting to actual tyranny. Penalties would be forcibly enacted in the case of any London citizen bold enough to have his bath-room or gas fittings replaced by some worthy man without any certificates of examination and apprenticeship. It is the old guild monopoly carried into our century of free competition; it is an attempt to render immutable an order of things which is undergoing a perpetual transformation; it is, in fact, mere absurdity.

However, no personal effort on the part of the workmen can make good the decadence of the trade. I asked Beeston, who complained bitterly of irregular employment, whether plumbers attempted to occupy themselves in some other line while out of work.

“No,” he replied, “we don’t care to do work beneath us.”

“Have you never thought of going to the United States? First-class workmen are very scarce there and wages are higher.”

“Yes, that is so, but America is no place for a good workman. Their work is hurried and rough.”

In short, the London plumbers practically consider themselves bound to their guild and their city. Suggest different work to them, or even the same work outside London, and they will have none of it, and so nothing is left but for them to be buried beneath the ruins of their trade. However, they attempt to resist, and by what artificial and illusory means we have just seen. Instead of organising afresh on a new basis, to meet the requirements of the clientèle under the new conditions, they attempt to subordinate public convenience to an old form of organisation which is no longer adapted to new conditions.

It is the aristocracy of the trade which is at the head of the movement. Out of 3000 plumbers in London only about a third belong to the Union, but they are the cream of the trade. This must necessarily be so. In the first place, it is generally the best workmen who are readiest to combine for an advantage which is not immediate, for such a course presupposes a certain degree of foresight and of judgment of which not every one is capable. Secondly, the best workmen are precisely those who cling most to their specialism, who



are the most eager to defend it, who lose most by being confounded with unskilled labourers, and who feel the greatest pride in their position and think other work beneath them.

I do not propose to treat here of the advantages procured by the Union considered as a society for mutual assistance, though a sense of justice towards an association of honourable and hard-working men compels me to allude to them. What I blame is the evil and futile use they make of their power in their struggle against industrial evolution. Outside that the Union renders real services to its members in points of detail, but it would render far more important services if, instead of doggedly endeavouring to resuscitate the past, it concerned itself with organising the future, if it sought to find openings abroad, in the United States or Australia, for members willing to expatriate themselves, and if it showed them the wisdom of such a determination instead of buoying them up with deceptive hopes.

The plumbers are not alone in acting thus. At the Trade Union Congress of 1893 I heard similar proposals. Take, for example, the resolution presented by Mr. John Develin on the question of coopers in the navy.<sup>1</sup>

That this Congress strongly condemns the action of the Government in engaging youths as coopers in the navy under the age of twenty-one years; by so doing we believe it to be doing a very great injustice to our trade; secondly, we consider that our British industry suffers greatly through the Government giving away year by year the whole (or part) of the naval pork contracts to foreigners;<sup>2</sup> thirdly, in allowing labourers to perform coopers' work in the Government stores, either at Haulbowline or elsewhere. In the Government stores at Haulbowline no regular coopers are employed, but the work is performed by unskilled labourers, using the tools of competent workmen, to which they have really no claim.

Is not this remarkable? The coopers' tools are declared taboo and reserved for the sole usage of one body. If the preparation of wood by machinery simplifies cooperage, properly so called, why forbid it to those who can apply themselves to it? To the honour of the Congress, it should be said that among its members was a man of sufficient good sense and intelligence to checkmate this resolution by moving the

<sup>1</sup> Trades Union Congress, meeting of Friday 8th September 1893.

<sup>2</sup> No doubt because the making of the barrels is thus taken out of the hands of English coopers.

previous question. His argument was, in substance, that the terms "skilled" and "unskilled" labourer must be more exactly defined than hitherto. To narrow the term "skilled labourer" too much was to raise the problem of what to do with those who were thus debarred from work. His motion was adopted, and the Admiralty will continue to get its barrels made by outsiders whose work is satisfactory.

Similarly the engineers protest against the conduct of factory owners and shipowners who employ stokers without a special certificate at their engines. Of course they appeal to the public security, but the facts they cite go contrary to their pretensions. They complain, for instance, that incompetent engineers have recently been introduced into the Admiralty dock and ship yards, and that the number of first-class workmen on the staff has been reduced, and the Engineers' Union denounces the danger thus created. For my part, I have little belief in this danger. A manufacturer or a shipowner might perhaps, from motives of false economy, employ inferior workmen, though even he has weighty inducements not to do so, but such an exaggerated attempt at economy is difficult to understand in a public department whose expenses are included in the budget of national expenditure.

The same resolution contains an article which shows more clearly that the true motive actuating the engineers is their own narrow interest and not the public weal. Their spokesman, Mr. J. Anderson, urged that the ships' engineers should not be employed in repairing their own vessels if they put into a port in Great Britain, but that engineers should be engaged ashore for the work. Thus two engineers would be engaged at once—an engineer on the strength of the vessel, paid by the week or month, and a working engineer paid by the day or by the piece.

Such demands, whether they emanate from plumbers, coopers, or engineers, simply prove one thing, that the trades are becoming more accessible, require less technical skill, and may be practised without a long apprenticeship. In reality they are losing their specialist character, and no artificial measures will revive it. Machinery has overthrown the ancient walls which protected these trades, and it is useless to try to raise fresh ones. We have seen how the customs

of certain trades, upheld by the power of their Unions, has artificially lengthened apprenticeship, but these customs merely make more stringent a practice required by the very conditions of the trade, and consequently such trades can still resist in spite of the dangers which threaten them. Where, however, the old barriers have fallen of themselves, when, for example, the fixer can replace the plumber, when the cooper is forced to admit that his work can be done by an unskilled labourer furnished with good tools, when an intelligent stoker can manage a ship's engines, it is impossible to force the public to refuse these services. Such is the second stage of resistance, where the close body becomes impossible, and external pressure succeeds in overcoming the obstacles in its way.

Further, it does not seem that legislation in England should come to the aid of the threatened trades. The proposals of the older men find but little echo even among the Trade Unions, though these have recently become favourable to the intervention of the State on certain points. This may be seen by following the debates at the most recent meetings of the Congress. If Socialism is destined to have a future in England, it will not in all probability be by a return to the old trade guilds. At a later stage we shall see it clearly manifested in connection with mines and factories, and that will be the place to discuss it, to estimate its force, and to discover its real origin. For the present I shall content myself with noting one obvious but important point, that the Socialist tendencies of the threatened trades are undoubtedly due to their weakness. Those which are really strong, like the glassmakers, ask nothing from the State: they are self-sufficient, because the natural conditions of their trade are still on their side. The trades which have been affected recently still trust in the methods of private initiative which have so long been successful, they have not yet a clear perception of the danger, and they do not call legislation to their aid. This is the case of the printers. On the other hand, it is those who feel the full force of machine competition, and who see that they are powerless to resist alone, who cry out for legislative help. It is the last desperate cry of a drowning man. It is hardly necessary to say that Socialism of this sort has no future, it is merely a sign of irremediable

decadence. We shall meet it later under forms less obviously pathological.

Before we close this study of the resistance of the old specialised trades to the industrial evolution, we must still examine the last term, which marks the end of the struggle and the definite triumph of machinery. Below the trades which are struggling at an evident disadvantage must be classed those which no longer struggle at all, which admit their defeat, which have lost the market, but which still drag on a wretched existence, catching at any circumstance behind which their specialism can find a shelter. The types thus furnished are rare, and almost always present some special characteristic. Generally they owe their preservation to some accidental fact, to the fancy of a limited circle of customers, or the original character of the worker. In many ways they resemble the antiquarian treasures which delight the amateur, and they would have merely the interest of a curiosity for the observer if they did not mark the end of the cycle of resistance. With them we see how a trade dies, and this gives them a claim on our attention.

### III. *The Vanquished Trades.*

Probably the textile industry furnishes the most characteristic example of the defeat of the ancient trades.<sup>1</sup> The most complete tyro knows that the cloth he wears has been woven by machinery in a mill, and that the old type of hand-loom weaver has almost entirely disappeared. Hand-loom weaving is no longer found except in some special branches—in the manufacture of such luxuries as rich silk fabrics, ribbons, and the finest linen. It still exists, but as the handmaid of the modern system, in the manufacture of woollen fabrics for clothing. Samples of new patterns are worked out on hand-looms before they are entrusted to power-looms. In a mill in Galashiels, engaged in the manufacture of tweeds, I saw as many as twenty hand-looms preparing samples for the coming season.

It is not under such conditions, of course, that we must

<sup>1</sup> We shall here study the textile industry under its ancient form as a cottage industry. Its modern form will be studied in the sections dealing with the factory system.

observe the hand-loom weaver if we wish to understand what has become of the ancient type, but in the few independent private workrooms where he may still be found. Only these private workrooms can give us any idea of the state of the textile industry before the appearance of machinery, and of the present situation of the specialists which the trade turned out.

In this part of my task I had a singular piece of good fortune. While studying the Scottish miners in Midlothian, I read a notice in the *Journal des Débats* of an interesting book just published by an aged English artisan, under the title *Lights and Shadows in the Life of an Artisan*, in which the author, a Mr. Gutteridge, a ribbon-weaver in Coventry, told the story of his life. I hastened to write to him, and the cordial welcome I received from him subsequently enabled me to complete his monograph. I am much indebted to him for the following information.

Gutteridge has witnessed the transformation of the industry. In 1831, when he had been apprenticed for three years, working in a manufactory under his father's superintendence, Mr. Josiah Beck, the head of a neighbouring factory, introduced into Coventry the first power-looms for manufacturing silk ribbons. It was a revolution in the town. Mr. Beck put at his new looms young women paid by the week, and the ribbon-makers felt themselves menaced if women, who had hitherto been employed only as assistants, and who possessed no technical knowledge, could, thanks to power-looms, supply their places. In that case what did they gain from the seven years' apprenticeship by which they had bought the right to work as ribbon-weavers? The general discontent manifested itself first under the form of protests and indignation meetings, but the excitement soon rose to such a pitch that acts of violence followed. At the end of an uproarious meeting the weavers went in a body to Mr. Beck's factory with the intention of setting the unfortunate gentleman astride an ass with his face to its tail, and of parading him through the streets in this plight. After seizing him and subjecting him to gross ill-treatment, they broke the offending looms, set fire to them, and burned them, along with the entire premises.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Lights and Shadows in the Life of an Artisan*, by Joseph Gutteridge, Curtis and Beamish, Coventry, 1893, pp. 32, 33.

Such were the sentiments with which the artisan class met the introduction of machinery. This incident is only one among many, nor have such acts of revolt against new inventions been confined to England.

As a matter of fact, these inventions did in most cases deprive men of hardly-won privileges. The history of Gutteridge's early years must be read in order to understand what a price a man paid to enter the trade. Seven years apprenticeship was rigorously exacted, and the conditions were hard. In the first place, half the wages gained by an apprentice at any task were kept back by the master—the same custom which is still in vogue among printers, and was then general. In the second place, the apprentice was bound to his employer for seven years by a formal contract, and could not leave him on any pretext, as the payment of the forfeit was practically impossible for a lad of eighteen earning only half the usual rate of wages. Thirdly, the apprentice was forbidden to marry before he was out of his time. Gutteridge relates how he disregarded this prohibition, thereby bringing upon himself reproaches and unpleasantnesses of all kinds from his family and his employer. Finally, if an apprentice's ill-luck put him under a drunken foreman, which was Gutteridge's experience, much good-will and tact were needed to succeed in learning his trade. Thus the apprentice became a sort of fag, until at length he attained the dignity of workman, and thus apprenticeship lost the character of instruction which had been its original justification.

Having passed through this somewhat arbitrary probation, the weaver regarded himself as having a right to practise his trade. So far as he was concerned, Gutteridge would have been willing enough to renounce it, for his inventive mind attracted him to the mechanical arts, in which he would probably have succeeded, but the same barriers which shut in his own trade shut him out from others. Having served his apprenticeship to ribbon-making, he thought seriously of clock-making. This occupation, which was then in a high state of prosperity in Coventry, suited his tastes better than weaving, but there, too, seven years' apprenticeship was necessary. If, under special circumstances and in a moment of pressure, a stranger was admitted into a clock manufactory,

he was employed only on unimportant work, and the secrets of the trade were carefully concealed from him so as to prevent any possibility of his practising it.

Consequently, at the age of seven-and-twenty, Gutteridge found himself bound to a trade which he had entered without inclination, and for no other reason than because his father had practised it before him, in which he found no opportunity for employing his special faculties, and which in addition was in a most critical state, as steam had begun to compete with the weaver in the manufacture of silk ribbons. Thus the specialism which he had acquired was much cramped. It had still a refuge in the manufacture of ribbons of complicated patterns, which could only be accomplished with a Jacquard loom, where, even with the aid of mechanical motive power, a skilled workman was indispensable. To this narrow field the weaver must now confine his activity, and we shall see the results in the case of Gutteridge.

The story of his life is marked by a series of crises when he was out of work for long periods. Fashion changed—lace and feathers replaced ribbons for trimming hats, and passementerie and lace for trimming dresses—and so the looms were forced to stop. America, an importing country, shut her markets by prohibitive duties, and France, an exporting country, opened hers by the treaty of 1860. Both these blows struck directly at the trade of Coventry, and Gutteridge still suffers from them. From the first year of his marriage, when his position as a married apprentice exposed him to bitter reproaches and veritable persecution, putting him, so to speak in quarantine, he had also to bear all the miseries of extreme poverty. The phrases, “short of money,” “short of work,” fall constantly from his pen. At the end of his apprenticeship he had no loom of his own, and he found the terms for hiring one in a manufactory too high. Moreover, he had a complete knowledge of the Jacquard loom, and was unwilling to do work which was beneath him in his own trade, and which would disqualify him if he accepted it. Luckily he was clever and ingenious, and undertook any odd jobs of carpentry, cabinet-making, and furniture-mending he could get, and thus kept the wolf from the door. But at the price of many privations! His furniture was sold piece by piece, and

the last chair was broken and burned during a cold winter night when one of his badly-clad and starving children was shivering with fever. For forty-eight hours Gutteridge and his wife never tasted food. After innumerable vicissitudes he succeeded in realising his desire: he set up for himself with a loom lent by his master, and for some years he had fairly regular employment, and was in a position to meet the expense of his children's education and his wife's ill-health. He even managed to procure books, and began the interesting conchological collection which he has continued ever since. Then came the terrible crisis of the years 1860 and 1861. He was out of work for more than a year, the last penny of his savings was exhausted, and it was only through the kindness of his landlord that he was not turned into the street. At this juncture a Mr. Caldicott, who had imported from Saint Étienne a new loom which the Coventry weavers could not work, applied to Gutteridge, whose mechanical talents and ingenuity had come to his knowledge. Thus, as it seemed, he was once more set upon his feet; but the loom was not his own, and he was obliged to pay a large sum to Mr. Caldicott for the use of it, as the machine had cost a great deal originally, had undergone a great many modifications, and therefore represented a considerable amount of invested capital. Consequently his work was not highly paid, and it needed all his efforts to save enough out of his scanty earnings to buy a new outfit.

He succeeded at last, and settled in the little house in Yardley Street in which he is still living, and where you may at last see the family workroom for which he used to sigh. His wife works with him in a large, well-lighted room occupying the second storey. Two looms are set up opposite each other on each side of the huge bay-window, which occupies the whole width of the front wall. A horizontal driving shaft traverses the two lateral walls and communicates the motive force furnished by a neighbouring factory, thus rendering the work of weaving more rapid and less fatiguing. These are favourable conditions of situation, but the first essential is an abundance of orders. Unfortunately, however, the ribbon trade of Coventry is dying. The Franco-German War of 1870 reacted upon it, for every commercial shock is disastrous



to a falling industry. It was at the same moment that the silk trade of Spitalfields suddenly recovered itself, and the improvement was maintained for some years. At Coventry, on the contrary, from 1871 to 1876, the ribbon-makers had no work, and Gutteridge was again obliged to rely for a living on his talent as a cabinetmaker. He also set up a microscope, made violins, tried his hand at inlaying, and it was only thus, by work entirely outside his own special line, that he succeeded in making a living, and he has often had recourse to it since. From September 1890 to March 1891, and during several months of 1892, he did not make a penny by his trade. He is now seventy-five years of age, and lives on a small annuity secured to him by the kindness of some friends, supplemented by an allowance from a benefit society. The two together amount to 14s. a week, of which 4s. goes for rent, and the remaining 10s. suffice for his wife and himself. Even these meagre resources he owes in great part to the special interest excited in Coventry by his talents, his scientific tastes, and the publication of his memoirs, circumstances which make him a very exceptional artisan. In spite of his natural gifts, the specialism to which he was tied has brought him to this sorry pass, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that he has been crushed beneath its weight.

It is easy to demonstrate that Gutteridge's case is not exceptional. It is not only in the ribbon trade at Coventry that silk weaving as a cottage industry has been affected. In Spitalfields clever weavers may still be found who manufacture silk stuffs at home, but the number is continually diminishing and the trade no longer attracts apprentices. Such is the assertion made by Mr. Jesse Argyle in a complete and conscientious study of the silk industry of East London, included in Mr. Charles Booth's great work, *Labour and Life of the People*.<sup>1</sup> There is an interesting feature in connection with the personnel of this industry. It consists for the most part of aged persons; 70 per cent are over forty-five years of age, whereas persons above this age form only 23 per cent of the working class as a whole. In other words, the trade is obtaining no recruits and is practised only by those who are kept in it by the possession of acquired special skill.

<sup>1</sup> *Labour and Life of the People*, vol. i. p. 395.

They are, like Gutteridge, the victims of this special skill. The field of activity is continually narrowing. It consists chiefly of cravats and of rich silk handkerchiefs, admitting of various patterns; stuffs for the most expensive umbrellas, generally made by women; and fine furniture silks, reserved for men, owing to the vast size of the loom and the laborious nature of the work. These are all articles required only by a rich and very limited section of the community. The greater part of the silk used for umbrellas and sunshades, all silk stuffs for wearing apparel, the ordinary qualities of furniture silk, and almost all silk velvets, are machine-made. A Spitalfields cravat is sold for half a guinea. It too is an article of luxury.

The wages of these skilled workers are not what one would expect. Except in the case of men employed in weaving furniture silks, who earn from 35s. to £2 a week, but whose work is very laborious, the average wage is not high. Mr. Jesse Argyle estimates that an average workman manufacturing silk velvet earns about 25s. a week, that weavers of silk for cravats and handkerchiefs do not exceed 22s. a week, and that women engaged at the same work or on silk for costly umbrellas earn only 12s. or 13s. a week. Whereas the London dockers, paid at the rate of 6d. an hour, often make 30s. a week, and in the Scottish tweed factories the young girls employed at power-looms earn 20s. a week. The skill of the Spitalfields weaver does not receive any compensation for its limited field in a higher rate of wages.

Outside the silk trade the hand-loom weaver is no longer found except under exceptional conditions and in the fabrication of articles of a very costly kind. During my stay in Belfast I visited Robinson and Cleaver's great shop, a firm renowned for the fineness of its Irish linens. I was shown hand-woven linen handkerchiefs at 4s. apiece which I could hardly distinguish from machine-made ones at 4d. each. The manager, who accompanied me, pointed out by the aid of a magnifying glass the number and fineness of the threads which could be counted in a square inch of the hand-woven one. The difference was very obvious when the magnifying-glass was applied to the cheaper handkerchief. Side by side with these were cotton handkerchiefs at 2s. a dozen, and

children's handkerchiefs at 2d. a dozen. These are what the majority of customers buy. Messrs. Robinson and Cleaver say they sell 30,000 dozen handkerchiefs a week, but the costly article, hand-woven because no machine work can produce the necessary fineness, forms but a very small fraction of the total.

Hand-loom weavers are hard to find even for cambric handkerchiefs. Messrs. Robinson and Cleaver find their workers among the wives and daughters of Irish farmers, in Ulster and the south of Ireland, especially near Limerick. These women and girls work at home and are generally taught by their mothers, but it is not easy to find new ones when the older ones die or cannot continue to work. Here, too, there are no fresh recruits; the trade is not sufficiently profitable.

It is the same with Irish lace. I saw lace handkerchiefs worth £35 each, and lace for trimming, all hand-made in small quantities. The machine-made laces of Calais and Nottingham have killed the hand industry. There is very little demand for it, and it is not easy to find women capable of executing it. The reason is simple. Formerly among the mass of those who produced the ordinary article a few would be found capable of making the most expensive lace. These would gradually be transferred from simple to more and more complex work, and thus would become real artists. Now machinery has replaced the hand industry except for the costliest kinds of lace, and has thus at the same time destroyed the professional school which produced workers capable of executing them. Damask table-linen still gives occupation to some hand-loom weavers. I saw two or three at Messrs. Robinson and Cleaver's, and I was told that the firm employs a few others who work at home. They manufacture the finest quality, which cannot be produced by machinery, and execute special orders, the pattern of which is never to be reproduced. To set up a power-loom is far more expensive than to set up a hand-loom, and in order to make it worth while the design must be repeated a great number of times. If such repetition is impossible, and if for any reason the reproduction is forbidden, it is more economical to execute the work by hand. Of course these are exceptional cases. I was shown the loom used for making a set of table-linen presented

by the firm to the Queen on the occasion of her jubilee. Each piece represented the principal façade of the shop. It took nine months' work to make the patterns and set up the loom, and it is easy to see what that might come to. This is caprice rather than legitimate industry.

Messrs. Robinson and Cleaver make a speciality of fine linen. Belfast has long been renowned for it, and customers come from all parts of the world. I was shown the order-book in the order department. Turning over its leaves, I noted orders from Egypt, Smyrna, Damascus, Dannemora in Sweden, Germany, New South Wales, Cape Colony, Malta, etc.

I asked to see any other hand-made articles besides linen and lace. They are not very numerous: Irish poplins, fine woollen shawls of a pattern not reproduced often enough to make it worth while to use machinery, and Scottish stockings knitted in the Highlands. This is all that remains of a once powerful industry. Ireland is the last refuge of these *industries de luxe* which must be executed by hand and are poorly paid, and now even this refuge is beginning to fail. Ireland has long been sending her surplus population to the United States and to the manufacturing cities of England and Scotland. Irish workers in Lancashire or Glasgow earn more by tending a machine with hardly any previous apprenticeship than in manufacturing *objets de luxe*, which require great experience, real skill, and the minutest care. A single detail will show how increasingly incompatible with present conditions hand industries are becoming. Messrs. Robinson and Cleaver count among their workers a large number of young girls brought up in Catholic orphanages. The exceptional position of these convent workrooms is most adapted for supplying fresh workers. This amounts to saying that such can no longer be found except under exceptional conditions.

I have just mentioned the Highlands of Scotland. There we have also a centre of hand industry, in an environment wholly exceptional in its physical and social isolation, and of which the area is continually shrinking. Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, the mining centres of Fife and the Lothians, the Tweedside towns, are attracting a constant stream of Highlanders into their special industries, and those who remain among their native mountains are gradually invaded by new

customs and ideas. Consequently, the ancient domestic industry, where the family spun, dyed, and wove the brilliant tartans, has almost entirely disappeared. It is the same with the indestructible stuffs made in the island of Harris (Harris tweeds), which have given their name to similar articles made by machinery. I met in Edinburgh a delightful Highland gentleman, who still wears the picturesque national costume, an enthusiast for the old customs, who has collected a great number of evidences of the old domestic industry. Thanks to his museum, and to the interesting details he gave me in conversation, I can insist upon the archæological character of the hand industry in the Highlands. It belongs to the past. The real old tartans are, as a rule, rough to the touch, although some of them are of great fineness. Each family used to make for its own consumption, just as Scots-women still knit stockings for themselves, their husbands, and their brothers. It was only at a very recent period, when the Prince Consort began to encourage the manufacture of Scottish designs, and when tourists in search of the picturesque began to dress themselves out in kilts, that the Scottish tartans were manufactured for sale. However, the tourist who is conscientious enough to insist on hand-made tartan is indeed rare. The majority buy tartan in Princes Street, soft to the touch, machine-made, and preserving nothing of the old tartans but the arrangement and the colours of the stripes.

I cannot leave the subject of conquered industries without anticipating an often expressed regret. It is the correct thing to drop a tear over the disappearance of the old state of things, to sigh for the good old times when the worker worked at his own hearth, surrounded by his family, with a steady custom, unacquainted with slack times or sudden fluctuations in his earnings. This idyllic legend has shaped itself in many minds, and is due in part to the fascination which by-gones have for most of us, and in part to the just admiration felt for the work of these hand operatives, many of whom were really artists. I am most willing to admit the superiority of their finest work to the machine work of to-day. I have even explained how the abandonment of hand work in the ordinary branches destroyed the nursery in which these picked workers were reared, but this unfortunate result should not blind us to the

happy transformation wrought in the condition of the worker by the introduction of machinery.

I have beside me a curious little volume of verses, accompanied by a life of the author, a hand-loom weaver at the beginning of this century.<sup>1</sup> William Thom, born at Aberdeen in 1799, was essentially a worker of the old type. In his day hand-loom weaving was not limited, as it is to-day, to one or two special branches, and Thom was alternately engaged in making shirtings, sheetings, tickings, towellings, and different sorts of tartans. This variety of occupation was, in itself, an excellent guarantee against forced interruptions of work, but nevertheless it succeeded only in a very insufficient degree. In 1831 there was a crisis in cotton, on which the Aberdeen industry depended. Thom quitted his native town, and went to Dundee, where canvas-making was the staple occupation. In the spring of 1837 the failure of some American houses affected Dundee, more than 6000 looms were suddenly thrown out of work, and Thom was again obliged to seek another sphere. This time, finding no opening in his own trade, he tramped with his wife and four children, endeavouring to pick up a living by selling a few books which he had bought with the proceeds of his last bits of furniture. He carried a German flute, and earned a few pence by singing Scottish songs. One night his little daughter died of cold and hunger at Kinnaird. At last, after weeks of this wandering life, a half-guinea which he received from a laird of literary tastes for an ode of his own composition enabled him to reach Aberdeen, where he obtained a little work. A few orders came in, and he settled at Inverurie. But in less than a year work again failed, and this brought the direst poverty in its train. There is no need to follow him into his literary career, in which, after many disappointments, he found a means of supplementing his income. We have seen enough to prove that irregularity of employment is not a new evil due to machinery.

It is true that the country weaver working for local customers, and generally owning a little bit of land, suffered comparatively little from the slack times of trade. This may be easily seen at the present day in those parts of France

<sup>1</sup> *Rhymes and Recollections of a Hand-Loom Weaver*, by William Thom. Paisley: Alexander Cardner.

where the type still exists. But side by side with the weaver whose trade was only an accessory source of income, and who was really a peasant, there were formerly weavers working in towns entirely dependent on their trade for a living, and upon these the crises due to interruption of work produced the effect we have just seen. Long before the application of steam to the manufacture of textile fabrics there were manufactories in England and on the Continent. As soon as transport by sea, or even by land, had been carried to sufficient perfection to permit of the exportation of the products of industry, the manufacturing country came into existence, in a less intense form, of course, than at the present day, but nevertheless as a perfectly well marked type. At the end of the last century England was already concerned to find outlets for her industry, and the history of American Independence is evidence that she was already working for foreign markets.

A characteristic of the manufacturing régime at that time, from the point of view of the position of the workers, was their inferior status. The factory hand was necessarily drawn from the lowest stratum, because all the capable men preferred to set up for themselves in small workrooms at home. We have seen Gutteridge's efforts to succeed in working in his own house, either for customers of his own or for a dealer. William Thom had the same ambition, and in order to realise it he availed himself of the unexpected resources due to his poetical ability. If he went to the factory it was with regret, and because he had no work at home, and he quitted it at the earliest opportunity.

The result of this selection of the unfittest may easily be imagined, and neither Gutteridge nor Thom allows us to overlook it. "Life in the factory," says the first, "was very demoralising for the young," and he relates in detail the endless drinking for which the arrival of each newcomer furnished an occasion, the tyranny experienced by those who wished to avoid these stupid customs, and the coarseness which prevailed in the relations of the young men and young women. The recollections of William Thom are still more bitter. "The factory," he says, "was a nursery of vice and sorrow. Virtue perished within its walls, perished utterly and wholly; it was not even dreamed of, or if any remembrance of it remained, it

was linked to a deep and painful sense of degradation, so that men sought to forget what was unattainable. Folly, sin, and shame spread unhindered around this nursery. Perhaps it was to the advantage of the owners: I do not want to know anything about it. It is a duty to be fulfilled by those who have it in their power, and to fulfil which some one will be found, to state what was the condition of factory hands in our moral North at the time." Thom devotes several pages to painting this state of moral and material degradation. Often, in the course of his story, he adds some new traits to his emphatic narrative, and it is evident how deep was the impression produced upon him.

Thus we have on one side very great irregularity of employment for the chamber worker, working at his trade with the help of his wife, and taking his children as apprentices, and on the other, the moral degradation of the factory hand. This was the dilemma in England at the beginning of the century. I refer those readers who are disposed to suspect me of over-colouring the picture to Disraeli's interesting novel *Sybil*, and to the numerous works of all kinds in which the Labour Question is examined under some aspect or another at the period of which I am speaking. Their verdict is unanimous.

In addition we have to remember the sudden alterations of wages which made the worker pass from one extreme to the other. At the end of the last century, Thom tells us, the artisan weavers of Aberdeen earned 10s. a day, and refused to work more than four days a week. In 1814 10d. a day was an ordinary wage. These extraordinary variations were due to the same cause as the long periods of unemployment. There was not then, as there is to-day, a sort of general equilibrium of production throughout the entire world. The industry of a country was often dependent on a single outlet, and if this outlet were abruptly closed, there was a forced cessation of work, or else work was supplied at low prices by enterprising business men who hoped that things would shortly right themselves. In other words, both the industry of exportation and the factory system, which was in operation in England before the application of steam power to transport and to manufactures, were exposed to even more



terrible hazards than they are to-day, and these risks were more especially felt by the workers. This degraded and incapable class had not learned to organise the representation and defence of its interests as it has to-day. The long hours of work gave no opportunity of rest, and impeded the normal development of the individual, physically as well as intellectually and morally. This is a point which must not be forgotten in contrasting the very real evils of the modern system with the supposed felicity of the workers of preceding periods. There is a certain measure of truth in the praise bestowed on the old condition of things in the case of a worker in the country supplying a local custom. The condition of such a man, owing to his being a peasant as well, was stable, or rather stagnant. But all workers did not belong to this type, and the bad reputation of the factory is due in a large measure to the industrial period, now a thing of the past, which preceded the employment of steam power, and has nothing to do with the present condition of industry.

It would seem as if with the trades which have been beaten we had finished our review of manufacture by hand and our observation of skilled workmen. We have still, however, to examine an important particular case.

Hitherto two different types have presented themselves to us. In Brown we saw a skilled workman on his guard, who, confronted by the decadence of his specialism, trained his children for other occupations and held himself in readiness to abandon his own occupation before it abandoned him. In another group of trades we saw the organisation of resistance. Of these, some, owing to special circumstances tending to protect their specialism, resisted with success; others continued their resistance under conditions which left no doubt as to the issue of the struggle; others had reached the limit and had ceased to exist except in exceptional cases.

All these different types, however, had this in common, that they belonged to trades directly affected, although in different degrees, by the modern industrial evolution. There are others which, far from being threatened by this evolution, appear rather to profit by it. It has not affected to any extent the tools employed, nor has it attacked the position of the skilled workman, but nevertheless these trades have experienced

a great extension of their clientèle, in consequence of the new conditions of trade. They have felt, if only in this way, a certain indirect effect of the general transformation. It is principally by the commercial evolution that they have been affected. It is interesting to determine this evolution, and to see its effect on the Labour Question.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ORGANISATION OF THE TRADES CHIEFLY MODIFIED BY THE COMMERCIAL EVOLUTION

#### I. *The Production of Luxuries under Competent Management.*

I HAD been told in London, when starting for Birmingham, that I should find a large number of small workshops in that town. This is a characteristic of Birmingham, and was still more so thirty years ago. Now, in many branches, the transformation of the small workshop of skilled workmen into the huge workshop of machine workers is in process of operation. This transformation, where it has taken place, has been slower and less complete than, for instance, in the iron and textile trades of Lancashire. Thus the brass trade, although it has for a century been undergoing very important modifications, which are contributing to its evolution towards the modern factory system, and the silversmith's trade, notwithstanding the application of the process of electro-plating, which led to the foundation of the important firm of Elkington and many others in its train, still remain for the most part in the hands of skilled workmen. Another important branch of industry is also carried on in Birmingham, the jewellery trade, and here the rôle of the skilled workman does not seem to have been diminished to any serious extent.

The jewellery trade in Birmingham employs about 16,000 hands, distributed among three or four hundred workshops. I paid a visit to some under the guidance of an obliging compatriot, who has been in business in Birmingham for twenty years as a merchant of precious stones, and who is consequently very well informed about everything connected with the

jewellery trade. He showed me first, of course, the more important houses, which employ three or four hundred hands. If machinery had been introduced at all, it was there, if anywhere, that I should have ascertained the fact. From this point of view the visit to these large workshops was especially interesting.

The firm of Payton and Sons employs about 250 men when trade is flourishing, but at that moment there were only about half that number, owing to the depression caused by the failure of the Australian banks. Birmingham jewellery is in demand among a large class in Australia, and this class is at present suffering. Jewellery, like all objects of superfluity, only sells well in prosperous times, and this is the bad side of the industries engaged in producing luxuries. I saw the men at work. They are all skilled workmen, and the motive power put at their disposition does not replace technical skill. A simple pedal worked with the foot from time to time is often sufficient. It is a question, perhaps, of polishing the setting of a jewel, a brooch or bracelet, or of burnishing it, or of the application of a thin leaf of gold to a base metal in order to plate it with gold—details of very little importance in comparison with what is really meant by the manufacture of jewellery, the chasing, and the setting of precious stones. There is nothing gained by taking these minor processes from the skilled workman and entrusting them to workmen of a lower grade.

In a workshop which at that moment numbered forty-two individuals, but which employs about eighty in times of prosperity, the motive power employed is a gas engine. This technical detail has its importance. Gas engines, unlike steam engines, consume nothing except during the time they are actually in use, movement being produced by a series of explosions resulting from the sudden inflammation of the gas. If the machine is to be stopped the meter is turned off and the expense ceases. It is an advantage, consequently, to employ gas engines for performing mechanical work which is liable to frequent interruptions, and where the motive power is used only as an accessory. On the other hand, a steam engine is more economical when the work requires a powerful and constant motive force, and has hitherto been chiefly em-

ployed in large factories. Gas engines are principally used in workshops where the workman, instead of tending a machine all day long, makes use of one from time to time to assist him in his manual labour.

This, then, is a trade whose methods have been but little affected, and which has remained exclusively in the hands of skilled workers. It is true that I saw a fair number of young girls in the manufactories I visited, but in the jewellery trade these are also skilled workers. Their delicate fingers lend themselves readily to the fine operations involved in making and setting jewels. The work demands no muscular strength, but rather dexterity, care, and attention, in all of which women are superior to men. Women, too, ask a lower wage, and there is the further consideration that they do not as a rule set up as rivals, as is so frequently done by male workers who possess the necessary skill and a little push. So easy is it to start a small workshop, that the working jeweller of to-day is not infrequently the rival of to-morrow, and employers minimise this danger by employing young girls.

Here too, then, we see the same anxiety to monopolise the trade, but among the masters only. The men, although they are still skilled workmen, do not feel it necessary to defend themselves against the intrusion of outsiders, nor do they form powerful Unions. What is the reason of this ?

In the first place, it is because their technical skill is not threatened : machinery is not invading their province, as it has done, for example, in the case of the plumbers. It is therefore useless to take up arms against it.

Secondly, their technical skill is not so limited as that of the glassworkers or plumbers, and consequently there would be less reason in a rigid limitation of the number of apprentices. A glassworker or a cutler can make nothing but glass or knives, whereas a jeweller can employ his professional dexterity as a silversmith or a clockmaker.

Lastly, jewellers have another reason for not closing the ranks of their trade, namely, that during the last thirty years there has been a large and steady increase in the demand. Jewellery for export is chiefly manufactured in Birmingham, which supplies to Australia, New Zealand, India, and the Cape the chains, bracelets, lockets, brooches, and sets which are

presented by English colonists and merchants to their wives and sweethearts. Englishwomen at home often abuse this kind of ornament, and their sisters in the colonies exaggerate their extravagance. In times of good harvests or brisk trade, Birmingham has its share of the gains, and the prosperity of new countries has contributed in a large measure to the development of the jewellery trade in Birmingham. We have seen that the financial disasters in Australia affected it very seriously. "I have not done a single stroke of business for a fortnight," said my friend, the merchant of precious stones, "and till things look up over there we can do nothing here." No doubt these crises are hard, but an industry whose lot is bound up with the prosperity of the English colonies has nothing to complain of, for their future is sufficiently assured to afford every ground for satisfaction with such a base of operations.

The Birmingham jewellery industry has thus, at the present day, acquired the well-defined character of doing principally an export trade, and this circumstance marks very clearly the action of the new economic conditions. It is a far cry from the present position to the old one, from a circle of consumers extending as far as the Antipodes to the local custom of the past. It is entirely on this side that the jewellery trade has been affected, and we shall see how this transformation in the clientèle has expressed itself in the organisation of the trade.

The most obvious result is the creation of those large firms which sometimes employ as many as three hundred persons. Their history would be sufficient to prove the point. They are all of recent origin, and the head, generally a former working jeweller or the son of such a man, is nothing but a small employer whose clientèle has grown, and who has found himself in a position to serve a large clientèle, and to do a wholesale trade. Side by side with him, a large number of other small employers have remained what they were, without the knowledge or the ability to profit by favourable circumstances. They were lacking in the spirit of enterprise, in brains, or in capital, or else they were not ready when a chance came their way, and did not seize the occasion promptly enough. The large concerns have not killed them, in a sense they have even benefited them, since the wider relations created

by them have benefited Birmingham as a whole. The small businesses are in some sort the satellites of the larger ones, and move in their orbit.

Some of these powerful houses are not content with merely finding openings for their products abroad, but go there for a part of their raw material. On one shop I read the notice, "Branch at Durban (Natal)." Since the discovery of the diamond mines at the Cape, there have been close and frequent trade relations between South Africa and Birmingham. Generally, however, they are not direct, and the precious stones pass through several hands before they reach the jeweller who makes them up. Mr. H. D—— explained to me that London is the principal market for uncut stones, Cape diamonds, or coloured stones from India. It is there that he makes his own purchases, but he sends them to France to be cut at Saint-Claude in the Jura, where his family have a diamond-cutting business. "At one time," he told me, "we only cut coloured stones at Saint-Claude, and Amsterdam had the monopoly of diamond cutting, but we introduced it some years ago, and now I can send to France whatever I buy in London." Then it only remains to sell the cut stone, and for this, it appears, Birmingham is the principal market in the world.

Thus, in this particular town the manufacture of jewellery has led to the creation of a very important branch of trade, carried on as a rule outside the firms engaged in the jewellery trade. These firms generally buy the raw materials which they employ from merchants of precious stones and of the noble metals. These raw materials are very costly and require the nicest judgment, and the master jeweller, even in a small way of business, must have a certain command of capital and a real expert knowledge. It is not anybody and everybody who can set up as a master jeweller. This point is worthy of note, and has an important bearing on the prosperity of the workers engaged in this industry. We shall shortly see what grave inconveniences and what an abnormal situation result from the presence of a large number of incompetent masters in any trade. Here, on the contrary, we have to do with a normally constituted trade. The working jewellers are outside the area of the unionist agitation, they make no complaint of

being exploited, they are examples of a type sufficiently uncommon at the present day, that of a class of skilled workmen who have been benefited rather than menaced by modern conditions of labour.

Along with the jewellers we may group the various craftsmen, the bronze-workers and enamellers, employed at Birmingham in the manufacture of ornamental bronzes. Here, however, the demand, although it includes a number of widely separated countries, is far less numerous, and the artistic direction required in their manufacture demands in the master a certain aesthetic training and a cultivated taste. The result is that the small employer is rarely found in this trade, or else he works in direct dependence on a firm which deals in bronzes. The worker remains a skilled worker.

The chasers and engravers find employment for their special skill in the manufacture of costly silver, especially of table plate, which rich English families usually possess in great abundance. Here, too, the large manufactory is the rule. At Elkington's, in Birmingham, and at Rodgers's, in Sheffield, I saw a great many workers, graving-tool in hand, executing their designs without any mechanical aid. With them we enter the domain of art.

The success of these industries depends in a very exceptional manner on the ability of the master. It is not enough for him to possess administrative and commercial talents, he must also have an intuitive knowledge of what will please the taste of purchasers, and be able to select new designs which will be liked. This becomes more difficult as the public grows more exacting. Only forty years ago the designs in English silver and bronze were in the worst possible taste; instead of elegance and proportion there was eccentricity and straining after effect, and the ornament was complicated, overdone, and ungraceful. This lack of taste still characterises many similar objects, but there is nevertheless a very real progress in some branches. No one can deny, for instance, that the church brasses furnished by the firm of John Hardman, at Birmingham, show a refined artistic education in the designers. This movement has been aided by the different institutions created by the impulse of the South Kensington Museum, and there is good reason to hope for a transformation at no distant date in



those productions of the silversmith in which there has hitherto been a less evident progress.

Mr. John Hardman is also at the head of a stained-glass manufactory. This is also a trade in which the master's taste is an essential element of success, and where the specialism of the workers remains uninjured. Some of them design the model of the window and mark exactly the contour of the leads, others stain the glass, while the less skilful cut the glass and place and solder the leads. All this requires at least care, dexterity, and great practice. The only merely manual work which I saw executed in Mr. Hardman's stained-glass manufactory was that of drawing out the lead, and passing it through a machine which gave it the required shape.

Mr. Hardman employs about eighty men, nearly all of whom have been with him for a long time, and many of whom worked for his father, the founder of the firm. In order to make good workmen they must begin as children on leaving school, and must be taught their craft. Here the master is not merely an employer, but more in the position of a father. Mr. Hardman knows all his men by name, and their relations. "We are quite a family," he said. Every year he gives a small entertainment to which the whole staff is invited, and at which there is music and tea. Last year, at a gathering of this kind, Mr. Hardman gave his men an account of his recent travels in Australia and New Zealand—an interesting subject, since these countries are great markets for this industry. Orders are executed for Sydney, Melbourne, Wellington, etc., and here too the export trade is the chief stay of this industry.

In spite of this, however, the demand increases only gradually. Stained-glass windows and other artistic objects are not ordered in large quantities like objects in common use. Hence, no doubt, the moderate use of apprenticeship. It is not to the employer's interest to multiply to excess the number of young men he trains, for he is never tempted to over-production, and if he were unable to keep on any of his apprentices when they became fully qualified workmen, they would put the artistic education they had received from him at the service of competing firms. Thus this industry, by the very nature of its product, is assured against the variations which affect the industries of ordinary consumption. There

is no need for a powerful organisation of the men, as among the glassworkers, to limit the number of apprentices, for the number is limited by the very nature of the case.

All these details show how much is required from an employer capable of carrying on a business of this kind—artistic feeling, capacity for direction, and commercial aptitudes. Less than this would be enough to prevent any chance workman, however clever, from going into business on his own account. A manufactory can only be started by the initiative of an exceptional man.

Further, only skilled workmen are turned out, as we remarked when we saw them at work. The scale of wages which Mr. Hardman gave me more than proves this. His men get from 30s. to £5 a week. Such a margin enables an employer to appreciate and remunerate all degrees of skill, from that of the solderer to that of the designer and painter. Such variations of wages never occur in factories where the whole duty of the worker is to tend a machine.

The industries just examined form, as a whole, a picture on which it is pleasant to gaze. They constitute a limited group whither the general agitation hardly penetrates. The workers appear satisfied, and their relations with their employers are marked by mutual good-will. Nevertheless, this state of internal peace is not in the least due to stagnation. On the contrary, these are growing industries, directed by men who have the energy, the desire for improvement, and the enterprise necessary to push them onward.

The workers too, as a body, are impelled along the same line of progress. In the industries engaged in the production of luxuries, the craftsman's hand can never be wholly replaced by machinery, for it is essential to the artistic finish. The future consequently belongs to those men whose skill and taste are the most highly developed, and this is what the master aims at cultivating in his staff.<sup>1</sup>

While industries engaged in the production of articles of

<sup>1</sup> At South Kensington Museum, thanks to Mr. Alan S. Cole, director of the Science and Art Department, I was shown a series of designs sent in to the annual competition by Birmingham craftsmen. Some of these, which were due to the personal inspiration of the designers, gave evidence of a really cultivated taste.

ordinary consumption are in constant danger of seeing their methods overturned by machinery, the industries engaged in the production of luxuries are but little affected by the industrial evolution, and remain in the possession of hand workers. But on another side they are affected in a very marked degree by the commercial evolution, and, as we have seen, to their own advantage. The greater facility of relations with foreign countries opens a larger market, while the general increase in wealth enables a larger number of people to purchase, and this extension takes place without any rude shocks, under the direction of capable masters with capable men.

But the industries engaged in the production of luxuries are not the only ones which have been much affected by the commercial evolution, while little modified by the industrial evolution. Side by side with these, a less fortunate group merits our attention.

## II. *The Production of Low-class Articles under Incompetent Management.*

### *The Sweating System.*

There is a whole category of trades performed by hand which, from the point of view of the tools employed, have remained faithful to the ancient type, and which are practised by skilled workmen, but which have become the victims of the evil known as the sweating system.

The term suggests an idea of hardship and exploitation. It represents, not a definite form of suffering, but a sum of abnormal conditions, unhealthy workshops, excessive hours of labour, inadequate wages, etc. It arises, not from any passing cause, but from a permanent condition, and from a fundamentally wrong constitution of the trade, which exposes the worker to a crowd of evils without any protection whatever.

Its two most distinctive characters, then, are the great number of different trades victimised and the chronic state of ill-being which is the result.

The sweating system assumes a multitude of forms. In the clothing trade the tailor who gives out work at low rates, instead of executing orders on his own premises, practises sweating. The same thing is done by the large shops which

give dressmaking to poor women who are obliged to do their work at home in order to attend to their house and children. Both exploit the situation, that is to say, they take advantage of the destitution of those who apply to them in order to pay lower and lower wages. For one poverty-stricken woman who refuses to work herself blind by stitching for hours to earn a few pence, there are two others still more abjectly poor who will accept the terms. In the furniture trade the man who has made a chest or a cupboard at home, and who has procured the wood and varnish on credit, and who is also hungry and in debt for his rent, is obliged to put the furniture on a truck and take it to a big emporium in Curtain Road, where it is bought and paid for in ready money at a low rate—and this too is sweating. Another victim is the small shoemaker with no custom, who, when the leather-seller refuses further credit, or an apprentice asks his trifling wage, is obliged to take half a dozen pairs of boots to the wholesale shop to satisfy his creditors.

It would be easy to multiply examples, but these are enough to show that sweating is not confined to a single trade. They also point to the second characteristic I alluded to, the chronic nature of the system. The man without a fair start, who is driven by necessity to carry his work to the wholesale dealer as fast as it is finished, is at the mercy of every vicissitude, and will often find his way back to the wholesale shop, where he pawns rather than sells his goods. The needlewoman who is perpetually competing with all the other needy women of a large town will never get a remunerative price for her work. Further, the sweating system is organised and in uninterrupted swing; it is provided with organs, it has its sale-rooms and its recognised middlemen. Curtain Road, in London, is lined with general shops for the sale of furniture and boots and shoes, while in Paris the huge *maisons de nouveautés*, and the weekly Saturday fair of the Avenue Ledru-Rollin, play the same part. Sweating is as much a chronic condition as improvidence and poverty in those grades where improvidence and poverty are the general rule.

God knows that this is the case in the East End. There is no need to push an inquiry very far to be assured on this point; it is quite enough to walk at broad noonday in White-

chapel or about Tower Hill. A population in abject poverty, squalid, wan, and forbidding in appearance, seethes in the narrow, dirty, muddy, reeking streets. I was at an open-air market in a lane off Commercial Street. Every sort of merchandise, especially food, was exposed for sale under temporary awnings, and was purchased by the women of the neighbourhood. It was a painful sight to see the repulsive appearance of these women, with their bloated, disfigured faces, often diseased or withered, and almost all bearing the evident brand of vice and degradation. The impression was confirmed by their dress. They wore ragged garments, third or fourth hand, which had doubtless been worn by some woman of the middle class till they were shabby, and then handed on to the servants, descending finally, when they were worn out, to their present wearers. Every article in the costume had had a different origin, and strange medleys were produced, thanks to the English love of brilliant colours. One toilette which I noticed consisted of a violet skirt and a bodice of brown plush, over which was thrown a crochet shawl of bright red, which went sufficiently badly with the rest. Notwithstanding the stains and the countless holes and the frayed edges, the violet silk skirt still shot brilliant flashes here and there. Add to the picture unkempt hair, an absence or insufficiency of under-linen which betrayed itself where a button was missing or through tell-tale rents, filthy hands and face, boots down at the heel, everything proclaiming aloud the most abject poverty and the total absence of care and self-respect. To add to the horror of the general effect, many women wore frowsy wigs, generally put on awry! I was informed that this ornament is peculiar to Polish Jewesses, whose rites oblige them to shave their heads when they marry. Jews are very numerous in the East End, and it is chiefly among them that the sweating system finds hands, more especially in the clothing trade.

About the doors of public-houses, especially on Saturdays, may be seen crowds of persons of whom a considerable number are women. Drink is a ceaseless cause of physical and moral degradation, poverty, and irremediable ruin. It is only necessary to enter any one of the lanes which branch off from the main streets to convince oneself that vice is in its element. On the doorsteps of the little, mean, narrow houses where

families are crowded together higgledy-piggledy, many a wretched creature may be seen like those just described. The majority of them have no regular occupation. At a pinch they will go into a factory, but they cannot be got to stay. The least degraded go to swell the number of the sweated.

Even this is not the most pitiful sight of the East End, for it is still more heartrending to see children growing up in such surroundings. Unhappy little creatures, in rags and tatters, running barefoot on the muddy or frozen stones! In the damp climate of London this material destitution assumes a character of its own. It is not the indifference of the Neapolitan lazzarone, abandoning himself to a genial and easy climate, but the privation of a multitude of necessities which thwarts and injures development. In order to live in England, warm garments, dry shoes, and a substantial diet are necessary. All these are lacking, more or less, in the case of these wretched creatures, even if we leave out of consideration the unhealthiness of the hovels which shelter them, and the effects of atavism of which they reap the sad inheritance. In truth, the population of East London, handicapped by want of air and food, burnt up by drink and exhausted by vice, gives birth to offspring without vigour. I have been informed that a physician attached to a London hospital had never in the course of his experience met with a single individual born of two generations of pure Londoners. The vital powers are exhausted in the conditions to which the working-class population is exposed. An individual whose grandparents and parents were all Londoners showed as a rule well-marked symptoms of rickets. It is not easy to measure the results of the moral atmosphere in which these poor children grow up, but the statistics of crime are an index.

It is in the depressing surroundings of East London that the sweating system has taken root most firmly and flourishes best. The name was first applied to the Jewish tailors of the quarter who gave out work to be done at home, but it has been extended to cover a number of other cases, for, as we have seen, a variety of different industries have become its prey.

It should be borne in mind, however, that none of the industries which suffer are universally affected. There are

plenty of tailors, shoemakers and cabinetmakers in London who escape. In the first place, there is the fashionable tailor, who obtains a high price for his cut, and who executes orders in his own workroom under his direct supervision. In the same category are included the elegant West End shoemaker and the first-class cabinetmaker. All these are producing articles of luxury. Then we have the large manufactories in the boot and furniture trades, engaged in the manufacture either of complete boots or furniture, or else of some particular parts. Here, too, sweating is unknown. The men are collected in large groups under the control of a rich employer, are assisted by machinery, and come under the type of the factory hand, whom we shall study in the third part of this work. If they think they have any grievance, they can strike suddenly and in a body, and compel attention to their demands. Further, the factory is subject to severe police regulations as to sanitary condition, and consequently they are certain of working under hygienic conditions. Legislation also protects women and children employed in factories against excessive hours of labour. In short, although no law limits the hours of work for adult males, yet, as a matter of fact, no large employer of labour keeps his hands at work more than ten or twelve hours a day, while in small tailoring establishments a day of fourteen or fifteen hours is common when there is any pressure, and the poor needlewomen, shoemakers, or cabinetmakers, who do their work at home, often work all night to finish a piece of work and buy the much-needed bread.

Thus, in the trades affected by sweating, neither the establishments producing a costly article nor the large factory are touched. Where it is felt is in the manufacture of low-class goods made in the small workshop or at home.

Every one is agreed that the sweating system is the result of the small workshop and of home work, but this assertion is obviously too wide, and my readers will not be satisfied with it if they bear in mind Brown's forge in Birmingham, the cutlery workshops in Sheffield, and the jewellery manufactories. The few women who still make hand-made lace, and the female workers employed in making fine linen, are not liable to sweating either; and in their case, as we have seen, there is

a deficiency not of work, but of workers. They are paid moderately high prices, but very few are still capable of the artistic work required.

Before giving a sweeping verdict against home work and the small workshop, we must recollect that the fact of setting up business at home and of becoming a principal on a small scale, instead of a mere wage-earner, has always been considered as an advance, as a step forward, and that wherever a worker has had it in his power to reach this degree of independence he has done so. Gutteridge and Thom have proved it for us, and the inferior condition of the factory workers at the beginning of the present century shows clearly that the élite of the workers were then organised in small workshops or worked at home. It was not until the competition of machinery had definitely killed hand-loom weaving that weavers betook themselves to the factory.

Now here, obviously, the tools employed admit of the small workshop—for it exists—but they also admit of the prosperous small workshop, for all the small workshops and all those engaged in working at home are not victims of sweating even in the industries most affected.

Let us take cabinet-making as an example. Mr. Ernest Aves, who has published a detailed inquiry into this trade in Mr. Charles Booth's great work, estimates the proportion of cabinetmakers of all sorts working in the East End in small workshops averaging five persons at 80 per cent.<sup>1</sup> This leaves only 20 per cent for three or four factories employing from fifty to a hundred and ninety men, and for a certain number of important manufactories employing from fifteen to twenty-five men. Here, then, is a trade where the small workshop is far the most common case, and we already know what ravages sweating works there, but the evil does not extend to the whole trade.

In company with Mr. Aves I visited several cabinet-makers in the East End. I remember one in particular, a father working with his four children, who was far from exciting pity. He was not an artist, he was making ordinary furniture of good quality, especially those bedroom cupboards one side of which forms a wardrobe, while the other, which

<sup>1</sup> *Labour and Life of the People*, vol. i. pp. 326, 327.



is generally covered with a looking-glass, forms a cupboard with shelves. His house adjoined his workshop, which was a long wooden shed built among the out-buildings. He paid £45 a year for the lot, but finding himself rather short of room, he had rented at a little distance some small premises which served as a shop. By means of this extra outlay in rent he was able to keep a fair amount of furniture in stock, and to wait for a favourable opportunity to dispose of it. This man escaped sweating; the wholesale shops had no hold over him, and if he treated with them it was on equal terms. Of course he had a little capital, he was not in debt to the timber merchant, he could afford to wait for the return on his work and could advance his men their wages, nay, he had even burdened himself with a sensible increase in his rent to store his unsold furniture. In short, he was an efficient business man, fit to be at the head of a concern.

A second, a very good workman and a skilful carver, employed three men including his two sons. He complained greatly of the falling off of the trade. "No one wants first-class work," he said; "cheapness is everything, and men like me who make no rubbish have enough to do to get along. There is a carved-wood chimney-piece yonder which I have had more than a year without being able to get it off my hands." He pointed out to us two heads, inartistic in design but admirable in execution, supporting a chimney-piece surmounted by a large panel. Such articles do not belong to the regular trade, and a man who makes them, except to order, must have a sufficient margin of capital to enable him to wait for a considerable time for the price of his work. Our friend was not in this position; his shop was moderately bare, and he admitted himself discontented with his position. This is a man who has gone into business on his own account too soon, and if the kind of furniture he makes were of the kind sold in Curtain Road, he would lay himself open to sweating. However, wholesale houses do not care to burden themselves with costly articles, preferring to buy poor work, which has an easier sale. The small maker of expensive articles, who is unable to maintain his position as an employer of labour, is forced to give up business, a course which the man in question was preparing to take. He is so conscious of the draw-

backs of his position that he is trying to fit his children for something else. The youngest, who is the best carver, is at present working in a school to qualify himself for a situation as clerk.

In a lane quite close to the large shops of Curtain Road is a small workshop, consisting of a master and three men. The house is two storeys high and built of brick. All the ground floor is devoted to cabinet-making proper. Above, there are two small rooms, one used as a shop and the other for upholstering. Chairs, arm-chairs, and sofas are made, and they leave the frame bare, fit the springs, or finish them completely, according to the orders. The furniture is of ordinary quality, and has a ready sale. The master has the control of slender but sufficient resources, he keeps only a small stock, but he does not suffer from sweating in any marked degree, and maintains an equilibrium between his capital and the nature of his enterprise.

In short, sweating does not occur either among capable masters or even among incapable ones who turn out expensive articles. The first hold their own beyond the reach of the sweating system; the second disappear without being able to avail themselves of it for a precarious existence, being excluded from its sphere of influence by the very nature of the articles they manufacture.

On the other hand, the sweating system reigns triumphant where inefficient individuals produce at their own expense ordinary articles of inferior quality. Both these two conditions must be present—incapable masters and indifferent work.

How then, it remains to discover, can incapable masters maintain themselves at the head of workshops, no matter on how small a scale? Why do they not disappear before the competition of competent masters as they do under the factory system, and as we have just found that they do in the manufacture of luxuries?

Here we put our finger on the root of the matter. There exists in the industries liable to sweating, in cabinet-making in particular, a sum of conditions which determine the existence of an abnormal type of master, whom we may call the penniless employer.

Le Play justly applied the term "penniless landowner" to

the rural landowner placed in conditions such that he could not turn his bit of land to good account. The master with whom we are concerned is a master who cannot turn his trade to profit in the ordinary way. He has not the necessary means: he is a penniless employer.

The circumstances which give birth to this type of penniless employer fall under two heads, and their tendency is to make it extremely easy for a workman to set up as a master.

The first and least obvious cause is the division of labour resulting from the use of machinery. The cabinetmaker used formerly to make the whole piece of furniture himself in a small workshop, receiving his raw material in the form of planks or unsawn timbers. Consequently his task was a long one, and he needed money in hand in order to live while he executed it, as well as for a second purpose. All respectable houses laid in large stocks of wood, in order to supply sound articles which would not shrink, and consequently the master cabinetmaker had to allow a considerable sum for this purpose. To-day all that is changed. There are large steam sawmills in the East End which execute rapidly and cheaply a great deal of the preparatory work, whether rough or fine. They will cut undressed timber into stout planks, or make sixty sheets of veneer from a mahogany plank an inch thick. With small circular saws they cut out any shape of which a pattern is supplied. The motive power which drives them also controls turning lathes, on which are turned and modelled table legs and the columns and pilasters which enter into the ornamentation of a great deal of furniture. Consequently the cabinetmaker profits by the proximity of the sawmills for many details. Sometimes he gives an order to the manufacturer; sometimes, and this is the usual case, he rents a bench and goes there to work, availing himself of the motive power put at his disposition. A score of important establishments, and a hundred on a more modest scale, let benches to the cabinetmakers of the East End. Generally the same mills also do work to order, chiefly sawing jobs. As a type of an important sawmill, Mr. Aves cites one where the owner employs thirty men and lets the use of the motive power to one hundred and twenty others.<sup>1</sup> But whatever the combination employed by

<sup>1</sup> *Labour and Life of the People*, vol. i. p. 321.

the cabinetmaker, whether he gives out jobs or whether he goes to the mill himself to perform certain parts of his work, the total operation of making furniture is performed far more rapidly than formerly. Much less time elapses between the purchase of the raw material and the delivery of the finished article, and consequently the cabinetmaker requires much less capital. This is not all. Many of the mills belong to timber merchants, who offer to supply the cabinetmaker with parts of his work ready made, and keep in stock those most in demand. This is far more convenient than the old plan of keeping a stock of wood. The maker of expensive furniture, who must have dry and old wood, will perhaps remain faithful to the old custom if he has sufficient capital, but the majority buy planks dried by steam, as they require them, from some timber merchant who owns a mechanical saw, and supplies them in the required stage of preparation. The custom of buying wood at the time it is to be used is now so general among cabinetmakers that a retail trade has grown up to accommodate them. The wholesale merchant sells for cash, or perhaps gives credit to persons whom he can trust, while the small retail merchant supplies to cabinetmakers without capital the parts of the piece of furniture to be made, and waits for his money till it is sold.<sup>1</sup> There are also dealers in special lines—twenty merchants of veneer, for instance—and all this renders it less necessary for the master cabinetmaker to have money in hand, and makes it more and more easy for anybody to start for himself.

Mr. Aves estimates that many cabinetmakers start on their own account with a capital represented by £1 laid out in tools and £1 in cash—£2 in all. With double this sum they often employ a man and become masters.<sup>2</sup> Further, there is a class of small turners and cutters who undertake to execute details which cabinetmakers leave to them, and these are the principal persons who hire the motive force as already described. Here, too, very little capital is required to go into business, and the love of independence leads a large number to set up on their own account.

Thus the division of labour resulting from the use of

<sup>1</sup> *Labour and Life of the People*, vol. i. pp. 319, 320.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 323.

mechanical force has given the penniless employer a favourable chance of setting up for himself in this trade.

A second circumstance, acting in the same direction, is the increased demand. At first sight it would seem that the very opposite ought to have been the case, and that it is the inevitable tendency of a foreign custom and an export trade to create the large employer. This has, in fact, occurred in some cases, and a certain number of large furniture manufactories have been opened in the last forty years, but only three or four of these are in London, and the rest are in the country. The usual result has been the creation of large trading firms to meet the increased demand, and these firms act as middlemen between the purchaser and the small workshops. This combination is the result of an economic phenomenon which is not difficult to grasp. The conditions of labour in this trade make it easy, as we have seen, for the small employer to start in business, and such a man is unwilling to sink to the level of a mere wage-earner, except in return for some real advantage. Consequently it is more profitable to buy ready-made furniture from him, or to give him an order, than to get it made in a factory. This is why the furniture-dealer prefers to remain merely a distributor instead of becoming a producer, and this is how the great emporiums of Curtain Road have taken their rise.

These, in their turn, help the small workshop, the cabinet-maker who works at home, and the master without capital, by furnishing customers ready to purchase and pay ready money. Thanks to them, the cabinetmaker is enabled to realise at once the price of the article he has just finished. This encourages him to start business before he has the capital which would enable him to do so normally.

The sum of these conditions has determined the general feature of the sweating system, namely, the large number of penniless employers.

It is clear that a man without means, going to a merchant to sell any article whatever, is in the most disadvantageous position which it is possible to conceive. He must have money at once, and the merchant treats him as the usurer treats the ruined spendthrift.

The most revolting and characteristic form of sweating is

that popularly called "hawking" in the East End. It is chiefly practised by those who employ no one but themselves. When they are short of money they put their furniture on a truck and offer it for sale at the doors of wholesale shops, or even to passers-by. About Christmas, when work is slack everywhere, and when every Englishman thinks of the Christmas pudding, offers of this sort are more frequent, and goods are sold at two-thirds of their value.

This intense form of sweating gives rise to all the others. The merchant who can buy on such terms will not consent to pay high prices when he gives an order, and the man who executes it will in his turn underpay his workmen, and the wage of the unskilled labourer will be depreciated everywhere.

It is often supposed that sweating is due to the oppression of an inhuman master, but this is only its outward shape and not its original cause. It is frequently absent, and Mr. Charles Booth notes that in the trades affected by sweating masters have as a rule friendly relations with their men.<sup>1</sup> There is no great distance between them, they both suffer the same evils, and they are bound together by their common misfortune.

Others, who have taken this fact into consideration, have generally laid the responsibility of sweating upon the middleman, the wholesale dealer. This scapegoat is even more ill-chosen: he profits by the situation but does not create it, and this I think I have shown in the case of cabinet-making. If I had chosen a different trade for this study of the sweating system my conclusion would not have been altered.

In the boot trade, we have a chain of phenomena absolutely similar. In the first place, the whole trade does not suffer from sweating: the small workshop only is affected, while the large boot factory escapes. Among the small workshops, again, all do not suffer, only those with penniless employers. As in the case of cabinet-making, these penniless masters have arisen and multiplied owing to two recent causes. The first of these is the division of labour due to the introduction of machinery. The old type of shoemaker, who bought his stock of leather and made the whole boot, is quite the excep-

<sup>1</sup> *Labour and Life of the People*, vol. i. pp. 491, 492.

tion, and to-day the shoemaker buys ready-made uppers and sets up without capital. The second is the increased demand, which side by side with the large factory has created the large shop, which acts as a middleman between the purchaser and the small workshop. The two types correspond perfectly.<sup>1</sup>

The question of sweating has occupied many economists and sociologists, it has been discussed in congresses, pamphlets, and large works, and many remedies, generally legislative, have been proposed. The wisest minds demand a severe system of inspection of the hours of labour for women and children, and of the sanitary condition of small workshops. I do not deny that a certain number of cases of sweating might be reached in this way, but it is easy to understand that it would not succeed in destroying the evil. Mr. Charles Booth and Miss Beatrice Potter (Mrs. Sidney Webb), who are well acquainted with the subject of sweating, consider that the present inspection is insufficient, and that no appreciable result can be obtained till the responsibility of contravening the law is made to rest on persons who have more to lose than the small employer. Consequently, they propose to strike at the same time the merchant whose orders have caused the overwork or other abuse against which the law is directed and the owner on whose premises it takes place. The establishment of these responsibilities would be rendered easy by the compulsory registration of all orders, and such registration would greatly facilitate the task of the inspector, who at present has to discover what workrooms he should visit.

All this is ingenious, and I am far from despising these police measures. They have their value, for example, from the point of view of the hygiene of working-class dwellings, which amounts to saying that they are much needed in the East End, but I do not think they would succeed in remedying the chief feature of the sweating system, the insufficient remuneration of the labourer.

The system proposed would not prevent the cabinetmaker who works at home on his own account from hawking, nor

<sup>1</sup> See *Life and Labour of the People* for a study of Bootmaking by Mr. David F. Schloss (vol. i. pp. 241-308). On the question under discussion, consult in particular pp. 245, 246, 247, 253, 254, 257, 258.

from selling at a low price, and thus at the same time depreciating the value of labour in his own trade by competing with the regular factories. It would not deter the penniless employer from starting in business, and this, as we have said, is the characteristic mark of the sweating system. It is obvious that he would not be touched, and also that he cannot be touched. No one would propose to prevent a free citizen from making a table or a cupboard if he chose, nor from selling it if he had spent his last penny.

All that can be hoped from the most cleverly devised system of regulation is to render the establishment of small workshops difficult, but inasmuch as it cannot do away with the economic conditions which allow of the establishment of the incapable, it runs the risk of multiplying the number of men who work alone and are condemned to hawking.

It is true that by killing the small workshop it would indirectly favour the creation of large factories, but there again the present practice of the trade offers an obstacle to the aim of the reformers. If factories pay high wages they will attract workmen, but they will be unable to struggle against the competition of the cabinetmaker working at home. If they pay low wages, cabinetmakers will prefer to work in their own homes. If a man gives up his independence, it is because he is tempted by some compensation for a state of dependence. After all the legislation proposed, we have still to face the same fact.

This amounts to saying that no police regulations can do away with the sweating system, which is the result of technical conditions allowing the penniless employer to start business, and of social conditions producing indigence. It can only be thwarted in its expansion, like prostitution, vagrancy, and drunkenness.

However, what no police regulations can affect will perhaps be accomplished by a slight modification in the working of the trade. Supposing that to-morrow machinery were to play the principal part in the manufacture of furniture, so that this industry required fewer skilled workmen, as has already happened in so many other industries, the factory would straightway kill the small workshop, the men who work at home, and sweating.



When that day comes there will be a frightful crisis in East London, for the factories will be set up far from the great centres, in rural or suburban districts, where land is cheaper. The wave of the unemployed will be suddenly swollen in the former home of the small workshops. Nevertheless the crisis will be a happy one. It will divert from this focus of poverty and vice the ceaseless influx of population, and it will powerfully aid the efforts of those who are trying to develop a healthier physical and moral atmosphere.

Meanwhile all praise is due to those courageous spirits who are trying to bring about such a result. Every one has heard of Toynbee Hall and the People's Palace, but very few know of a crowd of other active institutions, all of which are endeavouring to give to the inhabitants of East London a taste for decent recreations, and to awaken in them a desire to elevate themselves. It is not in the power of such agencies, any more than of police regulations, to give a sudden death-blow to the lamentable results of sweating, but while the law only succeeds in preventing the external manifestation of certain evils, the personal ministry of men who devote themselves to the raising of their fellows puts those whom it touches beyond the reach of these evils. We shall return at the end of this work to this consoling side of the Labour Question. Here we need only note the beneficent influence thus exercised in the degraded surroundings where sweating is rampant. It goes to the root of the evil by reforming these surroundings, and by favouring the normal development of capacity of every sort.

The great lesson derived from this study of sweating is that nothing can absolve the workman from the need of personal worth. Even where the material conditions of labour make it easy for him to set up independently, he suffers cruelly unless he has the qualities necessary for such independence. That is the philosophy of the sweating system in a nutshell.

We commend this reflection to the generous dreamers who see the general solution of the Labour Question in the ownership of the means of production by the workers. Suppose an upheaval of society brought about this condition of things, and that the result produced here through natural causes were

obtained artificially, the outcome would be a gigantic sweating system. For true independence, there is something more important than material conditions, and that is the qualities which enable a man to retain it. In the course of this study we shall see that such independence is not impossible for the worker in the large factory, although the means of production do not belong to him.

## PART II

### THE LABOUR QUESTION IN MINES



## INTRODUCTION

### A SPECIAL CASE OF EVOLUTION—AN INDUSTRY ORGANISED ON THE MODERN SYSTEM AND A WORKER OF THE ANCIENT TYPE

EVERY one is aware how important a place mining occupies among British industries. 650,000 people are engaged in it, and the amount of coal extracted in a year in the United Kingdom represents about half the total quantity extracted over the whole surface of the globe. Further, the Labour Question has there assumed a peculiarly acute form. The miners' strikes have been among the most numerous and terrible, and the miners' Trade Unions are remarkably well organised and disciplined. In the late Parliament the miners were represented by men of great ability, enlightened champions of the claims of labour, ex-miners themselves, who had hewed coal in the collieries of the Midlands or of Northumberland, such as Thomas Burt, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, John Wilson, C. Fenwick, B. Pickard, to mention only the best known. This alone would entitle the subject of mines to a special study.

Mining, however, must be examined from another point of view in the series of trades which we are investigating. It has points of resemblance not only to the small trades practised by skilled workmen, but also to the factory system. The miner, by the simplicity of the tools he employs, by his conservative training, and his fidelity to his trade, belongs to the ancient type, while on the other hand the scientific nature of the work he directs, the vast capital employed, the enormous clientèle served, make the colliery owner a representative of the modern type, like the employer under the factory system. Thus

mining cannot be exactly classed either with the trades already studied or with the factory system, which will be examined later. It holds an intermediate place, and this curious dualism, this contradiction between the work of the master and the work of the men, is at bottom the greatest difficulty in the conflicts arising between colliery owners and their men. We shall find it everywhere. The Labour Question here assumes a special form, and encounters difficulties which are unknown in the same degree either in the small trades or under the factory system. Here as elsewhere the organisation depends on the conditions of labour, but nowhere else are the conditions of labour such as we find them here. It is important in the first place to determine them carefully by examining successively the work done by the employed and the work done by the employer.

## CHAPTER I

### WHY THE MINER HAS REMAINED A WORKER OF THE ANCIENT TYPE

#### I. *The Simplicity of the Tools.*

THE best plan is to see the worker at work, and this can be done by descending the nearest coal-mine. The pit to which I shall conduct the reader is situated in the Lothians. I chose it only because I have monographed a miner engaged in this colliery, and the details given here will serve to complete the description of the type which I shall present later.

I visited White Hill Colliery both by day and night, in order to acquaint myself with the different kinds of work performed there. The mine is most active during the day, from six in the morning to three in the afternoon. In the galleries the pony-drivers guide the horses which drag the loads of coal to the shaft opening. These drivers are lads of from twelve to sixteen, and only a little attention and care is required to execute the task without accident. Waggons which have to mount galleries at a steep incline are pushed by men, while others descend by their own weight on an endless rope system. The men employed at the windlass to regulate the descent of the waggons are, like the pony-drivers, possessed of no great skill. They are called drawers, a term which indicates with sufficient justice how closely their function approaches that of the beast of burden. Wherever the incline is too steep for horses, or wherever the gallery is too low to permit of their free movement, they are replaced by drawers.

Next there is the miner properly so called, the man who works at the seam of coal. His work is more or less that of

excavating or quarrying. He must have good strong muscles to wield his pick, and sufficient experience to know the best way of hewing the maximum quantity of coal in the minimum time. He is, of course, paid by the piece. To the trucks he fills he fastens a small wooden ticket bearing a number before he transfers them to the drawers or pony-drivers, and by this means it is easy to estimate his work when the coal is brought to the surface. His professional skill is measured by the amount of coal he hews, and it is for him to use his pick to the greatest advantage. I saw one who was attacking the coal from below. His method was to make a trench below, and then to introduce a crowbar between the topmost layer and the superincumbent rock. He then brought all his strength to bear upon it until the whole thickness, more than 3 feet, yielded, gave way, and broke, and nothing more remained except to fill the trucks. This method is much favoured in the White Hill Mine, owing to the fact that the coal is there almost everywhere enclosed by rock, and the neighbourhood of a resisting body to act as a fulcrum makes it possible to detach the coal by the use of a lever, which cannot be done in collieries where the coal rests on clay. We shall see further that the presence of rock gives the White Hill Colliery a special character, and that it exercises a considerable influence on the conditions of working.

I remained for some time near two other miners who were working at the bottom of a sort of low cul-de-sac. My guide and I crouched in a sufficiently uncomfortable position watching them while one of them lay on his side to undermine the coal with his pick, and the other prepared to bore into a layer of coal preparatory to blasting it. The lowness of the gallery did not permit of the process of crushing which we had just seen. In order to pierce the horizontal cavity for the powder as rapidly as possible, the second man used a simple and ingenious instrument, a strong drill, to which the requisite position was given by placing it on double iron uprights fitted with a rack, and clamped to the rock above and below. Thus he had not the trouble of directing his drill, and all his strength was available for using a handle and forcing the instrument into the coal.

The miner, of course, pays for the powder, as otherwise he



would be too apt to make it replace the muscular toil required to detach coal with the pick. As it is, it is for him to judge whether it will pay to use powder. At White Hill the employment of explosives is left to the discretion of the miner, the absence of fire-damp allowing of this course. The instruments used, pickaxe, crowbar, drill, etc., are the miner's own property. Most of them only possess a pick which costs 5s., and which requires to be attended to about once a fortnight at a cost of 6d. These details show the simplicity of the miner's outfit, which may easily be acquired at a small cost.

Machinery has, however, been tried. In one isolated part two men were at work with the aid of a coal-cutting machine—a sort of wooden frame running on rails by means of four wheels, and bearing on one of its sides a movable horizontal disk fitted with a number of miner's picks. By means of its wheels and the rails on which it runs, it can follow the direction of a gallery already opened, and can perform all along this gallery the sapping work which we saw done by the miner. The horizontal disk fitted with picks acts, in fact, like the disk of a mechanical saw. The coal-cutting machine I saw at White Hill Colliery is worked by means of compressed air conveyed through indiarubber tubing.

The two miners who were using it were engaged in the task of sapping about 60 yards of coal. It is obvious that this machine can be used only in a very limited number of cases. I believe the one I saw is the only one in use in White Hill Colliery, which employs about 300 men. Further, although it gets through a great amount of work when once set in movement, it requires from the men in charge of it a quantity of preliminary precautions involving considerable muscular labour on their part. First, they have to place rails in the given direction, using wedges to bring them to the required level, owing to the inequalities of the ground, and to fix them by means of wooden sleepers forced between the two horizontal walls; in short, to construct a rough but solid miniature railway. Nor are they at the end of their trouble when they open the tap admitting the compressed air and apply a mechanical force to their machine. It still requires to be guided. One man goes in front and one behind, and both grip with all their strength the two beams which form

the frame, and endeavour to diminish the terrible vibration, which shivers rails, wedges, and sleepers. At the same time they have to watch the machine's work, and be sure that it is cutting deeply enough into the seam of coal. Frequently the man in the rear turns off the compressed air, and with the aid of his companion devotes himself to the task of making good the damage done to the rails. Both are dripping with sweat, for the work is extremely laborious, and they are obliged to crouch the whole time for fear of striking their heads against the rock. The temperature too is very high, and their work is very different from that of the factory hand tending a machine without any muscular fatigue in a large and well-ventilated building.

However, a revolution would be effected in collieries if the coal-cutting machine were to come into general use. Skilled workmen would be required to work it, but the number would be far less than the number of miners now required to produce a given quantity of coal. It is useful, therefore, to remark that the machine can only be employed in a certain limited number of cases, and in galleries of sufficient length, which have previously been opened by the pick, and the bottom of which is exactly on the same level as the lower edge of the seam of coal. The most characteristic feature of the mines is that the coal is dispersed in irregular seams, that it is constantly intermixed with rock, clay, and other impurities, and that the miner's pick must continually be wielded with discernment. The machine lacks this discernment, it is essentially blind, and therefore it does not seem likely to have an important future in the extraction of coal. In any case its rôle at the present moment is a negligible quantity.

The pit wears a very quiet aspect during the work of the night-shift. It was half-past eight in the evening when I descended the Rosewell shaft. Except for the men in charge of the pumps and the cages, there was no one in the mine but stone-workers and road-makers, skilled workmen whose task is to remove the stone and construct the galleries. The extraction of coal is stopped, and nothing is done but road-making and work to facilitate the transport of coal to the foot of the shaft. The galleries are deserted. The manager, who conducted me, led me to the stables of the twelve ponies occupied by day in

transporting the trucks of coal; one was returning from work with his conductor, the others had gone to their carefully vaulted and paved subterranean stable when the men employed in the day-shift returned to the surface. We reached a small yard where three men were engaged in blasting a mass of rock in the upper part of a gallery in the course of construction. The two youngest took it in turn to pierce a blast-hole by means of a powerful drill. The elder was meanwhile engaged in making cartridges after a very primitive fashion. Sheets of newspaper rolled round a stick formed cylindrical envelopes into which he poured the powder. When the blast-hole had attained the right depth he introduced his cylinders of powder, and behind them a long thin iron rod which extended beyond the orifice. His place was then taken by the young men, who forced a clay plug into the hole behind the charge, and rammed it tight. The old man next withdrew the iron bar and replaced it by a fuse, to the end of which he set fire with his lamp. Then he seated himself several yards off in a lateral gallery, and advised us to follow his example. At the end of a couple of minutes the explosion took place, and the rock split horizontally, following the line of stratification. The nature of the rock lends itself admirably to this proceeding, as may be seen from the smooth and level form of the upper boundary of most of the galleries in the White Hill Colliery.

The stone-worker's task seems very simple, but it requires great experience to be done profitably. The object is not to bring down much rock, but to make an opening in a given direction of a given height and width. It is impossible to make the work pay without a thorough knowledge of the nature of the rock and the probable direction of the seams and fissures. The work can only be done by miners who have had long experience in extracting coal, and who possess a very superior power of judgment. Fisher, the Scottish miner whom I have monographed, is a stone-worker in the White Hill Mine. "I hewed coal for twenty years," he told me, "and I went through every variety of work in a mine before I was fit to be a stone-worker." He is a skilled worker of skilled workers.

The stone-worker, then, represents the aristocracy of the trade, the maximum of professional capacity, and time is required to reach this grade. A short apprenticeship, on the

other hand, is enough for the ordinary miner. According to Mr. Armstrong, the manager, who accompanied me through the colliery, a miner can learn his trade in two years. Apprenticeship is not organised and made compulsory as in many of the small trades we have studied. Muscular force is too all-important for men to be able to profit by their superior experience against younger men. Further, the trade is learned, so to speak, merely by seeing it done. The lad who goes down into the mine at the age of twelve as a pony-driver sees the men at work, he often helps his father to load his waggons, and as soon as he feels himself strong enough to wield the pick he tries his hand at hewing coal, and at last one fine day he does so on his own account and is a miner. In a similar way the young peasant learns to plough, to mow, and to reap: it is the method of apprenticeship suitable to very simple tasks.

## II. *The Miner's Trade is Conservative.*

A trade so easy to learn lends itself admirably to family apprenticeship, for the father always knows enough to show his son how to set about it. The lad will succeed well or ill according to the development of his muscles, his aptitude for thinking of the best methods of hewing, the rapidity of his movements, etc. An indifferent navvy can teach an active and vigorous youth the handling of the shovel and pickaxe, and make a good navvy of him. A miner is in the same position.

Consequently there is a natural tendency for a miner to teach his trade to his son and to take him down into the mine with him. This is strengthened by the circumstance that the miner is paid by the piece, and not by time; he is paid so much the truck, and it is to his advantage to get his son's help as soon as he reaches the age of twelve or thirteen. The practice is so usual that a miner's son is generally from his earliest years accustomed to underground labour, to the dreaded fire-damp, and to the heat and the thick air of the mine. Thus, unconsciously, he overcomes the obstacles which would deter from the work a young man of eighteen or twenty reared outside the mining districts.

Stone-workers' sons also, as a rule, go down into the mine

at an early age. Their father is no longer merely a piece-worker like the ordinary miner, but a sort of small contractor, who can give work not merely to a lad of fourteen who will help him to load his truck, but to a couple of sturdy lads of eighteen. The man we saw at work in White Hill Colliery directed a gang of three persons, including himself. A stone-worker, a friend and neighbour of Fisher's, told me he worked with his two sons, the eldest of whom was nearly eighteen. Thus the stone-worker has work ready for his boys; he keeps them with him as long as they find the partnership advantageous, and when they leave him they can engage as miners.

The pony-drivers are always young lads, as we have seen, and preference is given to the sons of men already engaged in the mine. Further, many mining villages are entirely peopled by miners' families, without the admixture of any other population. This is the case in particular at Rosewell, where all the houses, excepting the churches and schools, are owned by the Lothian Coal Company, who work the White Hill Colliery. Consequently the lads employed in the mine, who are of course obliged to live in the neighbourhood, are almost always miners' sons.

It is not merely the facility of finding employment near his home which impels the miner's son to embrace his father's profession. There is also the advantage of soon getting good wages, which is an advantage rare in any other industry. At the age of twelve he can already earn from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a day as pony-driver. Then when he feels himself strong enough he can help his father or become a regular miner in the capacity of charger, and at eighteen, if he is robust and vigorous, he will earn from 6s. to 8s. a day, and will have attained his maximum return.

The prospect of such prompt remuneration is a great attraction to an improvident and needy class, which does not stop to consider whether, when a miner grows old and sees his strength decrease, he will find himself in a less advantageous position than in his youth. They see only the immediate result which allows a child to earn a wage, and the proximate result which will render him independent at an early age. This circumstance acts disastrously upon the class of recruits, for it is not the picked members of a family who go down into

the mine. Fathers who are careful for the future of their children, and capable of making sacrifices to assure it, prefer to maintain their children longer, and to give them an apprenticeship less immediately advantageous than the miner's, and to throw them into some more open career, in which they have more chance of raising themselves. In studying the Fisher family we shall see that none of his sons go down the pit, although their father employs young men in his capacity of stone-worker, and would have derived an immediate material advantage from having his sons with him. One of them is employed as clerk in the colliery office, and another is serving his apprenticeship as a joiner. Fisher explained with a certain self-satisfaction why he had put his children out thus. It is indeed a clear proof of his pecuniary position, of the ease which reigns in his household, and of his grasp of the future.

The schoolmistress at Rosewell, Miss Thomson, who had been in the village for eighteen years, and who seconded me most usefully in my inquiry, made an interesting remark on this point. "Generally," she said, "it is the elder children who go down the pit; the younger ones are more likely to escape, and it is easy to understand why. When a miner has a numerous family his expenses are considerable at the outset. The eldest boy reaches the age of twelve or thirteen, and has seven or eight brothers and sisters behind him, his father's wages are barely adequate to fill so many mouths, and it is a great relief to set the lad to earn 10s. or 12s. a week as a pony-driver. It is an appreciable resource, and almost necessary to make both ends meet. On the other hand, when the elder ones are doing for themselves, or paying so much out of their wages towards the joint expenses, a certain ease reigns in the family, and parents can more easily maintain the younger children during a burdensome apprenticeship. Then they are ambitious to put them into business, or to send them into a trade or a factory, as engineers, for example."

Of course such ambition bears no fruit except among the more capable, who know how to regulate their expenditure by their income, and to make things easy at home. Those who drink and gamble, and these are not a few, are never in a position to make the sacrifices necessary to attain this end,

and their sons all go down the pit as soon as they are old enough to earn a wage.

Thus the families in a mining village may be classed according to the occupation of the children. The best organised and most prosperous families, like Fisher's, tend to bring up their sons outside the mining class, and are able to do so. Average families only attain this result in the case of the younger children, and the less well equipped send all their children down the pit. Thus it will be seen that I was right in saying that the recruits are not the highest type, a fact which we shall often have occasion to remark.

For a moment I wish to confine myself to one aspect of the fact, the conservative character of a trade constituted in the way we have just seen. A miner can always say to himself, "If I don't know what to do with my boy I'll make a miner of him." If he does not concern himself much about the future, if he allows himself to be guided by circumstances, if, in a word, he lacks initiative, it is all but certain that his son will go down the pit at the age of twelve or thirteen, and will remain there all his life, unless he possesses in a high degree the qualities which his father lacked. Miners are recruited then, as a matter of course, from the least provident, the least capable, the least open to initiative. They are conservative in a bad sense, following meekly along the beaten track, without looking either to the right or to the left, to see whether there might be a short cut across country, or whether it would pay to make a road in the opposite direction. In this they resemble the skilled workmen in the small trades, whom we have seen clinging obstinately to the past without providing for the future. Often they are even worse, owing to the small amount of scope their work gives to any latent inventive faculties they may possess. The workers in the small trades are often ingenious and on the look-out, and ready to adopt any technical improvements. The miner's work never changes, it does not appeal to his intelligence, and plunges him into routine.

To this it must be added that in many mining centres the production of coal has grown for half a century in the same proportion as the mining population has increased, and consequently no need for leaving the trade has yet made itself felt. There is

a balance between the demand for workers and the supply. Consequently it is an easy matter for the adherents to custom to argue that it is better to make their sons miners, and ensure them high wages at an early age, than to leave them to run the risks of some other profession. This reasoning would commend itself not only to the improvident but to the prudent, and in fact it has done so, and their practice has in its turn strengthened the authority of tradition. Hence we find families where the ascendants, descendants, and collaterals are all miners. "My father, my grandfather, and all my brothers have worked in the pit," said Mr. Stanley, secretary of the Midland Miners' Federation, himself an ex-miner. Fisher said substantially the same thing, and both agreed in regarding this not as an exception but as a general rule. Few artisan communities in England are so stable as mining communities. Even in families where the father is a member of one of the small trades, involving the possession of an exceptionally high degree of technical skill—as, for example, the Birmingham glassworkers and the Sheffield cutlers—the children are less inclined to embrace their father's profession than among the miners. The very limitation of the number of apprentices renders it difficult for all the children of a family to be absorbed by the father's trade, and further, the glassworkers and cutlers live in perpetual contact with workmen of every kind. Both at Birmingham and Sheffield the variety is great. In a mining village, on the contrary, there are only miners or persons employed by the mine, such as carpenters or mechanics, and everybody, from the pony-driver to the village retail trader, gets his living directly or indirectly from the mine. The frame is infinitely more narrow and the young man has less chance of raising himself.

I fancy that these and no more mysterious causes are all that is needed to explain "the attraction of the mine," a term which is often used to explain the persistence of the miner's calling in certain families. The pit pays well and it pays soon, and miners' sons, who are already strongly attracted towards the calling for these two reasons, are further influenced by being reared in an environment where there is no horizon beyond the pit, except for a few capable and ambitious parents. Is not this explanation enough?



However, this expression, "the attraction of the mine," which supposes in some curious way the occult influence of some subterranean fairy, is a useful one to retain as the fanciful and fantastic statement of a real phenomenon. At first sight, the stranger, overwhelmed by the idea of descending 1600 or 2000 feet below the surface, asks how human beings can condemn themselves to live and work in these dark and hollow depths, braving the dangers of fire-damp, of falling in, of flooding, etc. It is then that the phrase, "mysterious attraction," suggests itself to him, through the personal repulsion which he himself feels for a calling so little akin to his habits. "A man must have been brought up to it," he thinks, and there he is right, for it is but rarely that miners are recruited from among workers of other trades.

At Rosewell the bulk of the population consists of descendants of former miners, who, as long ago as last century, worked the veins of coal nearest to the surface for the sake of fuel. Later, when a scientific and reasoned system of working took its rise, it was necessary to augment the number of workers very largely. The colliery owner brought a large number from Ayrshire, where he had other collieries, while the farmers near Rosewell supplied him with others, and the other mining centres of Fife and the Lothians also sent a contingent, so that it was from among miners and their near neighbours that the staff of workers was obtained. There are also at Rosewell a fair number of Irish families, forced by agricultural distress to emigrate in search of work of any kind, but it is a well-known fact that these families for the first generation furnish workers at the surface only. Only their children, who have been educated with miners' sons, become workers in the pit itself.

The calling is thus conservative in two senses; first, because it is exercised as a matter of course, without the intervention of personal initiative, by miners' sons; secondly, because it is repugnant to any others.

The circumstance, however, which gives the miner his own peculiar physiognomy and distinguishes him clearly from all other workers is his fidelity to his trade.

### III. *The Miner's Fidelity to his Trade.*

"A collier is always a collier," said Miss Thomson, speaking of the Rosewell people, and Fisher's history gives a curious confirmation to this local adage. Not content with remaining a collier at home in the Lothians, Fisher has worked in collieries in America, both in Ohio and Pennsylvania. He possesses sufficient energy to change his country, but he has never dreamed of changing his trade. It must be noted that his exodus to the United States was not the sudden fancy of a young man who wanted to see the world, but the carrying out of a serious and reasoned project. Like many miners, Fisher married young, and had already four children when he went to America. He had heard from relations of his wife settled in Pennsylvania that wages were high in the Pittsburgh mines, and this was what led to his decision.

"Well then," I said, "why did you come back to Rosewell? It was true enough, and you must have found yourself well paid over there." "Yes, but the climate did not suit my wife and she had terrible headaches." It was not difficult to recognise in this reply one of those false, or at any rate secondary, reasons which most people give in answer to a question, either from want of reflection or to avoid too searching an inquisition. It was during one of my first interviews with Fisher, and the ice was not quite broken, so that I had to content myself provisionally with Mrs. Fisher's headaches to account for her husband's return. Some days later, as he often talked of America, I said to him, "Come, you seem to want to see some of your children go to the United States; you have relations who have done well there, you are a good worker and a steady family man, why then did you prefer to return to Scotland instead of settling in Pennsylvania or Ohio?" "Ah," he replied, "if I had been anything but a collier I think I should have got on over there and should have stayed. As a collier a man earns twice the wage he gets here, but at the end of the year he is not a bit better off."

Nevertheless, Fisher does not complain of the cost of living in America, for he recognises that if rents are higher than in Scotland, and if clothing is much dearer, yet food on the other

hand is cheap, so that the sum total of his expenses was not materially increased. "What kills the worker," he said, "is that employment is not steady."

It is easy to understand this impression in a miner, who is accustomed to throw in his lot with the pit in his village, who has entered the trade because of the family tradition and because of lifelong familiarity with it, and who is consequently little disposed to try something else when the pit can no longer supply him with work. In America industrial depression is frequent, and markets change, disappear, and reappear with prodigious rapidity. There, even more than in modern Western Europe, more even than in England, a man must be always ready to change his trade. Clearly this is not the place for a conservative and specialised workman. At the first crisis of interrupted work in Pennsylvania, Fisher went to Ohio, where he no doubt hoped to find a mining centre less subject to these shocks. Experience soon showed him that in this Ohio resembled Pennsylvania, and he wrote to Mr. Hood, the head of White Hill Colliery, saying that, as his wife suffered from very severe headaches, he was willing to return to Rosewell if he were assured that he could resume his work. Mr. Hood, who had a high opinion of him, and is a kindly master, not only replied that he would gladly receive him, but added that, if he had not sufficient money to pay the passage for himself and his family, he would be glad to advance it.

Such was the Prodigal Son episode in Fisher's life. He had allowed himself to be tempted by the bait of \$50 a month, the sum earned by a Pittsburgh collier when trade is brisk. He had not observed the lurking danger of irregular employment, and believed that it was only necessary to be a first-class workman in order to be sure of \$50 a month. Of these he would spend \$30, put \$20 aside, and get rich. But when he saw himself out of work for months at a time, he found the reality very different from his dream. I do not know whether he kept swine, though it is quite likely, but he told me that during one critical period he had been thankful to work for a farmer for \$1 a day.

In short, Fisher was not ripe for America—he was too much a workman of the ancient type, the skilled workman

bound to his trade—and he did well to return. His children, whom he has wisely kept away from the mine, and thus despecialised, have friends and acquaintances in America, and several of them will no doubt go there to seek their fortunes, and will do well.

Fisher gave me an account of one of his uncles, a Scottish miner like himself, who went to the United States and succeeded. The story is interesting, because it shows, by a contrary example, the permanence of the collier's specialism. This uncle arrived in Ohio at a favourable moment, succeeded in saving considerably out of his wages during the first few years he was there, soon became underground manager, and found himself in a position to buy a farm in Ohio, on which he settled with his family. Nevertheless, in this transformation of the miner into the landlord, the miner persisted, for the principal motive which influenced him in the choice of his farm was that it contained important coal deposits, and to-day the income of this so-called farmer is still derived from coal. I asked Fisher if he knew of many examples of English miners settling in America. "No," he replied; "not a great many miners settle in the States, although many go to the pits in Pennsylvania and Ohio." I was not surprised, for most colliers are like Fisher, and are ill suited to a country where circumstances do not as a rule allow of the uninterrupted exercise of any trade. Like Fisher, they are not ripe for America.

In the course of my inquiry in Great Britain, I often met men who had crossed the Atlantic and spent more or less time in the United States, and I never failed to question them in detail as to what they had done over there, the impression they had brought back, and the sympathy or antipathy they felt for American ways. Their replies invariably threw considerable light upon their degree of specialisation. The workman of the ancient type, the clever artisan bound to his trade, proud of his technical skill and determined not to lower himself by undertaking work of an inferior grade, had never anything but contempt for America. My readers will remember the contemptuous expression of the London plumber of whom I inquired why his comrades did not seek openings for their technical skill in the large American cities if work was scarce

in England. "They only do rough work over there," he replied. At an evening school in Birmingham I saw a smith who had spent some time in Philadelphia with his son, and had returned very much out of love with it. "I was like a child," he said. "I knew nothing about my trade; everything that I knew how to do with my hands they did by machinery. So here I am back in dear old England, and I shall not leave it again in a hurry to look for work elsewhere." Poor man! he did not see that his dear old England is on the way to grow young again very quickly, and if God grants him life, he will probably see the odious American practices adopted in English workshops. Where then will he turn to find a refuge for his specialism? A degree higher come Fisher and his congeners. For them work is the same in England and in the United States, but they are stopped by the greater unsteadiness of employment. I have often met Anglo-Saxon emigrants in the United States who were not stopped either by the roughness of the work or by the variety of occupations, and who always managed to make the best of what came their way. Such men succeeded and promptly became American, and were never again seen on the banks of the Thames. They were completely despecialised. We shall see in the course of this work how the modern conditions of the factory system force the worker more and more towards this type, how the despecialised are the best fitted to profit by the future in England, just as they are the only men capable of profiting by the present in America.

To return to our miners, it is obvious that their specialised character is a great obstacle to their prosperous settlement in the United States, and I have already pointed out some of the circumstances which tend to produce this character in them. I have analysed the expression, "the attraction of the mine," which states without explaining the attachment of the collier to his trade.

In conclusion, I must recall an important circumstance which comes in to strengthen the indissolubility of the union between the mine and the miner. This circumstance is the isolation of many mining villages. Rosewell is a good example of this; all the houses belong to the Company, and not only does the population consist exclusively of miners without any

admixture of other trades, but the miner is himself a miner without any tinge of any other occupation. He is, in fact, as much bound to the subsoil as the serf of the Middle Ages was bound to the soil, and is perhaps more exclusively a miner than the serf was a labourer. Consequently his specialised character becomes very highly marked. At Rosewell there is a brickyard connected with the mine and carried on by the same Company, but its presence does not affect to any appreciable extent the phenomenon in question. It employs chiefly children and workers at the surface, generally Irish. In times of interrupted work it could not give work to the colliers, supposing they asked for it.

Thus isolated, thus penned up in his mining village, the collier has fewer opportunities than most other workers of quitting the trade which he entered in accordance with the family tradition, and in which he is tempted by habit to remain. Here, then, is a numerous population, compact and inert, depending on the colliery for its means of existence.

On the other hand, these collieries cannot be worked under existing conditions without the assistance of large capitalists and clever engineers. We shall now see how this assistance is rendered, and examine a new aspect of the question. So far we have shown the simple and conservative character of the work on the collier's side. On the master's side, on the contrary, it is complicated and progressive.

## CHAPTER II

### WHY THE CONTROL OF THE MINES IS OUT OF THE COLLIER'S REACH

IN the majority of those trades organised on the old system which we have already examined, there is no great distance between the master and the man, and it can be easily covered. Nay, we have frequently met the type of master workman working with his own hands in the small workshop under his direction. Brown is such an example, and among the cutlers, the jewellers, the cabinetmakers the phenomenon is common, as it was formerly among customary weavers. This position of master workman was the goal of the worker's ambition and his way of rising in the world, and we have seen, in the cases of Gutteridge and Thom, with what persistence he sought to better himself on these old lines, even when new conditions barred his way and opened a vast field of activity to the capable organiser of labour.

There is no parallel case in the mining world. We have seen the forge for the smith, the hand-loom for the weaver, we shall not see the mine for the miner. This motto, it is well known, has led to fruitless attempts in France, at Monthieux and at Rive-de-Gier. We shall not meet with such attempts either in England or in Scotland, for they are opposed to English good sense. The truth is that, while the collier remains a worker of the ancient type because of the extreme simplicity of his tools, the functions of the employer have become extremely complex, and demand abilities of a high order. To rent collieries he must have a large command of capital; to work them on scientific principles he must possess

technical knowledge difficult of acquisition and large resources ; and thirdly, to make them a commercial success he must be a man of first-rate business capacity. Such endowments far exceed the qualities which make a thrifty, well-informed, and energetic workman. The distance between master and man is very great, and although cases may be found of men covering this distance and becoming employers, yet they cease at once to be workers. The two functions are incompatible.

Let us now observe in the colliery we are studying the organisation of the three complex functions of the master—ownership, the direction of the work, and the distribution of products—and the consequences of this organisation on the social condition of the working population.

### *I. Colliery Ownership and the Rights of the Landlord.*

White Hill Colliery, like the village of Rosewell, is part of the White Hill estate. In Scotland, as in England, the owner of the soil is equally the owner of the subsoil, and there is no exception to this principle in the case of mines, such as has been made in France under the system of concessions introduced by the law of 1810.

Nevertheless, the family which owns the estate has absolutely nothing to do with the working of the mine, which is farmed to the Lothian Coal Company for a royalty of 3d. on every ton of coal extracted. The royalty represents the right of the owner of the soil to the products of the subsoil. In some cases it may amount to as much as 6d. a ton, or even in very exceptional cases to 1s., when the exclusive right of working is combined with a rare quality of coal. At other times the owner receives in kind a tenth, twelfth, twentieth of the raw produce. In this case he becomes a merchant, and is directly interested in the trade in coal. Sometimes, but very rarely, it happens that the owner of the soil works the mine, and thus becomes a master collier.

In the present case the owner of the soil and the colliery owner are quite distinct persons. The laird, who has been compensated for the occupation of his land in a very advantageous way by the payment of the royalty, has no contact with the mining population, and no share in the direction of



the work. Even supposing he wished to do so, his financial position would not allow him to take any important part in opening up the mine, for the estate is heavily mortgaged. We are in the presence of a great lord without resources at his command. This situation is not unknown among the English aristocracy, although, thanks to the constant influx of fresh blood, it is rarer than among the aristocracies of the Continent. Some peers who own collieries are among the wealthiest men in the country, as for example the Marquis of Bute, said to be the largest coal-owner in the world.

The usufruct of the mine belongs to Mr. Hood, founder and director of the Lothian Coal Company, who until recent years worked White Hill Colliery entirely at his own expense. While the laird possesses only a sort of suzerainty, expressed by the royalty, Mr. Hood exercises a real authority over the population of Rosewell, and is generally spoken of as "the master." It is he, in fact, who fills the position of owner and master, and it is owing to his command of capital that he is enabled to work the mine and to utilise the wealth it contains.

Every one knows that the opening up of a colliery demands a large command of ready money. White Hill Colliery offers special advantages from this point of view, but nevertheless it is not difficult to see that the general expenses with which it is loaded, and the preparatory work which must be undertaken before the extraction of coal can be begun, represent a large outlay. The seam at present worked lies at an average depth of about 350 feet below the surface. This is a most favourable condition, for generally it is necessary to descend much lower to find coal.

Through the occurrence of a somewhat rare geological formation, another seam occurs below the first, about 3000 feet below the surface. Mr. Hood, from whom I had the information, adds that this seam is of sufficient thickness to supply coal for 600 years at the present rate of extraction. Supposing that the carboniferous deposits of England and Scotland are destined to be completely exhausted, this would be one of the last to supply coal. Think of a man without capital owning such an unavailable treasure buried 3000 feet below the surface! Whenever the Lothian Coal Company think it expedient to search for this lower seam, it will be necessary, before

obtaining any saleable produce, and without any immediate profit, to undertake boring operations, as well as others of an extremely costly character.

Meanwhile, although the necessary works preliminary to working the upper seam have long been executed, yet there are accessory works which constantly need to be undertaken, and which involve a serious outlay. Owing to the rocky nature of the subsoil, most of the galleries require no timbering, but as a set-off they cost a very large sum to cut.

The constant pumping too is a very expensive process. If the White Hill pit escapes the dreaded fire-damp, yet as a set-off it has more than others to reckon with the permanent danger of flooding. A powerful steam pump, capable of pumping 700 gallons a minute, is kept at work night and day, and is reinforced by three other pumps worked by compressed air or by electricity, which bring the water from different parts of the mine.

Further, there is the need for ventilating shafts and apparatus, the descending gear, waggons, rails, etc., the horses employed for draught, the trucks for loading coal, and the construction and upkeep of the line connecting the pit with the North British Railway. It may thus be seen that the machinery required by the master is as complicated as that of the collier is simple. The latter comes to the pit with his five-shilling pick, but he could not use it except for the large capital devoted by the master to opening up the mine, and to meeting the general expenses in connection with it.

Nor is this all. The Lothian Coal Company not only owns the mine, but also the houses of the men, which is necessary, given the situation of White Hill Colliery. There is no centre near the pit, and the village of Rosewell owes its existence entirely to the working of the coal seam. There was nothing there before but a single farm and its out-buildings. Hence it follows that the number of houses is exactly proportional to the number of miners, and every occupier is necessarily a miner or is connected with the mine in some capacity or other. The Company has had to construct all the dwellings, and when a miner leaves its service he does not receive the last fortnight's wages until he has given up the key.

The isolation of White Hill Colliery consequently renders it

almost impossible for the miner to own his home. Not a single Rosewell miner does so. This is not the case in districts where the pits are very near each other—in the Midlands, for instance, and especially in the Black Country, where a collier can work in several different pits without changing his abode. The villages are numerous and form an almost uninterrupted string, and the masters are consequently freed from the responsibility of lodging their men without the latter having any difficulty in finding quarters. The miner prefers to settle in a centre where he can find employment under several different masters, rather than in a village where he is dependent on the success of a single colliery. This phenomenon is still more marked in the cases where beds of coal are surrounded by a ring of factories, and round which veritable towns have sprung up. At Sheffield, for instance, with a population of 350,000 persons, I have seen pits right in the town. In Wolverhampton, Stafford, and on the outskirts of Glasgow, Manchester, or Birmingham, the phenomenon is a common one. Between Birmingham and Wolverhampton you never for a moment lose sight of factory chimneys, long uniform rows of working-class dwellings, and great roofs of corrugated iron covering enormous workshops, and from time to time you see emerging from huge heaps of refuse and of blackened *débris* the great wooden scaffolds with wheels on the top which mark the mouth of a shaft.

Miners who work in collieries of this sort often succeed in acquiring their own houses. It is a recognised form of investment among the more thrifty to buy two, three, or sometimes even five or six houses, which they let to less lucky comrades. To the same extent that the possession of the homestead is a fortunate circumstance for a family is the exploitation of house property by a workman attended by disadvantages. He is generally hard upon his tenant, does none but the most indispensable repairs, and cares little about hygienic conditions. Sanitary inspectors denounce him as a serious obstacle to the sanitary reform of artisan quarters, and some sociologists see in his conduct a form of sweating. One day, when I was expressing to Mr. Sidney Webb, of the London County Council, my opinion that it was a desirable thing for a workman to have the power of acquiring his homestead, he replied, "I would

rather see the whole of London in the hands of half a score of dukes like the Duke of Westminster than divided among a multitude of small landlords. If a working man owns his own house he can buy his neighbour's as well, and thus become a sweater." I ought to say that I am still of the same opinion, in spite of the danger pointed out by Mr. Sidney Webb. Nevertheless this danger does exist, but the formation of Building Societies to enable working-class families to acquire the homestead they inhabit will probably remedy it more successfully than any collectivist schemes could possibly do.

Wherever conditions of isolation exist analogous to those which have been pointed out in the case of the White Hill Colliery, the wish of Mr. Sidney Webb is found to be realised naturally by the force of circumstances. Rosewell, like the mine itself, belongs entirely to the Lothian Coal Company, and the miners' houses are satisfactory. But the village, like the mine, belongs to the Company, subject to the rights of the owner of the soil, and the ground on which it is built forms part of the White Hill estate, and is feued to the Company.

Feuhold, so far as I can gather, corresponds to the perpetual holding of old French law. English law does not recognise feuhold, and landlords who rent land to persons who wish to build a house generally adopt the leasehold system, that is to say, a lease for a long term of years. They grant the tenant the enjoyment of the soil for ninety-nine years at a small rent, but at the end of that period the land returns to them, with all buildings and improvements. It is in this way that certain wealthy families have acquired the ownership of entire quarters of London. In Scotland, under the system of feuing, the landlord derives an immediate profit from the bargain, but this profit does not go on increasing; it is invariable, it does not accumulate for ninety-nine years in the tenant's hands.

The Lothian Coal Company, therefore, in addition to all the other expenses just enumerated, has to pay an annual rent to the laird of White Hill for the ground on which the village is built.

This is not in any way exceptional in Scotland. There, as in England, the soil belongs to a small number of privileged families, and if these families become impoverished, they are

succeeded by others newly enriched and glad to enrol themselves in the landed aristocracy. Thus, where an individual great landowner disappears, natural causes lead to the re-consolidation of large estates.

Hence it follows that almost all mining companies are subject to a suzerainty expressed by the payment of rents and royalties. These charges are repugnant to modern ideas, and are the object of forcible criticism about which a few words must be said.<sup>1</sup> Royalties in particular are much disliked by miners' Unions. If the companies had not to pay royalties, they argue, they could increase the miners' wages. This is the first reason for opposition to royalties.

From another point of view, the spectacle of fortunate landlords, drawing a considerable profit every year without risking a farthing of capital, or taking the smallest part in the working of the colliery, is one calculated to excite envy. When these landlords are numerous, as in France, or when it is easy to become a landlord, as in the United States, envy is tempered by the secret hope which each one cherishes of profiting in his turn by a similar piece of good luck. It is a lottery in which everybody can take a ticket, and the fascination of the prize blinds men to the inequality of the chances. In England, and still more in Scotland, all increased value given to the land benefits the aristocracy exclusively, a very small minority of large landed proprietors. If a pit is opened, if a town grows, if an industry develops and covers the fields with factories, it is the landlord who will reap the indirect benefit of the enterprise, it is to him that the royalty will be paid, it is he who will dispose of the land he holds to his own advantage for the construction of workshops, shops, and houses.

<sup>1</sup> Seigniorial rights of very varied kinds are found in Scotland in lands held in feu. For example, I grant a man a feu of a piece of land, of which he becomes the owner, and of which he has the usufruct, as long as he pays the stipulated right, and this usufruct he is at liberty to sell. In that case I levy a *casualty*, which is generally fixed at twice the annual rent.

Casualties are very unpopular, and give rise to difficulties of all sorts, and several landlords have consequently given facilities for redemption to the feuer. A recent law allows the feuer to free himself on given conditions. Only the feu, that is to say, the original ground annual, cannot be commuted at will. The law is entitled *The Conveyancing (Scotland) Act, 1874, 37 and 38 Victoria, passed 7th August 1874*. The sections dealing with *casualties* are sections 15 to 24 inclusive.

Under the influence of these circumstances, the idea has sprung up and spread that although the land, modified by the work of culture, is the legitimate property of the landlord whose predecessors have executed this work, yet the subsoil, which they had left untouched, which they had not had in view when buying the land, ought to belong to the nation.

Such a conception is absolutely foreign alike to Saxon and Norman traditions, which make the lord of the soil lord and master of all that goes with it, and which grant him not only the free disposition of its products, but also the administration of interests of every sort arising out of it, which institute the freeholder, the sovereign of the land. It marks the profound modification undergone by British ideas and customs since the territorial aristocracy yielded the first place to the industrial and commercial aristocracy. To-day a large estate is a luxury, the consecration, so to speak, of a fortune already acquired, and no longer a means of acquiring one. The landlord who makes a fortune does so not through the direct product of cultivation, but through the indirect product made off the land when any industry is established.

The movement of opinion against royalties is, therefore, the expression of an undoubted change in the social condition of England; it corresponds to a new position of affairs, and deserves to be considered otherwise than as a mere theory of the ideologist. Both the Saxon and the Norman tradition, it is true, granted to the owners of the soil the rights and prerogatives of power, but they also imposed its responsibilities upon them. The owners of the soil undertook at one and the same time the work for the good of the nation, the national defence, and the public service: they were cultivators, warriors, judges, and administrators. To-day work for the good of the nation no longer consists exclusively of agriculture—mining, and still more industrial pursuits, come into the category—and much of it consequently has passed out of the hands of the owners of the soil; national defence has been quite a dead letter since the institution of standing armies; working men have been appointed magistrates in the towns, and the magistracy is no longer exclusively in the hands of the land-owning class, except in the country, where justices of the peace are recruited from this class; the administrative control which

was retained until lately by the Quarter Sessions has been entrusted, since the passing of the Local Government Bill, to elective County Councils, and a recent law has just instituted Parish Councils to replace the squire's authority. Finally, on the highest rung of the ladder, the political position of the House of Lords is seriously menaced. The realities of political power have thus passed into new hands at the same time as the new sources of influence derived from labour. The holders of the soil no longer represent the collective interests of the nation. A new nation has been formed, of which they are part, but it no longer confounds itself with them.

It is to this new nation that the majority of the attributes of government are now transferred, and one of these attributes is the right of suzerainty over things which do not positively belong to any one. The law of 1810, which related to mining property in France, rests on the legal fiction that the State, representing the nation in its collective capacity, has a right to dispose of the riches of the subsoil. Perhaps we shall some day see the State in England acquire the rights of the present owners of coalfields, and place them under an analogous régime. That day will see the end of royalties.

Meanwhile, the Trade Unions are carrying on a vigorous agitation against them. Their sentiments may be judged from the very absolute statement made to me by Mr. Stanley, the secretary of the Midland Counties Miners' Federation. "Royalties, as they now exist," he said, "are absurd. They ought to belong to the nation."

After such a sharply-defined opinion on the subject of royalties, I waited to hear the speaker express analogous ideas with regard to the property of mining enterprises, and to hear him defend the position of "the mine for the miner," but I was reckoning without the English good sense which generally intervenes to prevent a principle from being pushed to its logical conclusion. To my great astonishment, I was obliged to explain to Mr. Stanley what German and French socialists mean by this expression, whereupon he remembered having heard it at International Congresses at which he had been present. However, without attaching any importance to projects of which he saw no practical outcome, he contented himself with replying, "I don't see how that could be managed."

After the facts I have set forth, I am glad to call a witness on the point who is above suspicion. Mr. Stanley is right; the collier cannot aspire to become his own master and to own the pit in which he works. It is out of his reach by the very fact of its importance and by the amount of capital required to start it. Nor is money everything. Not only is a colliery very expensive, but it cannot be worked without special knowledge. For this, ordinary every-day abilities are as insufficient as a workman's savings would be to meet the working expenses. If we see the masters at work we shall learn that it is by their technical knowledge, still more than by their command of capital, that they differ from their men, although the second point serves to measure, in a very impressive manner, the distance which separates the two.

## II. *Scientific Mining and the Training of Mining Engineers.*

It would indeed be superfluous to insist upon the necessity for special technical knowledge in those who undertake to direct mining operations. But the process by which a man becomes a mining engineer in England is so different from that in France, and the profession of a mining engineer is so much more open to the men, that a Frenchman might be tempted to think there is less difference from this point of view between the English miner and his employer than between the French miner and his employer. This, however, is not so, for although the English method offers the men more facilities for rising, yet in reality it is only an infinitesimally small number of picked men who can profit by it. The road is freer but the ascent remains difficult.

Two kinds of engineers are found in English collieries, one resembling the ordinary type of French engineer and the other trained under a very different system. White Hill Colliery presents examples of both.

Mr. Hood, director of the Lothian Coal Company, lives at Rosewell, in a pretty little place of his own, a few hundred yards from the village. During the day he is generally to be found in the office of the colliery, unless business calls him elsewhere. Thus he lives in constant contact with his men, and at the same time he is a thorough gentleman, with a fund



of agreeable general conversation. He was educated abroad—in Belgium, Germany, and subsequently in France—and has travelled widely. This has modified his English character, and given him a frankness and affability very unlike the stiffness of which his countrymen are so often accused.

Mr. Hood studied at the School of Mines at Mons and at a German university, and completed his technical education by practical studies in different countries. He spent three months at Aubin, in the rich coal basin of Rouergue, six months in Spain, and has visited collieries in Brazil, Australia, and New Zealand. He has also mastered several foreign languages, and speaks French and German fluently, as well as a little Spanish.

Such a combination of qualities makes a sharp distinction between an engineer and his men. Mr. Hood's education is quite unlike that of the ordinary working man, and implies that his parents possessed pecuniary means quite out of the reach of working-class families. He is an engineer in the French sense, with the additional English characteristic of extensive foreign travel and prolonged residence abroad.

Mr. Hood's father, however, who is now at the head of several collieries, did not attain his position by such means. At the age of ten he was working at the surface, and is entirely a self-made man, so that there are other modes of becoming an engineer than those which were at his son's disposal.

In my visits to the mine I was accompanied by Mr. Armstrong, who is also a self-made man. He never wielded the pick, but he has been employed in mines since his childhood. He has not only a practical knowledge of all branches of the work, but he has also been able to make a living by the use to which he has put it. His elementary education enabled him to survey the workings, and to act as a sort of underground geometer. At the same time that he was acquiring the most valuable practical experience by constant dealings with the colliers, by superintending their work, and by his exact knowledge of the workings, he was also attending special evening, and sometimes afternoon, classes in Edinburgh, which ultimately enabled him to obtain a certificate. An intelligent youth can thus, notwithstanding want of means, manage in

this way, but he must have energy and determination to succeed in finding time to attend classes and to prepare for examinations after a hard day's work in the pit.

This is an entirely different method, and one much in honour in England. In France a little surprise is always caused by these practical methods of instruction. The art of mining, it is thought, should be studied in text-books, and attempted only after a course of general study of a very comprehensive nature. A mining engineer's career is regarded as the envied prize awarded to the most brilliant students of the *École polytechnique*, or, at a lower level, as the result of a long training in special professional schools. This latter method is by no means ignored in England, and is employed in certain institutions, but it is not characteristic of the national genius, and I doubt whether English Schools of Mines would compare favourably with French.<sup>1</sup> This would also seem to be the opinion of Mr. Hood, since he preferred to study in Belgium and Germany, instead of in Great Britain. But, on the other hand, the English excel in training men to direct undertakings by means of practical acquaintance with them, and by teaching them the knowledge necessary for such direction by and through their actual work. Engineers thus trained have less general education than French engineers, but they know their particular trade to perfection, while they retain more originality, more curiosity, and more ingenuity than men who have served a long apprenticeship to docility in one of the great French schools, and their memories have not been developed to such an extent as to stifle the faculty of invention.

I asked Mr. Hood about the subjects in which Mr. Armstrong was examined. "Chiefly practical matters," he told me; "ventilation of mines, drainage, etc."

Consulting the official programme of the Science and Art Department, I was struck by the absence of all matter inserted for the purpose of eliminating candidates, and preventing the profession from becoming overcrowded. The examiners are dealing not with college students, but with professionals. If the candidates are not qualified to become engineers, they must remain foremen or workmen, if they can find work as

<sup>1</sup> For the same phenomenon in the United States, see *American Life*, pp. 394, 395.

such, while if they possess the necessary qualifications they will obtain a recognition of it and pass as engineers, supposing they can find work as such.

I append a few extracts from the official regulations issued by the Science and Art Department for the examination in the principles of mining.<sup>1</sup> The preamble runs: "This subject is naturally divisible into the two branches of Coal Mining and Metalliferous Mining, and to suit candidates who have studied, or who have been practically engaged in, either branch, the examination papers will be set in three sections—A, General; B, Coal; C, Metalliferous."

It will be sufficient to enumerate the heads given in the syllabus for advanced candidates to show their special and practical character.

1. Mineral Geology and Geography.
2. Exploration and Searching.
3. Breaking Ground.
4. Deep Boring for the discovery and working of Minerals.
5. Details of opening Ground.
6. Methods of working Minerals.
7. Ventilation of Mines.
8. Lighting of Workings.
9. Underground Conveyance.
10. Drawing and Winding.
11. Drainage of Mines.
12. Travelling in Shafts and Levels.
13. Surface arrangements of Mines.
14. Dressing of Minerals.
15. Surveys and Plans of Mines.

The programme for the first or elementary stage is rather less comprehensive. The official document specifies that questions will treat principally of the simpler operations in actual mining, such as the use of tools (*with details of form and dimensions*) in driving, sinking, and getting minerals; the cutting and setting of timber; the construction of simple machines; the characters of beds and veins, and the composition and characters of the commoner useful minerals. The regulations for ensuring safety in dangerous operations, such as blasting, and the removal of minerals and the management of lights in fiery mines, should be familiar to candidates; and they should

<sup>1</sup> The programme has been recast since this chapter was originally written, but the changes introduced are not such as to modify what has already been said.

have some knowledge of the mechanical principles involved in the processes of ventilation, winding, pumping, and the dressing of minerals. Questions may be asked upon the general characters of the larger machines, but without requiring much detailed description.

In the second or advanced stage candidates are expected to show some knowledge of details in their answers, and should be able to give proper sketches with dimensions when necessary in support of their written descriptions. They should be able to discuss the methods of occurrence and working of minerals in some district (of their own knowledge), and also be generally familiar with those of other districts from study. The constructive details of the machinery and engineering works of mines should also be studied in addition to the general principles. Exactness will be expected in all that relates to numbers, dimensions, and weights, and as neat and accurate drawing as the time will permit.

In the third or honours stage candidates will be expected to show a knowledge of the structure and working details of some of the coal-fields and metallic mining districts of the United Kingdom, and of the more important ones of foreign countries; to be able to discuss and illustrate the details of different classes of mining machinery, such as those for pumping, winding, and ventilation; the laying out, working, and management of coal and metal mines, with details of working staff and economic arrangement, and the details of dressing machinery and plant required for treating particular quantities of stuff.

The paper will practically be divided into three parts:—

1. Geological and Structural,
2. Mechanical,
3. Mining proper,

and answers showing proficiency in any one or two of these will be of more value than a large number of vague or short answers in all three.

This method of making engineers, so different from that adopted in France, has very interesting consequences from the point of view of the relations between masters and men. The young man who spends his youth in the pit with his comrades,

and shuts himself up to study while they are loafing or drinking, is at once their equal and their superior. Though of the same, or approximately the same, origin, he represents the picked few, and stands on a higher plane, both as a workman and as an individual, and although there may be no appreciable distinction of class between him and the average collier, there is a very appreciable distinction of personality. From this point of view it is much easier for a capable man to rise in aristocratic England than in democratic France, so called. The path which leads from the position of workman to the position of master is simpler and more direct. This is particularly noticeable in the mining world, where advanced knowledge is essential for directing the work. In France, on the plea of the necessities of this training, the child is required to choose his career on leaving the primary school. If he wishes to rise he must shun the practical side and devote himself betimes to studying programmes and preparing for examinations. On this condition and on no other can he become an engineer. In England and Scotland, on the other hand, he may work for his living at the practical part and at the same time try to rise higher. If he succeeds he will have less general knowledge than in France; if he fails he will merely fall back to his position of working man; he will remain a mining surveyor or underground manager, but he will not be *déclassé*.<sup>1</sup>

The *déclassé* is an individual trained to practise a specialism for which he has not the necessary aptitudes, unaccustomed to ordinary manual work, and incapable of earning his living as a working man. Such men exist wherever schools for training specialists require all their time and keep them in pupillage till they are eighteen or twenty. Where the technical school deals with men actually engaged at the work, and aims at completing the knowledge they have acquired in their practical work by the necessary intellectual work, there cannot be *déclassés*.

In other words, there cannot be *déclassés* where individuals are classified by their recognised aptitude for direction, instead of by an artificial process of selection. But then society as a whole must feel a sincere esteem for true work. A boy whose

<sup>1</sup> "I do not know an English equivalent for this word," says M. de Rousiers, "and I do not think there is one. The phenomenon is not an English one."

intelligence has been recognised by his form master must not feel that he is lowering himself by starting life as an ordinary workman. There must be no distinction in the upper classes of society between higher and lower professions. The man engaged in industry or commerce should not have to blush before the civil servant or the soldier. This is what is needed in France to avoid *déclassement*, and consequently *déclassés* are found in every grade of society. In England, curious to say, they are found only at the summit and not at the base of the social pyramid. The son of a peer or of a rich commoner, who has been educated at Eton or Harrow and then sent to Oxford or Cambridge, is often at a loss to find a position in life corresponding to his habits and tastes. If he does not feel drawn to politics, the church, the army, or the Civil Service, he will be greatly embarrassed, for he is prevented from entering the ordinary professions by the prejudices of his education. Unless under exceptional circumstances, he will not go into business, because nobody does. Thus he becomes a *déclassé*, clinging to positions he cannot hold and repelled from those in which he might have succeeded.

In England, however, the upper class is small and confined within narrow limits. Although the phenomenon may affect a few noble families or very wealthy commoners, yet an enormous number of what would in France be considered old and wealthy families escape altogether, and the prejudices of a handful of the nobility do not affect the general feeling. There is therefore nothing surprising in the fact that technical education has been organised so as to render ordinary work fruitful, and not so as to avoid contact with it, as in France.

There is a remarkable resemblance in this respect between technical education in England and technical education in the United States. There, even more than in England, intellectual power does not count for so much by itself in the direction of various branches of industry as when it completes the experience drawn from practical acquaintance with the matter. There are no *déclassés* in America either.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to understand this fact in order to have a sound understanding of English labour conflicts. In France, in similar cases, there are elements of antagonism and disorder

<sup>1</sup> See the chapter on Education in *American Life*.

which rarely occur on the opposite side of the Channel. They are generally organised by men who have been failures, whereas we shall see that this is not the case in England or Scotland.

To return to the subject under discussion, and to complete the portrait of the colliery employer in Great Britain, it should be added that the engineer is, far more often than in France, not merely a professional man engaged in opening up a colliery, but the actual director. We saw that Mr. Hood long worked White Hill Colliery in his own name, that he is still the life and soul of the Lothian Coal Company which he founded, and that when the Rosewell miners speak of "the master," he is always the person referred to.

This emphasises the real differences between the man and the master, which is due not merely to the technical aptitudes required for the reasoned and scientific exploitation of a mine, but still more to the aptitudes for complex organisation required in the difficult task of managing a large staff. The same man is at once capitalist, industrial engineer, and governor of a little society. At any moment he may have to decide questions of financial organisation, of industrial measures, and of technical details connected with the working of the mine, and beside all this he may have to deal with a series of social problems. It was very interesting, consequently, to listen to Mr. Hood's conversation, which showed his interest from more than one point of view in such questions as miners' dwellings, their education, the investment of their savings, and their intemperate habits. He told me, for instance, that the last workmen's dwellings built in Rosewell were of a much better type. They had a flower-garden, larger rooms, and larger doors and windows. Of course the rent was higher, but nevertheless they were greatly run after. This he will bear in mind in building new ones, since it is now demonstrated that by raising the standard of comfort in artisan dwellings to this level he is meeting their expressed desires. Again, being in a position to let his houses as he chose, he thought to work wonders by refusing to accept any dealer in intoxicating liquors as a tenant, in order to prevent their sale in Rosewell. Unfortunately there is as much or more drinking, but it is done at home, so Mr. Hood is beginning to wonder whether it would

not be better to start a public-house, and is disposed to try the experiment.

Here we have a sphere of action very far removed from that of the mere head of a workshop. When Brown sees that his men drink and gamble, and are without a penny in hand, he says they are a bad lot and thinks no more of the matter. What indeed could he do? But the man who exercises authority over the entire population of a village feels it both possible and necessary to use his power for their good: the sense of new responsibilities awakens in him, and he finds himself grappling with real problems of government.

There is still a side of the master's work which we have not examined—the commercial side. The whole question of working is dominated by that of markets. How does the master come at them? How does the state of the trade in coal affect the carrying on of the mine? That is the next point to consider.

### III.—*The Clientèle and the Hazards of the Trade in Coal.*

In undertaking to work a colliery, it is necessary to estimate as exactly as possible the probable net cost of the coal extracted, a very complicated calculation, and one liable to many surprises. Then this net cost, subject as it already is to so many hazards, is compared with the probable selling price. Thus a rough balance is struck in advance between expenses and receipts. The second term of the comparison, however, is as variable as the first is uncertain.

During the great English coal strike of 1893 I asked Mr. S—— of Glasgow, a large exporter of coal, whether his business was much affected by the long interruption of work in the pits of Wales and the Midlands, which did not, however, extend to Scotland. "I should think so," was his reply; "before the strike the wholesale price of average Scottish coal in Glasgow was 7s. 6d. per ton, while to-day we quote it at 11s., a difference of 50 per cent in a couple of months. Now if work were resumed to-morrow in the Midlands (the conversation took place on the 20th of September) we should have a fall of 30 per cent in less than a fortnight. You see the difference."



It is true that this was in the midst of a crisis, but even in quieter times the price of coal also varies, although in a much slighter degree. From February 1891 to March 1893 the price of the ton had passed in Northumberland from 7·964s. to 6·196s.; from February 1891 to June 1893, on the eve of the great strike, it had fallen in South Wales from 13s. 5d. to 9s. 0½d.<sup>1</sup>

The masters feel the effect of these variations in a manner more or less immediate. Sometimes, indeed, they sell directly to consumers, sometimes to a great merchant like my friend in Glasgow, sometimes they have a contract for a long period with a manufacturer, and are obliged to supply coal at the price specified, whether the market price rises or falls. Hence arise a variety of combinations, which are open to great risks. Mr. Hood explained to me that he disposes of the Rosewell coal in various ways. In the first place, he employs travellers who work up and extend his connection; next he has agents in different towns on the Baltic coast; and finally, he also supplies wholesale dealers.

It is easy to see that under these conditions the question of placing his coal is a very important matter for the colliery owner, and one which requires highly developed commercial aptitudes. The variations in the price of coal, however great their importance, form but one side of the question, and are bound up with a crowd of other circumstances upon which they act and react. Some of these I shall now point out.

The clientèle of the collieries of Great Britain is not merely national, but foreign. The immense industrial consumption of this country of factories, the considerable domestic consumption of a numerous population collected into towns, and requiring coal for fuel and gas for lighting, the enormous consumption in steam transport, all these would not suffice to absorb the millions of tons annually extracted from the bowels of the earth. The rich underground kingdom of the English and Scottish coal-fields has often been called the Black Indies, and the expression will hardly seem exaggerated if we consider the figures shown by the following statistics:—

<sup>1</sup> *Labour Gazette*, July 1893, p. 60.

In 1886	Great Britain	produced	157,412,919	tons of coal.
„ 1887	„	„	162,013,108	„
„ 1888	„	„	169,843,315	„
„ 1889	„	„	176,813,523	„
„ 1890	„	„	181,512,021	„
„ 1891	„	„	185,373,445	„
„ 1892	„	„	181,674,990	„ <sup>1</sup>

If the same rate of progress continues for the next seven years, the production will have passed the colossal figure of 200,000,000 tons.

About a sixth of the coal extracted in Great Britain is at present exported, but it is easy to see that the proportion is liable to vary. Such a bulky article of commerce is not easy of transport, and there is an inevitable tendency to purchase as near home as possible, so that a distant clientèle is easily lost.

As for the Rosewell coal in particular, it is consumed principally on the Baltic coast and for industrial purposes, as it is a steam coal. It is shipped at Leith, and sent by sea to its destination, and is thus enabled to compete with German coal, although this competition would become impossible if railway rates were lowered. Germany, of course, is a great coal country, ranking next to Great Britain, with about one-third as much, which, however, has lately increased at a rapid rate. The Ruhr coal-field at present produces more than 28,000,000 tons yearly, a quantity equal to more than 40 per cent of all the French collieries put together.<sup>2</sup> It is a hazardous enterprise to export coal to a country which produces so much, and it is necessary to play cautiously to keep the advantage in the face of the inevitable competition of German coal.

Rosewell is not the only colliery which sends coal to the Baltic, which is the principal market for all collieries using Leith as their port. I met a coal-dealer in Leith, belonging originally to Schleswig-Holstein, Danish in sympathy, German in fact, and about to naturalise as an English subject. He is a natural link between Scotland and the Baltic, and this helps him considerably in his business. Further, we have the

<sup>1</sup> *Labour Gazette*, October 1893, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> *Ouvriers des Deux-Mondes*, 2nd series, 14th number: "Monograph of the Silesian Miner in the Coal Basin of the Ruhr (Rhenish Prussia)," by L. Fèvre, mining engineer, p. 270.

eloquent figures furnished by the statistics of the Board of Trade. In 1891 out of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  million tons of coal exported from Scotland, 1,334,000 tons were sent to Germany, more than 700,000 tons to Denmark, 400,000 tons to Russia, more than 600,000 to Norway and Sweden, that is to say, more than 3,000,000 were consigned to the Baltic.<sup>1</sup>

The collieries of the Lothians, situated near the eastern coast of Scotland, as a rule send coal for export to Leith; but as they are also only an hour by rail from Glasgow they can thus ship it on the west coast without great expense. Glasgow furnishes nearly a quarter of the total export of coal from Scotland, but the geographical position modifies the direction of its consignment. The Clyde steamers often dispose of their cargo of coal in France or Spain, although a great number also trade with Norway and Sweden. In 1892, according to the English Custom House, France alone received 170,492 tons of coal, out of 780,829 tons shipped in Glasgow. The shipowner who gave me this information complained greatly that France and Spain are becoming less and less dependent on imported coal, and are tending to consume coal drawn from their own mines. Thus two markets are seriously threatened. The danger is all the more grave because domestic consumption in various localities has taken certain special forms which may any day cease. "To La Rochelle and Rochefort," said Mr. S——, "I send a coal which burns without flame; while to Bordeaux, on the other hand, I send a coal which burns with a flame." If during a crisis, or in time of strike, Scotland suspends or diminishes her consignments, and if the inhabitants

<sup>1</sup> Table of export of coal from Scotland in 1891 (after Board of Trade) :—

Belgium . . . . .	135,385 tons.
Denmark . . . . .	713,526 „
France . . . . .	476,024 „
Germany . . . . .	1,334,023 „
Holland . . . . .	88,100 „
Italy . . . . .	225,303 „
Norway . . . . .	287,567 „
Russia . . . . .	339,993 „
Spain . . . . .	73,110 „
Sweden . . . . .	328,572 „
Other Countries . . . . .	435,091 „
Total . . . . .	<u>4,436,694</u> „

of La Rochelle at this juncture use French coal producing more flame, or the people of Bordeaux content themselves with a coal which produces less, their exclusiveness may possibly undergo some modification, and then there will be another Scottish market closed or compromised.

This rapid survey of the clientèle of the mines will suffice, I think, to convince the reader of the enormous difficulties with which the coal trade has to contend in order to keep a proper equilibrium between production and consumption. How is it possible to calculate in advance with any exactness quantities made up of so many different elements? Who can foresee how the working of a new coal basin may close markets? or what the creation of a new industry may open? Moreover, owing to the considerable preparatory works which have to be undertaken in most mines, and the enormous working expenses involved, it is impossible to produce in small quantities without loss. Many tons are required before the sum of the profits realised on each covers the expenses of opening and upkeep. The master is thus impelled to produce as much as possible, and is forced to do so by the special requirements of the enterprise he directs, and by the necessities which affect him directly. It is useless to urge upon him that by extracting an ever-increasing quantity he is running the risk of contributing to a crisis caused by over-production. A general state of depression in the coal trade is better for him than a personal discomfiture.

Thus stocks of coal inevitably accumulate and burden the yards, causing a fall in prices, and consequently in wages, as well as much disturbance in the coal world.

This phenomenon generally foreruns a great strike. On the eve of that which marked the year 1893, in the month of March, the Congress of the National Miners' Federation, meeting at Birmingham, denounced the danger of over-production, and sought to remedy it. Two propositions were considered. The first sought to limit work in the mines to four days a week for some time, the other demanded a general suspension of work for four weeks. Both had the same reception, and were rejected by a majority of the Congress. The miners, like their masters, were unwilling to sacrifice a certain personal advantage for an uncertain general advantage.

If crises of over-production bring about strikes, the fear of them makes masters little inclined to accumulate stocks of coal when orders fall off. This leads to great irregularity of employment in many mines, especially in those which chiefly produce coal for heating purposes. In summer the demand for this coal is slack, and to avoid over-stocking and a fall in prices the masters are obliged to resort to partial stoppages. Instead of working the full week, the men work three or four days a week only, or else they work short hours daily. These necessary measures are very prejudicial to the prosperity of the enterprises, and they have a disastrous effect on the well-being of the men, as we shall have occasion to show later.

What we are in a position to note at present is that over-production and irregularity of employment have especially disastrous consequences in mines. We have seen that the collier is exclusively attached to his particular calling, and further that the isolated situation of many collieries tends to tighten the links which bind the miner to the mine. In the presence of a situation which disturbs the equilibrium between supply and demand in the case of coal the miner is confronted with a dilemma. Either he must for the moment cease work, or he must for the moment cease to be a miner. He does not accept the second alternative, for a collier is always a collier and so he is sometimes a collier without work, without money, and without food.

This absence of flexibility assimilates the mining industry, notwithstanding the difference of scale, to those small highly-specialised trades whose dangerous condition has already been examined. Hitherto the ever-increasing utilisation of coal for industrial purposes has prevented miners from feeling all the disadvantages of the close corporation. They have experienced temporary crises, but they knew that sooner or later they would be needed, that the *food of industry would give out*, and that it would be required at any price. Thus they occupy, relative to the industrial clientèle, the position of a monopolist of corn relatively to a country where dearth prevails. It depends on them to starve out the industrial clientèle, and they can then dictate their terms. This is why miners so often assume the tone of masters, but is not their monopoly already

somewhat threatened? Will industry always depend on coal? Will it not manage to escape from its tyranny in some appreciable degree? Some symptoms seem to lend colour to such a belief.

During the strike of 1893 some English railway companies, short of coal, tried the experiment of using petroleum, and succeeded very well, it is said. This is a very significant circumstance. Coal at a certain price ceases to be profitable for the generation of steam, and can be replaced by another combustible mineral which America and the Caucasus yield in abundance.

Take another fact. Electricity is also capable of driving locomotives—it lights, warms, works machines, and propels trains. The electric energy is, it is true, often generated by the aid of steam, and here coal plays its part; but wherever a waterfall is available it is called into requisition. The Americans obtain 50,000 horse-power from Niagara; the Genevese borrow 12,000 horse-power from the Rhone, which they utilise for lighting, for transport, and for working machinery. M. Léon Dryon, engineer-in-chief at Avignon, lately proposed to bring 6000 electric horse-power to Marseilles and Toulon by utilising the water-power in the neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup> There is no lack to-day of examples of the long-distance transmission of electricity.

Of course this does not prove that the coal age is about to lose its name, but it suggests at least that the use of coal is no longer destined to follow a development absolutely parallel with that of industry. Henceforth there will be other powerful sources of motive force, which can be more easily utilised, and everything leads to the belief that electricity has not yet said its last word.

It is not impossible, therefore, to foresee a state of things in which industry might partly free itself from its dependence on the production of coal, in which case the production of coal would lose the privileged position it enjoys to-day. Should such a day come, the mining population would experience a crisis of which strikes and the present interruptions of work can give no idea. It would be forced to change its trade,

<sup>1</sup> See the *Causerie scientifique* of M. Max de Nansouty, *Temps*, 20th January 1894.

and for this we already know that the majority are but ill prepared.

Even now its attachment to the mine gives a specially acute and grave character to crises in the coal trade. To understand this we must see what sufferings are inflicted on this population by a great strike or by a prolonged stoppage of the pits. We shall understand it better when we have been into a workman's home and observed the daily life of one of those mining families which are so cruelly affected when their means of existence are suddenly withdrawn.

## CHAPTER III

### A MINER'S FAMILY IN THE LOTHIANS

WE are already acquainted with Fisher, the miner of White Hill Colliery, who returned to Scotland to his native village after a temporary migration to the United States. He was born at Rosewell, and his wife also belongs to the district. He has always worked in mines from childhood, his family is numerous, he succeeds in bringing them up, and consequently he affords a good type for observation.

It is, indeed, through those who succeed in solving their own labour question that we can familiarise ourselves with the problems which are agitating the labour world. The task is not to invent solutions to these problems, but to find out by observation what are effective solutions. Fisher has found an effective solution so far as he is concerned. Let us, therefore, examine how he set about it, and then we can with advantage try to reproduce it. Having seen a miner's family content with their lot, we will ask the discontented what their demands are, we shall seek to find why they suffer, and why they do not employ the means which others have found successful, and in what way the remedies they advocate will facilitate the employment of these means. Without such a preliminary observation of a prosperous type it is impossible to understand the drift and bearing of the noisy claims which are forced upon our notice.

#### I. *How Fisher earns his Living.*

I was put into communication with Fisher by Miss Thomson, the schoolmistress of Rosewell, and about seven



o'clock one evening I presented myself for the first time at his house. I found him just donning his working dress to descend the pit. Fisher works in the night-shift, for the task of boring galleries in which he takes part can only be done in the absence of the colliers, and when traffic is almost suspended in the mine. Consequently it was impossible to visit him at home in the evening. In the morning he sleeps, profiting by the hours when the children are at school and the house is less noisy. We therefore made an appointment for the afternoon of the following day.

Like all the men at White Hill Colliery, Fisher works only five days a week; no work is done in the Lothian mines on Saturday and Sunday. Some years ago the men worked half a day on Saturday, but this custom has been abandoned in favour of a complete break. I asked Fisher if the miners were contented with the change. "Certainly," he replied, "it was the men who came to that decision." He is strongly in favour of the change himself, and congratulates himself on the marked shortening of the hours of labour. "Formerly," he told me, "when I first began to work, we had a twelve hours day, whereas now it is a nine hours day at Rosewell, and it has been an eight hours day everywhere else in East Lothian since 1872. We find ourselves much the better for it. I well remember what the miners were like with a twelve hours day. Scarcely a man looked at a newspaper or took any interest in politics, they went to church much less regularly than now, and their life was very dull. In winter it was dark when they went down the pit in the morning, and it was dark when they came up at night, and for six weeks they would never see daylight except on Sundays." "And why do you work nine hours at Rosewell?" "We used to have an eight hours day eight or nine years ago, like the rest of East Lothian, but then Mr. Hood found himself affected by the failure of a Glasgow bank, and asked us to consent to a temporary nine hours day in order to augment the production and his margin of profit. Ever since then we have got into the habit, and now we should not care to go back to the eight hours day, because we are used to the higher wage we get for the extra hour. So, recently, when we had a ballot on the compulsory eight hours day, the proposal was rejected here by a large majority."

The Rosewell colliers, then, spend forty-five hours a week in the pit. The day-shift, in which the coal-hewers work, and which is far the most numerous, goes down, as we have seen, at six in the morning and comes up at three, and half an hour's break is allowed at nine o'clock for meals. The forty-five hours' work produces an average wage which Fisher estimates at 22s. a week, but which, according to the more exact information of Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Hood, comes to 30s., or 6s. a working day. In the Midlands the average daily wage is 7s. a day—a piece of information which I obtained from Mr. Stanley, the secretary of the Miners' Federation for that district. Of course the skill and vigour of the individual colliers affect their respective wages to the extent sometimes of 2s. or 3s. a day.

The value of the stone-worker's labour is still more difficult to estimate. As I have explained, the stone-worker is a small contractor, liable either to lose or to make a profit. Fisher explained to me that he is always free to cancel too hard a contract by giving one day's notice to the master, who on his side has also the same privilege. Mr. Hood told me one day during my visit to Rosewell that he was going to cancel his existing contract with Fisher, who had struck an easy vein to work and must have made 20s. the night before. However, when I questioned the latter a few days before as to his weekly earnings, he modestly estimated them at 25s. Mr. Armstrong assured me that they could not be less than 35s., and were probably as much as 38s. This was also Mr. Hood's opinion. The sum of 35s. is what I decided to take as the basis of my calculations.

It should be remarked that this sum represents more than forty-five hours of work. Like many of his comrades in the night-shift, Fisher works about ten hours every time he descends the pit, or about fifty hours a week.

The tools required by the stone-worker are more numerous and complicated than the collier's tools. Fisher values those put at his disposition by the Company at £5. "Then you do not own your tools as the collier owns his pick?" "Oh no," he replied; "if we had to have £5 worth of tools of our own before we could take a stone-worker's job very few of us would volunteer, and the small number of competitors would

allow us to impose our own terms on the Company. It is to their advantage to supply our tools and thus increase the competition." The stone-worker derives a small profit and great convenience from this arrangement, and from this point of view he is better treated than the collier.

On the other hand, he does not receive a subvention, which indirectly increases the salary of the latter. The collier buys coal from the Company at a reduction of 2s. a ton. Every coal-producer profits by this reduction, but the workers at the surface and the pony-drivers, engineers, stone-workers, etc., engaged in the pit do not share in this advantage.

These details are necessary to enable us to appreciate exactly the average daily wage which Fisher draws from his occupation. The whole situation, however, is dominated by one all-important fact, the extreme infrequency of stoppages.

Not only are strikes infrequent at Rosewell, as I shall have occasion to remark, but the sale of the White Hill Colliery coal has always been so steady that the Company has only once in twenty-five years resorted to a partial suspension of work. "This summer" (1893), Fisher told me, "we worked only three days a week for three months, and that is the first time I have known it, though I have worked here twenty years."

On the other hand, Mr. Stanley, the secretary of the Midland Counties Miners' Federation, told me that partial suspension of work is almost the rule every summer in the Midland counties. "For five months," he said, "from November to March, the men work the full week of five and three-quarter days, coming up on Saturdays at two o'clock. But in warm weather, during seven months of the year, in the present state of depression, they do not work more than two or three days a week. This was the case from 1875 to 1887. In 1888 business was active and they worked nearly the whole year, but this lasted only for a little while, and now we are back at the old state of things."

This irregularity of employment has extremely serious consequences for the Midland colliers. Further on we shall see how they seek to remedy it. Fisher and his comrades in the Lothians escape this difficult problem. What is the reason?

The reason of the difference is not very easy to disentangle. I see traces of many influences which seem to contribute to it, and these I shall endeavour to point out.

In the first place, the nature of the Lothian coal makes its consumption more regular. It is a coal especially fitted for industrial purposes, and steam-engines burn as much in summer as in winter. If its destination were industrial only, we might content ourselves with this explanation of the phenomenon, but domestic consumption also counts in the demand for Lothian coal. We have seen from the statements of Mr. S——, the great coal exporter of Glasgow, that it is sometimes difficult to say whether such and such an exported coal will be burned in a boiler, a cooking stove, or an open grate, owing to the capricious nature of local usages. On the other hand, the Midland coal is far from being reserved for domestic consumption only: it feeds the blast furnaces of Birmingham, the Staffordshire potteries, and the countless factories of Lancashire, and also furnishes many railway companies with fuel. Nevertheless, the fact that it is burned in winter in a large number of stoves, heating apparatus, and open grates certainly makes an appreciable difference between the summer and winter sale. It is no small matter to warm the comfortable homes of the Midland counties. The raw damp climate requires a fire for health's sake, and the widespread habits of material well-being are little in favour of effecting a saving in this item. The first condition of comfort is to be warm in-doors. We saw in Brown's house that almost every room had a fireplace. Fisher's more modest dwelling consists of two rooms only, but coal is burned there all day in winter. Multiply this domestic consumption—Fisher burns about four tons of coal a winter—by the enormous number of separate homes, and you will get a huge total which cannot fail to influence the demand.

The demand for coal, then, fluctuates more in the Midlands than in the Lothians, and further, the influence of this fluctuation is more directly felt. The Midlands are less favourably situated for export, and supply chiefly the home markets. The Lothians, on the contrary, send their coal to the Baltic. The result is that the number of middlemen is smaller, speaking generally, in the Midlands than in the Lothians, and these

middlemen are bound to regulate prices. Further, when the coal trade is affected by a local crisis in this country, the other markets, Germany, Sweden, France, etc., are not thereby closed, and the effect consequently is not only less direct, but also less violent. The Midlands, on the other hand, depend almost entirely on the home market, and are affected more directly and with greater intensity.

Of the four coal basins in England, the Midland coal-field is least favourably placed for foreign trade. The Scottish basin is encircled and penetrated by the sea. The estuary of the Clyde on one side and the Firth of Forth on the other open it up by their long fiords, and form, as it were, large natural canals. The Durham and Northumberland coal-field stretches in the direction of a coast-line with numerous and excellent ports, among which it will be sufficient to mention Newcastle and Sunderland. The Welsh coal-field is provided for by the long estuary of the Bristol Channel. In the presence of three rivals so well equipped for exportation, the Midland coal-field is quite naturally designed to carry on the home trade.

Already, then, we have two unfavourable conditions for the regularity of trade. Both are due to circumstances independent of the mining population. There is also a third, where the social condition of the mining population seems, on the contrary, to have exerted a certain influence.

The representation of the interests of the working class has long been efficiently organised in the Midlands. The local unions are powerful, and are grouped into numerous wealthy and ably governed federations. It follows that they have succeeded in obtaining from the masters the maximum of possible concessions. The average salary of a miner in the Midlands is 7s. a day, while that of a Scotch miner does not exceed 6s. As soon as a rise in the price of coal is declared, or as soon as any favourable circumstance swells the master's profits, these vigilant Unions claim an advance in the men's wages. Under these conditions the masters are obliged to be very particular, and to stop work immediately orders fall off. They cannot afford to accumulate any stock unless they can guarantee the sale at a price previously fixed.

All these influences have combined to produce the painful

position of which the Midland miners complain so bitterly, and which they try to remedy by means to be examined later. For Fisher, on the other hand, the problem does not exist. Irregularity of work seems to him a rare accident, against which a little foresight will protect a sensible man, and not a frequent and periodic phenomenon of long duration. When I spoke to him of the solutions proposed by the Midland Unions, in order to see if any of them would attract him, I encountered a marked indifference, which expressed itself in the remark, "Here work is regular enough ; there is nothing to complain of."

This fortunate position greatly simplified my task ; directly I knew that all Fisher's weeks were full weeks, and had reliable authority for estimating his average weekly wages pretty fairly at 35s., it became an easy matter to calculate his yearly receipts. Taking into account the numerous holidays which cut up work in Great Britain at Whitsuntide, New Year, Easter, etc., and deducting ten days for occasional stoppages, the total duration of his year's work might be estimated at forty-five weeks. This would make a total sum of £84 a year earned in the pit.

To this sum must be added the wages of the two eldest sons, who are employed, one as under clerk in the colliery office, and the other as apprentice in the joiner's shop connected with the mine. The first earns 7s. 6d., the second 6s. a week. As these wages are insufficient to keep them, they go into the common purse, and consequently enter into the account of the joint resources of the family, which are thus increased by £35. Thus we get a total of £119.

Fisher has a daughter in service in Mr. Hood's family, but she has no longer anything to do with the family budget. She is able to support herself, and spends or saves her wages as she thinks fit. When the boys are out of their apprenticeship and earn higher wages, they will no longer continue to pay the whole of them into their father's hands. If they still live in Rosewell, they will pay a sum for their board until they marry and start housekeeping separately. This was the arrangement we saw in full swing in Brown's family in the case of Joe.

This question of the children's wages is one of considerable importance in the budgets of working-class families. In

Brown's it was lost sight of in the general prosperity of the successful employer's position. Here it is only imperfectly seen owing to the tender age of the wage-earning children (thirteen and fifteen years) and the slenderness of their earnings, but in some families it occasionally happens that for several years the total amount paid by the children for board is greater than the father's wages. This procures the household great material well-being, but well-being of a very ephemeral nature and of a very dangerous kind. As the children settle, it gradually diminishes, so that the parents are at last obliged to pinch considerably just when their health and strength are on the decline. This happens especially in miners' families, where the sons early find well-paid employment in their father's trade, while the girls go to the neighbouring factories. The director of an important colliery in Fife told me that when he wished to acquaint himself with the position of a mining family, his first question was, "How many of you are there to keep the house going?"

In the Fisher family there are three persons to keep the house going, but the two lads together contribute little more than a third, while the father furnishes single-handed almost three-quarters of the whole. The fact deserves special notice, because if the eldest girl had gone to the Roslin carpet factory like so many Rosewell miners' daughters it would have appreciably augmented the general resources. However, it was her parents who dissuaded her from the idea and found her her place in Mr. Hood's family, and they declare very strongly that their daughters shall never go to the factory if they can prevent them. Here we already notice how superior are the aims which inspire Fisher and his wife in the guidance of their family. However, if they are deaf to the more ordinary considerations of immediate material advantage, it is because they know how to manage with their £119. It is interesting, therefore, to see how they set about it, and it will also be an excellent opportunity for acquainting ourselves with their daily life.

## II. *The Home of the Fisher Family.*

On arriving at Rosewell from Hawthornden Station the traveller perceives on his left hand, a little ahead of the rest

of the village, a wide street bordered with small houses, uniform but well kept, and of recent construction, as may be seen from the colour of the bricks. This is Lothian Street, the last batch of workmen's houses built by Mr. Hood. On both sides of the street the houses are separated from the footway by a little garden bordered by a wall breast high, and each front door is flanked by two flower-beds. The tenants are not allowed to plant vegetables in this little strip of ground, which is intended to give a smart appearance to the miners' dwellings. This end is attained, for most of the men are very proud of their flowers, and the general effect of this long border, where the individual taste of each tenant produces a great variety, is, if not very ornamental, at any rate very gay. It produces a kindly feeling for those who live behind these elegant little patches, and it suggests what keen pleasure the miner who returns home from the dark and dusty mine must feel in the bright colours which frame the threshold of his home.

Fisher, who is one of the inhabitants of Lothian Street, bestows great care on the cultivation of his geraniums, pansies, and two or three shrubs, and is pleased with compliments on their appearance. A small kitchen-garden behind the house (about 11 yards by 28) furnishes him a very fair quantity of vegetables, as we shall learn when we question Mrs. Fisher about her housekeeping. Like many miners he is clearly a good gardener. The handling of a spade is child's play to them, and work in the open air is a great attraction. I have often had proofs of their decided taste for gardening in England, Scotland, and France. Even in thickly-populated towns like Saint-Étienne, for instance, many of them rent a small plot of ground on the outskirts of the suburbs, often at a considerable distance from their homes, in order to do a little gardening in their leisure hours.

Here Fisher has sufficient space for this useful recreation at his own door. Further, when houses are isolated by gardens on one side and by a wide street on the other, the hygienic conditions are favourable for obtaining fresh air, and owing to this mode of arrangement the close proximity of the adjoining houses presents few disadvantages.

Inside, the arrangement is the simplest possible. The front door is placed in the centre, and opens into a narrow



hall leading into the kitchen on the right and another room on the left. Both rooms are exactly alike. Out of each sufficient space has been taken to make a long alcove, holding two beds placed end to end, and this alcove is placed in a line with the door in such a way that when the curtains are drawn the room has a regular shape. In the rear of the house a small shed holds the coal-cellar and wash-house, the indispensable adjuncts of the kitchen. This is all. There is no upper storey and no cellar, and the whole family lives in two rooms measuring together about 110 square feet.

This is little enough for the number of children. Fisher and his wife have been married nineteen years, and have eight children living. They have lost three others, which makes eleven, but as the last arrival was baptized on the day of my first visit, there is no saying whether there may not be more. The eldest daughter is at present in service, so that nine persons have to sleep there, including the baby, who has a cradle consisting of a sort of small wooden box of primitive shape. The remaining eight persons are stowed away two by two in the four beds.

The most surprising thing is that the house is clean and in good order, in spite of the limited space and the number of children. It is true that I never called in in the morning, which is the time when Fisher sleeps after returning from his night's work, but my visits were sometimes unexpected, and never resulted in any of those surprises which are so trying to housewives who are more jealous of a good reputation than deserving of it.

In short, this scanty accommodation is sufficient for the family, and presents a most undoubtedly respectable appearance. The house costs only 2s. a week, including the kitchen- and flower-gardens. These are very advantageous terms.

The kitchen-garden, indeed, supplies resources which ought to be deducted from the rent. Fisher grows all the cabbages, turnips, onions, and leeks which the family need, and potatoes enough for three months, or a quarter of the total quantity. If we deducted from the total rent the sum represented by these vegetables, it would reduce it very considerably, and the labour expended in raising them is rather an amusement than a toil.

The rent of a miner's house in Rosewell hardly ever exceeds this figure of 2s. a week. Two only in Lothian Street are let for 6d. more, and these contain three rooms. On the other hand, there are plenty of houses in the village at 1s. 6d., and Fisher told me that some miners living about two miles away pay only 8d. a week for a little cottage and garden.

In the Midlands and throughout England generally rents are higher and the houses larger. A Staffordshire miner with a family as large as Fisher's would not be content to pack himself and his children into two rooms. Very few houses are to be found in the English coal-mining districts let at less than 2s. 6d. a week, and 3s. 6d. seems to be an average rent.

There are two causes for this. The Englishman is less simple and more exacting than the Scotsman. Industrial and commercial prosperity have had a longer time to penetrate, and the Englishman's principle is to live well and work well, and to aim at increasing his earnings instead of at diminishing his expenses. The Scotsman is now tending more and more towards this conception, but it is less deeply rooted in his case, in the first place, because the industrial development is less marked in his country, and in the second, because of his social origin. The population of the Lothians, the wealthy part of Scotland, receives a constant influx from the poor counties adjoining, the Highlands and the Hebrides. Emigrants from these districts bring with them the patriarchal habits they have adopted, and without which it would be impossible to live there. In a mountainous district where cultivation must necessarily remain rudimentary and industry does not arise, and where the chief resources are derived from scanty pasturage and from fishing on a good but dangerous coast, there is a very clear realisation of the inflexible limits which Nature has set to production. Human effort encounters insurmountable obstacles, and wisdom therefore consists in limiting wants to what circumstances demand, since it would be sheer imprudence to trust in laborious energy whose results might be lost through the inability of the soil to repay them. Where, however, the intense industrial régime opens an unlimited field to the action of labour, wisdom consists in developing in a man the greatest possible efficiency. The right course is to put oneself in good form, and to spare nothing to

increase one's power of work. Experience has shown that this course pays best, and consequently there is a general tendency among the workers to have better food, better houses, better clothing, better instruction, and to conduct themselves better morally—all conditions which contribute, though in unequal degrees, to the most complete development of the human being.

Secondly, rents are a little dearer in England than in Scotland, and in the Midlands than in the Lothians, a circumstance due to the greater intensity of the industrial movement, which agglomerates the population and raises the price of land.

As a set-off, however, there is an advantage to which I have already had occasion to call attention, the possibility of a working man being able to live in his own house. There is no Building Society at Rosewell, nor could there be one, since White Hill Colliery is the only source of work within reach of the inhabitants. No one binds himself to live in a village where he is at the mercy of a single employer. In the Black Country, on the contrary, the close proximity of different collieries permits a family to acquire a house and live in it while still leaving them free to change employers. Consequently in many mining centres we find men owning their own houses, and the number is continually increased through the facilities offered by Building Societies.

The little village of Roslin, two and a half miles from Rosewell, in the picturesque glen in which stand Hawthornden Castle and the ruins of Rosslyn Castle, possesses two factories, a paper factory and a carpet factory. There is not much choice for workers, but the agglomeration of population is a little greater, and the local trade is a little more important; in a word, the village does not, like Rosewell, depend entirely on a single enterprise. Here we already find working men who own their houses, but the phenomenon is embryonic, and there is no Building Society to make it evident and facilitate its growth. Those who have become the owners of their houses are those who have been capable of saving the necessary sum in advance, who possess a real aptitude for becoming capitalists and are emerging from the condition of factory workers. My attention was particularly drawn to a mason, a baker, and a butcher in Roslin, who, not content with

living in houses of their own, have bought others as an investment and let them.

Fisher, with whom I discussed this matter one day, objected that the Rosewell miners could never in any case become the owners of their dwellings because there was no land to feu round the village. I quite believe that if Fisher were to go to the factor of the laird of White Hill and were to propose to feu 300 square yards, equivalent to the square area of his present premises, the factor would not listen to him. But why not? Merely because if he were dismissed by Mr. Hood he would no longer be able to keep up his payments, while it would be difficult to sell the house because no one at present buys houses. But suppose, on the other hand, that one or many new industries sprang up, and that Rosewell became a town, and we should see whether there was no more land to feu!

It is, in fact, due to the complete dependence on White Hill Colliery that Rosewell cannot have any working-class house-owners. As this cannot be, it is a very fortunate thing that the Lothian Coal Company concerns itself as it does with the welfare of the miners, and builds them decent houses at a low rent.

I have said that the houses are not crowded too closely together. The air circulates freely both at the back and front, and penetrates by two large windows. The floor is raised about 8 inches above the level of the soil as a preventive against damp. The slate roof preserves the ceiling from wet, and the brick walls are carefully jointed. The houses are, to borrow a common phrase, solidly built.

A hydrant in the street puts an abundant supply of water at the disposition of every tenent. Near the door leading from the kitchen into the garden I saw a large butt, in which Mrs. Fisher carefully collects rain-water from the roof, but only, as she explained to me, to have soft water for washing. The water supply is abundant in quantity and good in quality.

This is an index to Mrs. Fisher's housewifely ability. It is easy to discover how much she possesses merely by looking at her simple well-kept furniture. In the kitchen is a wooden dresser set out with a little not very ornamental china, a table, four chairs, a wicker arm-chair, and great square

wooden chest of the kind in which working folk usually keep their clothes in this country, two beds made up in the alcove, and the baby's cradle. A splendid sewing-machine occupies the place of honour in front of the window. This is a recent acquisition, for which Mrs. Fisher paid £8 and gave her old machine into the bargain. It is by far the most costly piece of furniture in the place, but it is also an active tool in the hands of the mistress of the house. "I make all the house-linen," she said, "and all the under-linen for the family," and her husband added in response to the astonishment I manifested, "Scotswomen have plenty to do." Of this there is no doubt, and in this they present a marked contrast to Englishwomen, who all rush to ready-made articles, which, though perhaps not much dearer, are certainly less serviceable. This is another point in which, as just pointed out, the difference between the two countries and their origin comes out.

The other room, to the left on entering, is a little more luxuriously furnished. Besides the two beds in the alcove and the clothing-chest beside them, it contains six chairs and an arm-chair covered in horsehair. The alcove is shut off by cotton curtains, and there is a chest of drawers on the top of which stands a glass with shelves, and a round table holding an enormous Bible with metal clasps, which cost £2 : 4s.—a real Family Bible, as may be seen from its size, the splendour of its binding (in the worst possible taste), and its large print. Fisher and his wife bought it before going to America. In spite of the laudable feeling manifested by such a great outlay for a religious object, I ought to state that this Bible seems to be very little read. The white pages with fancy borders for recording the children's names make no mention of any birth, in spite of the manifold opportunities Fisher has had for filling them, while the extreme cleanliness of the pages completed my conviction that the metal clasps are not often opened. A miner's fingers, however clean, do not turn over a book for several years without leaving some trace.

In a description of a miner's furniture, the short curtain covering the lower half of windows looking on to the street must not be forgotten. It is *de rigueur* in all the Rosewell houses, even the poorest, and the most astonishing thing is, that among all the coal dust which forms the basis of the

respirable air in Rosewell, this little white curtain is always clean. It is certainly one of those details which prejudice the passing stranger in favour of the cleanliness of the interiors, but it is also often merely a deceitful advertisement of pretensions to housewifely care which are not justified by anything inside. The little curtain is generally the product of domestic industry, and is adorned with various designs, some fanciful, some pious, and some showing a poor enough power of invention. Sometimes it is a cat, gravely sitting on its hind quarters, sometimes a moral maxim worked in cross-stitch, sometimes a simple arrangement of lines. It is needless to say that the girls' schools pay great attention to this inferior form of art, and that good pupils bring home superb pieces of work to their admiring parents. After all, these imperfect or grotesque efforts at ornament give a little girl a love for home, and thus contribute, if not to the æsthetic development of the rising generation, at least to their moral development. Nothing is indifferent which leads a woman to render her fireside more attractive, and which makes her love it.

The furniture of the Fisher family, with the addition of the scanty stock of house-linen, certainly did not cost more than £60 when new, and the sewing-machine represents £8 of this amount. An English family in the same position would probably have a far more expensive and comprehensive household of furniture, as it would occupy a larger house at a higher rent.

A similar difference may be seen in the living. A Lancashire working man would hardly reconcile himself to Scottish cheer, and would think the bill of fare a rather meagre one. It is not that English cookery is less simple, but that it is more substantial, and almost invariably consists of meat, boiled vegetables, and pudding on high days, the whole being washed down with tea. In Scotland, on the other hand, and especially as we go towards the Highlands, the consumption of meat is much less. The recipes, however, become complicated by traditional methods which are extremely perplexing to the profane outsider.

This is especially the case with oatmeal porridge, which constitutes the national dish, *par excellence*. No true Scot would start out in the morning without having partaken of

porridge, and every day Mrs. Fisher, who is a true Scot, makes it for the whole household. But not all the Rosewell housewives are equally faithful to the time-honoured custom; they find that porridge takes too long to make, and they substitute tea and bread and butter. This substitute is far from good. Porridge with fresh milk, as it is generally eaten, is a diet at once light and nourishing, and for children it is especially wholesome, nor is it all exaggeration when the Scots attribute to it merits without number. There is nothing to prevent tea and bread and butter being eaten after the porridge, and this is what the Fishers do, at any rate the parents and the grown-up children. Mrs. Fisher explained to me that porridge should be boiled for three-quarters of an hour every morning, and that many housewives were too lazy, or too delicate, or too negligent, and shrank from the necessity for rising betimes, or from the bother of such a lengthy preparation. After such information from a competent housewife, I thought I had penetrated the secret of porridge. I even saw a rapid and easy method of classifying Scottish housewives, and I loaded with scathing epithets those whose want of energy prevented them from springing out of bed in a morning in time to make porridge, until one fine day the whole vanity of my method of classification was revealed to me! I found myself with a family of very stanch Highlanders, and conversation having turned on porridge and its virtues as an article of diet, I thought to distinguish myself by showering blame on those women who forsook the old national custom in order to prolong their morning sleep. Instead of the unanimous approbation for which I had hoped, the ladies looked at each other with a smile, and one of them asked me how long I supposed it took to make porridge. "Three-quarters of an hour," I replied, "and my authority is an excellent housekeeper." "Three-quarters of an hour! Who can have told you that?" "A miner's wife in Midlothian." "Ah, I might have known. Yes, that is the fashion in the Lothians, but it is detestable, and you can have no idea of what porridge is if you tried it there. Come to breakfast to-morrow at nine o'clock and you shall have some real porridge made in the Highland way. Ten minutes will cook it, but the meal must be properly ground. That is the whole secret." And a

Highland archæologist showed me a small stone mortar in which oats used formerly to be ground for meal, and according to him it is by returning to that primitive practice, and only thus, that genuine porridge can be obtained. These ladies do not agree with him, so that I shall not attempt to pronounce upon this local and obscure controversy. However, I have eaten porridge in the inns of the Far West of America, where tradition does not count for much, and I have eaten what was carefully prepared for my benefit according to all the lore of the Highlands, but I saw no great difference. The only thing of which I am perfectly certain now is that the cooking of porridge is not to be lightly spoken of in Scotland. It is part of the special rites of each clan.

The Fishers dine about one o'clock, and dinner is the principal meal. It consists of broth, meat, and vegetables, generally potatoes. Tea is taken at six o'clock, with bread and some little relish, eggs, herrings, or Dundee marmalade. Meat does not usually appear more than once a day, and is sometimes replaced by fish, which is easily obtained owing to the proximity of the small fishing-ports of the Forth. When I described to the Fishers the daily fare of the English working men whom I had studied, they cried out upon their gluttony. "We all know," they said, "that the English spend more than we do, and especially upon food."

This difference exists even in the class above the working class, in grades of society where the habits of different countries are generally much the same. So far as I was able to ascertain, it is a moderately general custom among the middle classes of Edinburgh and Glasgow to eat meat only once a day. Breakfast is taken about eight o'clock in the morning, and consists of eggs or fish; a light lunch at one o'clock consists of a plate of soup, some fruit, and occasionally a cup of cocoa; a cup of tea is taken at four or five o'clock, and dinner in the evening. It is only at dinner that meat appears, while in England, on the contrary, the middle and working classes have it on the table thrice a day.

A characteristic common both to respectable English and Scots is the custom of drinking nothing but water at those meals at which tea is not served. Fisher and his family are true to this sober custom, and although drunkenness is very



prevalent in Rosewell, the majority of those who get drunk follow the same practice. It is between meals, and with the deliberate intention of carousing, that they empty great jugs of strong beer, or ruin their stomachs with whiskey. Mr. Hood admits that he has not checked the evil by resisting the opening of a public-house in Rosewell. On holidays, and especially at the New Year, there are drinking-parties in private houses, in which the women also take part. Miss Thomson told me that one New Year's Day, on entering the house of an Irishman in Rosewell, she found four women, two of them quite young, sitting round a table with a bottle of whiskey completely emptied. The eldest, who was most overcome, could neither stand nor speak, while the other three were either unable to speak or unable to move.

Fisher has the reputation of not giving way to these excesses; he is a sober man, but does not belong to any temperance society. I do not think that Rosewell would be a very favourable field for such a society, at any rate at present. In more populous centres, which are more advanced in every way, teetotallers are drawn chiefly from among persons desirous of improving the moral conditions of the working class. I have rarely met, either in the United Kingdom or in America, any Anglo-Saxon devoted to this mission who was not at the same time a zealous apostle of total abstinence. This is easy to understand in a race which does not know how to use alcohol aright, which drinks water at its meals and gets drunk afterwards! At Rosewell the 300 miners who form the population have not, even when sober, any well-marked general interest in the public weal, and the group is too small to make it easy for a man capable of awakening this interest to arise.

All the provisions bought by the Fishers come from the Co-operative Store in the village, where bread, butcher's meat, and groceries can all be obtained. Fisher and his wife bestow unbounded praise on the Store, where, according to them, the quality is good and the price very moderate. On the other hand, Mrs. B——, a lady living in the neighbourhood, who would have been willing to deal there, told me that one got a better article elsewhere for the same price, and that the principal aim of the Co-operative Society was to get a large bonus for its

members. The most curious thing is that both sides are right from their own point of view, and this difference of opinion will enable us to determine with sufficient exactness the kind of service rendered by a well-conducted Co-operative Society in a village like Rosewell.

Working-class households are obliged to live from day to day; they cannot lay in stores, and are dependent on the local retail dealer. In large towns the very considerable extension of the clientèle stimulates competition, and allows traders to realise a good profit by means of a very trifling one on each sale, so that retail trade in towns can be organised, and tends to be organised, on lines favourable to the interest of each and every consumer.

In a village the clientèle is necessarily very limited, and the total figure of the sales very small, and it is consequently impossible for the trader whose field is so narrow to be content with a very trifling profit on each. Further, there is little competition, which permits him to fix his price arbitrarily; and thirdly, he is obliged to give credit to some of his customers, which compels him to make his prices higher. Thus it happens that in order to compensate himself for the disadvantages of the situation he imposes them upon the customers who deal with him.

This, then, is why a Co-operative Society which means business is started where the retail dealer formerly exploited the consumer. Its principle is never to give credit. Thus it gets rid of bad debts, and relieves customers who pay ready money from the higher prices which they were otherwise obliged to pay in order to compensate for the system of credit. Secondly, it is able to buy at a cheaper rate, and can sell at a lower rate, than the small retail dealer.

Further, as the Society divides the net profits of the enterprise amongst its customers—and this is in fact the essential principle of co-operation—it is clear that a Co-operative Store should, if wisely managed, secure great advantages to working-class families accustomed to pay their way as they go.

This is what strikes Fisher. Mrs. B——, however, is not in the same position. She is not dependent on the local supply: she can make her purchases, as she actually does, in one of the

large shops in town, which forward by rail large quantities of goods, for which she pays by a cheque on her banker. Thus she escapes exploitation by the village grocer, owing to the fact that she can afford to lay in a store beforehand, and can consequently buy in large quantities, that she has a banking account, and that she has frequently occasion to go to Edinburgh. Thus she belongs to the town clientèle, a thing which is obviously impossible for Fisher. When she asserts that the articles supplied by the Co-operative Store are bad and dear, she is comparing them with those supplied by the large shops of Edinburgh and Glasgow. When Mrs. Fisher says they are good and cheap, she is comparing them with those supplied by the small village shop. This is why I said just now that both are right from their own point of view.

It might be supposed from this example that only the working classes and small villages have derived benefit from Co-operative Societies. I am far from drawing this conclusion. Societies for co-operative distribution—the only ones under discussion—have cut short the excessive and varied exploitation of the consumer by the trader. Thanks to them, trade has learned a lesson. Wherever they are carried on intelligently and honestly, they have achieved enormous success, and have helped to remedy this form of oppression. To me they seem one of the most interesting manifestations of the remarkable aptitude of the Anglo-Saxon race for effectually opposing every form of tyranny, whether private or public.

At Rosewell we see a particular case of a Co-operative Society, and we have to find the meaning of this particular case, and not to write the history of the co-operative movement. We shall elsewhere meet other particular cases which will enlighten us on other points.

Let us for the moment leave Fisher to speak. He congratulates himself on the saving effected in his expenses by the Co-operative Store, and appreciates at its proper value the advantage of paying only  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. for a 4-lb. loaf—"a halfpenny less than anywhere else," he declares—and of getting good boiling beef for 8d. a lb., beefsteak at 1s. 3d. a lb., tea at 2s. 6d. a lb., etc.; nor is it only for this reason that he is glad to belong to the Co-operative Society.

"Every three months," he said, "the profits are divided in

proportion to each member's purchases. Last time we received back 4s. in the £1, or 20 per cent." I expressed some surprise at the rate of this bonus, which seemed to me to justify Mrs. B——'s criticism; but Fisher continued, "You see, many working men would never have anything for clothes every quarter if it were not for this money coming in just in the nick of time. Most of the members count on it, and always provide themselves then with clothes and linen and boots, which can all be got at the Co-operative Store." Thus the Society plays a part similar to that of the money-box in which children save up pennies for any extraordinary outlay. It supplies the machinery for thrift and foresight.

But that is not all. The Society needs working capital, and borrows money. This is an excellent investment for a workman's savings, and although I was not able to get any very exact information on the point, I strongly suspect that Fisher has invested a little money in this way.

But the Society does not restrict itself to facilitating thrift and leaving a man to sit down and fold his hands. It does something better than this, by teaching the working men who compose it to manage their own interests and to turn their money to good account. It tends to transform them, not into stockholders, but into business men. Let us hear Fisher further.

"At every quarterly meeting," he said, "*we* pay the employés, the rent of the premises, and all the working expenses, on the proposal of the manager, and according to his accounts. Of course it is all in his hands, but we can discharge him if we are not satisfied."

When we hear a man express so clearly and coolly his satisfaction with the control he exercises, it is not difficult to conceive that it is real and efficient. Note that we are concerned with a control exercised by workmen in matters which touch them very closely and with which they are well acquainted. The manager and the employés belong to their village, they meet them every day, they watch their conduct, and would be quick to perceive any abuse contrary to their own interests. Further, they are kept informed as to the business operations effected and the combinations adopted. Thus it is a valuable school, a school for practical life, as an American publicist justly said in speaking of Building Societies. It is also a

school of true and healthy democracy, in which a working man can serve his apprenticeship to those political rights which so many electors are incapable of using in a reasonable manner. Through the existence of the numerous autonomous co-operative societies, trade unions, temperance societies, friendly societies, etc., Great Britain is training up generations of capable citizens, and thus is putting herself in a position to meet the political changes in store without violent revolution.

Fisher's Scottish sobriety naturally diminishes the importance of food as an item in his budget. If we compare his food bills in detail with those of the Brown family, we remark a considerable difference in the consumption of meat. Cereals, on the other hand, occur in a much larger proportion, either in the form of bread or of oatmeal. Fisher told us that he ate more than 1 lb. a day to his own share, and the family (father, mother, and six children, not counting the baby) require about a loaf and a half a day. This gives an average consumption of 12 oz. per head, counting as adults three children aged respectively five, three, and two years, whose consumption would naturally be less. In the Brown family we had rather over 9 oz., reckoning in two children, of whom the younger was eight years old.

The difference of consumption does not exactly measure the difference of expense in the two cases, because prices differ. Birmingham is a large town, admirably provisioned, and meat costs less at an ordinary butcher's than at the Rosewell Co-operative Store, 6d. instead of 8d. for boiling beef, and 9d. instead of 1s. 2d. for roasting joints. This confirms what we said above on the advantages of the large town. We ought also to mention the facilities in Birmingham for buying American or Australian frozen meat at a low price. Mrs. Brown, however, did not use it, and her means allowed of this luxury, but a less well-to-do family would thus be able to obtain a wholesome and nourishing diet for a very small sum. At Rosewell and, generally speaking, in most villages this meat cannot be obtained owing to the lack of freezing chambers, which it would not pay to construct for a small clientèle. On the other hand, bread from the Co-operative Bakery costs less than that which an ordinary baker supplies to the Browns (about  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a lb.), and we have explained the reason.

I shall not enter in further detail into the calculations which I used for estimating the annual outlay on food for the Fisher family. From what I know, it must reach the amount of £66 : 8s., thus absorbing more than half of the total resources. From this sum must be deducted £2 : 8 : 9, representing the value of the vegetables grown in the kitchen-garden, which brings the actual cash expenditure to £64.

The item of clothing is not heavy. There are no tall young girls to bring their earnings to the common purse, and show themselves very exacting with regard to their toilets. Nor does Mrs. Fisher seem to lean towards overdressing, a fault which is rather common in Scotland. Further, the famous sewing-machine, the cost of which should be spread over the ten years it will probably last, enables her to make the under-linen of the family as well as some of the children's dresses. As for Fisher, he is well supplied. Besides his working dress, he has an entire new suit, another not so fresh, and a winter overcoat. We have seen from the figures given for Brown how cheap all this is in Great Britain. I should put down the total annual expenditure on clothing for the family at £14.

Twelve tons of coal are burned in a year, four for warming and eight for the kitchen fire, which also serves for washing and ironing. At an average price of 7s. a ton, this costs £4 : 4s.

To finish with household expenses, we must add £4 for upkeep of furniture and household linen, £2 for lighting, and then we have only to examine the minor items in the family budget.

Medical attendance, for instance, is represented by a subscription of 3d. a week, including the doctor's visits and medicine. Education, with school requirements, entails an expense of 2s. a year for the two youngest school-children and 5s. for one who can write, in all, 7s. Then there are further the boys' football subscriptions; the modest fishing tackle which Fisher uses—without any great result, he says—in the neighbouring burns; the *Evening News*, which he buys daily, and the *Weekly News*, which he reads every week. The total cost of these amusements is an annual charge on the budget of £2 : 8s. The subscription of 1d. a week to the Lothian Miners' Union represents an annual expenditure of 4s. 4d.

Finally, we ought to mention the weekly premium paid to

the British Legal Life and Loan Company. For each of the seven children living at home and for his wife Fisher pays 1d. a week, and 2d. for himself, or £2:3:4 a year; and for this the Company will pay his family £5 at his death, and each child is insured for £10 if he dies after eleven years of age. Fisher would have been entitled to £10 if he had not dropped his payments while he was in America. On his return he was obliged to take out a new policy on less favourable terms.

If we recapitulate the receipts and payments enumerated above, we shall be able to make up the budget of the family thus :—

<sup>1</sup> Cr.		Dr.	
Fisher's Wages . . . . .	£84 0 0	Rent of House and Garden . . . . .	£5 4 0
Two Sons' Wages . . . . .	35 0 0	Upkeep of Furniture and Linen . . . . .	4 0 0
		Warming . . . . .	4 4 0
		Lighting . . . . .	2 0 0
		Food . . . . .	64 0 0
		Clothing. . . . .	14 0 0
		Medical Attendance . . . . .	0 13 0
		Amusements . . . . .	2 8 0
		Subscription to Union Educational Require- ments. . . . .	0 7 0
		Insurance . . . . .	2 3 4
		Voluntary Contribu- tion to Edinburgh Infirmary . . . . .	0 1 0
		Balance unaccounted for . . . . .	19 15 4
Total . . . . .	£119 0 0	Total . . . . .	£119 0 0

At first sight one might be led to suppose that Fisher must have accumulated relatively considerable savings, but it should be noted that the present situation is quite recent. Two years ago none of the children were earning anything, which reduced the total income to £84, and further, the eldest daughter, now in Mr. Hood's service, was kept by her father. Again, in the early years of his marriage, when Fisher had fewer children, and when, consequently, his expenses were less,

<sup>1</sup> Not including the products of the garden nor the bonus from the Co-operative Store.

he was not a stone-worker, and earned much lower wages. He has now reached that short period of prosperity experienced by large and industrious working-class families when the eldest children contribute to the general expenses. Further, his furniture represents a part of his savings, and the rest—which is, I should think, very little—is probably invested in the Co-operative Society.<sup>1</sup> We might also include under this head the eventual right of the family to the insurances in the name of the various members.

I do not wish to leave this subject without calling attention to the absence of one noticeable item in the enumeration of expenses, that of taxes. "I pay no taxes," said Fisher. He does indeed pay indirectly a very small sum, included in his rent, but that is all. No *octroi*,<sup>2</sup> hardly any duties, and no conscription. Neither the hand of the State nor the hand of the county nor the hand of the parish exert any sensible pressure. "However," he added, "I give a shilling a year to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, like the rest of my comrades, but it is quite voluntary, and we are entitled to be looked after in the Infirmary in the case of accidents for which the master is not responsible." This is indeed an attenuated form of taxation.

### III. *How Fisher brings up his Family.*

It is not enough to know how the problem of daily bread is solved by a family of miners, chosen indeed from the most respectable, but exceptional in no other respect. We must also acquaint ourselves with the future of the family. We have said that the miner's environment is closed in on all sides, but nevertheless there is a road of escape, and Fisher's case is a proof of this.

Fisher is certainly not ready, like Brown, to leave his trade, nor can he fall back upon commerce, like the Englishman. He is a stone-worker, and might be a collier, but take him out

<sup>1</sup> During the Scotch miners' strike in 1894 Fisher received the strike pay allowed by the Union, but was obliged to dip into his savings considerably to face the long suspension of work. He voted for the strike, as his good position permitted him to resist.

<sup>2</sup> The *octroi* is the toll imposed on merchandise entering French towns. It is obvious that such a tax really falls upon the consumer, and must be far more severely felt by the poor than by the rich.



of the pit and he sinks to the rank of a navvy. What distinguishes him from the mass of his comrades, and marks him out as among the most wideawake of them, is that he is aware of the disadvantage of being so tightly bound to a specialism, and that he is seeking to open a wider field to his children.

For this he is not very well equipped. A worker in a small mining village can profit only by the local resources, and in Rosewell everything is connected with the mine. Nevertheless, even there he chooses whatever is least closely connected with the mine. His eldest son is a clerk in Mr. Hood's office, which will qualify him to become later a clerk anywhere, to find a good opening in a business house, perhaps even to start in business on his own account, if he knows how to seize an opportunity, and if fortune smiles on him. The second son is an apprentice in the joiner's shop connected with the mine. There he is learning what will open several trades, as, for example, carpentering, cabinet-making, and others. The method is obvious; it consists in turning to account all the means at disposal in a peculiarly unfavourable position to prevent the over-specialisation of the child and facilitate his escape from the position of a miner.

It is obvious that all this is the result of a very definite idea on the father's part. It is an idea which has grown and ripened, and which has long been exerting its influence upon the children. They would have gone straight to the mine if they had been allowed. As sons of a well-known stone-worker, they would have found an opening, and their father was in a position to give them work under favourable conditions. Further, they knew that the pit ensured a good living, they saw an example of it in their own home, where all the resources were drawn from it, and where things prospered in spite of the heavy burden of expenses. What, then, induced them to turn from remunerative work within their reach in order to brave the unknown? This is a phenomenon in education.

Education does not consist wholly in moral training and instruction. It is the result of a mass of opinions which lead us to act in such and such a direction, and of a sum of habits which exercise a strong influence on the direction and efficacy

of our faculty of action. The principles of religion and morality and the knowledge imparted by instruction furnish, it is true, a part of these opinions and habits, but they do not furnish them exclusively. The judgments we hear expressed around us in early years, the sage lessons of experience or out-of-date prejudices, usually form the foundation of our opinions. The manner in which our parents live forms the foundation of our habits. All these conditions contribute to determine the particular being represented by each of us.

Evidently it cannot be an unimportant matter that the young Fishers have often heard their father say, as he said to me, "If I had been anything but a miner I should have got on in America." This is a subject of conversation which frequently comes up. Mrs. Fisher has a sister in the United States who works in a lace factory and earns \$11 a week. She often writes to Rosewell, and congratulates herself on her lot. Her letters are discussed by the family, and I picture Fisher answering his children's questions, recalling what the elder children remember of Pennsylvania and Ohio, and ending, "Yes, yes, America is a fine country; but don't be a miner if you want to get on there." Nor is Mrs. Fisher's sister the only one of her family who has settled in the States. All her people are there, and there is constant communication and comparison between this isolated and peaceful family of Scottish miners and the great industrial centres of the Eastern States. Further, the eldest daughter has friends over there, and she speaks as a matter of course of going out to them, as if the project were quite simple and easy of execution. All these circumstances contribute powerfully to widen the horizon of childish imagination, to suggest a future outside White Hill Colliery, and to save the children from the over-specialisation of their father.

Thus, the most notable factor in Fisher's educational influence on his children, the circumstance which has contributed most to elevate them, is the experience which he acquired from his residence in America. Without it they would probably have been quite content to follow their father's trade.

This is not mere chance. It would be a mistake to suppose that if Fisher had one day taken it into his head to emigrate to Pennsylvania, and two years later to return home, his

conduct would have resulted, mechanically and inevitably, in a great educational advantage for his children. It must be noted that Fisher made a vigorous effort to go to Pittsburgh. He was married, the father of a family, and had work at Rosewell. When he decided to emigrate he had a weighty reason, the wish to make a good position better, and not to escape from poverty. He cherished the legitimate ambition of rising. Having arrived in the New World, and having tried to settle first in Pennsylvania and then in Ohio, he found that he lacked something necessary to success, he realised that he had not the necessary flexibility, and that his specialism was a hindrance rather than a help. I have already pointed out that he was not ripe for America, and this fact he discovered. The discovery was well worth the voyage. Courageously and patiently he returned to the Lothians, and took up again the chain he had not succeeded in breaking, but with the resolve that he would not fetter his children in the same way. He made a false start himself, but he has taken measures that the next generation shall not do the same. Here, indeed, is a phenomenon in parental influence and education.

If opportunities of bettering themselves present themselves in the mother country, his children will be able to seize them. They are educated for the Lothians or for China not less than for America: they are educated with a view to profiting by favourable circumstances wherever these occur.

Such, at least, is their father's plan, the end towards which he is working. It remains to be seen whether the limited sphere of Rosewell will allow of its development. Mr. Hood's clerk can easily find a way out, but the joiner's apprentice will probably find himself less favourably situated. His specialism is, indeed, less exclusive than a collier's, but it is still a specialism. If we compare the future of this family with that of Brown's, we are struck by the advantages which a large, active, growing centre offers to a prudent father for putting his children out into the world. What would be easy and likely to be realised in Birmingham becomes problematic in Rosewell. Fisher's children are at a disadvantage too from another point of view. Their father can point out the road they should follow, but he has not set foot in it himself like Brown, nor has he at his disposal the same financial

means to fit them thoroughly for the part he wishes them to play.

With regard to his daughters, Fisher has very definite ideas, and declares that they shall not go to factories. His wife, who in her youth worked in the neighbouring carpet factory of Bonnyrigg, is of the same opinion, and both agree that it is much better to go into service in some respectable family. This is what they chose for the eldest girl, who is in Mr. Hood's service.

At first sight this view of the question somewhat astonished me. I asked myself how Fisher, who has shown ambition for his sons and knowledge of the world in the way he has started them in life, could find nothing better than domestic service for his daughters. No doubt he is careful to choose good places, and he has been particularly lucky in the case of the first, but it would hardly seem that the profession of a domestic servant commonly offers those opportunities of advancement which he seeks for his sons. Does he then sacrifice his daughters, or is the position of a domestic servant different in England and Scotland, in certain cases, from what it is in France?

Evidently the latter hypothesis is the one we must adopt. If Fisher sacrificed his daughters—if, indeed, he had no special care for their future—he would let them *do like the rest*, a simple course for apathetic parents, and would leave them to be caught by the current which draws most of the other miners' daughters to the carpet or paper factories in the neighbourhood, especially to those at Roslin, two or three miles off. Every day you may see groups of young women going to their work in the morning and returning in the evening, enlivening the pretty road which leads from the bare moor of Rosewell to the shady and picturesque glen of Roslin. With their bare arms and a woollen shawl over their head and shoulders, they might pass for Lancashire factory lasses, but for the knitting in their hands, which betrays their Scottish nationality. They are very decent-looking girls too. Miss B——, who lives between Rosewell and Roslin, and meets them constantly, had no complaint to make of their manner of coming and going. I have more than once met them myself, and the general impression was very unlike that produced by a walk in East London or in the

streets of Liverpool. Their manners are neither supercilious nor rough. Miss B—— and I one day found ourselves at a level crossing on the North British Railway, just behind such a group. One of the girls, who did not know us at all, was careful to hold the gate open in order to save us the trouble of opening it again behind her. I note these trifles to show that the life of factory girls is not an abyss of degradation, corruption, and brutalisation, from which conscientious parents are bound to snatch their daughters. We shall see what morality is worth there, but so far appearances are satisfactory, which creates a presumption in its favour.

I made observations to the same effect under absolutely similar conditions at Dunfermline, a small industrial town in Fife, surrounded by coal-fields. Many of the young girls employed in the factories belong to mining families in the neighbourhood, and several of them, whose homes are at a distance, live in lodgings, which are said to be highly respectable.

Why, then, are Fisher and his wife so firm in refusing to allow their daughters to go to the factories? It is not a mere notion they have got into their heads, such as might be held on the subject by a middle-class family, where the daughters are not obliged to work. It is an opinion which deprives them of a very real and positive benefit, that of seeing additional wages added to the family income. Half a sovereign a week means £26 a year, which is something with an income under £120 a year. It is far more than would pay for the board and lodging of a young girl in the style in which the Fishers live. Of their own free will, then, they renounce an advantage by sending their daughter into service, for her wages are then, of course, quite at her own disposal.

It must be, therefore, that they think there is a certain educational value in service, and if their opinion is correct, service in Scotland must differ considerably from service in France. This is, in fact, the case.

In the first place, one notable difference is that a young girl who goes into service does not by any means consider that she is entering a distinct class, the servant class; she thinks she is choosing this method of earning her living as she would choose any other, until she marries; she is in a sense serving

her probation for marriage. To use an expression which will often recur in dealing with the classification of occupations, service is a very *despecialised* trade, at any rate in ordinary families, where a man-servant is an unknown luxury, and it is in such a family that Fisher has placed his daughter. This observation, like those which follow, must not be taken generally as applying to service in large establishments. Butlers and powdered footmen, who are legion in the mansions of the nobility and merchant princes, are even more noticeable than French *mâtres d'hôtel* and valets and lackeys for the vacant and solemn expression which befits their occupation. They are specialists of an extreme type, swollen with a sense of their own importance and dignity, impassive as statues, and undoubtedly form a class apart. The same thing may be said of the *femme de chambre* of a duchess, of her French *chef*, and of the skilful coachman who drives her in Hyde Park. It is almost always necessary, in any appreciations of England, to distinguish carefully between the upper classes who come most to the front and the nation of workers behind. In the present case there is a great gulf fixed between the professional man-servant in the first and the temporary maid in the second class. We are here concerned only with the latter. It is certain that Fisher does not think his daughter is destined to live and die in Mr. Hood's service, sincerely attached to the family as she seems.

Secondly, masters here are interested in their servants. I do not refer to such consideration as might be inspired by prudence of an entirely selfish kind, but to real interest, prompted by the feeling that servants are human beings. Young girls are not exposed to the nocturnal promiscuity of a sixth storey, jointly occupied by the servants of all the tenants, as they are in Paris, often as a matter of course. Each family occupies a separate house, where the servant has proper quarters, and the kitchen, laundry, and servants' offices are healthy and decent, and generally kept with scrupulous care. In some families, where great importance is attached to religious and moral training, the servants are invited to share these interests as much as possible. I have never heard servants addressed in the unseemly and odious language which is unfortunately but too commonly employed in France, by

persons who call themselves well-bred, to a careless cook or a clumsy lady's-maid. They are treated with the same respect for the dignity and personality of a human being as is seen in the education of children. Children are talked to like grown persons, and servants like men of the world. It is a good way to educate and elevate both.

The same phenomenon is seen in the liberty allowed to them. I have already had occasion to notice that in Birmingham servants are accustomed to frequent leave of absence and a yearly holiday. It is much the same, with some difference in detail, in all parts of Great Britain, and although young servants are preserved from the moral dangers of Parisian life, yet they are subject to no surveillance in their walks and in the company they keep. It is considered quite natural that they should employ the time at their own disposal as they think fit, and this line of conduct is justified by the habits of independence and respectability which are the rule. It is thought that all young girls, whether servants or not, must serve their apprenticeship to life by learning how to conduct themselves, and by gaining experience for themselves. These mitigations of the bondage of service prevent this occupation from exerting so fatal an influence on initiative as when the subjection is close, complete, and constant. This is the redeeming feature in the position of servants, they are not compelled by an inexorable law to remain in service all their lives, or to fail in their first attempt to change their condition from incapacity for self-guidance. Their will has not become atrophied nor paralysed through disuse.

Service, thus stripped of its gravest disadvantages, offers the advantage of respectability, which Fisher and his wife appear to value highly. A young girl placed in a carefully chosen family comes into contact with a superior class, and thus acquires habits of care and cleanliness and a higher standard of material life as well as of morality. Later, when she becomes a wife and mother, she carries these habits into her own home, to the great gain of her husband and children. Mrs. Fisher expresses this by saying that factory girls know nothing about housekeeping. The expression is hardly just, for they might learn easily enough, if they cared to do so, as Mrs. Fisher herself did, although she had worked in her youth at

Bonnyrigg. But they do not care to do so ; they have none of that liking for a comfortable and attractive home which makes a husband glad to come back after his day's work, none of that love of cleanliness and order which is not far removed from elegance, none of that desire for something better which expresses itself in ingenious attempts at ornament, though all these things are so many links to attach a working man to his own fireside, and so many influences helping to transform the house, the mere place of shelter, into a true hearth and home.

Mrs. Fisher is also influenced by another consideration that of the marriage of her daughters. Marriages are contracted at an early age at Rosewell, and in most mining centres. As I have already explained, young men are soon in a position to earn good wages, so that there is no need of vigorous or persevering effort on their part in order to support a family. Thus they marry, not by a process of selection, but *en masse*, all at once, from eighteen to twenty. It is not difficult to commence housekeeping, for there are plenty of merchants willing to sell the few bits of necessary furniture on credit, while the relations and friends bidden to the marriage all give a small present, and as wages are high and expenses small to begin with, the young couple have no immediate hardships to dread. Consequently the factory girl is quite willing to be courted by the first lad she meets, and marries him without any fear of material difficulties, proud to exchange her work in the factory for the dignity of marriage. Marriages are lightly made, and often to legalise previous relations. Such irregularities are very rife in Rosewell, and public opinion is not very hard upon them if the situation is regularised. A young man who refused to marry the girl he had seduced would find himself in a very bad case, without taking into account his legal responsibilities. Such a case occurred at Rosewell a few years ago, and the man was kicked out of the village. These summary acts of justice do not, however, prevent the very real and grave evil of marriages concluded without judgment. Miss Thomson told me that girls would marry anybody at twenty, and a colliery proprietor in Fife told me that if a clerk or a Dunfermline tradesman were to marry as the colliers do, he would be thought a fool.

By sending their daughters out to service, the Fishers



enable them to escape the epidemic of imprudent marriages. The girls are thrown less in contact with the youth of the neighbourhood, and they get a little ambition, as well as a higher standard of material refinement. Consequently the prospect of settling down in a miner's cottage, with its meagre furniture, and with no money at their backs, is not one that arouses any great enthusiasm, and as they are less ready to rush into housekeeping, they are more likely to make suitable marriages.

We have seen that the means of elevation within reach of Fisher's children are much lessened through the circumstance of their living in a small mining village. The various forms of employment offered to their activity are very limited, and initiative is not keenly stimulated, as it would be in a great manufacturing centre, by the spectacle of a crowd of different enterprises. However, neither instruction nor moral training have been lacking. I visited the Rosewell schools with interest, not only to hear the little Fishers questioned, but also to acquaint myself with the organisation of the schools and the nature of their influence.

The first point to note, and one which strikes a Frenchman most, is the social standing of village schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, which is certainly superior to that of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses in the rural communes of France. They exhibit more dignity, more self-respect, more moral elevation. They enjoy a position of more consideration, and do not seem affected by that chronic malady, born of the spirit of antagonism and inferior social status, which expresses itself by distrust and jealousy towards the upper classes on the one hand, and on the other by a proud and contemptuous bearing towards the labouring classes. This difference is due to a number of causes of which the following are, I think, among the principal.

In the first place, the persons who devote themselves to teaching in primary schools usually belong to a better class. The female teachers especially, who are more numerous than the male teachers, as they have the charge of infants of both sexes, are usually daughters of well-to-do farmers, tradesmen, small employers, and well-paid working men. This is frequently the case in France too, but in England such families have a

higher standard of comfort than in France. Generally speaking, their ideas are less grovelling and more enlightened. Of many it cannot be said that they belong to a lower class, although they may do so temporarily, for they are ready to rise to a higher level when their means of existence permit, and marvellously well equipped to acquire more ample means. Take for example the case of Brown's eldest daughter, who is at present a pupil-teacher, and on her way to become a certificated mistress. Can we suppose that the remarkable spirit of progress and of push which have coloured her home education will not be seen in her influence upon her pupils, in her own attitude, and in the judgments she forms. She possesses as her birthright a real talent for educating the young.

Working-class families, then, have a legitimate ambition to rise, while those in which the father belongs to a liberal profession are not rendered sterile to the same degree as in France by their contempt for work. The daughter of a clergyman with a small income will not think she is doing anything derogatory in teaching in a primary school. Nor will she be pitied because she has to earn her living, for that does not appear, even to a young girl, as the supreme misfortune; indeed, nothing is thought more natural. Thus teachers are not uncommonly drawn from non-artisan families, without the circumstance appearing in any way abnormal or exceptional. In this way the profession is rising.

Village schools are strictly dependent on the local School Board, which nominates the teachers, fixes and pays their salaries, and can even to a certain extent determine the programme. At first sight it would seem that such dependence must lower the position of the teachers, but the reverse is the case. It is certain that Fisher has more respect for Miss Thomson, who teaches two of his children, than a French peasant has for the communal teacher in his village, whose official position he envies, but whose educational rôle he fails to appreciate. The latter is not responsible in any way to the parent for the manner in which he teaches his children, but is like any other bureaucrat, accomplishing a piece of routine work, without any link between him and the population whose future, by a bitter irony, it is his mission to prepare. In Scotland the head of a family has a direct interest in school

affairs, he feels that his influence is real, and that he is responsible for their right direction, and that the teacher whose task is to co-operate in the work of education is really invested with his confidence.

To render the influence of parents on school organisation more direct and more conclusive, an ingenious process is resorted to which assures the effective representation of minorities. It is known as cumulative voting, and consists in giving to one candidate the total number of votes which might be divided among the different candidates on the list. At Rosewell, for instance, the School Board consists of seven members, and each elector has consequently seven votes. By means of cumulative voting, he can give the whole seven votes to one person, and thus it is easy for a compact minority to secure a representative on the School Board. Thus in Manchester, Bradford, Sheffield, and many other towns Roman Catholic priests have seats on the Board, although Catholics form only a small minority.

Thanks to this system, teachers appointed by the School Board are really elected by families, and are in communication with them and directly represent them. It was by the kind offices of Miss Thomson that I was introduced to the Fishers, and I have often been in a position to render acknowledgment to her profound knowledge of the population. Naturally, when the School Board gets hold of a capable teacher, it does not part with such a one. Miss Thomson has been eighteen years at Rosewell, and that creates ties in a village. On the other hand, the Board can dismiss a master or mistress on no other ground than that of unsuitability or want of success, and they have not to concern themselves, as in France, with finding another appointment for the unsuccessful teacher. Thus there is at work a constant process of selection of the fittest, and it is not difficult to understand that the results are satisfactory.

To get good teachers they must be well paid, and this is done. At Rosewell the head master gets £200—£160 in money and the equivalent of £40 in lodging. The head mistress gets £80, assistant mistresses £40, and pupil-teachers £12 to £16.

Rosewell school is thus organised on lines calculated to promote the joint efforts of parents and carefully-chosen

teachers for the instruction of the children. It is a powerful aid to the different families, nor is it without influence from the point of view of religious and moral education, in spite of its unsectarian character. It is not unsectarian in the same sense as in France, that is to say, indifferent or hostile to religion, but it does not recognise differences of creed. This leads me to point out very briefly how religious questions are generally regarded in the milieu under discussion.

Very strong religious convictions are held by the Scottish middle class, more especially by members of the Free Church of Scotland. I have had many opportunities of recognising the profound sincerity of their beliefs, the reality of the influence of their religion upon their lives, and their stanch devotion to principle. There is much more indifference, apparently, among the working class, and there is no doubt that church-going is looked upon rather as a sign of respectability which goes along with a certain material elevation. At Rosewell the young do not generally go to church, with the exception of the Irish Catholics, who form about a quarter of the population. Once married, however, the greater number become church-goers, but still retain their indifference to religious exercises. We saw in Fisher's case that Bible reading is not common in the majority of average families, and the education which the children receive shows no trace of dogmatic religious teaching. But in Scotland, as in England, there is a widespread feeling that religion is a serious matter, which must not be treated lightly, and that its influence is moralising and elevating. Further, the doctrine of revelation is almost universally accepted. It is true that a few divines who have devoted themselves to Biblical exegesis have held very bold opinions on the inspiration of the Bible, and tend towards rationalism, but the bulk of the British nation believes in the supernatural revelation of the Holy Scriptures, and this doctrine lies outside the scope of religious differences. Thus, underneath the semblance of irreligion we find, even in the classes to which these matters seem of the least account, a substratum of Christian belief, which is very different from the strongly marked anti-religious feeling so general in France in all classes.

This difference of attitude explains a variety of opinions

regarding unsectarian schools which are generally held in England, but which would be very startling in France. Miss Thomson, herself a staunch Protestant, declared herself entirely in favour of the unsectarian system, asserting that it was, in many cases, the only one which ensured children proper instruction. "Take the case of Rosewell," she said; "out of 300 children of age to attend school, we have about 80 belonging to Catholic families. These families are generally Irish,—poor, moderately improvident, and generous. They support their schools somehow, but it is a great burden on them, and they cannot afford good teachers. Thus they make heavy sacrifices to give their children an inferior education. It would be infinitely better for the school to teach all the children without giving any religious instruction, and to let each denomination arrange to supply such instruction to its adherents." Nor should I be astonished if there, where the different sects are on good terms, such a compromise could be loyally carried out, producing all the advantages which Miss Thomson anticipates. But unfortunately this is not the case everywhere, and Miss Thomson admitted that Presbyterian ministers are much prejudiced against Roman Catholics, and do not hesitate to show it. Given these germs of antagonism, the education in common of children belonging to rival churches would present many difficulties. On the other hand, the situation as it stands to-day also presents very serious ones. It is clear, for instance, that the Irish children in Rosewell, who as a rule find but few stirring examples in their own families, lose much if they do not come into contact with a more bracing environment by going to the public school. Further, prejudices have less chance of disappearing if each denomination brings up its children apart. I have sometimes heard Catholic children and youths make sweeping statements about the Protestant clergy, which very little experience and contact with Protestants would have modified as they deserved.

In this analysis of the means of elevation within reach of the Rosewell miners, we must not omit to mention the enormous influence of the press. As I have said, Fisher takes in the *Evening News* and the *Weekly News*. His conversation shows his interest in politics, not merely in the narrow sense of party politics, but in their wider general aspects. This

stone-worker is beyond doubt far better informed about what is going on in the world than the great majority of Frenchmen who have received what is called a liberal education. When I was in Rosewell (September 1893) bimetallism or monometallism was the question of the day. Fisher was keenly interested in the different American Silver Bills, and we talked about the abolition of the Sherman Law and the probable modifications of the M'Kinley Tariff Bill. He gave his opinion, not like a man who talks for talking's sake, but like a serious man who has taken pains to acquire information, and for whom such discussions correspond to realities in his own experience. He has lived in the States, and has been paid in the silver dollars alluded to in bimetallist debates, he has paid three times as much for his clothes as in Scotland, he has experienced in his own trade the effect of the crises precipitated by tariff legislation, and when the *Evening News* informs him of what is going on he sees the consequences they will have in a series of small facts which are familiar to him. Hence his enormous interest in information pure and simple, without any colouring or commentary, which he can supply for himself. Moreover, American relations and friends write to him occasionally, and whet his appetite for American news. It is impossible to mention a leading town in the United States without his remembering that he knows some one there. Denver, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, which I mentioned on purpose, always reminded him that he had some relation or friend settled there. Of course, too, he has his views about Australia, New Zealand, and the Cape, for what Scotsman is so forsaken of God and man as not to know some countryman there. To a Briton the whole world does not seem so great as does Europe to a Frenchman, and, above all, it seems less foreign. At a dinner-party given by Mrs. B—— I heard Mr. Hood say to the hostess, "The other day I met a young fellow employed in the paper mills at Roslin, who knew your son in Japan." "Oh, that is very likely; my son is very hospitable to his countrymen." Nothing more; the conversation turned on other subjects, and no one seemed to see anything worthy of remark in the fact of two Scotsmen meeting in Japan.

It is not easy to deceive men whose mode of life and various ties and interests keep them informed, without any

effort on their part, respecting a variety of matters. This is why the English press is so careful to obtain as far as possible precise and authentic information. When information is falsified it is done in the interests of the country, and to throw dust in the eyes of foreign countries. Consequently the influence of the press is something very different from that of the French press; it instructs its readers and keeps them in touch with a variety of matters, and certainly tends to open their minds. It is infinitely more in earnest, and only admits the serial story, which forms the chief attraction in popular French journals, into its uncoordinated and overcrowded weekly edition. I cannot doubt that Fisher owes much to his daily newspaper reading, rendered fruitful by his souvenirs of his sojourn abroad and his personal relations with other countries.

This is important for Fisher himself, but still more so for his children, some of whom will probably emigrate. When one sees how fatal is the ignorance of French parents to any distant enterprise on the part of their children, how it takes the alarm at any sign of bold initiative, and with what blind confidence it accepts the proposals of certain exploiters, and when one sees, on the other hand, working-class fathers like Brown and Fisher argue like sensible and well-informed men about the best way of settling in New Zealand or Pennsylvania, one is led to the conclusion that the dissemination of information by the press may have other results than the mere satisfaction of idle curiosity. For this reason I have not hesitated to note its influence as next to that of the school in this small isolated village, where we might have supposed it a negligible quantity.

The description of Fisher's home life has led us to examine the daily life of prosperous miners, of those who, assured hitherto, through special circumstances, of regular work, and knowing how to use their resources well, have no complaints to make about their position. We must now turn our attention to another side, and consider the disturbance caused in mining centres by long periods of interrupted employment and by great strikes. Such crises will enable us to lay our finger on the special difficulty presented in collieries, with their staff of miners indissolubly attached to the mine on the one hand, and with their variable clientèle on the other.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MINERS' STRIKE OF 1893

THE year 1893 witnessed a miners' strike of exceptional length and importance. The pits were idle for more than thirteen weeks, and both masters and men suffered considerably. A large number of industries were very seriously affected by the coal famine, and several factories had to be closed. Even the railway service was threatened, and the effects of the strike were felt in all directions. In some cases acts of violence were committed which left a stain on the character of the British working classes. Public safety was endangered, and revolutionary sentiments were in the air. The great strike of Lancashire textile operatives a few months before had preserved the respectable and dignified character of a dispute between reasonable persons. The miners' strike did not everywhere do so, and it had a much greater effect upon the labour world.

We are not concerned here with the effect of the strike upon industry, but with the nature of the struggle and the different features which it presented in different mining districts. This will enable us to appreciate the disturbance it wrought in the milieu we have been describing.

Let me refer once more to a circumstance with which our readers are already familiar, which intensifies the consequences of such a crisis in no small degree. I allude to the indissoluble tie which binds the collier to his trade, and in many cases to a particular colliery. Wherever a pit is isolated it is the collier's only resource, and when it fails him he has no other. Fisher was glad to work on a farm in Ohio for \$1 a day during a period of depression, but at Rosewell even this



modest wage would not be forthcoming, for the agricultural labourer is less nomadic in Scotland than in the United States. Recently 150 French miners at Graissesac, on being dismissed by the Colliery Company, appealed to the Government, and the Minister of Public Works offered to find them employment on a line in course of construction. The representatives of the men rejected the offer with indignation, and a resolution to the following effect was unanimously carried: "By the nature of our work we were attached to the soil of Graissesac, where we had almost taken root. We were a settled people, and now we are to be condemned to a wandering life by the abrupt suppression, without any legitimate cause, of rights we had acquired, and which appeared to us indefeasible."<sup>1</sup> Here we encounter the same obstacle, and miners' strikes cannot be settled, as is done in some industries, by the departure of the malcontents. Nor is it easy for a colliery owner to replace them, for the only colliers in the neighbourhood are his own disaffected men. Other disputes may be settled by separating the parties at variance, but here it is well-nigh impracticable.

In addition to this general difficulty, which is common to all miners' strikes, there are particular developments depending upon the social condition of the population affected, and more especially upon its capacity for organisation. Finally, the success or failure of a strike depends not merely on the organisation of the strikers, but also on the practicability of their demands. In support of this we will take a rapid glance at the leading incidents of the great strike of 1893.

### I. *Special Character of the Strike in the different Mining Districts.*

It has already been pointed out that the mining districts may be grouped into four—the Scottish coal-field, the Northumberland and Durham coal-field, the Midland coal-field, and the South Wales coal-field. These districts were not all equally involved in the strike. In Scotland the crisis lasted only a few days, and everything was quiet when I was at Rosewell in September 1893. It is true that at a later date the influence of the events which had taken place in the

<sup>1</sup> Report of the meeting held at Graissesac, 10th July 1894.

Midlands and South Wales made itself felt in Scotland in a rather remarkable way. During the English strike the Scottish miners received higher wages, but when work was resumed in the English pits, and the price of coal fell to the normal level, there was a corresponding fall in wages in Scotland. This led to the Scottish strike of 1894.

Various causes combined to keep the Scottish miners outside the general movement of 1893. In the first place, as I have already said, they suffered less from irregularity of employment; and in the second place they were not so well organised. The orders issued by the English Unions could not be carried out to the letter and in concert, nor were the Scottish Unions strong enough to bear a prolonged strike. They are not rich, for their membership is not large and the contributions are low. While a miner in the Midlands contributes 4d. a week regularly, and will make special efforts from time to time to support a strike in some other district, Fisher only pays 1d. towards the funds of his Union. In reply to my questions he told me that the contribution was at one time 3d. a week, but seeing that it would be impossible to accumulate a strike fund large enough to permit of a protracted struggle, they took the desperate resolution of reducing the sum to 1d. a week. The circumstance which led them to this decision was the insufficient number of adherents. To accumulate a fund of any size the numbers must be large, since contributions are necessarily small, and the whole body of workers must understand that it is to their interest to combine.

Now, the composition of this body of workers is far from homogeneous. In Ayrshire, in particular, there is a large percentage of Irish even among the underground miners, a circumstance due to the proximity of Ireland. The Irish are also numerous round Glasgow, and even in the Lothians we found that 25 per cent of the population were of the same origin. The Celtic Highland element is also largely represented, and notwithstanding the fact that it is readily modified by contact with the more active Lowland environment, it does not readily lend itself to the complicated organisation of Trade Unionism. The Highlander only acquires the qualities of the Lowland Scot after prolonged intercourse

with his Saxon neighbour. I have frequently been told by Irishmen that they belonged to no Friendly, Insurance, or Co-operative Society, and the English and Scots are unanimous in asserting that an Irishman lives from day to day, and never sees beyond his immediate needs. A Roman Catholic lady living near Rosewell, who was very willing to render full justice to her co-religionists, gave them the following character: "Many of them do not drink, and are estimable, steady, moral people, but they have no wish to raise themselves, and are not on the look-out for a chance. If they have enough to eat, it is all they want. They get very little good out of what they earn, and if they ever happen to save, they save coins. The idea of putting their money in a Savings Bank or of taking shares in some of those Co-operative or Building Societies which offer safe and advantageous investments to working men, never occurs to them. The Irishman, too, is generally mistrustful, and does not care to talk about his affairs—a result, perhaps, of long oppression, which has taught him something more than reserve. You may have noticed a man digging in my garden last Saturday. He is an Irishman employed at White Hill Colliery, and he works here on Saturday to add a little to his wages. I am sure if you had tried to question him you would have got nothing out of him, while Fisher received you cordially and gave you every assistance."

Where forethought is so little developed, the prospect of a remote advantage is not sufficient to induce men to burden themselves with a weekly contribution. At the same time their dislike to publicity where their personal affairs are concerned makes them reluctant to join any society which not merely agitates for higher wages and shorter hours of labour, but also investigates the condition of its members, and the results produced by a given crisis, a given reduction in the hours of labour, etc.

Consequently a fair percentage of Scottish miners hold aloof from the Trade Union movement either from inaptitude for combining except for short periods, or else from a feeling of distrust.

Another circumstance which prevents the Lowland miner from clinging to his Union as tenaciously as the Midland miner does is that he is more ready to emigrate. Fisher is much

more disposed to seek a solution for himself by settling in America than to look to the Lothian Miners' Union for a solution. It is true that he sees no future for himself in the New World, but he seeks one there for his children. As a general rule the Lowland Scot is ready to go to any point on the habitable globe where he hopes to find a better field for his energy. As his own country offers fewer openings than England he is obliged to go further afield, and necessity has begotten a national habit. This deprives the Trade Union movement in Scotland of an enormous number of ordinary men who would give it the power of numbers, and of many exceptional men capable of impressing their personality upon it.

It was but natural, therefore, that the Miners' Federation of Great Britain which organised the great strike of 1893 met with only lukewarm sympathy. The Scottish miners professed their willingness to join their comrades, but a rise in their wages was enough to detach them from their loose allegiance. They were not sufficiently well disciplined to espouse their comrades' quarrel from a feeling of solidarity.

The miners of Northumberland and Durham, on the other hand, had no lack of discipline, but they were accustomed to fighting successfully for their own local interests, and did not care to compromise them in a general struggle. Their policy is essentially individualistic. On the eight hours question they have always been strongly in favour of voluntary action, and opposed to any legislative restriction of the hours of labour, remaining faithful to the old Saxon tradition of self-help. They had the necessary organisation for concerted action, but their willingness was more equivocal.

It may, perhaps, be urged that it was their duty so to act, for the Northumberland and Durham Miners' Unions had recently been affiliated to the Federation, and according to article 20 of the Federation rules all federated unions must immediately strike work when notice is given. But the Unions had not abrogated their own rules on joining the Federation, and by these rules a strike could not be declared unless two-thirds of the members had previously voted in favour of suspending work. There is nothing surprising in this flagrant contradiction if we recall the circumstances under which the

Unions joined the Federation. It was just after the great Durham strike, in which the strikers had been generously helped by the Federation, and in a burst of gratitude they voted for affiliation. The Federation, delighted with a result which it had not improbably sought, was disinclined to point out the incompatibility of the two sets of rules, and eagerly opened its ranks to this important accession, preferring their sympathy without complete solidarity to being completely sundered. Nevertheless, the Federation failed to achieve its principal object. It resembles a syndicate of monopolists, but instead of making a corner in wheat, or sugar, or petroleum, or copper, it makes a corner of working colliers with the same object of sending up the price. Its object is to create a dearth of labour and consequently a dearth of coal, and thus to put employers and consumers at the mercy of the Federation. To this end it is necessary to act suddenly and in concert, and this is the object of the famous article 20 of the rules of the Federation.

Now when, in accordance with this article, the Durham and Northumberland Unions received notice to strike against a reduction of 25 per cent on wages, they took a vote in accordance with the rules of their own Unions, and as they did not get the necessary majority of two-thirds, work was not suspended in the pits of the district.

There remained Wales and the Midlands, which together formed more than two-thirds of the mining population of Great Britain. Both took an active part in the strike, but the development was very different in the two cases.

The Welsh population is of Celtic origin, and far less capable, as a whole, than the Saxon population of the Midlands. At the same time it is more impressionable, that is to say, less capable of self-control, and very much less advanced in the organisation of labour. Although there are Welsh miners' Unions, yet they cannot be taken as a satisfactory representation of the interests of the Welsh miners. The miner has not the same confidence in his Union as the Midland Counties miner has; he distrusts the results of the ballots taken to decide the question of a strike, and regards the Unionist leaders as exploiting rather than as representing him. At the same time he fears their power, and as long as their tyranny is

endurable he offers no resistance, but allows it to grow until it becomes intolerable and he is obliged to make a violent stand against it.

This is clearly seen in the strike of 1893 in Wales. At the beginning the strikers counted little on the Welsh men for the success of the strike. The North Wales miners, who were affiliated to the Federation, were not rich; the South Wales men, who were not affiliated, had for some time back accepted a sliding scale. Their wages rose or fell with the price of coal, which would seem to leave no room for dispute. In July there was some little agitation, which was calmed by modifying the sliding scale so as to give an advance of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The masters believed everything was quiet, when a new complication occurred.

In August there was considerable dissatisfaction among the hauliers, who were usually quiet, and content to take a subordinate place and follow the lead of the colliers. For some reason not clearly understood, they demanded an advance of 20 per cent, and when this was refused they went out on strike. This disorganised a certain number of collieries, and a number of colliers were thrown out of work. By the middle of August, 50,000 men had stopped work in Wales. Many of them had brought out their tools reluctantly, cursing a state of things which deprived them of their living, and from which no appreciable advantage could accrue to them in the future. They had not struck deliberately, willing to engage in a struggle which, though hard, might yet result in a victory to their own advantage, but they were the victims of the decision of mere unskilled labourers, arrived at without any previous concert. A certain number caught the excitement and backed up the strikers, and war was declared between the more prudent, who feared starvation and were willing to resume work, and the more hot-headed, who were for continuing the strike. Everything was ripe for scenes of violence.

It was not long before they broke out. A great meeting of 10,000 strikers in the Ebbw Valley, near Cardiff, was attacked on 18th August by the non-strikers and men belonging to other bodies. The meeting was dispersed, and several were wounded on both sides. At Dowlais the strikers attacked the non-strikers with stones. The latter closed up,

and with the assistance of the blacksmiths they inflicted an exemplary correction upon their assailants. In several districts a sort of local militia was organised. Butchers, grocers, and bakers, mounted on the horses which usually did their rounds, reconnoitred the country and signalled the enemy's presence. It was a civil war on a small scale.

In the face of such a situation the local police and the government were obliged to take action. A band of 2000 miners who were threatening Swansea was vigorously repulsed. Troops were despatched to Pontypridd, where several riots had occurred, and although they had received orders to keep out of sight except in case of absolute necessity, they had to intervene on various occasions. To form an idea of the firm and moderate attitude of the government, Mr. Asquith's letter to the municipality of Pontypridd should be read. It shows that the presence of troops in the district was not intended as a provocation, and in no way interfered with peaceable manifestations. In this letter Mr. Asquith pointed out that troops had no authority to disperse a band of strikers whose destination was unknown so long as they abstained from acts contrary to the law or dangerous to the public peace. If, however, the strikers were a legitimate source of terror to a neighbourhood, or if they committed acts contrary to the law, or collected for that purpose, the authorities were justified in regarding this as a case of necessity, and it became their duty to disperse the gathering, unless circumstances rendered this impossible, or unless such a course would lead to still greater difficulties.

With an armed force under orders to act only in case of recognised necessity, in a country where the intervention of the Government is rarely asked, difficult to obtain, and exercised with discretion, conflicts between the strikers and troops are due entirely to the former, and the entire responsibility should rest with them. It is only where the workers are unable, through deficient organisation, to secure the representation of their interests in a peaceful and normal way that troubles of this kind occur. In the strike of 1893 it was in Wales, where the miners' Unions have least hold on the men, that these sanguinary and brutal riots occurred. In Scotland the miners' Unions are neither numerous, rich, nor powerful, and yet they do not cause any trouble. In Wales they have a respectable

number of members, but the men are not loyal, and though they may occasionally attach themselves to a leader, they are ready to desert him on the first opportunity. Thus they labour under the double disadvantage of being outwardly strong, which makes them rash, and weak in reality, which urges them to violence.

In the Midlands, on the other hand, we are dealing with a really powerful organisation. The Unions are supported by ample contributions from a large membership, and they have amassed a large strike fund. Two months before the crisis the secretary of the Midland Federation put the resources of the Association at £480,000. When I asked him for what use this sum was destined, he said quite frankly and without embarrassment that it was for a strike when the right time came. The Midland miners are business men who know the value of capital and secure this essential beforehand. They formed the nucleus of the National Federation, and have been the most successful in organising resistance in a body. A coalition policy suits their private interests best, and therefore they endeavour to secure its adoption in all the miners' Unions of Great Britain. I have already pointed out that the Midlands rely on the home markets, and consequently producers and consumers affect each other directly. When consumption falls off, the miners suffer from irregularity of employment, and the consumers experience a coal famine when the miners stop work. If the extraction of coal ceases in the Midlands, the factories of Lancashire, Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Birmingham, and the surrounding district are brought to a standstill, and if it were suspended throughout England, the effect would be still more prompt and intense. On the other hand, if Scotland or Northumberland ceased to export coal to a foreign market, there would be a temporary difficulty, and then coal would be obtained from Germany or Belgium or France. Whenever coal is imported there is a choice between several exporting countries. It would, therefore, be bad policy for the Durham and Northumberland miners to create a coal famine in their foreign markets, although such a course might be advantageous to the interests of the Midlands.

I should not be surprised if the individualistic policy of the Northumberland and Durham miners were largely due to



this circumstance. Their problems are different from those of the Midland Counties; they are not thrown out of work in summer, and are less dependent on a given market, and as they feel themselves strong enough to manage their own affairs, they are little concerned with concerted action. The Midlands, however, need concerted action because their Unions aim at a monopoly, and although the interests of the Durham and Northumberland men differ from their own they are ready to support and encourage them in striking, whatever their reason may be, and are eager to win their sympathy and to affirm the solidarity of all miners' Unions, because this is the only way to create a monopoly of labour on the day of the great general strike. This is why the Midland Counties' Unions are the bulwark of the National Federation, and why the Federation grew out of their organisation.

Thus the Midlands are impelled to solidarity by reasons analogous to those which make the Durham and Northumberland men individualists. The workmen are in both cases equally capable of organisation, and therefore the difference of policy is very striking. At first sight it is strange to see Englishmen resorting to a discipline of almost military severity in strong contrast with their passion for individual liberty. In the case of the Midland miners, however, it is adopted to meet an emergency which calls for united action, and not from inability to act alone. Self-help, therefore, may take different forms and does not preclude associated action. But union is strength only when the individual members are efficient.

In the Midlands individual efficiency is not lacking. It is clearly seen in the good order which characterises the deliberations of the miners' meetings in the Midland Counties, in their consistent policy, and especially in the leaders they choose. I was fortunate enough to converse for some hours with Mr. Albert Stanley, the secretary of the Midland Federation, and the impression which I carried away threw considerable light on the information I had obtained from him. He is in no sense a revolutionary, but a young, active and intelligent man, who is eager to rise, and is capable of doing so by the means which the existing condition of society puts at his disposal. He is delighted at the material, intellectual and moral amelioration produced among the miners of his district by shorter

hours of labour, better housing, the foundation of more public libraries, and more regular attendance at religious worship. His sympathies are strongly appealed to by everything which tends to raise the worker, to make a better man of him, and to give him a better chance in life. He is anxious to free him more and more from unremitting, exhausting toil, and to give him leisure, not merely for the sake of the amusements which it would render possible, but for the sake of the rest. Evidently he has a true conception of the real end of social progress.

In the pursuit of this end he is not hindered by certain prejudices which, on the Continent, often keep back workers who are sincerely desirous of a better state of things. He has no hostility to religion, and was astonished and shocked by the anti-clerical proposals of Basly and Lamendin at the Brussels Congress. He had just returned from this Congress, and could not understand how any one could deny the moralising influence of Christianity. He sees no reason to be terrified by the bogey of clerical ascendancy, because it corresponds to nothing in his experience, and because he knows that if a man allows himself to be reduced to submission, his own attitude is to blame. He is glad to have a chance of associating with men of superior education in order to supply his own deficiencies, and he is no more hostile to the middle class than to the clergy. This wide sympathy and absence of prejudice is due to his consciousness of strength. Labour associations in England have now reached a point where it is clear that they and they alone have the control of their own interests. They are definitely emancipated, and quite capable of defending their own interests and securing a proper life. Why then should the fear of oppression deprive them of useful allies, who have it in their power to render great services without being able to encroach upon their province? Here as elsewhere the strong can associate with the strong without danger. It is only the weak who seek security in isolation and hatred, and directly this attitude becomes impossible they have to cry for quarter.

To be strong, an association must not merely represent powerful interests, but must also know how to organise the representation of these interests. Wherever there are mines and factories, labour associations correspond to necessities of the same kind and importance, but they do not by any means

enjoy the same degree of credit. There is an obvious difference between the miners' Unions in Wales and in the Midlands. The latter have solved the problem of internal government by selecting their best men as leaders. Mr. Pickard, president of the National Federation, and Mr. Burt, formerly Parliamentary secretary of the Board of Trade, have entered Parliament without appearing out of place. Mr. John Wilson and Mr. Fenwick, representing Durham and Northumberland miners, have done the same. Mr. Stanley may in his turn take his seat in the House of Commons and win liking and respect. Obviously the miners' Unions in these districts are capable of selecting their fittest members, or, in other words, of securing representation and self-government.

In France there has been much discussion as to whether the law dealing with syndicates should admit into labour associations members not belonging to the trade, members who have left the trade, or members still working at the trade. The question was opened in consequence of very real abuses, and because the labour associations were liable to fall under the tyranny of public agitators and professional politicians. The Trade Unions Act of 1871 was not called upon to deal with these questions of internal order, because the English Unions had settled them before they were definitely recognised by law. Whenever we insist upon a legal qualification, we encounter many difficulties and are in danger in some cases of interfering with the representation of the interests of labour. In particular, it seems impossible to insist that the officials of a powerful organisation must actually be exercising their trade. In the first place, their qualification would be at the mercy of their employer; and in the second place, a man who works ten hours a day in the pit can hardly conduct the correspondence, keep the accounts, and undertake the necessary inquiries.

If an ex-miner is qualified as a miners' representative, what term of service are we to fix? Would a man of forty who had loaded coal-trucks as a boy come under the definition of an ex-miner? If, on the other hand, a minimum term of service is fixed, say at two, three, or ten years, this puts the younger men at a disadvantage. And to what tribunal shall we entrust the settlement of these delicate and complicated questions, which no general formula can settle in a manner

which will be universally satisfactory in practice? To a set of politicians ignorant as a rule of what happens in mines, and very unfavourably placed for obtaining information between those who are anxious to strangle the representation of labour and a few labour members who are incapable of organising it. Mr. Stanley worked for twelve years in the mines, and now he is directing a very complicated organisation, presiding at meetings, making investigations, attending congresses, and spending his leisure moments in libraries, and is evidently no longer a mere workman. Would it be reasonable to refuse to the miner who has undergone such a transformation the right to belong to the organisation he is qualified to direct?

Legislative regulation would present fewest difficulties perhaps in the case of a miner, who rarely forsakes his trade and adopts it for life in early youth. But what about the case of dockers? Here the question becomes extremely difficult and delicate. It came up at the Trade Unions Congress of 1893, in connection with Mr. MacHugh, the secretary of the National Dockers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland. The Congress was asked to consider whether he was properly qualified to act as delegate, and it was stated that he had served his apprenticeship as a printer, and had followed the trade, but that thirty years before, when he was fifteen or sixteen, he had worked for a month in Glasgow docks. After a hot discussion, the Congress disallowed the qualification, and on Thursday, 7th September, he was expelled from the Congress. On the following day his supporters, headed by Mr. J. H. Wilson, called attention to his valuable services to Trade Unionism, and laid stress on the fact that, having been elected by the dockers, he was really their representative. A majority of the Congress reversed the decision of the preceding day, and Mr. MacHugh resumed his place. This incident shows the difficulty felt by experts in deciding in a concrete case upon the qualifications of a labour delegate. How is a legislative body which is ignorant of the matter in question, and concerned with abstractions and hypotheses, to make a hard and fast rule which will meet every case?

On the other hand, how can labour be guaranteed honest and trustworthy representation so long as the men allow themselves to be guided by agitators? It is obviously im-

possible, and yet unless labour can secure itself fit representatives it will be exploited. It is useless to point out that it is the workers themselves who suffer most by failure in this matter. The middle class may be inconvenienced when an agitator provokes a desperate struggle, but it is the workers themselves who feel the pangs of hunger and hear their wives and children crying for bread. Nothing can supply the place of capability in the workers themselves, and the only method, slow, indirect, but efficacious, is to help them to become capable, to teach them, improve them, enlighten them, educate them, and above all, to abstain from hindering their organisation.

In England, and especially in the Midlands, one part of the question is solved so far as mines are concerned. The miners of the Midlands are well represented and organised, but the history of the strike of 1893 showed clearly that this was not sufficient for success, and the powerful discipline of the Federation was shattered by a superior force, the force of circumstances.

## II. *The Force of Discipline and the Force of Circumstances.*

Let us now return to the original cause of the strike. Since 1888 the miners belonging to the Federation had received a gradual increase in wages amounting to 40 per cent. In 1893, owing to depression in the coal trade, the masters announced that they could no longer afford so high a rate of wages, and that there would be a reduction of 25 per cent, to come into operation on 28th July. Rather than submit to this reduction, the men brought out their tools and left work.

The real question, therefore, which was at the bottom of the whole dispute, was whether the masters could or could not afford to pay the same rate of wages in spite of the low price of coal. A master cannot afford to work at a loss, nor can he close the pits without loss. Consequently, when the men refuse to agree to a reduction, the master is forced to weigh both sides minutely, and to concede whatever he finds within the bounds of possibility. As Fisher put it to me one day, a strike does no one any good but it teaches the employer a lesson. It forces him to reflect, and to look into the position, and to name the maximum wage he can afford to give, which

is reached when any further concession would make the scale sink on the losing side. After this the insistence of the men is unavailing. Their policy is not to be continually making fresh demands in a more and more imperious tone, but to consider what concessions a master would be prepared to grant rather than close his pits, and then to extort these concessions by stopping the production of coal until they are granted.

The first essential of success in such an attempt is proper organisation, and the second is to demand only what is reasonable and possible. At the beginning of the present industrial era the workers were not organised, and were individually at their employer's mercy. This taught them that to have right on their side was not enough to ensure success. When, after great difficulty, they forced employers to respect their interests, they at once obtained considerable advantages. This gave rise to an interesting phenomenon. The same men, justly proud of their power to defend their own interests, attributed their success entirely to their power of organisation and to their excellent discipline, and imagined that henceforth they could extort whatever they pleased from employers, just as employers had thought that they could extort whatever they pleased from their men. Intoxicated by their success, they forgot that they had obtained the concessions so easily and promptly only because the employers could afford to make them, and they believed that proper organisation would invariably make them victorious whether they were in the right or not. Such a delusion—a very natural one—still exists, and traces of it may continually be seen in the attitude of certain labour leaders, who adopt the tone of masters and seem to imagine that employers cannot exist without their permission. Such a state of mind is far from reassuring, but if anything can cure it, it will be the stern lessons of experience. The result of the strike in question has been to force the Federation to abandon a set of claims directly traceable to this delusion, and to confine the discussion within the narrow limits set by the nature of circumstances.

Of these the most characteristic, inasmuch as it best illustrates the exaggerated confidence in the power of discipline and the complete contempt for the force of circumstances, is the demand for a living wage. The theory of the living wage is that prices must follow wages instead of wages

following prices. If coal is too cheap to allow employers to pay their man a living wage, the price of coal must be raised, and the labour associations will be able to do this. This reasoning is a direct inversion of the real facts, and this the result of the strike proved.

We may well ask how Englishmen, with their well-known common sense, came to put forth a claim so obviously fanciful as that of the living wage, sufficient to assure to the worker a certain standard of comfort, and serving to fix the market price of coal. It is one of those aberrations which we can only attribute to the intoxication of victory. If there is one thing in the world which varies, it is the sum which will enable an individual to provide for his wants. The estimate will vary according as living is cheap or dear in a given place. It may be more than trebled according as a man is a bachelor or the father of a family. If he is married, his wife may be either strong or delicate, and his children may be of age to work or entirely dependent upon him, and these circumstances give entirely different results. Then opinions differ widely as to what the standard of comfort is. At a conference held on 29th November 1893 in Holborn Town Hall, in favour of the organisation of industry on a Christian basis, the chairman, Mr. G. W. Russell, then Under-Secretary of State for India, defined the living wage as that wage which would ensure a man a decent, moral, and healthy home; which would suffice for food, warmth, and clothing; and thirdly, which would allow him leisure to cultivate the intellectual, moral, and spiritual parts of his nature. Such a formula shows a very sympathetic attitude to the workers, but it is not very luminous. It is certainly to be desired that the workers should have a decent material life, and opportunities for intellectual and moral development, but what rate of wages will secure this at the same time to the unmarried lad of eighteen and to the father of a large family. However, the members of the Conference referred to carried a motion in favour of fixing a minimum wage. Of course their interest is not limited to miners only, but extends to all workers without distinction, whether small artisans or factory hands. "Our aim," said Canon Scott Holland in his speech, "is to secure recognition and respect for human personality, and to *govern the industrial market.*"

Here Canon Scott Holland was right. To solve the question of the living wage from his point of view, it would be necessary to govern the industrial market and to fix in an arbitrary way the price not only of coal, cloth, linen, and all other industrial products, but also of wheat, butcher's meat, sugar, petroleum, etc., which are all articles daily consumed by the working class at prices which vary with the district and with the fluctuations of the market. Even if a uniform rate were fixed in this country for every commodity, whether manufactured or otherwise, and if the living wage were fixed in every industry, there would still be the question of foreign competition, which not having artificially increased its retail prices would ruin English industry. As English industry depends for its existence upon its trade with foreign countries, it would indeed be badly defended by tariff regulations which would close both home and foreign markets. It would be necessary to introduce the living wage at once and without delay into India, America, China, Egypt, Europe, and indeed throughout the whole world. However, Canon Scott Holland was applauded by an audience which included Lord Hugh Cecil, Canon Farrar, and a large number of the clergy of the Church of England.

Thus the living wage appeals to the sympathies not only of labour associations but also of persons of all ranks. In their case the delusion is due not to triumph but to sentiments of justice and generosity not checked by actual facts. It is a fact that the worker cannot put his best work into a trade which does not afford a decent living, and it is very desirable that he should have the necessary leisure for intellectual and spiritual cultivation; but at the same time he is not forced to stick to trades which are in his opinion badly paid, and it is an utter impossibility to fix arbitrary prices in order to send up wages in such trades.

So far as concerns the miners and the strike of 1893, the situation may be put thus: the men were unwilling to change their trade, and endeavoured to resist a reduction which still left them a higher rate of pay than what they had accepted and lived on a few years before. The reduction proposed was 25 per cent, while salaries had risen 40 per cent since 1888 in districts affiliated to the Federation.<sup>1</sup> Thus the question

<sup>1</sup> *Labour Gazette*, July 1893, p. 60.



was not really one of a living wage, but of a better living wage. Why then was not this admitted? Why did not the men take up a sincere attitude and say that they did not wish to see a reduction of 25 per cent on the wages they were in the habit of spending until they were certain that the masters were really unable to continue to pay the higher rate of wages? This would have been quite natural and quite true, while the claim for a living wage was artificial, and was demolished by the strike which was intended to affirm the sanctity of the principle.<sup>1</sup>

As long as the stocks of coal remained considerable and there was no rise in prices, the masters maintained the reduction of 25 per cent, but when coal became scarce and prices began to go up, several masters who saw a chance of gain hastened to make such concessions as would induce men to resume work. But as the rise was due to the exceptional and temporary stoppage of other pits, they were always careful to stipulate that the arrangement was only a temporary one, so that all along the miners, whether belonging to the Federation or not, saw their wages following the fluctuations of the market and regulated by its condition. Many of them were not ashamed to profit by the high price of coal to get an additional bonus. This was a direct contradiction of the principle of the living wage, for if the selling price of a commodity is to be fixed by the normal wage, this wage must be a fixed quantity independent of the price of the product.

Another claim which had to be abandoned after the strike

<sup>1</sup> The check given to the principle of the living wage has not discouraged its supporters, although the English miners seem to have learned a lesson. At the Miners' International Congress at Berlin in 1894, there were two resolutions dealing with the question, one proposed by English and the other by German delegates, which are worth quoting as illustrating the difference of attitude between the two. Englishmen are anxious to find a solution which takes actual circumstances into consideration, while Germans wish to appeal to legislation for a solution. The English resolution was to the effect "that this Congress believes that the only way to obtain and maintain a living wage is to be thoroughly organised, and that no question relative to wages should be decided unless profits, losses, selling prices and a minimum rate of wages be within the purview of any arrangement made for settlement of wages questions." The German delegates moved an amendment "that this Congress demands that in every country the minimum wage should be fixed by law." The amendment was lost.

was the refusal of the Federation to accept permanent arbitration boards. In Durham and Northumberland the masters and men had formed conciliation boards representing both interests, to which all differences had first to be submitted before resorting to a strike or lock-out.

This seemed to the Midland miners a sign of weakness and an indication of readiness to compromise, and they repudiated such an arrangement with disdain. In June 1893 Mr. Stanley said to me, "We don't want any permanent arbitration boards to sacrifice our rights; we prefer to win an undivided triumph by resorting to a strike whenever a difficulty arises." Not long after, the great strike of 1893 broke out, and ended, as we shall see, in a compromise which bound both masters and men for a period of two years, and entrusted the solution of possible conflicts during that period to a conciliation board to be constituted forthwith. The men who accepted these terms in December were the same men who had indignantly refused in June to have their hands tied or to submit to arbitration. The strike had made them more reasonable, and had taught them how dangerous it is to think that reason is entirely on their own side.

Thus the discipline in which the Federation had trusted was forced to yield to circumstances. At the beginning of the strike great stress had been laid on the solidarity of miners as a body, and upon the necessity for common action, and at a conference of the Federation held at Westminster on 22nd August a resolution was adopted to the effect that no pit in the Federation should be allowed to work until a general settlement was made for all to commence at one and the same time.<sup>1</sup> A month later, however, they were obliged to abandon this uncompromising attitude and to authorise Federation men to resume work wherever the masters returned to the old rate and abandoned the 25 per cent reduction. A large number of partial settlements were immediately arrived at, and thus the phalanx of resistance was broken. Early in November most of the men had returned to work in Nottingham, Warwick, North Stafford, and Leicester.<sup>2</sup>

This strike, it should be remembered, was the work of a reasonable and well-organised body of men, who had discussed

<sup>1</sup> *Labour Gazette*, Sept. 1893, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 1893, p. 154.

it and rediscussed it in a business-like way in their meetings, and had carried on dispassionate negotiations with the masters all through the conflict. Such men, it is evident, must have reached a very high level of discretion and intelligence. The position they took up during the strike was the position they had decided upon before the strike, and their claims had been formulated in council after ripe deliberation, and were not the outcome of any fortuitous accident. If we read the accounts of the various conferences held by the Federation during the struggle, and the communications exchanged with the Coal-owners' Federation, we shall understand with what diplomatic punctiliousness, and how coolly and firmly, the miners fought every inch of the ground. If they were ultimately obliged to surrender these positions, it must have been because failure was inevitable. Neither discipline, organisation, nor the spirit of association can do away with the necessity for good sense, and their success in the past had obscured the good sense of the Federation men. They were intoxicated, but when they become sober once more, they will understand that though Trade Unionism supplies a counterpoise to the power of the masters, it cannot, as they appeared to believe, put them above the action of economic laws.

The lesson which the strike teaches is clear, and applies to all struggles of the same kind. In the contests which inevitably arise between employers and employed, organisation and discipline are not the only things to be considered, if we wish to appreciate aright the true force of the opposing parties. They are an indispensable element, but not the principal and fundamental one. In trades where the men have not resorted to combination, the master occasionally abuses the superiority which the absence of combination gives him, but if the men combine they promptly obtain all that can reasonably be obtained, since it is to the master's interest to yield. In trades which have long been organised, on the other hand, there is no question of shaking off a tyranny, and if the men try to set up one in their turn, they will fail. It is impossible to take advantage of a master, for the very simple reason that it would ruin him, and he would no longer be a master. The men must renounce their too ambitious and far from praiseworthy aims. They are powerful when they advocate possible

claims, and weak, notwithstanding the ablest organisation, when they put forward impossible ones. Circumstances are too strong for them, and the only consolation for them is, that they are also stronger than everything else in the world.

### III. *Advantages of the Organisation of Labour in Mines.*

After this criticism of the mistaken ideas of the Federation, it is only just to point out the important part it plays, and what it is doing to bring about a peaceful future in the mining world.

It is possible to fight without organisation, or with defective organisation, though, of course, under unfavourable conditions, at great expense, with enormous loss, and at a great risk of defeat. But when it comes to making peace, organisation is necessary. To treat with an undisciplined mob is impossible; it must be with organised bodies capable of respecting the articles they sign, and with agents who really represent the interests in the name of which they are acting.

When the men rally round their Unions only for a moment during the excitement of a strike and then desert them, the masters are little disposed to treat with the Unions. What indeed would be the good? As soon as a bargain was made, the men would disavow the action of their delegates, and the whole question would be reopened. Such a case occurred in France in 1893 at the time of the great coal strike in the departments of Nord and Pas-de-Calais. The miners' associations had not enough cohesion to qualify them to represent the strikers, and the colliery owners refused to receive them. The same thing occurred during the Scottish coal strike in 1894, when, in spite of the praiseworthy efforts of the Lord Provost of Glasgow, the Masters' Association refused to confer with the labour leaders.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, when the masters find they have to deal with strong organisations, under leaders who possess the confidence of the men, they have everything to gain by opening negotiations. During the sixteen weeks that the great strike of 1893 lasted, the representatives of the Federation were in constant communication with the Coalowners' Federa-

<sup>1</sup> *Labour Gazette*, August 1894, p. 239.

tion, and ultimately, under the auspices of Lord Rosebery, an agreement was signed between them, enabling work to be resumed. The text of two interesting resolutions passed in August will give an idea of the relations existing between the two parties during the hottest part of the strike. On 22nd August the conference of the Federation made the following proposal:—"If the masters withdraw the reduction of 25 per cent, we undertake to resume work at once, and to demand no increase of wages until the price of coal reaches the level at which it stood in 1890." A week later, on 29th August, the Federated Coalowners met in London, and after considering the men's proposal, they sent the following reply:—"The masters cannot accept the proposed settlement, as they think it would neither be to the advantage of the coal trade, the miners, nor the public, and they believe it would end in disaster both for masters and men."<sup>1</sup> At the same time they declared their readiness to accept arbitration.

This diplomatic exchange of notes went on with the same punctiliousness all through September, and brought about an appreciable and immediate result. This was the resumption of work in a number of pits, in consequence of an offer made to take back those men who were willing to work at the old rate of wages for the time being.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of October the Mayors of Sheffield, Leeds, Bradford, Nottingham, Derby and Barnsley offered to mediate, and laid before the two Federations a settlement, which the masters were unable to accept without modification, and which the men rejected because it proposed a reduction of 10 per cent on their wages.<sup>3</sup>

These negotiations, however, prevented any of those violent ruptures which might have provoked a dogged obstinacy on both sides, and led both parties to examine all sides of the question. They continued during October, and then the Federation, wishing to be certain that it was not prolonging resistance beyond reasonable limits, and aware of the suffering which the struggle was inflicting on the mining population, submitted the masters' terms to the referendum of its adherents.<sup>4</sup> This shows that the leaders had no intention of

<sup>1</sup> *Labour Gazette*, September 1893, pp. 104, 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 1893, pp. 128, 129.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 1893, p. 154.

exploiting the men, but that, on the contrary, they were sincere in their desire to represent their real wishes. The men decided to continue the struggle and to accept no reduction.

However, work was being generally resumed at the old rate in some districts, and the price of coal had gone up so much, owing to the fact that stocks were exhausted, that the masters were in a position to pay wages without reduction. On the other hand, the long interruption of work had caused the most cruel suffering. The time was not far off when a temporary truce could be accepted on both sides. The Prime Minister judged this a fitting moment to intervene and hasten the solution of the struggle. He had before him two plenipotentiaries,—the Federated Coalowners on one side, and the Miners' Federation on the other,—and the only task was to bring them to terms. On 13th November he addressed the following letter to the respective secretaries :—

10 DOWNING STREET,  
13th November 1893.

SIR—The attention of Her Majesty's Government has been seriously called to the widespread and disastrous effects produced by the long continuance of the unfortunate dispute in the coal trade, which has now entered on its sixteenth week. It is clear, from information which has reached the Board of Trade, that much misery and suffering are caused not only to the families of the men directly involved, but also to many thousands of others, not engaged in mining, whose employment has been adversely affected by the stoppage. The further prolongation of the dispute cannot fail to aggravate this suffering, especially in view of the approach of winter, when the greatly increased price of fuel is likely to cause distress amongst the poorer classes throughout the country.

Moreover, the Government have little doubt that the effect of the stoppage on industry is rapidly extending and increasing, and that, unless an early settlement is effected, lasting, if not permanent, injury may be done to the trade of the country. The Government have not up to the present considered that they could advantageously intervene in a dispute the settlement of which would far more usefully be brought about by the action of those concerned in it than by the good offices of others. But having regard to the serious state of affairs referred to above, to the national importance of a speedy termination of the dispute, and to the fact that the conference which took place on the 3rd and 4th November did not result in a settlement, Her Majesty's Government have felt it their duty to make an effort to bring about a resumption of negotiations between the employers and employed under conditions which they hope may lead to a satisfactory result.

It appears to them that advantage might accrue from a further discussion between the parties of the present position of matters, under the

chairmanship of a member of the Government who, it is hoped, will not be unacceptable to either side.

Lord Rosebery has consented, at the request of his colleagues, to undertake the important duty which such a position involves.

I have therefore to invite the (Miners' or Coalowners') Federation to send representatives to a Conference to be held forthwith under his chairmanship. In discharging this duty, it is not proposed that Lord Rosebery should assume the position of an arbitrator or umpire, or himself vote in the proceedings, but that he should confine his action to offering his good offices in order to assist the parties in arriving between themselves at a friendly settlement of the question in dispute.—I am, your faithful servant,  
 W. E. GLADSTONE.

The following replies were received from the two Federations on 14th November:—

From the Federated Coalowners.

SIR—I have submitted the letter which I have had the honour to receive from you to the Coalowners' Emergency Committee, and I am instructed to reply that the Committee accept on behalf of the coalowners the invitation of Her Majesty's Government to a joint conference such as is suggested in your letter.—I have the honour to be, sir, your obedient servant,  
 T. RATCLIFFE ELLIS.

From Miners' Federation (*Telegram*).

Miners' Federation Great Britain.

Conference decided attend joint meeting with coalowners, on lines of invitation in your letter received by me this morning. Miners' representatives are prepared to meet as early as you can possibly convene meeting.—ASHTON.

Lord Rosebery consequently made an appointment at the Foreign Office for Friday, 17th November, at 11 A.M., with fourteen delegates from each Federation. An agreement was signed at 5 P.M., and the bases of agreement were fixed. The happy outcome of the negotiations was immediately made known in all the mining districts, and was received with the greatest enthusiasm. Bells were rung in the Black Country, and on Saturday morning a large number of men returned to work. The sympathetic personality of the head of the Foreign Office, his gracious manner of welcoming the delegates of both parties, and the tact with which he promoted a friendly understanding, contributed to hasten and facilitate the arrangement of the crisis, and his efforts were seconded by the anxiety for a settle-

ment on both sides. The terms were obviously those of a provisional arrangement, and were as follows:—

I. That a Board of Conciliation be constituted forthwith to last over the year at the least, consisting of an equal number of coalowners' and miners' representatives, 14 each. They shall, before the first meeting, endeavour to elect a chairman from outside, and should they fail, will ask the Speaker of the House of Commons to nominate one, the chairman to have the casting vote. That the Board, when constituted, shall have the power to determine from time to time the rate of wages on and from 1st February 1894. The first meeting to be on Wednesday, 13th December 1893, at the Westminster Palace Hotel.

II. That the men resume work at once at the old rate of wages until 1st February 1894. It is agreed that all collieries, so far as practicable, be reopened for work forthwith, and that, so far as practicable, no impeding be placed in the way of a return of the men to work.

We, the undersigned Chairman and Secretary of the Federated Coalowners and of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, on behalf of those represented at this conference, agree to the above terms of settlement of the present coal dispute.

Signed: On behalf of the Coalowners:

A. M. CHAMBERS, *Chairman*.

THOMAS RATCLIFFE ELLIS, *Secretary*.

On behalf of the Miners' Federation.

BENJAMIN PICKARD, *Chairman*.

THOMAS ASHTON, *Secretary*.

ROSEBERY, *Chairman of Conference*.

H. LLEWELLYN SMITH, *Secretary of Conference*.

This is evidently only a truce, and in the disturbed condition of the coal trade, after so long a suspension of work, it was impossible to do more than sign a truce. It amounted to saying, "Let us work until 1st February, and then we shall see what arrangement can be made."

In addition to the great and immediate relief obtained by the resumption of work, a Conciliation Board was established for a year to prevent future conflicts. This indicated a very happy change of attitude on the part of the Federation, for, as we have seen, before the strike they rejected with scorn every proposal for forming permanent boards of arbitration. Henceforth a strike was not to be tried till all other means of arriving at a settlement had failed.

Subsequent events justified these proceedings. Wages remained steady at the old rate in the districts belonging to the Federation not only until 1st February, but all through



the winter of 1894 and at the beginning of the warm weather, when the falling off in domestic consumption produces a yearly depression, a new arrangement was concluded which should ensure peace for two years.

On 6th July, at a sitting of the Conciliation Board, held at the Westminster Palace Hotel, London, it was decided to propose for the acceptance of masters and men a settlement fixing the limits within which wages might fluctuate for a period of two years. The terms were accepted by both sides, and on 19th July the Conciliation Board carried the following resolutions:—

1st, That the present rate of wages be reduced as from the 1st August 1894, by taking off the last two advances of 5 per cent each, and that the wages remain at that rate until 1st January 1896.

2nd, That for a period of two years from the 1st August 1894 the rate of wages shall not be below 30 per cent above the rate of wages of 1888, nor more than 45 per cent above the rate of wages of 1888.

3rd, That from the 1st January 1896 to the 1st August 1896 the rate of wages shall be determined by the Conciliation Board within the above-named limits.

4th, That the Conciliation Board shall be continued for this purpose for two years from the 1st August 1894.

(2) That the above terms shall apply to the collieries whose names (firms, or companies) shall be handed to Mr. Thomas Ashton by Mr. T. Ratcliffe Ellis on or before 31st July 1894.

(3) That the new rate of wages shall be paid on the Friday or Saturday, 10th or 11th August next.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the masters obtained a reduction, and the men secured a minimum wage sufficient to allow of a decent existence for most of them. If it is any comfort to call this a living wage, let them do so, but it is needless to point out the difference between a living wage settled for a definite period and a living wage independent of the price of coal, such as some theorists dreamed of. English working men fortunately care less for theory than practice, and are certainly filled with satisfaction at being assured of proper remuneration for two years.

The sitting of 19th July 1894 forms a memorable precedent, and has probably inaugurated a new era in the relations of masters and men in this country. It will be an era of possible understanding and reasonable discussion; in other words, an era of diplomatic relations instead of continual

<sup>1</sup> *Labour Gazette*, August 1894, p. 239.

war. The Federation men have become intelligent, weighty and capable enough to treat with the masters on equal terms. They deserve the position they have won, inasmuch as they have proved themselves capable of winning it, and the masters have good cause to rejoice at a result so favourable to their interests. Among all the elements of uncertainty which affected the probable margin of profit, and among the risks which employers had to run, there was one more to be feared than all the others. The possibility of a strike haunted the masters like a spectre, but the signing of this treaty has banished it for the present, and removed one unknown quantity from the great problem with which coalowners have to deal. The terms were accepted by a large number of collieries employing from 200,000 to 250,000 men, or more than a third of all the miners in the country. This is a most important result, and it is clearly due to the organisation of labour.

Let us now contrast with this aristocracy of labour the non-federated Scottish miners. They had profited largely by the strike of 1893 and the long period of idleness in the Midlands, and the increase in the price of coal had sent up their wages considerably. Their difficulties began when the crisis was over in England. In November 1893 they demanded a further rise of 1s. a day, owing to the constant increase in the price of coal, and as the masters did not feel justified in acceding, about nineteen-twentieths of them in the west of Scotland brought up their tools. The recent success of the Arbitration Committee, over which Lord Rosebery had presided, led the Lord Provost of Glasgow to endeavour to arrange a meeting of delegates from both parties in the Town Hall, and to bring them to an understanding. The masters, however, absolutely refused to treat with the representatives of the men, not recognising them as a power, and considering it useless to treat with improvised ambassadors. The men, deceived by the analogy between their position and that of the Federation, appealed to the Prime Minister to intervene. Mr. Gladstone replied in the following letter:—

10 DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL,  
9th December.

DEAR SIR—I received last night the telegram which you had addressed to me, during an important discussion in the House of Commons, and I

perused it with the utmost interest. The Government regard with high satisfaction the action of Lord Rosebery in the English coal dispute and its result, but any failure in the proceeding would have had a mischievous effect, and the failure was avoided by an exact observation of the circumstances of the case. Both parties were then before the Government in one and the same attitude, whereas the telegram you have sent me is written on behalf of one side only, and I doubt whether you would wish me to proffer any request to the Scotch coalmasters concerned. But the main point of difference is this. We had in the English case full proof of repeated efforts at conciliation by direct communication between the parties themselves, and it was also apparent that their powers of obtaining a settlement by independent efforts were exhausted. On the other hand, those efforts had not been futile, for they had served to bring about approximations such as to afford a hopeful prospect if Government intervention in a limited capacity were introduced. I have not learned that an equal amount of such independent and local effort at agreement has been used in the Scottish case, and there is no proof before me that the power of such efforts has been exhausted. There is, therefore, a want of parallelism in the two instances at the present moment. I must remind you that the moral influence of an administration or of a single Minister in such a matter is not an instrument to which it would be prudent to revert habitually, or upon the occurrence of difficulties which might be otherwise surmountable. We should pause before assenting to use it unless satisfied that a state of facts existed analogous to that which made the action of Lord Rosebery practicable and expedient. I have, however, in consequence of your telegram, communicated with the President of the Board of Trade. He will send down to the North a competent officer of his department to observe and report upon the state of things. In the meantime, I hope that what I have written may assist you, and those with whom you act, to judge whether the controversy now unhappily subsisting in Scotland is likely to assume such a character as would warrant the consideration of the subject with a practical view by the Government.—I remain, dear sir, your very faithful and obedient,

W. E. GLADSTONE.

This letter, which I have quoted *in extenso*, is the best possible commentary on the situation. Mr. Gladstone there explains better than I could do the fundamental difference between an organised association of workers, seriously represented, and capable of treating with employers, and a group of working men, with no real life, no proper leaders, and unable to secure recognition from the employers. Mediation is possible in the case of two opponents who agree to meet each other, or between two regular governments, but it is impossible to make peace with unauthorised and irresponsible officials.

The reader will have noted the views which Mr. Gladstone

expresses in his letter as to the function of a government. In effect he says to the Scottish miners, "Do not increase the burden of Government, which is already heavy enough, and do not resort to State intervention except when you cannot do otherwise. Where obstacles can be surmounted by other means, employ them. They are the best means, and State intervention is but an indifferent substitute." This English conception of Government is almost diametrically opposed to the French conception, in accordance with which the central authority is first entrusted with everything which it can possibly do, and then with a variety of other functions which it discharges badly.

In the case of the Scottish miners' strike, it would have been especially wrong for the Government to intervene, for, four days after the telegram referred to, a Conference of miners met in Glasgow and decided to end the strike and resume work on the old terms.

Since then, the coal world in Scotland has been agitated by fresh troubles, and the organisation of labour does not seem to have made much progress. Led by the example of the English miners, and struck by the results obtained by the Federation, the Scottish miners have formed a Scottish Federation affiliated to the National Federation. This sudden and hurried organisation at the time of strike is too like those paper constitutions which are really only a dead letter. It is to be hoped that the Scottish miners will take the lesson to heart and will succeed in establishing representation on a business footing. Hitherto the Union of Fife and Clackmannan men is the only one with which masters have consented to treat. With the Scottish Federation they have again and again refused to enter into negotiations, notwithstanding the intervention of the National Federation and of the Lord Provost of Glasgow.<sup>1</sup> But to have representatives in a position to conclude peace in an emergency, it is necessary to know how to select them under ordinary circumstances. This is what the English miners of

<sup>1</sup> On 20th July 1894 a meeting of the Executive Council of the National Federation held at Westminster decided to propose a settlement to the Scottish coalowners. This settlement was rejected by the General Committee of Scottish Coalowners on 25th July. Early in August, the Lord Provost of Glasgow offered to mediate, but the masters refused to enter into communications with the strike leaders (*Labour Gazette*, August 1894, pp. 238, 339).

the districts belonging to the Federation and the Durham and Northumberland men have done, and what the Scottish miners have yet to do.

But the rôle of labour organisations is not limited to the solution of conflicts; it also consists in preventing them by keeping the interests of masters and men in touch. Important results are obtainable in this way, and may rank among the great services rendered to industrial peace by the organisation of labour. The Durham and Northumberland miners, to take but one instance, have succeeded without legislative assistance in settling the great eight hours question which is agitating the rest of the country.

Another far-reaching but less obvious result is the real elevation of the leaders of these associations. I have already pointed to men like Thomas Burt and other labour members, who are real authorities on social questions, and whose experience and judgment have made their mark in the position to which they have risen. Many others, like Mr. Stanley, are proving their fitness to continue the tradition. The interest of employers and employed are too closely bound up together for the labour leaders to overlook the interest of the employers, and they are obliged to consider the same questions as the masters. Thus their outlook widens, and the complexity revealed corrects those absolute and unqualified opinions which the more limited intelligence of the rank and file too readily adopts. Possessing the confidence of the men, they find it easy to convince them where the masters would fail to do so. Thus throughout the mining class, from the undistinguished members at the bottom to the president of the Federation at the top, a constant process of elevation is going on to the great profit of all.

In his speech at the opening of the Annual Congress of the Miners' National Federation of Great Britain in January 1894, the president, Mr. Pickard, M.P., advised the Executive to keep themselves informed as to the accumulation of stocks of coal in depôts and in the market, so that the various mining districts could reduce the output in time to prevent prices going down, and a resolution to this effect was carried by the Congress. This detail shows that the Federation have to consider the important question of the

distribution of coal not less than the masters, and that attention to the market is one of their avowed objects. Here they become, in a sense, the master's colleagues and rise to his level, and resume under a new form something of that proprietorship which the old organisation of industry left in the hands of the workers but of which the modern system has deprived them. They show themselves capable of partially directing the coal trade, the extreme complexity of which we have remarked, and in proportion as such manipulation has become more delicate their skill and judgment have developed, and they have risen to the situation. This may serve as an index to the educational and elevating influence of associations of working men.

We have now only to examine some of the claims which figure on the programmes of the miners' Unions of Great Britain. They do not all seem capable of practical application, at any rate in their present form, but all point to sufferings and aspirations which will throw light on the social position of the miner, while some of them have a still more general bearing.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MINERS' DEMANDS

WE have already had occasion to notice some of the points to which the miners' Unions attach great importance, such as their opposition to royalties and their support of the principle of the living wage. But no definite steps have yet been taken towards the abolition of royalties, and though in some cases the Unions may have succeeded in fixing a minimum wage, yet the proposal to fix the price of coal by the rate of wages is not one that can be seriously entertained.

On the other hand, there are points in their programme which they have already begun to put into execution, and these consequently afford us a base of investigation. It will be interesting to discover what practical results they have achieved, and what modifications they have undergone in the process, as well as what we may hope from them for the solution of the problems they deal with. All the proposed reforms seem to be directed to the same end, to ensure regularity of employment and to diminish as much as possible those sudden stoppages which upset the family exchequer by throwing the father out of work. We have seen how the miner's trade is exposed to the inevitable risk which besets all skilled trades. When a pit does not pay, a collier cannot turn round and make a living at some other sort of work, but his fortune is bound up with that of the pit. We have seen that owing to the nature of the product and the conditions of the market masters cannot afford to allow stocks of coal to accumulate, and that the supply has to be continually regulated by the demand. Thus there is a chronic difficulty: the

needs of the men require the extraction of coal to proceed at a regular rate, and the operation of the laws of supply and demand tend irresistibly to make it irregular.

This constitutes the chief hardship of the miner's calling, and it is naturally against this that their efforts are directed. Various artificial means have been devised as palliatives to soothe an ill they are powerless to cure. One roundabout and indirect method proposed is that the men should devote their enforced leisure to cultivating the soil. This led to the existing laws relating to small holdings and allotments, which give the working classes greater facilities for obtaining them. Among the direct means is the agitation for an eight hours day, which, by slightly diminishing the quantity of coal extracted per head, would allow of the employment of more men without increasing the total output. It has also been proposed to effect a compulsory reduction in the total production, in order to prevent the accumulation of stocks, which depress the market and lead to crises. We shall now examine in succession the efficacy of these various means.

### I. *Small Holdings and Allotments.*

Side by side with occasional periods of unemployment due to the market being for the moment overstocked, there are others which return with more or less well-marked periodicity. The phenomenon, as we have seen, is especially common in the Midlands, where the falling off in the domestic consumption every summer causes a corresponding falling off in employment, so that miners are in work only for three, and sometimes only for two, days a week. Between 1875 and 1893, according to Mr. Stanley, this happened every summer except in 1888.

There is no doubt that if a summer occupation could be found to occupy this time of enforced idleness it would be an unspeakable benefit to the Midland miners. Agriculture needs extra hands in summer, and therefore seems marked out to supply what is required. But, as things are, miners cannot find sufficient employment on neighbouring farms, and it is of course impossible to seek it at a distance, because they are at work in the pits two or three days a week, and obliged to live



near them. But, supposing that the farmers of the neighbourhood were in a position to employ all the unskilled labour which the colliers have to dispose of, the problem would not be solved. A farmer must have men who are available when he wants them, and not merely when they have nothing else to do. He might at a pinch occupy one or two such men, but it would be impossible for him to allow them to form the whole or any considerable part of his total number of hands. On the other hand, men in the habit of earning 6s. or 7s. a day are not contented with an agricultural labourer's wages, so that the actual number of those who supplement their earnings in this way is very small indeed.

These two obstacles disappear if the men work on their own account on a little holding which they own or rent. There they can really work when they like, and as the whole profit will be theirs, the question of wages can be left out of consideration.

The idea is gaining ground in the Midlands, and Mr. Stanley seems much charmed by the picture of a miner proprietor who falls back on his land when the mine stops work. The type has indeed much in its favour, and exists not only in England but in some parts of France, and probably also in Germany.<sup>1</sup> I have seen much the same thing in the neighbourhood of Saint-Étienne, where the mountain folk of Velay and Auvergne work in the mines during their winter leisure, and I particularly remember the mining village of Brassac, south of Brioude, where most of the miners are also peasant proprietors. There we have a population which unites the larger resources of the miner's calling to the security of rural life. It is easy to see how such a happy combination pleases a class so conservative as miners.

But in England peasant proprietorship is almost non-existent. Land is monopolised by the rich or noble. 38,000 landowners own four-fifths of the arable land, and the remaining fifth is divided in insignificant fragments among 920,000 small proprietors and cottagers. Statistics tell us so much, but they do

<sup>1</sup> On the combination of mining with agriculture, see *Ouvriers des Deux-Mondes*, 2nd series, vol. ii., "Miners of the Ruhr Basin," by L. Fèvre, mining engineer, p. 251. See also *Les Ouvriers européens*, vol. iii., "Miners of the Upper Hartz," by F. le Play.

not say how many of these 920,000 small proprietors are persons of the middle class, with a house and garden in the country. A large number of the 920,000 portions are put to such use, and though they are part of the cultivated soil, they are not agricultural holdings in the proper sense. In fact, the peasant proprietor does not exist either in England or in Scotland. The Rosewell miners have not an inch of land of their own, nor any opportunity of renting or feuing any.

This is not an artificial circumstance due to the system of entail. When a large estate comes into the market it is easier to find a purchaser for the whole estate than for separate lots. There are many capitalists who are willing to sink their money in return for the dignity and importance attached to the possession of large landed property. In France, on the contrary, owing to a special set of circumstances, more can be realised by selling separate lots to peasants and persons in a small way than by selling the whole estate to a large landed proprietor. Natural causes tend to break up large estates, just as in England and Scotland other natural causes of an opposite tendency are at work to consolidate them.<sup>1</sup> Thus the ideal proposed has to encounter a serious obstacle, but that is no reason for abandoning it until it is proved that there is no way out of the difficulty.

The question of allotments and small holdings has attracted considerable attention, and has led to the enactment of a number of laws affording facilities for the acquisition of small holdings. Private initiative led the way, and a society was formed, with the Duke of Westminster as president, with the object of extending the voluntary system of allotments.

The objects of the Society were defined by the secretary, Lord Onslow, in his book on *Landlords and Allotments*. According to Lord Onslow, the association was formed to popularise and extend the practice, already common in certain districts, of rent-

<sup>1</sup> Small holdings, it is perhaps needless to remark, may be found outside Great Britain in her colonies. In the United States, Australia, and at the Cape many settlers cultivate their own land. In the cultivated parts they are in a large majority, while squatters are engaged in cattle breeding on land not yet brought under cultivation. This is a compensation for the disappearance of small holdings in the mother country. It is a mistake to consider England separately, because she is not really a separate country, but the capital of the English-speaking world.

ing as an allotment a small quantity of arable land or pasture sufficient for a cow, in addition to the cottage garden. He points out that it is universally allowed that the small wage-earner who has an allotment can turn his leisure to profitable account in its cultivation, and thus by means of his own labour and the assistance of his family bring about a real improvement in his social condition and financial position. It has been found that rents are paid regularly and that enough manure can be put into the land to prevent it becoming exhausted, and on these terms a class of small farmers might be created who would be grateful for such facilities and ready to pay a high rent for land. Landlords have therefore an excellent opportunity of showing, with regard to allotments, that it is unnecessary to resort to legislative means and that the result aimed at by such legislation, which would be of doubtful benefit to the agricultural population, may be attained through the co-operation of the landlords themselves.

The latter part of this quotation shows that the steps taken by the Society for the voluntary extension of allotments was not the beginning of the movement. It was a response to steps taken by associations of working men, and especially of agricultural labourers and miners. This question has long been included in their programme, and their agitation led to legislative measures dealing with the matter.

In 1887 an Allotment Act was passed which provided for the constitution of allotments not exceeding an acre in extent, and gave the local authorities considerable powers to assist in creating them. The County Councils were to acquire land and provide allotments for working men who applied for them.

This law seems to have produced but little effect, at least so far as miners were concerned, and it is not surprising if the Midland miners thought it insufficient to deal with the problem of irregular employment. An acre of land cannot be cultivated, it can only be gardened, and though it may be a very appreciable source of comfort to a family when work is regular, it would not supply the place if other work failed. Mr. Stanley pointed out to me that allotments would never be a sufficient remedy, and he was quite right.

A second Act passed in 1892 goes further, and provides

not merely for letting, but also for effecting the sale of, small holdings, varying in area from 1 to 50 acres. This Act seriously aims at creating peasant proprietors. The working man who wishes to acquire a small holding must pay down one-fifth of the purchase-money, and the County Council will lend him the remaining four-fifths at the same rate of interest as the Council itself pays, the whole sum to be wiped out by fifty annual payments. Even this Mr. Stanley considers insufficient. He maintains that no law will have much effect until landlords are compelled to give up unproductive and uncultivated lands, such, for example, as are now devoted to raising game. He would not propose, of course, to force landlords to sell land under cultivation nor to break up the parks surrounding their seats, but only land of which no use is made.<sup>1</sup> I objected that such a law would be difficult to carry out. It is expropriating land in the interests of one section of the community, and the first step in a dangerous direction. Further, it would be found extremely difficult in practice to determine what lands were so far utilised by the landlord as to be excluded from the operation of the Act and what were not. Again, to what authority could the task be committed? Mr. Stanley thinks that the County Councils would be the proper authorities, but I cannot say that I am convinced.

But supposing Mr. Stanley's plan were put into execution, what would probably happen? Many miners would find it difficult to transmit their small holding in its entirety, and it would probably be offered for sale at the father's death. Who could afford to buy it and pay ready money? Some capitalist who would add it to a neighbouring estate or let it to a workman. The efforts of the law to render the working man a peasant proprietor would be frustrated in each generation.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, on the one hand, the present law respecting small holdings does not satisfy the miners, because too few proprietors are willing to dismember their estates; and on the

<sup>1</sup> Something has been done in this direction by the last Allotments Act, but no compulsory steps have been taken up to the present.

<sup>2</sup> At Creusot Messrs. Schneider made a generous attempt to enable their men to acquire the houses in which they lived, but whenever the head of the family died, the houses were sold to speculators. The difficulty is not to create working-men proprietors, but to make them capable of remaining so.

other, if compulsory sale were enacted, large estates would be reconstituted as the small proprietors died off, through the action of the same natural causes which bring about this result at present. Of course the law might forbid the sale of a small holding to a man who possessed another, or to any capitalist or landlord, and in fact make it taboo! But this would be an inconvenient piece of property, difficult of sale, and consequently of very small value. Why then make a man pay the ordinary price for land which he could only get rid of at a disadvantage?

Would it not be better that working men should rent small holdings instead of buying them outright? This, indeed, is what the present law would come to at the end of a generation in the majority of cases. Why not aim directly at the result which economic laws tend naturally to produce, instead of seeking an antagonistic one? The Society for the Extension of Allotments might do much in this direction if they also turned their attention to small holdings, and the great landlords who are at the head of it would probably find this a useful method of deriving a profit from their lands, while at the same time conferring a benefit on society. On the other hand, it is easier for working men to become tenants than proprietors. Their means would in most cases allow them to do so, and thus the reform would affect a larger number. Further, at a time when it is necessary in the labour world to be able to make a prompt change of front when necessary, is it wise to bind a family whose chief resources come from an industrial source to a property which it cannot get rid of at any moment? It is impossible to say how the development of electricity may affect the future of coal, and therefore it might not be desirable to link a mining family indissolubly to this unknown future.

To sum up, the problem of irregular employment might perhaps be solved by the renting of small holdings, but their purchase outright not only raises great difficulties but presents serious dangers. Therefore the combined efforts of County Councils and associations, whether of masters, landlords, or men, should be directed towards facilitating a system of renting. In this direction there would seem to be room for a beneficial reform.

## II. *The Eight Hours Day for Miners.*

The question of an eight hours day for miners came near a solution in the Parliamentary session of 1894. The bill had passed the second reading when an amendment was introduced in committee which compelled the promoters to withdraw the bill. This amendment established the system known as local option, and allowed any mining district to set aside the eight hours day if a majority of the men in the district were opposed to it. Thus it preserved the liberty of the Durham and Northumberland miners, who, as we have seen, were absolutely opposed to any legislative restriction of the hours of labour.

A measure so liberal could not but satisfy all who were really desirous of freeing the miner from excessive hours of work, but it went directly counter to the real object of those who had introduced it. They withdrew it in its amended form because local option would defeat their intentions. The object they had at heart was not merely to secure to miners the leisure necessary for their intellectual and moral elevation, but to introduce a shorter working day, in order to give employment to more men.

In England and Scotland miners rarely work more than nine hours a day, and an hour less would not so increase their leisure as to change the current of their lives. So much agitation for nothing more than that would indeed be much ado about nothing. But at least 500,000 out of the total number of 650,000 miners work more than eight hours a day, and if we multiply one hour's work by the number of men affected, we get 500,000 hours, or 62,500 days of eight hours each. That is to say, such a measure would provide work for 62,500 men now out of work.

The advocates of a compulsory eight hours day for miners reckon that this addition of 62,500 working days would prevent men from being thrown out of work. But this conclusion, notwithstanding its semblance of mathematical accuracy, would only be true if the reduction of working hours by one-ninth really diminished the production of coal by one-ninth; and further, if the number of miners did not increase under the new régime.

This is not the case. It is now universally recognised—and it is one of the arguments most frequently used, and with justice, in favour of shortening the working day—that a man produces more per hour in proportion to the diminution of the hours of labour. Experience, therefore, is against the arithmetical argument. Secondly, the number of miners is not a constant quantity, and it would certainly be largely increased if more employment was offered. It has already been remarked that the demand for coal varies considerably with the season, especially in the Midlands. In winter, therefore, it would be necessary, in order to meet the demand, to employ extra hands, who would be thrown out of work during the dull summer season. In order to be logical it would be necessary to bar the entrance to the trade as in the guilds of the Middle Ages, but happily English common sense stops before this obvious impossibility.

Nevertheless, the miners' Unions from time to time protest in a more or less platonic fashion against workers at the surface being employed underground, and they are desirous of prohibitive legislation which would prevent a man of more than eighteen years of age from working in any pit unless he has worked as a collier before attaining this age. In short, they are making hesitating but unavailing attempts to render the exercise of the miner's calling less unrestricted than it is at present, but it is useless on their part to hope for any serious results in this direction.

In most districts, however, a shorter working day has already been obtained without recourse to legislation. The eight hours day has been introduced in Durham and Northumberland, and local option would have done a great deal in the same direction had not the amended measure been withdrawn by the promoters, because such partial success would have checkmated their larger plan.

We can now understand the attitude—often misunderstood—of the Durham and Northumberland men on this question. The supporters of a compulsory reduction accuse them of selfishness, and say that, having obtained for themselves what they wanted, they refuse to help their comrades who are trying to get an eight hours day. But the proposal to establish local option cuts this ground from under

their feet, and the only charge which can be brought against the Durham and Northumberland men is that they are unwilling to associate themselves with a measure for diminishing irregularity of employment. But the North Country miners do not believe in the method proposed, and in any case, owing to the fact that theirs is largely a foreign custom, they suffer less from irregularity of employment. This is the true reason of their different policy. When the Durham and Northumberland men are described as bravely defending the liberty of the individual, and the Midland miners as tending towards State Socialism, the real fact is that the former reject legislative compulsion because they stand in no need of it, while the latter cry out for it because they think it would benefit them. If the Durham men suffered from irregularity of employment, they would act precisely as the Midland men do.

In 1893 I attended the Trades Union Congress at Belfast. Mr. Fenwick, secretary of the Parliamentary Committee, was severely heckled on the question of the Eight Hours Bill, which had been defeated in the House of Commons. In the report of the Parliamentary Committee, which he presented as secretary, Mr. Fenwick said that the Committee had used their influence with members of the House of Commons to secure the passing of the bill. Several delegates protested that it was notorious that Mr. Fenwick and Mr. Wilson had voted against the bill, and these gentlemen had to justify their conduct. Without going into their reasons for disapproving of the measure, they simply maintained that for their conduct as members of Parliament they were responsible only to their constituents. I well remember the honourable and manly tone in which Mr. Fenwick, who was specially attacked, defended his course. It required no little courage to proclaim openly his independence of the Congress, for the object of the attack was to remove him from the important position of secretary of the Parliamentary Committee, which he had held for several years. "I consider," he said, "that I am perfectly free as a member of Parliament to obey or disobey the wishes expressed by this Congress. As a member of Parliament I am not responsible either to this or any other Congress, but solely to the men who pay me and who send me to represent them in the House of Commons. If the Congress desires to



dispense with my services, I shall bear it no ill will; but so long as I have the honour to represent a constituency in Parliament, I do not intend to be controlled except by the electors of that constituency."

Mr. Fenwick had already made a similar declaration at the Liverpool, Newcastle, and Glasgow Congresses, and he was obliged to make it again at the Norwich Congress in 1894. At this Congress the supporters of a compulsory eight hours day for miners were strong enough to secure a majority against retaining Mr. Fenwick as Parliamentary secretary. His defeat was due not to a conflict between his personal conviction and a vote of the Congress, but to the clashing of divergent interests—the interests of his constituents, the Durham miners, and the interests of the Trade Unions, in which the influence of the Federation predominated.

On the other hand, the supporters of compulsion do not hesitate to unmask their batteries and avow their real end by opposing to their utmost any projects of local option. In June 1893 Sir Charles Dilke addressed a meeting of miners at Barnsley to this effect:—"Although this declaration may lose us votes, it is well that the supporters of the proposed measure should profit by the first occasion to announce without any circumlocution that no sort of local option will be acceptable to them."<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Dilke also told his constituents, the Forest of Dean miners, that his efforts would be directed not merely to allowing them to work only eight hours, but to preventing other miners from working longer.

Nor is it only representatives of mining districts who uphold the interests of this district rather than a theory of government; those who do not feel bound by their declaration on the subject also look at the question in the same way, and compare and weigh the conflicting interests. In an open letter addressed to Mr. D. A. Thomas, M.P., in August 1894, Mr. Gladstone expressed himself on the question thus:—"I am clearly of opinion that if miners by an almost unanimous majority desire an Eight Hours Bill, they have a moral right to it. I have grave doubts, however, as to their moral right to impose this reform on a considerable minority, and I

<sup>1</sup> *Yorkshire Evening Post*, Tuesday, 20th June 1893.

apprehend that if this minority is really considerable, there will be more practical difficulty in coercing them than the promoters of the measure anticipate."

Mr. Gladstone's view is the right one : it is a conflict of interests, and not a discussion of principles.

### III. *Legislative Limitation of Production.*

Side by side with the question of the eight hours day, which is in process of solution, and which the persevering efforts of the majority of miners will probably succeed in making compulsory, there is a far bolder project of much more general scope, which proposes to deal directly with the danger of over-production, and the irregularity of employment consequent upon it. It has hitherto remained a mere aspiration, but it requires notice as showing to what extent English miners are to-day looking towards legislative control.

At the Berlin Conference of Miners in May 1894, the French and Belgian delegates proposed a resolution in favour of limiting production by an international agreement of workers. The German delegates introduced an amendment to the effect that no complete remedy for over-production could be found unless the existing social system was first changed. This was equivalent to postponing any project of reform until the Greek Kalends, and the English delegates disapproved of such a course. They rejected the amendment of the German delegates, and proposed the following, which was carried :—

The Congress is of opinion that the over-production of coal is due to the introduction of unskilled labourers into the mines, and the enormous increase in competition among merchants. The Congress is therefore agreed that all nationalities should have recourse to every legitimate means for limiting the production of coal, and should endeavour by legal means to prevent the admission in future of unskilled labourers into the mines.

This is a return to the guild system and its strict limitation of production, and the abuse of the long novitiate in the case of young workmen, without the excuse of special circumstances which formerly permitted such restraints to be imposed. The aspirations of the English miners are at once

vague and precise, vague as to the means, precise as to the end.

How can the various States intervene to any purpose to prevent a master from extracting coal, and how, above all, can they fix the precise point at which further production should cease? Supposing this could be done, could they agree among themselves and force work to cease simultaneously in the various countries? The state of the market would have varied over and over again while their representatives were coming to an understanding, and their treaties would invariably be behind the market, and would regulate labour not by the actual situation but by the situation as it had been. Such a project is quite impracticable, and it is an amazing thing to see cool and clear-headed men of experience and common sense like the English delegates recommending it for adoption by an International Congress.

There must, it is obvious, be a reason for this strange conduct. It is often said that English miners are abandoning the old traditions of private initiative for socialistic methods, but this is a statement of facts and not an explanation. It is not any blind and unreflecting attachment to socialism which makes them act thus, for, as we have seen, when they are masters of the situation they never have recourse to legislation to carry their point. They have succeeded in forming their powerful associations without the assistance of legislation, and indeed to some extent in spite of it. Legislation has had no share in securing the high rate of wages they earn, nor in establishing the eight hours day in Durham and Northumberland, and the nine hours day almost everywhere else. They have not been indebted to legislation for the permanent arbitration boards, which enable them to settle disputes with the masters pacifically; nor for the establishment of Friendly and Co-operative Societies, which provide for them in times of crisis, or save them from exploitation at the hands of retail dealers. All this they have done unaided, and why then do they now turn to legislation for aid?

The reason is a very simple one. It is because they are face to face with an impossibility. At the beginning of this study I pointed out that the miners' trade assumes an entirely

different aspect as we view it from the side of the masters or from the side of the men. From the latter point of view it is a simple and almost a closed trade, consisting of skilled workmen of a very conservative type; from the latter it is essentially complex and progressive, a great industry requiring large capital and intelligence of the highest order, and depending on very delicate commercial combinations and economic conditions which are essentially variable and difficult to foresee, dealing with international relations of cause and effect, and liable to constant surprises due to the continuous development of invention.

The miners at the Berlin Congress, who made the proposal already quoted, regarded their calling as a small industry of the old type, and they wished to reduce it to the old proportions that it might employ some thousands of men only. They wished it to be ruled and regulated like the glass-blowing or cutlery trades. They complained of the keen competition among merchants, and yet where would they be unless English merchants competed successfully for supplying the Baltic with coal, or for exporting to France and Spain, or for supplying the merchant navy—unless, in fact, they were always ready to compete anywhere and everywhere?

Nevertheless their desires, although they do not point to the true remedy, yet indicate with precision the nature of the malady they are intended to cure, which is but too real. So long as the collier remains specialised and conservative, so long as he claims to have a right to work in collieries and nowhere else, so long will crises due to irregularity of employment be a constant menace and burden. There is little chance that he will lose this character so long as the trade, in so far as he is concerned, remains faithful to the primitive methods we have seen at work.

It is to indirect methods that we must look for ameliorations, unless in the improbable event of a revolution in the methods of extracting coal. English and a large proportion of Welsh and Scottish miners are sufficiently well organised to discover and apply such methods. We have seen that they tried to find one in the creation of small holdings, and though the attempt presents difficulties, it is capable of being carried into execution in certain cases. It might be possible to

develop a system of insurance against unemployment by turning in this direction the powerful institutions which already exist. Trade Unions are from one point of view only a savings bank, enabling a group of men to exist while out of work for a long period if they decide to strike. Why, if arbitration boards render strikes less frequent, should not the Unions apply a larger proportion of their funds to meet the periods of unemployment caused by imperious necessity?

Mr. Thomas Burt, M.P., speaking at the Newcastle Trade Union Congress, gave the members a piece of advice which is well worth repeating here. "Never trouble yourselves for a moment about the inevitable, and don't bother yourselves about the unattainable." Unemployment in mines is inevitable, especially in the Midlands, and a universal reduction of production by international legislation is unattainable.

It is from another side that efforts must be made. There is no need for the miners to fold their arms and resign themselves to the inevitable. They have won too much already by means of organisation, intelligence, and practical common sense, to fail utterly before this obstacle. As soon as they realise that they must go round it instead of overthrowing it, they will be able to discover more efficacious means than my inexperience can suggest. As I have already said, the best organised Unions, those affiliated to the Federation and those of Durham and Northumberland, have at their head real diplomatists and statesmen. To these leaders belongs the task of defending the interests committed to their charge against the dangers which menace them. The peace of Europe is often threatened but rarely disturbed, thanks to the diplomatists who smooth away the difficulties which arise. The various states are harassed by internal disorders and maladies, but their respective governments apply more or less efficacious palliatives which usually arrest crises. It is in the power of any group of interests which is seriously represented to do as much. The arbitration boards supply the diplomatic machinery of the Federation which has long since proved again and again that it can also deal with internal affairs. Therefore we may leave the great problem of unemployment in its hands with full confidence that it will find it within its powers, provided

only that it abstains from seeking a solution where none exists.

This examination of their demands completes our study of the miners of Great Britain. With them we leave the trades which are still to some extent organised on the old type. We have now to study methods of production which have accomplished their evolution towards the modern type, which is known as the factory system. The mines partake of the character of both types, and were thus specially adapted to serve as a transition between the small trades carried on by skilled workers and the large factories employing unskilled workers.

## PART III

### THE LABOUR QUESTION UNDER THE FACTORY SYSTEM

TRADES WHICH HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THEIR EVOLUTION





## INTRODUCTION

THE factory system is the characteristic form assumed by modern industry. We have great factories or mills, which mass together a large number of hands, with powerful and complex machinery capable of executing the work formerly entrusted to highly skilled workers, and requiring nothing but intelligent supervision.

The factory system marks the advent of a new era and of an important transformation in the worker. The member of the old closed trade guild has seen his technical skill ceasing to be of value to him, and has been replaced by chance individuals who possess no technical knowledge and have served no apprenticeship. The first result was a sense of humiliation and depreciation on the part of the worker. So far as his quality of skilled workman was concerned, he had sunk to the level of other men.

But, at the same time, a new horizon opened before him. The breaking down of the barrier which had grown up round his particular trade gave an outlet to his general aptitude and his personal initiative. In proportion as his technical aptitudes diminished in value, his aptitudes as a man acquired a new efficiency, so that the modern era, which began among the curses of the workers, has really been a means of emancipation and progress.

The continual development of the application of machinery has contributed to modify the evolution of the machine worker in the direction of the commercial clerk. The clerk passes easily from one kind of commerce to another—from textiles to colonial produce, from fancy trades to furnishing—so that to-day retail trade in the hands of men of first-rate

ability is no longer confined to this or that branch, but has ended in the great emporiums we are familiar with. The manufacturing trades cannot yet claim so wide an area, but just as the clerk passes readily from one counter to another, so the factory hand passes easily from superintending one machine to superintending another—from weaving to boot-making, from the paper mill to the spinning factory, etc.

In the new conditions created by machinery, the Labour Question assumes an unforeseen aspect, and is complicated by unexpected problems, while at the same time old difficulties disappear. The Trade Union movement still clings in many instances to the defence of positions which can no longer be defended under modern conditions. Even the trades which are least compromised hitherto, and still hold out, are at the mercy of the first invention, in a century which sees the birth of new ones every day. Thus it is that the glassmakers and cutlers still struggle successfully for their ancient privileges, while the typographers and plumbers feel themselves seriously menaced, and the hand-loom weavers and lace-makers have wholly disappeared before machinery. These workers of the old type are in the position of a nation which should persist in defending itself behind the fortifications of Vauban, or the works of the beginning of this century, while the latest modern artillery was rendering their protection vain. All measures inspired by this conservative and short-sighted policy are doomed to fail sooner or later.

Our study of collieries revealed a hybrid situation where old conditions of labour were combined with extremely complicated methods of engineering, and were governed by the general conditions of the factory system. There Trade Unionism partook of a double character. The vast scale of working, the highly-developed commercial side, had awakened in the miners a perception of the higher laws to which masters and men were alike obliged to yield, while at the same time their position as specialists kept alive the old notion of a close corporation.

The factory system will furnish a different spectacle. As its evolution proceeds, as labour becomes more mechanical, the workers abandon the old idea of specialism which no longer protects them, and seek strength elsewhere. Their

combined efforts are directed full at the modern problem—how, without any visionary hopes, to organise labour in such a way as shall tend towards amelioration, towards the greater capacity of the worker, and towards the representation of his true interests.

Nevertheless the result is not attained uniformly in all branches of the factory system, for all are not equally despecialised, and the evolution of the worker and of the Trade Union movement is everywhere closely bound up with the evolution of labour.

It would be interesting to follow the steps of this evolution in the different industries, but such an undertaking would require an exhaustive study of industrial activity in all its branches, and would exceed the limits of the present work. But we may obtain a clear idea of the phenomenon by examining in succession one of the most highly specialised branches of industry organised on the factory system, and one of the least specialised. We can thus appreciate the remarkable way in which the method of work in each corresponds with the mode of organisation, and at the same time the study of those furthest advanced along the lines of evolution to-day will enable us to understand the direction of this evolution.

Among the industries in which the worker's technical skill still holds a large place, the most important and characteristic is iron-working. Whether in metallurgy properly so called, or in the countless applications of iron to the construction of ships, locomotives, or machines, it is necessary to employ skilled workmen who have served a long apprenticeship. It is true that the result of their efforts is enormously multiplied by the powerful assistance of machinery, but it is they who are responsible for directing this effort and regulating its employment in subordination to their technical knowledge. The man who presents an enormous mass of iron destined to become a driving shaft to the repeated blows of a steam-hammer needs exactly the same nicety of judgment as the village blacksmith fashioning a bar of iron with his ordinary hammer. Both are skilled workmen, but the first is the more highly specialised, since he is able to control a far greater force. The distinctive mark of these industries is that the object of the majority of aids employed is to place a considerable force

at the disposal of a competent workman, possessing the quick perception and nicety of eye which comes only from long habit and special aptitude. In a word, the machine is the servant, the man is its master.

At the other end of the scale, where modern evolution has advanced furthest, we have just the opposite condition, and the worker has only to attend to the machine. He feeds it with raw material, starts it, stops it, regulates its movements, but it is the machine which blindly and mechanically performs the work for which its constructor designed it. An excellent example is the textile industry, where ingenious and powerful machinery employs women and children, dispensing with the long preparatory training which was formerly necessary for the fabrication of thread or stuffs and giving employment to a large proportion of unskilled labourers.

Thus, by studying successively the iron and textile industries, we shall have the extreme terms of the series of changes brought about by machinery, and shall be able to appreciate the influence of this evolution on the Labour Question in each of these extreme cases. The great iron-works will furnish us with a type of worker quite different from the iron-workers of Birmingham or the cutlers of Sheffield. The Labour Question is different for each, and it is important to determine the nature of the problem before proceeding to see in what direction a solution should be sought.

## CHAPTER I

### THE IRON INDUSTRY

#### *Machinery subordinated to the Workman.*

ANY study of the iron industry, however far from exhaustive, should first mention the foundries where the mineral is worked. But these foundries are closely connected with the mines where the mineral is extracted, and from the point of organisation of labour and organisation of the workers these present considerable analogy to coal-mines. Iron-miners, like coal-miners, belong in some respects to the modern type and in others to the ancient type. Iron-workers, though further advanced along the new lines, are still kept in the immediate neighbourhood of the mine by the cumbrous nature of the material. They are therefore much more closely bound to the soil than ordinary factory hands, and thus they share in the hybrid character of miners.

On the other hand, in those industries which are fed with cast iron and steel, we have a class of workers belonging entirely to the factory type. But the degree of despecialisation is far from uniform in all the varieties of this group. For the sake of order we shall arrange these varieties in terms of the increasing despecialisation of the worker, that is, in terms of their degree of evolution.

The fabrication of special machinery comes first. It requires a highly skilled worker to set up these ingenious contrivances with the requisite precision. These skilled workers must be the best procurable, in order to satisfy the

requirements of an exacting class of customers. We shall be able to appreciate better what this means if we pay a visit to the vast workshops of Platt Brothers at Oldham, the largest makers of textile machinery in the world.

I. *The Construction of Machinery used in Special Trades.  
Weaving and Spinning Looms.*

Oldham is one of those manufacturing towns which form an unbroken ring around Manchester, and feed the great textile market. Rochdale and Blackburn are quite near, and the whole country bears witness to almost incredible activity, and gives point to the American epigram which describes England as a town with a few gardens in it. Oldham, however, is not one of the gardens. In this great industrial hive Oldham is specially concerned with the fabrication of the various machines employed in the textile industry. Under the direction of Platt Brothers it has developed enormously. 10,000 men are employed in their workshops. Eight locomotives are busy from six in the morning to eight at night in transporting the finished looms along the special line to Oldham Station, and in bringing back coal and raw material. A network of rails covers the ground floor, so that nearly all the transport is affected by steam, and trucks can load or unload at any point.

The firm has not been content to rely on the wrought and cast iron and steel furnished by iron-founders. Messrs. Platt have started iron-founding to ensure the quality of the material used in the construction of their looms, and mining to supply the coal for their workshops. They own four collieries between Oldham, Manchester, and Rochdale. This important firm, with its complex organisation, is clearly an example of the factory system, from the scale of its workshops, the number of its employées, the magnitude of the capital employed, and the enormous amount of work turned out. The looms made by Platt Brothers are despatched to Europe, Japan, China, India, Australia, Brazil, Mexico, the United States, and, in fact, to all the countries of the world.

But in one way their workshops differ from the most advanced types of the factory system. The work done there is of an extremely delicate and technical kind, and the mounting

of the looms in particular requires great care and the most exact finish in all the component parts. Every workman is a specialist. A significant fact in proof of this is that not a single woman is employed by the firm. The young woman who enters a factory to earn her living till she marries would be out of place. There is no room for occasional hands or casuals, who take up any sort of work to-day to drop it for something else to-morrow. Every workman must be master of his business. Except the porters, who are superseded as far as possible by lifts and locomotives, almost every individual employed by the firm is a skilled workman.

Here consequently we find apprenticeship flourishing as in trades of the old type, though it is, of course, greatly modified by the different conditions. We have no longer an apprenticeship imposed by a guild jealous of its privileges, and anxious to close its doors on younger men and to regulate their enrolment, but rather an apprenticeship imposed by the conditions of labour and by the demand for technical skill of a high order.

Apprenticeship is thus freed from all artificial restraints. The apprentices of Platt Brothers are bound by no contract, but are free to go and liable to dismissal. They are retained by the compulsion of circumstances, and by the advantages which they desire to obtain and which cannot be obtained otherwise. On leaving school at fourteen they are taken on at 5s. a week, with an increase of 1s. a week every year, so that in the last year of apprenticeship they are getting 12s. a week. At twenty-one they are reckoned as workmen, and paid at that rate, as far as possible by the piece, and nearly always with a system of bonuses which increases the minimum salary in proportion to their individual skill.

Another proof of their specialised character is, that though looms are sent out unmounted for convenience of transport, yet their mounting is extremely difficult, and can be done only by the firm's own workmen, and Messrs. Platt do not guarantee the efficiency of their looms unless they are set up by their own people. About 200 picked workmen are told off for this work, and are constantly employed in travelling to the clients of the firm for this purpose. I was told by a member of the staff that men were at that moment in the Far East, and that even

Japan was not too far for them to travel in order to guarantee the proper mounting of a loom. This speaks volumes for the skill of the workmen who construct them.

Now, it is a remarkable fact that these workmen have no Trade Union, and belong to no association for protecting their interests against their employers. In 1851, at the end of an important strike, the Union was entirely crushed, and since then Messrs. Platt have forbidden the formation of any such Union among their employés. When the men have any suggestions to make, they send a deputation to their masters, who always hear it with attention. Their demands are examined, and are accepted or refused as seems just, but without discussion. It is the system of grievances of the old régime, while the Union aims rather at the effective representation of the interests of labour.

The absolute position of the masters, so exceptional in the labour world, is explained by the unique position of the firm. Although it is not the only English house of the kind, it is far the most important. It has no rival in the neighbourhood of Oldham, and has, in fact, a monopoly of this branch of industry, which it has raised to its present importance. Workmen who left would find great difficulty in disposing of their special skill elsewhere on equally favourable terms. It is their highly-specialised character which makes them so dependent on the great firm which directs and employs them.<sup>1</sup>

It must be remarked that the world-wide reputation of the firm of Platt Brothers has hitherto always enabled it to solve the difficult problem of constant production. There are no periods of unemployment at Platt's, whose men are assured not only of well-paid but also of regular work, and feel that security about to-morrow which is so precious to the man who

<sup>1</sup> Frequently, as in the glass industry, the possession of a high degree of specialised skill enables the men to force the demands of their Union on the masters. Skilled workmen of this type can transfer their skill to other masters without impairing its value thereby. But in this case the workmen's skill requires the direction of Messrs. Platt to complete it. In other words, the glass industry is a trade in which no very sensible progress is made, and the workmen know all its secrets, while the construction of looms is an industry in which constant progress is made, and in which the part played by the employer cannot be dispensed with. This is why an employer of real talent must always attach his men to his own fortunes.



lives from day to day. Here, then, is a second cause of the close dependence of the workmen on an employer who guarantees steady work.

"Then you accumulate stock?" I inquired. "No," was the reply, "it would be quite impossible for us to work except to order, as we have to deal with clients who require not merely a particular loom but also one of a special size to suit their factories, and with modifications to suit their individual requirements. Further, there are the constant changes introduced into the machinery of the textile trades, which would expose us to the risk of filling our warehouses with old-fashioned looms. All that we can venture to make in advance is what clients near at hand require for repairs, while our more distant clients naturally prefer to have repairs done on the spot."

I asked how the firm managed to prevent slack times. "Hitherto," was the reply, "we have always had too many orders. These orders are very important and their execution involves delay, but our clients prefer to wait and have looms of our making instead of getting served more quickly elsewhere. Generally we have six months' work in hand."

Thus the exceptional relation between the employés of this firm and the heads of the firm clearly results from the exceptional position of the firm, which is master of the market in a very unusual degree. As a result it can impose its own terms on its men, since it is the only channel through which work can be obtained.

The firm of Platt Brothers is practically in the privileged position of the holders of a patent. Its origin is connected with that of mechanical looms. The father was an ordinary workman who afterwards set up a small workshop, where he worked with five or six assistants. Later on, having found a partner with capital, he was able to develop his business and to introduce continual improvements tending to save labour, and by the unceasing exercise of his inventive power, aided by the men he had gathered round him, to turn out more and more perfect machinery. His sons continue to do the same, and are thus able to retain the first-class reputation created by the father.

A first-class reputation is all-important in a trade like this.

The firm produces machinery for one of the giant modern industries, and consequently it is concerned only with rich clients, to whom it furnishes the means of production. Such clients can afford to pay for the best possible machine, and will accept no other. Inferior machinery would mean ruin, and consequently they deal only with a first-class firm. In other trades, where the clientèle is varied, inferior and adulterated products may find a market. Second-rate machinery finds none, and second-rate firms disappear while the others achieve a brilliant triumph. This, then, in the case of Platt Brothers, is the first element of success, and a very considerable one.

Another important cause lies in the fact that it supplies machinery for a trade which is developing enormously. We shall see later how the textile industry has grown during the present century. This explains the gigantic scale of the works of Messrs. Platt. Not only did the intelligence and energy of the original founder render the firm superior to all rivals, but the sphere of activity thus opened has widened beyond all anticipation.

This prosperity has affected many of those who were originally in the employ of the firm, and has enabled them to rise in the world and make large fortunes. Mr. C—— told me that one of the directors who had recently died, leaving a fortune of £553,000, had begun life as a workman. Another, still living, was an ordinary unskilled labourer in 1851, unable either to read or write. He educated himself as best he could at evening schools and public libraries, and to-day he is head of the engineering department.

Picked men have, therefore, undoubtedly found excellent opportunities of rising in the world. Have the rank and file, those who will live and die ordinary workmen, gained anything by this enormous industrial development? What is the position of the men in the employ of Platt Brothers? This question is worthy of serious investigation at a time when our ears ring with the denunciations of capitalism and the unjust division of profit between capital and labour. We have seen how much is gained by the workers who become capitalists, but what is their lot if they remain ordinary workmen?

We have seen in the small trades that the men are more or less successful in defending the remnants of their industrial monopoly, of which the evolution of industry undoubtedly tends to dispossess them. They still retain some of their old privileges, and though their stronghold is seriously threatened they will continue to hold it until it is definitely overthrown.

The miners are at once the most and least fortunate. On the one hand, they find their ground cut from under their feet, owing to the large and complex scale on which mines have to be worked, requiring large capital as well as technical knowledge far superior to the endowments of an ordinary workman. On the other hand, they have created an organisation which puts at their disposal a force hitherto unknown. Although they cannot rise to the position of employers, they can at least treat with employers on equal terms. They can affect consumers directly by ordering a suspension of work. They have more than a negative share in the direction of this industry, as is shown by the provisions of the treaties signed at the end of the great coal strike.

Here, on the other hand, the influence of the men disappears before the overwhelming importance of the employers. If the latter consent to receive deputations and to hear the grievances of their subordinates, it is clearly stated that it is an act of benevolent condescension, and that their reply will be in accordance with what they think it just to do. No doubt their sense of justice is a very enlightened one, and they are animated by the most praiseworthy sentiments, but nevertheless their men are defenceless and the situation is not unlike a benevolent despotism. Such at least is what, on the face of things, would seem to be the position.

But let us see what is the real position of the workmen. I saw them leaving the works at mid-day, and though wearing their working clothes they presented an unmistakably respectable appearance. Those who lived near were going home for dinner, others who lived too far away went to neighbouring bars. Messrs. Platt, aware of the temptations offered by bars, are building a dining-room capable of accommodating 1700 persons. This is only one of many signs of a strong reaction against the national vice of drunkenness. I was told by Mr. C—— that drunkenness is on the decrease in Oldham, and

though he cordially acknowledges the praiseworthy efforts of temperance societies, he thinks it is largely due to the various means of improvement which have been brought within the reach of the working class. The spread of education, technical schools, musical societies, athletic clubs, and free libraries have done much in this direction. Men who have other interests do not find it hard to give up whiskey and gin. These lower pleasures appeal chiefly to those who cannot find other and higher ones. To preach temperance without offering some attractive occupation for a man's leisure hours is in every case waste of time. Thus an increase in sobriety indicates a happy tendency towards better habits, and proves that we are dealing with a class which is rising in the social scale, thus shaking our unfavourable impression of the conditions of labour in this industry.

Let us, however, proceed further. In answer to my inquiries about the housing of the men, I was informed that many of them own their own houses. Many Building Societies exist to facilitate this, and are working satisfactorily. According to my information, a working-class dwelling consisting of four rooms—two on the ground-floor and two upstairs—with a small yard, can be bought for £150 to £180. The separate four-roomed house for each family is the usual type, as may be seen by a walk through the town. An ordinary family would consider it intolerable to be overcrowded to the same extent as the Fishers. If the Fishers with their eight children lived in Oldham, they would never dream of packing themselves into two rooms, but instead of spending only 2s. a week on rent they would occupy a house at a rent of 5s. or 6s. a week. Taking into account the difference in the value of property, it may be reckoned that a working-class family in Oldham spends twice as much on rent as a working-class family in Rosewell under the same conditions.

Such a state of things certainly does not point to a population ground down by the tyranny of employers. Men who want a comfortable home and can generally manage to obtain it do not seem in much need of pity, and at the same time they prove that they are capable of making a good use of their earnings. Improvident and dissipated men never have the means to keep their family in greater comfort, and it is

much if they can provide for pressing necessities. They certainly are not eager to burden themselves with a heavy rent, and are quite incapable of making the sacrifices necessary for acquiring a house, even with the facilities afforded by Building Societies in the shape of advances, long credit, and graduated annual instalments. The fact that many workmen own their own houses, and that almost all live in relatively large ones, is strongly in their favour.

We shall also find, in Oldham as elsewhere, the thrifty workman who, not content with owning his own house, buys property in the shape of one, two, or more houses. We have already considered the good and bad side of this. On the one hand, it indicates superior qualifications on the part of the working man landlord for rising out of his class, and from this point of view it is very encouraging. On the other hand, it is a variety of the sweating system, the exploitation of the tenant by a hard and exacting landlord who is not in a position to make improvements in his property, and sometimes not even to keep it in repair. The sweating system in its industrial form is due, as we have seen, to the existence of insufficiently qualified employers, and we have here an analogous phenomenon, the insufficiently qualified and, if we may use the expression, premature landlord.

Side by side, however, with this low form of capitalism there is another which raises the thrifty and foreseeing workman to the rank of a director of labour, without opening the door to exploitation of the kind just mentioned. It deserves special attention, and will complete our enlightenment as to the social status of Messrs. Platt's men.

On my first visit to Oldham I had heard that a considerable number of them were interested in co-operative spinning concerns, and I was anxious to obtain further information on this important point. I was able to verify what I had heard, and I found that the case of working men capitalists using their capital in industrial enterprises was a common one. The foremen in the employment of Messrs. Platt, the confidential agents who set up the looms sent out by the firm to its customers, and a large number of others, are not only in the employ of Messrs. Platt, but employers on their own account. The statement about co-operation was not strictly accurate.

Co-operation means that an individual engaged in a certain industry shares the profits of that industry with his fellow-workmen. The employés of Messrs. Platt are more or less directly employers in a different industry. This is not what is generally understood by co-operation, but the confusion of terms on the part of my original informants was due to the combination of employer and employed in the same individual. The real facts are that several spinning mills in Oldham are financed on the principle of joint-stock companies. The shares are small, from £1 to £5 each. These small concerns, which are within the reach of workmen's means, and which were established to furnish them with an investment, have succeeded admirably in doing what they were intended to do, and there are many spinning mills in Oldham where all the capital is derived from investments of this kind. The phenomenon, though not co-operative, is none the less interesting, and it throws a brilliant light on the real prosperity of many working-class families, as well as on the superior qualifications of the heads of them.

It is no small undertaking to manage a spinning mill. Those which are carried on at Oldham under the conditions I have just described are not by any means the largest, but none employ less than 75,000 spindles, and most of them as many as 100,000. Generally they are managed by a committee of five or six, or at most seven, persons, who appoint a manager. This committee meets frequently, and keeps a keen eye on the business. The manager's position is often difficult. He has not sufficient authority to venture on a prompt and advantageous stroke, for the committee keep a tight hand over him and leave him very little freedom of action. Everything has to be referred to them, so that the manager is not ready for any emergency as the head of an industrial concern must be. This disadvantage, which is inseparable from joint-stock companies, is aggravated when the shareholders belong to the working class, for they frequently take short views and are disposed to be jealous of their manager.

These spinning mills are not always very prosperous. They suffer from the competition of large mills under independent management, and take only a second place. A foreman in the employ of Messrs. Platt told Mr. C—— that out

of 1700 shares he had in spinning mills only half brought him a dividend. Lest the phenomenon should be unduly exaggerated, it should be remarked that many of these spinning mills do not get all the capital they require from the shareholders. Many of them contract large loans, and in several cases half the working capital is borrowed. Thus reduced to its just proportions, this example illustrates the disadvantage of divided capital and of impersonal management under the factory system, while it also exhibits an interesting example of the way in which working men acquire industrial property.

Undoubtedly these managing committees, where working men at the end of their day's work discuss the carrying on of a business, are not in most cases a direct means of making a fortune. Nevertheless they are an important means of elevation, and though the men may fail to make a large profit out of their venture, they at any rate acquire valuable experience and learn a useful lesson. They know that thrift is not everything, but that ability is needed to turn thrift to account. Their own abilities develop as they are gradually initiated into the difficulties of industrial management. They learn by their mistakes what to avoid, and many an employer has been trained in this school.

It is interesting, thus early in our study of the factory system, to note this opportunity for a thrifty and intelligent workman to acquire industrial property. The works of Messrs. Platt have shown an apparent depreciation in the position of the workman, who is not only deprived of any rights of ownership in his own trade—which is characteristic of the factory system—but is hindered by circumstances from organising the representation of his own interests as against his employer's, to whom he would seem to be handed over bound hand and foot. The only thing that remains his own, his professional skill, is precisely what makes him so dependent on his employer, who alone is able to render it productive by finding employment for it. Under these very unfavourable conditions, which we shall nowhere else find in the same degree, we see what the workman has gained by the modern evolution of industry, and the vaster horizons which have opened to him where machinery has destroyed the old system of organisation.

It is useful to direct attention to this point, in view of the regret sometimes expressed for a bygone state of things. Working men are too ready to listen to these useless lamentations, and sometimes groan over the loss of their former independence and their enregimentation in huge factories, without sufficiently considering the superior independence to which many of them have risen under the new régime. Where would Messrs. Platt have been unless their father had had at his disposition the powers and resources of modern industry? Where would their customers be without the universal development of spinning and weaving, not merely in England but throughout the world? Messrs. Platt would be obscure blacksmiths in a small village, supplying a local and restricted clientèle, and the highest object of their ambition would be the acquisition of their house or of a little ground near it, or else they would have followed the example of their compatriots and would have sought in a distant land employment for the energy which was useless at home.

Or even without speaking of those who have reached the top of the ladder, and who are now at the head of a great factory, is it nothing for the rank and file to find profitable employment for their second-rate abilities, and to be better paid, better housed, better fed, and better clothed, than they used to be? There are 10,000 men in regular employment in the works of one firm, earning 5s. a week at the age of fourteen, when they are weak and ignorant, with a sure prospect of rising to 30s. or £2, and with a chance, if they are sufficiently capable, of becoming foremen. Look at the houses they own, and the families they bring up, the leisure due to reduction in the hours of work, the good use they make of it, the spread of education, the diminution of drunkenness, and compare it with Dickens's picture of the English working classes in 1840.

Of course material misery and moral degradation may still be found in the manufacturing centres of England. But not only are they much rarer in the great industrial hives like Oldham, Leeds, Blackburn, Bradford, and Bolton, than among the mixed population of London, Liverpool, and Glasgow, and not only has there been undoubted progress in this respect during the last thirty years, especially in Lancashire, but further,



there can be no doubt that the chronic state of wretchedness in many working-class families is the result of vice, intemperance, and imprudence, and not of abnormal conditions of labour. In the works of Messrs. Platt, where work has never been interrupted since the strike of 1851, and where the men have regular and well-paid work, this is too self-evident to need demonstration. It would be unjust in the highest degree to throw upon a large factory or mill the responsibility for individual faults or accidents of an exceptionally serious character, which cause suffering to particular families.

However, there is a darker side to the picture which must not be disguised. We have already referred to the benevolent despotism which would seem to be the system under which Messrs. Platt's works are organised, and it might be added that the men are somewhat in the position of happy slaves. This does not imply any reflection upon the management of the works, for it is entirely owing to circumstances that such relations have grown up between masters and men, and it is the special character of the industry which is responsible for them. Messrs. Platt's men are treated with the greatest kindness and consideration, but they are entirely dependent on their employers. They are certain of regular employment, and have not to dread being thrown out of work, but this regularity of employment is due to their employers, and to the improvements which they are constantly introducing. In themselves they are only docile instruments, they have not the direction of their life, and they are deprived of the training which is supplied by the keen and constant struggle of modern existence. Their happiness is guaranteed by a power above them, it is out of their own control, and consequently it rests on a very unstable foundation.

This is where the danger lies. We shall shortly see what difficulties workmen have to surmount in other industries to avoid unemployment, and comparing their position with the security of Messrs. Platt's men, we shall understand better how serious a matter it would be if this quietude were disturbed. Nevertheless, such a thing is always possible, if the inventive power of the employers gives out for a moment, or if a fortunate rival finds out a new improvement.

We have next to examine the branches of the iron industry connected with the machinery used in transport. Here the demand increases as the importance of skilled workmen decreases, and the Labour Question assumes a new aspect.

II. *The Construction of Machinery used for Transport.  
Locomotive Works and Shipbuilding Yards.*

We have not now to deal with the construction of machinery to be used in factories, nor with the manufacture of articles of ordinary use. The clientèle is no longer so homogeneous, nor so rich, nor so constantly on the look-out for the best machine, as in the first case, but neither is it so heterogeneous as in the second case. It purchases, not an article of consumption, but an instrument. The locomotive is an instrument belonging to the railway company, and a ship is an instrument belonging to the shipowner.

This instrument, however, is no longer, as in the last example, applied to production, and therefore its quality is not of the same importance. The transport of commodities can be effected with indifferent locomotives, without the consignee suffering in any way. In the case of ships, especially, the customer cannot always afford to go to the best houses. There are vessels in the small coasting trade which are not affected by the competition of the great lines, because they do not supply the same wants. Thus the clientèle changes its character and becomes at once wider and more mixed.

Turning now to the men, we find that relatively to the last example their position is modified in two important respects. In the first place, the number of despecialised workers is greater. Skilled workmen are still in the majority, but side by side with them we shall find individuals engaged in attending to ingenious machines, which enable them, without any previous apprenticeship, to turn out work which would formerly have required the assistance of skilled workmen. Secondly, in the case of the skilled workmen, the specialism is not confined within such narrow limits. In the first place, no house engaged in the construction of locomotives or ship's

engines holds such a unique and commanding position in its own line as the firm of Platt Brothers holds in the construction of looms. For reasons just shown, smaller works exist side by side with the more important ones, so that men can find openings for their technical skill in many different establishments. In the second place, this technical skill can equally readily be employed in many different branches. The term "engineer" is a very wide one, and the engineer is in possession of a wide field of activity, and is no longer closely dependent on a given clientèle and a single employer. This fact sensibly modifies the nature of apprenticeship and the representation of the interests of labour.

The first of these points, the reduction in the number of skilled workmen, fixes the position of this industry in the general evolution of labour, and also corresponds to a relatively recent series of transformations.

There was a very serious strike of the Amalgamated Union of Engineers in 1851, only a few months after its foundation, to resist the introduction of labour-saving machinery.<sup>1</sup> Of course it was powerless to arrest the progress of machinery, and even precipitated what it sought to prevent by leading masters to dispense as far as possible with exacting specialists.

I paid a visit to the Brightside Works of Messrs. Jessop and Sons, in Sheffield. I saw immense driving shafts intended for ships of the largest size, fashioned by a steam hammer. The workman in charge of it was a skilled workman of great experience, and it was most interesting to see him directing the operations of four men with large hooks, who moved the heavy mass of iron on its supports, in order to give it the proper position for receiving the repeated blows of the gigantic hammer. Further on, axles for locomotives were in course of construction, and toothed wheels for various machines. Messrs. Jessop also make some of the parts, either the most cumbrous or the most difficult, of engines which are finished and put together in other works. It might be supposed that only skilled workmen would be employed, and it is true that

<sup>1</sup> The history of this strike is given in the Comte de Paris's work on *Les Associations Ouvrières en Angleterre*, and brings into prominence the evolution which was then taking place in the construction of machinery.

they are in the majority, but not to the exclusion of all others. There were men engaged in superintending a machine which with slow and steady movement traced regular grooves in a broad thick bar of steel, and further on a machine caught up other bars and cut them into portions of perfectly equal size, out of which would be made screws, bolts and wedges. Then there was an endless variety of piercing and boring machines, which made holes of every size and shape in bars of metal whether thick or thin, and others which planed and polished and cut iron and steel as a joiner cuts wood. Evidently the men who superintend such machines are not skilled workmen in the same degree as those who forge driving shafts or axles, but they require discernment in order to apply the powerful force at their disposition with judgment. They are not mere unskilled labourers, but they are no longer picked workmen, as is shown by their rate of wages. While picked men earn as much as £2 a week or even more, most of the others do not exceed 30s., while common labourers earn much less.

I have already—when speaking of the cutlers—had occasion to remark that the artizan population of Sheffield has been much modified by the foundation of great works like those of John Brown, or Camell, or Jessop. A new element of non-skilled workers and labourers was introduced, and led to a considerable influx of Irish labourers, who now number about 16,000, out of a total population of 330,000.

The locomotive works of Beyer and Peacock, at Gorton, near Manchester, occupy about 2000 hands. There too, of course, skilled workmen predominate, especially as this firm devotes the greatest care to the work. I mentioned to Mr. Peacock—who very kindly accompanied me through the works—that I had visited the Baldwin Works in Philadelphia, and he pointed out to me a number of details which illustrated the difference between the more delicate English methods and the rougher American ones. “We want more finish,” he said; “and we frequently use copper where they use iron or steel.” Such conditions are favourable to skilled workmen, and yet even in this industry, where the proper working of an engine depends entirely on the utmost precision of construction and putting together, unskilled labourers find employment. Boilers,

for instance, are formed of broad plates fastened together with numerous rivets, and each of these rivets is introduced in an incandescent state into holes pierced by machinery, and flattened on each side by means of a powerful machine which crushes it and gives the head the required shape. The operation is performed so rapidly, that if you stand for a few minutes beside the man in charge of the machine you may see the plates gradually form a strong and well-knit whole. It is also due to machinery that boilers have been provided with the multitubular apparatus which makes them work more regularly. Had the brass trade clung to its old-fashioned methods, we should never have had the seamless tubes of which the apparatus is formed.

Thus the factory worker's field of activity is not only widening, to the detriment of the old skilled worker, but it is also developing unforeseen applications due to new methods of working.

It is particularly interesting to notice this result in a factory whose reputation rests on the finish of its work. Beyer and Peacock do not supply a local clientèle, and cannot therefore retain it through mere proximity. They keep it, as they acquired it, by the recognised superiority of their work. Mr. Peacock told me that 90 per cent of their orders came from abroad, that they had at one time supplied Sweden and Holland, and still sent out orders to Australia, New Zealand, India, and the Argentine Republic. I saw a completed locomotive to which was attached the cow-catcher used on the United States railways to keep cattle off the unenclosed line. I remarked that that was certainly not for English use, and was told that it was going to Brazil.

The shipyards, like the locomotive yards, have gained foreign custom by the excellence of their products. It would seem that they must be entirely staffed by skilled workmen, and men of very great technical skill are certainly found. I remember a blacksmith in the Fairfield Works in Glasgow, who was judging, entirely by eye, whether a strong steel plate was properly curved, and submitting it anew, if necessary, to the action of the machine, to bring it to the shape desired. This man's nicety of eye constituted part of his value, and he was in a sense an artist. But side by

side with such men there are others who are rather intelligent individuals than professionals, and such work as piercing and fixing metal plates, making the innumerable screws required, and bolting the different pieces together, is done almost mechanically. It is chiefly upon the mechanical engineer that the really technical part falls. The skilled workman played a far greater part in building the old wooden ships than in constructing the iron monsters which have superseded them. The *Lucania* and *Campania*, the most recent of the Cunard mail steamers, and the largest vessels which have ever crossed the Atlantic, were built in the Fairfield yards. The new methods tend more and more to substitute iron for wood in the details of their construction. I noticed long cones made of steel plates joined two and two by their bases. These were metal yards, and it seems that the old wooden yard has disappeared. It used to be carefully chosen from wood of the best quality, and every care was used to secure the utmost lightness without any diminution of strength, which necessitated conditions of cut, age, dryness, etc., implying the co-operation and care of several connoisseurs. The wooden yard could not be made at a moment's notice, but now it requires only a few hours to construct a yard out of plates of sheet steel. The difference is obvious.

Wood, however, holds its own in the internal fittings of a ship, where elaborate cabinetmaker's work has replaced rough shipwright's work in the cabins. I am speaking, of course, of iron vessels, and not of the old-fashioned ones which are still used for some purposes. In the joiners' shops attached to the Fairfield yards I saw men working American yellow pine and mahogany, and using all sorts of quick and powerful machinery to effect their work. Mortises, which play such an important work in joinery, are cut in a few seconds by steam chisels, and the planing is also done by machinery. Thus joiners can, by these means, keep the delicate parts of the work, and leave the rest to men possessing no great experience.

In short, when we observe closely the great locomotive works and shipyards, where one would expect to find skilled workmen masters of the situation, we see that they are far from monopolising these trades, although they certainly predominate. For this reason these trades rank after the works

of Messrs. Platt, where the skilled workman plays an all-important part. If we consider the skilled workmen themselves, we find their specialism is of a less narrow type, as has already been pointed out. This we shall now consider.

The construction of locomotives is concentrated in a small number of important and well-known establishments, but none of these is so completely master of the clientèle that its men are entirely dependent upon it. If they are dismissed by one firm they can go to another, so that their special skill does not put them at an employer's mercy as in the case of Platt's men. The same is true of shipyards. It would be a mistake to suppose that great shipbuilding yards like those of Armstrong in Newcastle, or the Fairfield Works in Glasgow, are the only establishments of the kind. In every port a large number of more modest firms may be found, which construct ships of smaller tonnage and execute repairs, and smaller firms of still less importance engaged in constructing and repairing boilers. Engineers of the same type as those who work in the large yards employing 10,000 or 14,000 men are also employed here.

Take for example the firm of Clover, Clayton, and Company at Birkenhead, who call themselves shipbuilders, shipsmiths, and joiners. They employ from 150 to 900 men, and undertake to repair any damage sustained by ships which come into the port of Liverpool. This is their ordinary line, but they also frequently buy an unseaworthy ship which has been wrecked or seriously damaged, repair it at their own expense, and sell it. They buy such ships on any part of the English coast, and along the French coast as far as Marseilles. Such ventures are sometimes very profitable, and they have the further advantage of supplying work in slack times for men whom the firm does not wish to dismiss.

Most of the men employed are skilled mechanics, so much so that Messrs. Clover and Clayton take apprentices. At the time of my visit their apprentices numbered 20 shipbuilders, 15 boiler-makers, 4 joiners, 4 blacksmiths, 6 engineers, and 5 improvers. Improvers differ from ordinary apprentices in having already served their time, and wishing to learn the niceties of their trade with another firm. In Liverpool they often come from Scotland, and remain two years as improvers.

They receive 14s. to 16s. a week, while apprentices begin at 4s., and do not earn more than 11s. in their last year. They are really workmen who recognise the insufficiency of their apprenticeship, and are willing to devote two years more to learning their trade. After two years as improvers they will earn 30s. to 36s. a week, or sometimes as much as £2. In busy times, when obliged to work overtime, they earn considerably more, as overtime is reckoned at half as much more, and sometimes at twice the ordinary rate, when an urgent job makes it necessary to work on Sundays or on a holiday.

Unskilled labourers, who do the cleaning and rough work, only earn 4s. or 4s. 6d. a day, that is from 24s. to 27s. a week, for a nine hours day. This shows the higher degree of skill which the workmen possess, and the greater value of their labour.

While in Liverpool I also visited, in company with a naval engineer, several boiler-makers' works, where I also found skilled workmen. One of them employed 80 persons, and represented one extreme, the other being represented by Fairfield Works.

Let us now take an example where shipbuilding is not the only work done. The Ledsam Works, managed by Messrs. G. E. Bellis and Company of Birmingham, make engines for small vessels, torpedoes, pumps, and apparatus for electric lighting. The Royal Navy is one of their most important clients, but they also do a large trade in connection with the electric light. This illustrates what has already been said, that in this trade a skilled workman can transfer himself, not merely from one employer to another, but also from one branch to another. Messrs. Bellis take apprentices, who thus acquire skill of wide range. They are apprenticed for five years, and begin at 4s. a week, as in most engineering firms. They get a rise of 2s. a year, which gives them 14s. a week in their last year, when they have reached the age of twenty-one. As full workmen the cleverest earn from 30s. to £2 a week, and are men of the same type as we saw with Beyer and Peacock, and Clover and Clayton, at the Fairfield Works, and with the Liverpool boiler-makers.

All these houses differ in one important respect from that of Platt Brothers. In all of them employment is irregular



and there are continual changes in the number of the staff. At the time of my visit to Gorton, Mr. Peacock told me he was employing only 1500 men, though sometimes he has as many as 2300, and is occasionally obliged to organise night-shifts. Needless to say, it is impossible to accumulate stock in this industry.

It is also impossible in the shipbuilding trade, but long orders and the custom of the Government and of the great navigation companies prevent any considerable danger of unemployment in the cases of the largest and best known shipbuilding firms.<sup>1</sup> As the importance of the firm diminishes, unemployment becomes more serious, and it is felt with extraordinary severity in repairing yards. At Brightside Works in Sheffield there are often 1000 men, but at the time of my visit there were only 800, although the nature of the works admits of some accumulation of stocks in periods of depression. At Ledsam Works the number of the staff varies from 200 to 300, and the number of men employed by Clover and Clayton varies from 150 to 900. Forty of these, as we have seen, were apprentices, which leaves about 100 workmen whom the firm is anxious to keep, and for whom it tries to find work when there are no orders in hand. It is with this object that the firm buys up unseaworthy ships, which are repaired at odd times with the reduced permanent staff. On the day of my visit there was only a single ship on the stocks, while next week, I was told, there might be one in each dock. "As many as 3000 men," my informant added, "are sometimes employed by a shipbuilding firm in the neighbourhood, and to-day you will only find the apprentices and the foremen." I asked what became of the men who were dismissed in this summary fashion, and whether they would turn to unskilled labour, and work as dockers, let us say, while out of work. "Such a thing is very rare," was the reply, "and rather than take such an extreme measure they go to other seaports, where

<sup>1</sup> It must not be forgotten, however, that these large shipbuilding firms experienced a terrible crisis about thirty years ago. One of them, Mr. Samuda, stated about 1868 that of all the shipbuilding firms in existence before 1851 his own was the only one which had not failed, and that he himself had been obliged to reduce his staff from 2000 to 200 men. The great firms of to-day are also not insured against such risks. (*Les Associations ouvrières en Angleterre*, Germer-Baillère, 1869, p. 207.)

there may be a chance of finding employment as mechanics. If they find nothing in England they will go to Scotland or Ireland, and we ourselves have often brought men from Cumberland or Scotland. Of course we offer them some advantages to induce them to make the change, such as guaranteeing to keep them for five or six months. This, of course, is only when the demand for labour here is in excess of the supply, or when we are resisting excessive demands on the men's part during strikes. In the latter case we apply to non-unionist men if we can find them, but the Unions are extremely powerful."

The direct result of this irregularity of employment is shown by the existence of associations for the defence of the interests of the labourer. Messrs. Platt were able to crush such attempts because they were able to guarantee regular work to their staff, and consequently that security for the morrow which is the first and most serious of a workman's interests. In the industries with which we are at present concerned no employer can do this, for he is unable to accumulate stock, and directly orders do not come in regularly, he must regulate the number of his staff by the orders he has in hand. No philanthropic or benevolent sentiments can interfere with this necessity in his case. The workman must be prepared for these sudden interruptions and for being thrown out of work, and his Union is one of the means to which he looks. The Unions help to keep up wages, notwithstanding the tendency of the variations of supply and demand to modify them. They also keep a man informed of the state of the labour market, and offer him better chances of employment by showing him where trade is brisk for the time being. They also organise the preliminary agitation for certain legislative measures, from which many working men hope for great results. The Trade Union movement is, consequently, strongly marked in these industries. I was told at the Brightside Works that all the men belonged to the Union, and it was the same in all the other firms.<sup>1</sup>

The Unionist movement owes its efficiency to the circum-

<sup>1</sup> The Amalgamated Union of Engineers has 35,000 members, and the Shipwrights' Associated Society has 13,456. These figures are the official ones given at the Trades Union Congress of 1893.

stances which gave birth to it. The men are able to treat with their employers on a footing of equality, because their specialism is less narrow than in the case of the men engaged in constructing textile machinery, and can therefore be more readily transferred from one firm to another, or even into other related industries. This adaptability is the key to the situation, and Trade Unions facilitate and organise it in the best possible way. They step in and help the workman to change his front and to profit by circumstances, and they wean him from the old idea of maintaining stability by limiting the number of apprentices and erecting artificial barriers around a trade.

It is true that this antiquated spirit has not yet entirely disappeared in the iron trades. It is shown by energetic claims, which, however, are powerless, because they are directed against the tide of circumstances. We shall see this when we come to examine the bearing of the proposals for labour legislation put forward by the Trades Union Congress. Here it will be enough to notice the numerous proposals for preventing men from working as engineers without a special certificate, to be granted either by their Union or, as some propose, by a Commission.

Thanks, however, to the practical spirit of English mechanics, the Amalgamated Union of Engineers has proved an effective instrument for defence and representation, whenever its efforts have been directed towards possible reforms, and in favour of claims compatible with the new situation. The diminution of the hours of labour and the increase in wages are among the fruits of its labours.

The widening of the workman's specialism has affected the conditions of apprenticeship. We have seen that Messrs. Platt's apprentices are not bound to their employer by any contract. The apprentice knows it is to his master's interest to keep him as the length of his apprenticeship increases, because an apprentice who is no longer a raw beginner works at a cheap rate. The employer knows it is to the apprentice's interest to remain, because at the end of his apprenticeship he will reap the fruit of his labour by remaining in the service of a first-class firm, where the staff is never reduced and where unemployment is unknown.

Here, on the other hand, the apprentice could not be sure that he would not be dismissed, in a period of depression, by an employer who did not want to work at a loss. The employer would not be sure that an apprentice, who had cost him something during the first two or three years of his apprenticeship, might not go and finish his time with a rival firm, just when the work he could do for a small wage was beginning to compensate for the sacrifices his employer had made. Under these conditions a special agreement is required which shall be binding on both sides, and this explains why in most engineering firms, like G. E. Bellis and Clover and Clayton, we generally find the formal indentures of apprenticeship. The artificial link is strengthened because the natural link is so weak.

If we now compare the position of the men engaged in the construction of locomotives and in shipbuilding with that of Messrs. Platt's men, we shall find they possess a marked advantage in the increased facilities for advancement which the more capable possess. These industries are further advanced along the line of evolution, and contribute in a much more powerful manner to the elevation of those engaged in them.

In the first place, the men are not lulled into inactivity by the certainty that work will always be forthcoming, as Messrs. Platt's men might be. The latter works, as we have said, have never had to stop work for more than forty years; but this exceptional circumstance is due to two special causes, the inventive genius of the heads of the firm, and the remarkable development of the textile industry during the last half-century. It is almost a monopoly, but not quite, for there are a few competing firms. If any one of these were to introduce a new improvement this monopoly would be seriously endangered, and it might be altogether destroyed by an unforeseen invention. Then what would become of the 10,000 men who have become accustomed to count upon regular and well-paid work?

The problem with which they would then be confronted is, however, familiar to the men engaged in the trades under discussion. It is their daily preoccupation, and for most of them it constitutes the whole of the Labour Question. Many of them solve it, and in a highly satisfactory manner.

I questioned a foreman in the employ of Clover and Clayton who is now in a position of confidence, and he told me that he entered the shipbuilding trade on leaving school, served his apprenticeship, and had since worked in different towns. His migrations from place to place, while still only a mechanic, seem to have left no bitter memories. Probably he had sufficient foresight to provide against temporary periods of unemployment, and his reputation as a good workman very likely secured him work in preference to others. At the present moment he has regular work of a superior kind.

Many of his comrades rise still higher and become employers, a step which is facilitated by the existence of small firms. In the construction of textile machinery such an attempt would be attended with the utmost difficulty. Messrs. Platt's men find an opening in trades outside their own, as, for example, in managing spinning mills. In their own trade they cannot hope to rise higher than foremen or managers, and even when they display qualities of the highest order they do not set up for themselves, but only swell the staff of the firm.

But in the shipbuilding trades all employers are not great capitalists. There are many grades among them, and consequently it is less difficult to become independent. Most men start by repairing ships. Messrs. Clover and Clayton's foreman quoted cases where men had started in this line without having either wood or tools of their own, hiring the necessary machines and procuring wood on credit. I inquired how ships could be refitted except in dock. "That can be hired too," was the reply; "there are plenty to let in the public docks, and it is quite a simple matter to get the necessary accommodation. Shipowners also are often ready to lend a helping hand. It is to their interest to encourage the creation of new yards, and a shipowner who can trust a man who wants to start for himself can often help him considerably, not merely by giving him orders, but also by paying him in instalments in proportion to the progress of the work. Thus a man who is just starting can pay his men every week without being forced to borrow at a heavy rate of interest. Sometimes such a man will find a moneyed partner who is willing to make a good profit on his capital with the assistance of the working partner's technical qualifications. There are

various means, and not much capital is needed to make a start." Even with ironclads there is still room for small firms. Boilers, pumps and other parts may be repaired or replaced separately. The shell, too, often needs trifling repairs and repainting. Then there are all the small shore boats for the land service, coasting vessels, and the swarm of small crafts which the great steamers do not in any way interfere with, but rather tend to increase, by developing transport by sea. This supplies an important amount of custom, which does not seem at all likely to disappear. Thus the uncertainty due to irregularity of work is compensated for by the increased facility of rising to the position of employer.

There is also a further advantage which the workman enjoys. Engineering has many branches, as we saw in the case of Messrs. G. E. Bellis, and this wider sphere gives him a better chance of employment in times of depression. If shipbuilding is dull he can work at some of the other branches connected with it which are less affected, or at new and successful special lines. This is the best guarantee against unemployment. It is to this that working men should look to-day when trade is so unstable. They must not trust to any one trade to the exclusion of others, but must look only to themselves, and regard any trade open to them as another means at their disposition for supplying their daily wants, and for rising, if possible, out of the working class.

It is easy, too, to see that notwithstanding the coming and going which results from the conditions of labour in the repairing yards skilled mechanics generally live in comfort in English seaport towns. At Birkenhead only about 5 or 6 per cent own their houses, and it is easy to understand that they hesitate to tie themselves to a place when they are so often obliged to shift from one dockyard to another. The high price which houses fetch may also be an obstacle. A small six-roomed house is worth £200 and lets for about 7s. a week. This is a high rent, but it must be borne in mind that living in Birkenhead, opposite Liverpool, enables a mechanic to find work in the numberless dockyards which owe their existence to the enormous traffic of this port. Birkenhead owes its existence to the neighbourhood of Liverpool, and a few years ago, within the memory of Messrs. Clover

and Clayton's foreman, it was only a village. Now it has 100,000 inhabitants, and since the construction of the Mersey Tunnel it is to all intents and purposes a suburb of Liverpool. In the early days of its prosperity Building Societies enabled a certain number of working men to acquire houses on good terms, but now the increased value of land makes it more difficult. Birkenhead, however, has in its turn created a number of artisan villages in its neighbourhood, and the smaller rents lead many working-class families to settle in the quarters about the railways, which put them into quick and constant communication with the docks.

I visited several working-class houses at Miles Platting, a quarter of Manchester. Many of them are occupied by families where the father is employed in some of the iron-works in the neighbourhood. The district between Miles Platting and Gorton bears witness to great activity in the iron trade. I wished to inspect the more modest dwellings, belonging to families less well qualified to rise in the world. The Roman Catholic priest of St. Edmund's kindly assisted me in my task and took me into the Irish quarter. It was Saturday, the general cleaning day, a fact which may have given me too favourable an impression. I had, however, visited the East End of London on a Saturday without seeing any such sight. Here housewives were scrubbing the floors, cleaning the steps, or polishing the grates, and this too in struggling homes where life was pinched and precarious. One good woman apologised for the untidiness of her house by explaining that she had just been bathing the children.

The scanty accommodation of these houses shows how little comfort the family can manage to procure. None have cellars, which is a grave defect in a damp climate. They consist of two, or at most three, rooms, and there are usually several children. Waste matter of all kinds is deposited in a small place at the back of the house and taken away at night by scavengers' carts. Such an unsatisfactory system creates a permanent centre of infection, no less unsanitary than unpleasant. We are far indeed from model working-class dwellings. The furniture matches the houses. A scrap of old carpet or an unrecognisable oilcloth on the floor of the principal room may be considered as a luxury, but there are

not enough beds, very few utensils, and the chairs are often rickety. Nevertheless rents are rarely less than 3s. 6d. a week, though many houses let at this rent are not so good as those for which a miner in the Lothians pays only 2s. a week, with a flower-garden and a kitchen-garden included. This is the price which must be paid for the advantages of a great city like Manchester, and though it is heavy, the advantages are considerable. A clergyman told me that young girls easily find employment in factories or shops, and that lads can be apprenticed to different trades while continuing to live at home. They are not driven into their father's trade like miners' sons, but their special abilities may be utilised in iron-works or spinning mills, or in one of the numberless forms of trade. Each member can support himself, and if one of them is thrown out of work in one trade the house can still be carried on when there are several able-bodied members.

The same clergyman told me that in his parish of 15,000 souls he did not know a single family living in the horrible flats and tenements which are so frequently found in Whitechapel, Tower Hill, and other parts of London. Every family has its own house, humble it may be and poor, but free from the degrading promiscuity of tenements. Sometimes a young couple without much in hand will rent a room from a struggling family which finds its weekly rent too heavy, but such an arrangement is only a temporary one, to enable a young couple to save money and get a little furniture before children come and oblige them to take a house. This alone indicates a considerable degree of prosperity and self-respect. I saw nothing which filled me with the same pity and horror as I have often felt at the spectacle of the frightful destitution of London.

Destitution and degradation are far more common in the small trades in which sweating prevails than in the industries carried on in large factories. Hence the East End of London, which swarms with small workshops, presents a sadder spectacle than this quarter of Manchester surrounded by works of every kind. I purposely chose the most densely populated town in the manufacturing district of Lancashire, and the class least qualified to better itself, and I found a higher level than where the old system was making its last stand.



We have now to take the branches of the iron trade which supply ordinary consumers, and here we shall find the workers most despecialised.

### III. *The Manufacture of Articles of Ordinary Use.*

Every one has heard of Coventry since cycling became so popular. Some of the best English bicycle works are there, and so far English houses command the market.

Messrs. Singer and Company's factory is one of the most important in Coventry, and this I visited. Contrary to my expectations, I did not find that skilled workmen preponderated. Even in the forging department, though they were in the majority, they were not the only ones. Besides experienced workmen, I saw lads of fifteen or sixteen who seemed to accomplish their task quickly and properly. I inquired whether they were apprentices, and was told that no apprentices were taken, but that youths began at 5s. a week, and received an increase of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. or 1d. an hour as they became more experienced, and that whenever possible they were paid by the piece.

Thus there is no regular apprenticeship. The older men look after the younger ones and teach them to handle their tools, and it is the duty of the foremen to initiate them into the methods employed, but no contract binds the apprentice to his employer, and there is no compulsory term of apprenticeship. This indicates an advanced stage of despecialisation. Messrs. Platt's apprentices, as we saw, are bound by no contract, but they nevertheless serve the full seven years. In shipbuilding and locomotive works the period is generally reduced to five years, but it is still the authorised mode of entering the profession. Here it has entirely disappeared, and a man is considered qualified, and is paid as such, as soon as he is able to do his work in a satisfactory manner.

The other departments require less technical knowledge than the forging department. I saw youths using a machine to pierce holes of different shape in little cubes of steel, others mechanically tracing the grooves to admit a screw, and others making the screws. Every part of a bicycle has to be polished, sometimes again and again. This

is done by unskilled labourers who present the object to be polished to metal brushes, and then to softer and softer ones, which, when set in rapid motion, soon remove all irregularities from the surface of the metal. The frames have also to be enamelled, and the felloes of the wheels, and this is done by placing in special ovens heated by gas the parts which have previously been covered with a coat of liquid enamel. The handles and pedals have also to be nickelled, an operation which is done by special baths, and requires nothing but a little practice and care on the workman's part.

Thus the manufacture of bicycles offers a large field to unskilled labour.

There is another respect in which it is essentially modern, and differs radically from the old closed trade, entrance to which was difficult, and in which a man remained till he died. It is a trade which supports a man during part of the year only, and if it were jealously barricaded such men would die within the barricades.

Messrs. Singer and Company employ about 700 men in summer, but dismiss a large part of their staff at the beginning of winter. "You see," said one of the directors, "cycling is difficult in the bad season, and few bicycles are bought after October, so that we are obliged to stop turning them out."

"But you do not sell directly to purchasers, you have middlemen who must be supplied in advance. Why not try to keep production steady by working in winter for the following season?"

"You forget," was the reply, "that improvements are constantly being introduced, and our representatives in England and France, and firms which deal in our machines, always insist on the newest make, so that any improvement introduced by our own or any competing firm is enough to depreciate all we have in stock and render it unsaleable. How then could we accumulate stock? Just now, as a matter of fact, we are changing our models, and as soon as the new ones have been introduced we shall work at high pressure to profit by the moment's popularity, and then we shall wait till next summer."

"And what becomes of the men when dismissed?"

"If they belong to a Union, like the blacksmiths, they

apply for out-of-work relief, and the others shift for themselves."

I was told in Coventry that some of them work at watch-making, which is also a local industry, but this not in any way regular or organised, and as a matter of fact the men dismissed from bicycle works have no alternative but to look for work. They meet with an obstacle so obvious that it has never occurred to them to try to unite their strength in order to force employers to give regular work. No Union could succeed, and those which exist can only play the part of friendly societies, without any of the exclusiveness and tyranny which we have seen in other trades. I was told that at Messrs. Singer's works union and non-union men worked together without any difficulty arising, and the cause was stated to be that higher wages were paid in bicycle-making than in any other related industry. I saw men who manage to earn 1s. an hour by the piece, which, with a nine hours' day, makes £2 : 14s. a week (supposing Saturday were a whole day). This, of course, is exceptional, but generally speaking the pay is good, and must necessarily be so. Men would not take temporary work without the attraction of high wages, but would remain in the works and factories from which they are at present drawn.

This industry is a recent one, and the workmen employed have been drawn from many sources. It is rather a new opening for iron-workers than a distinct trade.<sup>1</sup> In proof of this we may notice that a good blacksmith is quite able to make a bicycle by himself, as young Brown did, but it would be an interesting experiment rather than a profitable employment. It never pays to use a skilled workman's time and labour where an intelligent man, with proper machinery at his disposal, can do more work in less time. Consequently the factory type must necessarily predominate in this branch, even though much hand labour is required, and though we find none of the powerful mechanical engines employed in the construction of locomotives and shipbuilding. The Singer

<sup>1</sup> This explains why gunsmiths and manufacturers of sewing-machines often start as bicycle manufacturers *with the same staff*. This happens in the case of the different firms of Saint Étienne, the firm of Bacle, the Decauville Company, etc.

Company have two sets of works at Coventry. In the older one the motive power is generated by a steam engine, in the second it has been found more desirable to use two gas engines, one of 30-horse power and one of 40-horse power.

This shows that the factory system is not limited in the future to those immense factories where important and cumbersome work is performed. Machinery plays its part in the fabrication of more modest articles, and in factories less vast than Fairfield Works. This we shall see shortly in some of the small factories in Birmingham. But before leaving the Singer Company and the manufacture of bicycles, I ought to say that the introduction of an industry where the staff is so variable has not in any way aggravated the Labour Question. The studious Coventry weaver, who was ruined by the failure of the ribbon trade, and who painted so vividly the vicissitudes of his career in his interesting book, *Lights and Shadows in the Life of an Artisan*, this man, who all his life suffered from the modern industrial evolution, because circumstances had left him stranded in a ruined trade, renders full justice to the beneficial side of this evolution. Let us be equally just, and recognise, like him, that, by availing himself of his freedom to pass from one industry to another, a man can better solve the problem of how to live under the new conditions of labour than he could ever do it under the old conditions by clinging to a single trade. The Singer Company's men are well aware beforehand that the dead season will come, and they can take steps to find other employment against that time. Many of them manage to do so, and thus by means of the new formula of change they keep their material life stable. From this point of view, notwithstanding their specialisation, they are well advanced along the lines of change.

We turn now to another type which exhibits the utmost degree of despecialisation reached in the iron trade. This is a nail-making factory in Birmingham, the home of nails, screws, and all the small uses to which various metals have been put, not even excluding the precious metals which are employed, as we have already seen, in the jewellery trade. In nail-making only iron and brass are used, and the persons engaged in the trade are not artists like the jewellers, but ordinary factory hands of both sexes. We have not previously

met women in the iron trade, but in this factory 30 men and 40 women are employed. Thus the numbers are approximately equal, if we deduct the foremen, mechanics, stokers, etc., who are always men. Very few of the women are married, the majority being young girls who soon marry off one by one and are replaced by others. Consequently they never rise to a good position nor acquire much experience, but are machine tenders and nothing more. Of the men, only those who manage the motor machines possess first-rate qualifications, for the post of foreman is rather one of confidence and superintendence than of technical knowledge.

The work is extremely simple, and consists in cutting to size bars of metal which have already been drawn out. The head is then flattened and the point sharpened, and this is easily done by very simple machinery, which produces different sizes and kinds, such as carpenters' tacks, copper nails for shoes, etc. The simplicity of the machinery employed reduces the dimensions of the factory, and a small capital and simple management are sufficient. If orders fall off it is quite possible to accumulate stock, as nails are in general use and little susceptible of modification.

This is an advantage both to employer and employed, but not in the direction in which we generally look and in which the true interest of the worker lies. His real interest is not to remain for ever at this trade when other and better ones are opened to him by their increasing despecialisation, but to keep this to fall back upon when thrown out of work in others. This is the true use of an industry of this kind for the modern workman, whereas if it frees him from the need for seeking work it will keep him an unskilled labourer, and make him pay dear for his freedom from anxiety about the morrow. As a temporary resource, however, it is extremely valuable, and in times of depression even a clever mechanic may be glad to earn £1 in a nail factory.

So far as young girls are concerned, it is clearly to their advantage to work at a trade until they marry, if they are strong enough to resist the temptations of such a life. Girls of the working class, however, are from their earliest years accustomed to the streets, where they play with their companions, and they run but little danger in a well-ordered

factory, not more perhaps, in many cases, than if they remained at home. If they did not go to the factory they would go into dressmakers' or milliners' workrooms, or into service, where there is the same danger. Their salaries, however, are very low, not more than 6s. or 7s. a week.<sup>1</sup>

The trade, however, is in some respects an unattractive one for young girls. The girls are repulsively dirty objects in their working clothes, stained with rust and black dust. Some of them are pretty, but with their faces besmeared in this sinister fashion they look like veritable hags. There are not many openings for women in this centre of the iron industry, and masters profit by this to make them work for low wages. Women's wages tend to rise as the application of machinery to industry develops, and as women take a larger and larger share in the work of the modern factory. We shall see a proof of this in the textile industry.

<sup>1</sup> If any readers are inclined to pity the Birmingham nail-makers, I would call their attention to the report of the Board of Trade, published in November 1889, on the nail-makers of Staffordshire and Worcestershire. They work by hand at home in wretched villages, and earn ridiculously low wages for long hours of work. Henry Parken, fifty-nine years of age, earns 9s. 2½d. a week, working fifteen hours a day, and out of this he has to spend 1s. 2½d. a week on coke for his forge. Two women who work with him earn 4s. 9½d. a week, working fourteen hours a day. One nail-maker earns 12s. a week, but he is a skilful man. Thomas Harrison works with a daughter, aged twenty-eight, and the two together earn 13s. a week, deducting coal. The report contains a number of revelations which throw a sad light on the material and moral condition of these people. It should be remarked that the Birmingham nail-making factories could pay their female hands better but for the competition of firms who employ the hand nail-makers of Staffordshire and Worcestershire. It is the sweating of the latter which tends to cheapen the price of labour and the price of the product.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

#### *The Workman Subordinated to Machinery.*

THE textile industries offer the most complete example of the triumph of machinery which can at present be found in any trade. The workman occupies but a secondary position, and serves the machine instead of being served by it. Apprenticeship disappears with the need for technical skill. Women are no longer handicapped by their inferior physical strength, nor by the temporary nature of their presence in the factory. Although they will leave the factory when they marry, they can nevertheless earn a good wage while they remain unmarried, for neither muscular force nor special technical skill, nor indeed anything but care, attention, and discretion, is necessary for superintending spindles and looms. Finally, the clientèle is as large and varied as possible.

Thus the textile industries are an excellent type of a despecialised industry, and mark the highest point of the modern evolution of labour in factories, and from this point of view they are of the utmost interest.<sup>1</sup> They were the first to undergo those transformations to which other industries are approximating in different degrees. They have experienced crises analogous to those experienced to-day by trades of the old type when threatened by the advance of machinery, their present organisation is that to which these trades are tending, and their example will thus furnish a valuable lesson.

<sup>1</sup> We shall see that the industries of transport occupy a still more despecialised class of workers than even those industries where the use of machinery is most developed.

We have again and again been led to remark the general movement of this modern industrial evolution. All the types which have been described are in a sense landmarks, intended to fix a given moment in this evolution, and to prove its triumphant progress. We have noted the material condition of the worker corresponding to each of these given moments, and have thus been able, by means of a series of fixed points, to trace two closely connected curves, one showing the evolution of the organisation of the worker, and proceeding parallel to the second, which shows the evolution of the application of machinery to industry.

Thus the different aspects of the Labour Question appear to us no longer as a series of different and independent problems, but as a progression in which we know the first few terms, and of which we can find the law. The truth of the law becomes more and more evident with each new term of the series, and the existence of a constant relation between the transformation of the workshop and the transformation of the worker is demonstrated. We see that the worker becomes more and more of a man as he becomes less and less of a specialist, and that his prosperity increasingly depends on his own personal worth, intellectual resources, and moral energy.

Thus an unbiassed examination of the facts leads to the unexpected conclusion, that *the solution of the Labour Question will be increasingly found in the development of the worker, and in his more manly training, and less and less in ingenious combinations intended to ensure a mechanical happiness by producing an artificial stability of trade.*

The progress of modern industry is overthrowing the old barriers which penned the worker inside a limited area in order to protect him—often unsuccessfully—from the struggle for existence, and is compelling him to face this struggle, thus placing him afresh in the natural conditions of humanity, while at the same time urging him to equip himself for the struggle.

But just as all industries are not equally committed to this twofold evolution, so, in some branches of the textile industry, we shall find survivals due to special circumstances, while others seem to have attained the extreme limit at present observable.



The part played by skilled workmen in the textile industries depends on whether the mills are isolated or in a great manufacturing centre; on the nature of the raw material, whether silk, wool, cotton, hemp, jute, etc.; on the nature of the operation, whether spinning or weaving; and corresponding to each of these different cases we have a different aspect of the Labour Question. We shall examine them in the order in which they bear on the question, and illustrate the vanity of all artificial solutions by rendering evident the true source of all the solutions.

### I. *A Silk Spinning Mill in Yorkshire.*

Not far from Halifax, in one of the prettiest corners of Yorkshire, lies a charming valley, with splendid meadow-land and great masses of dark verdure thrown into relief by the bright green of the turf. The trees are not so fine as in the south of England, but they are dotted about in groups which give the whole country-side the appearance of an immense park. We are far from the gloomy surroundings of Birmingham and Manchester, where the valleys are buried under accumulations of mining débris, where the factories almost touch each other, and where the whole district looks like a quarter in a manufacturing town. Here the mills are scattered about the country-side, often hidden by the thick foliage surrounding them, and the houses of the operatives make coquettish little villages at the bottom of a valley or are dotted over the slopes of a neighbouring hill. It is like some picturesque spot in the mining districts of Normandy, with the characteristic features of the scenery a little accentuated.

I had an introduction to Mr. H——, who is not merely an energetic business man, but an accomplished country gentleman. He is also a magistrate, and is well qualified by his practical knowledge, his high character and fairness, to discharge the functions of such an office. He feels for his people the inherited sympathy which results in certain families from generations of residence, services rendered, and common memories. His father and brother and himself are at the head of a spinning mill established in 1800, and a large number of their men have never worked

anywhere else, but have succeeded their fathers and grand-fathers.

The scene is a very attractive one, and inspires a sense of calm and peace and of mutual good-will between masters and men. My first impression was confirmed by a visit to the factory. I asked a joiner engaged in the repairing department whether he belonged to any Union, and he replied with a smile, "We don't care about that sort of thing." The only Union men in the mill are two or three dressers, strikes are unknown, wages are high, and work regular.

Is this then an industrial earthly paradise? In a certain sense it is. Partly owing to the general conditions of silk spinning, partly to circumstances peculiar to the Ripponden mills, and the intelligent care displayed by the employers for their men, the latter are freed from many cares. Like Messrs. Platt's men, though from different causes, they are spared the hard necessity of preparing for the contingency of being thrown out of employment, and can rest in a security which has remained undisturbed during several years of regular work. These are their advantages, usually called fortunate ones, but like all privileges they have their other side. The worker who relies on favourable circumstances external to himself neglects to fit himself for overcoming difficulties, and is less fitted to meet and conquer them. And yet difficulties may come.

Mr. H—— explained to me that he only succeeded in working uninterruptedly by accumulating stock to a very considerable extent, and that he often had £20,000 or £30,000 worth of spun silk on his hands. He thus runs a great risk, and a case might arise where all the good-will in the world could not prevent the mills from stopping. It would be enough if a falling off of orders were to coincide with a depreciation in prices, which is by no means an impossibility. Silk is liable to considerable variations, both of production and consumption, and therefore to well-marked fluctuations, and there might be serious danger if large quantities could not be got rid of. In that very year (1893) the silk market had been in a very disturbed condition. Between 1st January and 1st May prices had a constant upward tendency, amounting for some kinds of silk to a difference of 31 per cent between the

two dates. In December prices had fallen, and were 22·4 per cent lower than they had been in January.<sup>1</sup> Thus manufacturers who had bought raw material in large quantities at the beginning of the year, and had worked it up into stock, found themselves encumbered with greatly depreciated goods, and lost through the fall in the price of the raw material. Such occurrences tend to make masters very cautious about accumulating stock, and force them to stop work when orders fall off.

If this contingency has been avoided hitherto, it is partly due to the skill, foresight, and devotion of Mr. H——, and partly to the fact that the consumption of spun silk is more regular than that of stuffs, trimmings, velvets, ribbons, or silk lace. Fashion changes abruptly in these matters, but the spun silk, which is used for many different purposes, is not directly affected by these changes. So long as its destination is merely changed, it makes very little difference if, let us say, there is a great demand for velvets and ribbons, and very little for silk stuffs.

However, neither of the elements which contribute to regularity of employment is absolute. The masters may be less clever, less fortunate, or less ready to risk their own interests in order to prevent a crisis among their men, or they may have less capital at their disposal, and thus be unable to continue to manufacture without selling. Even if the consumption of spun silk is relatively steady, owing to the variety of uses to which it is put, its markets and its market price are subject to a number of vicissitudes. Mr. H—— told me he sells not only to England and Scotland, but also to foreign countries, and especially to France. Thus he has in the first place to allow for fluctuation in price, owing to the state of silkworm culture in France and the demand for spun silk, and then with artificial disturbances due to French tariff laws, which are by no means unimportant. Previous to 1888, Italian raw silk was sold to Lyons duty free, on 1st March 1888 a differential duty was imposed, and in 1892 it was again exempted

<sup>1</sup> Raw Cevennes silk of second quality was quoted at 46·4s. in January 1893, 60·8s. in May, and 36s. in December. See the Report on the Textile Industry in France, presented to the Permanent Commission on the Value of Customs by M. M. Gaston Grandgeorge and Léon Tabourier, pp. 3 to 6.

from any duty. Each of these measures affected English spinners relatively to their French competitors, especially when they sent part of their produce to French markets. Previous to 1888 wrought silk paid no duty at the French frontier, in 1888 it paid 2 francs (1s. 7 $\frac{1}{5}$ d.), and in 1892 3 francs (2s. 4 $\frac{4}{5}$ d.). So much for the circumstances which directly affect these isolated Yorkshire mills. In a situation where the risks are so great, even those employers who are most ready to make sacrifices have not always the power to prevent a crisis which will throw their mills out of work.

If such a crisis occurred here, what would become of these operatives? 450 men, girls, and children make a living by the mills, and as a rule a good living. Wages are as high as in the great manufacturing centres, and Mr. H——, as he himself told me, is always anxious to pay his operatives as liberally as possible. "If you want good hands you must pay them well," he added, in a very practical tone. Work is not usually paid by the day in his mills, but by the piece, but the average weekly wages will indicate the rate of payment. A man earns from 35s. to £2 a week, girls about 15s., and children employed as half-timers from 7s. 6d. to 8s. a week. These of course are averages, and Mr. H—— told me that girls often earned £1 a week. A working day consists of ten hours, and Saturday is a half-holiday, so the weekly wage represents ~~thirty~~ thirty-six hours' work, and the rate of payment is high.

Here then we have a staff of workers accustomed to earn a good regular wage, thanks to the care which their employers take to prevent interruptions of work. If the mills were obliged to stop, what would they have to fall back upon, and where would they find—not merely such good employment—but a substitute of any kind by which they could make a living?

A good many of them do a little cultivation, and this part of Yorkshire affords excellent pasturage, which makes it profitable to keep cows for milking. This is work which requires very little labour, for the women and children can look after the cows and the dairy, and the husband has time to milk when he comes home from work. This would be an appreciable addition to the family income in ordinary times, but it

would be quite insufficient to maintain a family if the mills stopped work. A family cannot live on one or two cows, a pig, a few fowls, and a couple of rabbits, more especially a family accustomed to the comforts procured by a large weekly wage.

The most skilful of the men, those who earn about £2 a week, seem least inclined to profit by their rural situation to engage in a little cultivation. A foreman with whom I conversed replied to my inquiries as to whether he cultivated a little land with a rather contemptuous smile: "I don't believe in farming for a workman in a mill." He thinks he can do better, and that he would be wasting his time. It should be said that he has only two children, a son of twelve and a daughter of fourteen, who cost him very little. "I don't believe in large families," he told me. At bottom he does not believe in anything except his good salary, on which he depends exclusively. He is ambitious for his children, and his daughter is training to become a teacher, while his son has not yet made up his mind about his career, though he announces that he means to be a gentleman and not a working man.

Personally, I have not much faith in this way of bettering oneself. Undoubtedly the present position of this man is good: he has very few children, he pays only £6 a year for a large and comfortable house, and his wages amount to about £100 a year. This is certainly a position of ease, but it is due chiefly to the limitation of expenses, to voluntary sterility, and to the lowness of rents in this little village. Real improvement tends rather to augment resources than to reduce expenses. The strong, healthy, vigorous method is to produce a large family and work hard to keep them while they are young, and to fit them to earn their own living as early and as well as possible. If the mills were to fail, where would be the advantage of having no bread-winner for the family but the father? What would be gained by the lowness of the rent in a place where there are only Mr. H——'s mills to furnish employment. We are concerned, be it remembered, with a skilled workman, the foreman in charge of the dressing department, in which silk is sorted according to quality. In this department all the operatives serve from five to seven years' apprenticeship, for their task is an extremely delicate one, requiring very great

experience. It is also very important, owing to the value of the silk, the different varieties, and the various uses to which they are applied. The foreman of this department, therefore, must be a skilled workman of skilled workmen. He would not readily consent to work in woollen or cotton mills, and Mr. H——'s are the only silk mills in the neighbourhood. Indeed this manufacture is relatively little developed in England.

This man, therefore, would be without resources if he were thrown out of work. His savings, if he had any, would soon be exhausted with his habits of living, and neither his son nor his daughter seem qualified to support the family by their work. The daughter, if she succeeds in becoming a teacher, will need all her salary for herself, and the son will fare badly if he has to rely solely on what he earns as a gentleman! Of course it is a perfectly legitimate ambition to wish to become a gentleman, but such an ambition should rest on a solid material basis.

It may be urged that this foreman is in a somewhat exceptional position, that he has few children, devotes himself to no supplementary work like cultivation, and is a specialist, and that the other operatives would hardly present the same character. I admit the force of the argument, but my point is that the men most disposed by their advantageous position to try to raise themselves find but few facilities in a village. They and their children lack the thousand openings which present themselves in a great industrial town, and their horizon is inevitably a very limited one. The man of whom we are speaking has lived in Ripponden for thirty-one years, sorting silk according to quality, and there is nothing in such an occupation to open a man's eyes to the future. In other words, his isolation and his specialisation are unfavourable circumstances for the advancement of his family.

We have still to see whether the great mass of operatives, the rank and file, who are more anxious to make both ends meet than to reach the top of the ladder, do not find better conditions in this delightful village than in a suburb of Birmingham, Leeds, or Bradford.

At first sight it would seem as if the reply should be in the affirmative. Rents, as we have seen, are low, and the cost of food comes to about the same thing, for the price of meat

and bread does not vary very much in any part of England. Against the higher price paid for groceries in the country, and the impossibility of obtaining frozen Australian or American meat, may be set the facilities for growing vegetables and keeping pigs, poultry, and perhaps a few cows.

All this would be excellent—supposing the mill were absolutely guaranteed against ever being obliged to stop—if the only object of the institution of the family were to support the children. But it ought to provide for their education and render them capable of keeping themselves some day and founding families in their turn, and here the difficulty commences. Of course what are generally called the means of education exist at Ripponden, and there are schools—and excellent schools—in which the employers take a deep and enlightened interest. But children do not get the most important part of education at school, but out of school hours, in the family, in their surroundings, in the thousand and one occurrences of daily life. If these means of education are ample, there is the best possible chance of children acquiring a complete education; if they are few or feeble, education is a very difficult matter.

In France there are numbers of young men, usually called well educated, who are quite at a loss how to set about making a living. The will is not lacking, but they are stopped by the absence of means within their reach. This is the essential fault in their education. In certain classes of English society, on the contrary, young men are ready for any sort of enterprise, and for acting on their own initiative. We might recall the instance of Brown's children, who have entered very different branches of business, and are not only ready to go to the other side of the world but are capable of making a living anywhere. This is a phenomenon in education, and it is due to their father's example and to the fact that they live in a great town of 500,000 souls, a centre of extraordinary activity in touch with the entire world.

But in this charming Yorkshire village such means of education are rare. It is a delightful place of repose, but not a centre of work, and it is for work that children should be educated, since it is only through work that they can hope to rise. What can a working man do with his children here?

Mr. H—— is willing to take as many as he can, and two or three other mills in the neighbourhood can also take some, but not all. Where will the others go? The world is open to them, of course, as it is to everybody, but their education has not given them so much knowledge of it as many others possess, and they are less fitted to make their way. As a rule they will make for the manufacturing towns, where they will become workmen and remain so, and the peaceful calm of their childhood will have been but an indifferent preparation for the temptations and the keener life of a great centre.

Nor is this all. I have assumed that the mills are not thrown out of work, but what would happen if they stopped, even for a short period, which as we know is not impossible? We will leave out of the question the skilled workmen, who are but a small minority. Except in the dressing department, the work is done by machinery. The operatives serve no apprenticeship and only attend to machines, silk-washing machines, rotatory drying-machines, and spinning-looms. It seems as though it should be easy to pass to another occupation of the same kind, but where is it to be found? Except for the farms and a few woollen and cotton mills in the neighbourhood, there is no chance of finding employment. This is the true danger of the situation, the sword suspended over the head of this peaceful folk.

It is impossible to praise too highly the benevolence and the devoted guardianship of Messrs. H——. They neglect nothing which might contribute to the material and moral well-being of those they employ, or procure them innocent recreations. They not only pay good wages, but they endeavour in innumerable ways to exercise a beneficial influence on their operatives, and with this object they have founded a penny bank and started a free library in the mill, as well as a theatre where music and recitation may be practised on holidays, schools, and religious services. Nothing that careful and enlightened masters can give is lacking, and yet one essential thing is wanting. That is ability on the part of the men to organise for themselves what their employers have been obliged to do for them and to push their children vigorously into new grooves. These are things which no employer can do for them.



In a word, the prosperity of this Eden depends rather on the employers than on the men. The latter are worthy folk, well paid, well fed, well sheltered, and well insured so far against the storms of life. But let a storm sweep away their employer and they are at the mercy of circumstances.

Mr. H—— used for a long time to give out work to families in the neighbourhood. The waste silk was supplied to some of the country people who had hand-loom, to be woven at odd moments for a small wage into coarse articles for which a sale might be found. "It was a poor speculation," said Mr. H——, "but we did not do it to make money. We were content to make both ends meet, and glad to put a few shillings in the way of our poorer neighbours. We had reluctantly to stop this about a fortnight ago, for we were losing money by it."

There is, of course, an enormous difference between the working up of waste silk under the unfavourable conditions of handloom weaving and the machinery set up by Messrs. H——, provided with every modern contrivance. Yet if their work-people found themselves deprived of work through competition, like the peasants of the neighbouring hillsides, they would be no better able to find other work, and they would not even have the resource of agriculture. We cannot compare such mere accessories as the possession of a bit of land and a few domestic animals with a real farm meant to support a peasant family. They are even more dependent than such peasants on Messrs. H——.

This proves that it is not enough for the modern factory hand to be professionally despecialised, and to have ceased to be dependent from the nature of his work on one special trade. To acquire the flexibility required to-day he must also be morally despecialised and must not be bound by his habits of life to the factory in which he works. If not, he is as much the slave of those habits as others are of their specialism. Isolation is very favourable to the over-development of such habits, and that is why we have begun our study of the textile industries with this example, where we get machinery with every modern improvement and despecialisation of the workers, but where, nevertheless, the latter are restricted to a very limited sphere of activity.

The woollen industry will take us into very different surroundings. There is no need to dwell on its enormous importance in England and Scotland.<sup>1</sup> While the silk manufacture occupies but a small number of mills, and the silk trade of Europe is in the hands of Lyons and Milan, Great Britain holds a front place in the woollen manufacture, and notwithstanding the recent tendency to send the wool exported from Australia and La Plata direct to those countries of Europe which have woollen manufactures, London is still the greatest wool market in the world.

## II. *The Woollen Manufacture.*

The mere fact of the large number of factories devoted to the manufacture of woollen goods has a sensible influence on the position of the operatives. Those who, notwithstanding the reign of power-looms, remain skilled workmen in any particular line are at least connected with a very widely employed specialism. Some towns, like Bradford, live entirely by the woollen manufacture, and skilled workmen in this trade are therefore not at the mercy of a single employer, or if their employer fails they can find other employers in the same place, for whom they can do the same kind of work. Only a general crisis seriously affects them.

This is one great difference between the silk and woollen manufactures. We have seen that the former is but little developed in England, and further, the mills we observed were in the country, which greatly increased the difficulty of finding other work in the event of a crisis. In the woollen manufacture we shall rarely leave the great manufacturing centres,

<sup>1</sup> Great Britain manufactured in 1893 about 500,000,000 lbs. of raw wool, or more than a fifth of the entire consumption of the globe. Europe used about 1,260,000,000 lbs., and North America 500,000,000 lbs., the same quantity as England.

In the case of silk the figures are quite different. France comes to the front, with about 8,000,000 lbs. used in her factories. Great Britain had only about 1,550,000 lbs., or only half as much as Switzerland, and rather more than 5 per cent of the total consumption of the manufacturing countries of Europe and America. Considering the enormous development of the textile industry in England, we may say that silk is an exception. (See Report on the Textile Industry in 1893 already cited, pp. 8 and 53.)

and although we may come across small mills in some Scottish valley which owe their origin to a neighbouring waterfall, these are exceptions and not the rule. They do not present the characteristic features of this industry, and should not be chosen as types for observation.

We have no longer, then, to take isolation into account, for it does not appreciably affect woollen operatives as a body. The special circumstance which will retard or accelerate their evolution will be their specialisation, which will be more or less well marked, according to the branch in which they are engaged.

The further a manufacturing process is carried the more likely are we to meet with skilled workmen. We shall find more, for example, in weaving than in spinning mills. A particular stuff is woven with a particular loom, while a given warp or woof may enter into the composition of different stuffs. From this point of view the manufacture of fancy stuffs requires more skilled workmen than the manufacture of plain ones. Hence it follows that in order to observe the branch where skilled workmen are most numerous we must take a factory producing an article ready for use and admitting of various patterns. The example we will choose is the carpet factory of Messrs. Templeton in Glasgow.

Messrs. Templeton employ 1200 hands, of whom about half are women, and as a rule unmarried. Skilled workers may be either men or women, but the men are generally reserved for work requiring muscular strength. Before a loom can be started it must be furnished with heavy bobbins. When carpets are made in a single piece the size of the loom prevents a woman from performing the various manual operations necessary for its proper working, and men are employed. Messrs. Templeton execute special orders on hand-looms, for if a pattern is not for general use, and cannot be reproduced a great number of times, nothing is gained by using a power-loom, which is a much more complicated one to set up and represents a large initial expense. Here again it is necessary to employ men. On the other hand, some other workmen are only chosen in preference to women because they have stronger arms, but these are labourers rather than skilled workers.

There is a considerable difference in wages among the

women hands. The most skilful earn more than £1 a week, others do not exceed 10s., while a few little girls of thirteen or fourteen, whose work is extremely simple, only receive 4s.

The preparation of the patterns to be reproduced seems to be the chief difficulty in the manufacture of carpets. The most skilful of the women hands are employed at design and pattern-making. By means of ingenious contrivances the different colours of yarns are so prepared as to form a kind of rope which, when used as a warp and woven on the woof, gives the required design. It is not difficult to see that this is an operation which requires the greatest care and accuracy. In the pattern workshops I saw young girls puzzling over great pattern cards, which were ruled in narrow divisions, and covered with numbers. These pattern cards are afterwards given to the design-makers, who must understand and carefully follow their directions, notwithstanding the great number of bobbins of different colours which they have to employ.

Even among those who tend the looms there are some who require discernment, sustained attention, and a certain technical skill. They have not always merely to weave carpets by the piece, in which the pattern is repeated indefinitely. Centre carpets and rugs require more attention, and I have seen girls attending to looms with a series of shuttles which have to be introduced or taken out of the way as the pattern requires.

I asked Mr. Templeton whether the hands employed in pattern-making and in working complicated looms served any apprenticeship. He replied that they did not, and that apprenticeship was dropping into disuse, but he was referring to the regular apprenticeship for a fixed period such as we have found in some trades which are still in the hands of skilled workmen. The apprenticeship which is disappearing is the preliminary test imposed uniformly on all future workmen for a fixed number of years, but it will always be necessary for beginners to learn what they do not know, and to acquire the trade which they wish to practise. I saw two girls who had newly come, and who were being put into the way of their work by a comrade who was already perfect. This is the form now assumed by apprenticeship. As soon as these girls

were able to work alone they would be left to do so, and paid according to the quantity and quality of their work. This is no small advantage for young girls, who as a rule remain only a very few years at the work, less in many cases than the length of the old apprenticeship. Under the old handloom system they could not have found work in a carpet factory, or they would have remained in an inferior capacity, and thus they owe more to machinery than they are aware of.

Work is fairly regular in Messrs. Templeton's factory. Their customers are large wholesale firms and important furnishing houses who are obliged to order in advance, a circumstance which tends to keep production regular. When orders are not very numerous, Messrs. Templeton lay in a stock of carpets of ordinary kinds, and thus their staff has no great reason to fear unemployment. Moreover, Glasgow offers numerous and varied openings in the event of a crisis in any particular industry, and the sufferings of the artisan population are less cruel than in towns which depend on a single industry, like Bradford, which depends on the woollen trade, or Oldham, Rochdale, and the Lancashire towns, which depend almost exclusively on cotton.

The Trade Union movement is not very marked, for the variety of industries alluded to makes it less necessary to represent and defend the interests of the labourer, who is secured by this circumstance against the terrible risk of general unemployment.

There is also another reason. Glasgow is a town with a very mixed population, and with a large proportion of Irish, who have been attracted by the great demand for unskilled labour in the docks and the various factories. The Celtic populations of the Highlands and the Hebrides are also well represented. The Irish are not usually very amenable to the influence of environment, and find it difficult to acquire the habits of self-respect and persevering energy of which they have examples before their eyes. The Highlanders are more easily roused to ambition and to the desire to better themselves, and they become modified by contact with those influences which were lacking in the solitude of their mountain or island homes. Nevertheless this process takes time, and the labouring class is constantly being recruited by new-comers in

search of work, who have no power of organisation. The Irish generally remain mere labourers, as do their children after them, and thus a large proportion of the working class in Glasgow consists of individuals who are little adapted for Trade Unionism. This explains the scanty membership and general weakness of labour organisations in this district, a phenomenon we have already had occasion to remark in discussing the Scottish Miners' Federation.

This inability to organise proper representation greatly handicaps the working class in times of crisis. It makes it difficult to establish a reserve fund against a period of unemployment, and it injures the success of attempts at arbitration in the case of a strike, as was shown by the fruitless efforts of the Lord Provost of Glasgow to bring about an understanding between coalowners and men during the strike of 1894. It also occasionally leads to an ill-timed attitude of bluster when a sudden increase in membership has deceived the leaders as to their real strength, and leads them into regrettable struggles. So far as Messrs. Templeton's factory is concerned, the relations between employers and men seem satisfactory, and the regularity of employment has hitherto prevented any great crisis. It is well, however, to point out that such crises, if brought about by unforeseen circumstances, would probably fall heavily on the men, who have no power to avert them.

We shall now leave Glasgow for the south of Scotland. Not far from the Border, on the Tweed, we find a small manufacturing town almost entirely given up to the woollen manufacture. Galashiels is celebrated for its tweeds, which are greatly in demand for men's clothing. Their reputation is of long standing, for the Galashiels hand-loom weavers used to produce them from Tweedside wool long before the introduction of power-looms, or the importation of colonial wool. The hills around Tweed supported a large number of sheep, and the manufacture of woollen stuffs was a characteristic industry of the district.

The inhabitants were a hard-working, peaceful folk, deeply attached to their religious beliefs, fine simple souls, honest God-fearing people, to quote the expressions used by Galashiels people in speaking of the history of their town. There is often a sly hit at themselves in this description. "Nowadays,"

I have heard it said, "I suppose we are pretty sharp business men, with an eye to the main chance."

A transformation has undoubtedly taken place, but it is not one to blush for, notwithstanding the romance which is ever associated with a bygone past. While the modern evolution of industry has in many cases ruined local manufactures, Galashiels has profited by the new conditions to develop considerably. The causes which destroyed many a former reputation have but increased hers. Markets opened for new products while others were closing against old ones, and Galashiels succeeded in following the new lines of evolution. This proves that the honest and God-fearing people were also alive to what was going on in the world, and only needed an opportunity in order to become shrewd business men. They had the germs of the qualities to which the present generation owes its success, and the strong moral fibre which was the outcome of their religious convictions contributed to the development of these germs. They were not unlike the simple and God-fearing New England folk, who founded the most active industrial centre in the United States. The simplicity of the old ways has disappeared in both countries before the extension of general wealth, and the sudden influx of a foreign element has brought corruption in its train, but the true leaders are still those who retain most of the old strong moral fibre, and remain faithful to it in these new times. They lead the industrial and commercial movement of to-day, as their fathers of old cleared the forests and brought the fertile soil under the plough. They leaven the town and give impulse and life. The great mills, ever active, are their work, just as the peaceful, sheltered, rural community was their work. It is only the conquest of nature by man carried a step farther, the subjugation of unknown forces instead of the subjugation of the originally wild soil. The phenomenon is the same, but its aspect is new, in Galashiels as in Massachusetts. Virtue is not necessarily simple and austere, though in some of its forms it may be so, and the world can never do without virtue allied to knowledge, activity, energy, and success.

About 1840, I have been told, some of the more energetic of the Galashiels weavers established power-looms, and through

a variety of favourable circumstances, and more especially the increased facilities of transport, soon developed into great manufacturers. Most of the present millowners are ex-handloom weavers or their sons and grandsons.

When Australian wool began to come into the English market, the Galashiels manufacturers were alive to the importance of the fact, and many proceeded to the colonies to buy on the spot at their own risk and peril. No telegraphic communication then existed between Britain and Australia, and to do business quickly a personal visit was necessary, but the trouble was well repaid by the value of the information obtained. This originated a very profitable branch of trade, to which the development of Galashiels is greatly indebted.

It is an interesting spectacle, that of these Scottish weavers, buried in a small town, threatened with impending ruin through the inevitable disappearance of the old local industry, and yet recovering themselves in this remarkable manner. They showed an equal readiness to accept the inevitable, and turn it to advantage, when the vicissitudes inseparable from the modern conditions of industry began to check the tide of prosperity. Between 1880 and 1884, the town was in a general state of industrial depression, and the population, which had increased from 10,000 to 15,000 between 1860 and 1880, remained stationary for three or four years. Times were hard in the old country, and men emigrated to Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. The return of prosperity checked the stream of emigration, and the population again began to increase, until in 1893 it amounted to 20,000 inhabitants.

This readiness to settle abroad during periods of crisis at home, and to remain in Scotland and prosper as long as circumstances permit, shows a character pre-eminently well qualified to succeed in colonial enterprises. Such emigrants are neither a burden to their country nor do they quit it without good reason, while even when they have quitted it they are still of advantage to it.

I was told of masons who for several years were in the habit of spending the spring and summer in the United States and returning to their homes in Galashiels in winter, working there if any occasion presented itself, and going off again the



following spring. It is clear that men who are capable of such a mode of life are not at the mercy of the first incident which interferes with their ordinary habits.

Such details give some idea of the milieu under observation, a sphere of freedom and activity, where the worker rises to a real degree of independence through his ability to regulate his own life. Popular education was organised in the south of Scotland long before it was made compulsory throughout the United Kingdom. Here again we trace the spiritualising and moralising influence already referred to. Great efforts have for generations been made to raise the people by developing a sense of duty, and by impressing upon them that the first obvious and profitable duty is to give full play, in a rational and spontaneous manner, to the faculties implanted in man by his Creator.

It would be interesting to study the enormous part which has been played in the extension of the British power in the nineteenth century by this small Scottish nation of not more than 4,000,000 souls. We should see the important part played by Scotsmen in New Zealand and Australia as agricultural colonists; in the United States, where the great Pittsburg factories were founded by a man of Scottish origin; in exploration, where Livingstone's name shines with incomparable lustre; and in the intellectual world, where Scotsmen hold the foremost rank.

But without going beyond the limits of the present study, we may at least remark the material and moral energy which characterises some of the industrial centres of the Lowlands of Scotland, and note how much it owes to those enlightened influences which have favoured its development. "You will never understand Scotland," said a Scottish friend, "unless you take into account the influence the church has had in making the people decent, hard-working folk," and he was perfectly right.

In such an environment, perfectly adapted to the requirements of the modern system, there has been a great extension of the woollen industry which explains the notable growth of the town. Not that we find any of those enormous mills of which we shall see examples in other textile industries. The Buckholm Mill, belonging to Messrs. Brown, one of the most

important mills in Galashiels, employs only 900 hands, although both spinning and weaving are done there. Another spinning mill which I visited, owned by Messrs. Laidlaw and Fairgrieve, employs only 100 hands. These mills, it must be remembered, are entirely occupied in the manufacture of tweeds, which are greatly affected by every change of fashion, and cannot be produced in very large quantities. Great care has to be taken to vary the patterns, colours, and general appearance, and thus manufacturers are prevented from following their natural inclination to compensate for the general outlay by increasing production. This noteworthy fact has important consequences on the general state of the tweed industry.

One consequence we shall see in Messrs. Brown's mills. A great room is filled with hand-loom, worked by pattern-weavers, who are making samples for the following seasons. They are supplied with a number of designs which it is thought may please buyers, and a sample of each is made, in order to judge how it comes out in the tweed, and what would be its chance of popularity. At the time of my visit (30th September 1893) the pattern-weavers were preparing samples for the winter of 1894 to 1895, for manufacturers require a year's start, in order to choose among the patterns, produce the tweeds, and put them into the market before the beginning of the season. When the preparations for the winter of 1894 are completed, they will begin to prepare for the winter of 1895, and so on. "We must be continually inventing," were Mr. Brown's words.

Side by side with the pattern-weaving looms, at which men are employed, there are winders of an equally primitive type, also worked by hand. They are turned by women, who wind the wool into balls as our grandmothers used to do. It is surprising, at first sight, to find such an archaic contrivance in a modern factory, but the explanation is that a great many different colours are required, but in very small quantities, as only very small samples of each pattern are woven. Here, as everywhere, the general cost of production by machinery can only be covered when a very large quantity has to be produced.

The pattern-weavers are skilled workers, and serve an

apprenticeship, which, however, lasts only three instead of seven years. They are paid by the piece, and do not earn more than 25s. to 30s. a week.

It is interesting to compare these wages with those paid to young girls employed at the mechanical looms, who are also paid by the piece, and earn from 20s. to 22s. a week. The difference is less sensible here than in the industries where machinery is but little developed. Modern industry has opened the factories to women, and furnished them with employment, and the further evolution proceeds, the more lucrative does this employment become. In a hardware centre like Birmingham, the demand for muscular strength shuts out women, and when they are employed, they are poorly paid, owing to the small demand for female labour. In Galashiels, on the contrary, women are largely employed, and on very advantageous terms. They begin at winding machines at 10s. to 14s. a week, and at eighteen or so they are generally put to the looms. Their probation is neither long nor hard, and is very different from that of seven years' apprenticeship, under the old system of organisation.

Each loom is worked by a woman, and a loom-tender, who is a man, superintends about a dozen looms. His chief duty is to replace the beams, the cylinders round which the threads of the warp are wound. These cylinders are heavy, and difficult for a woman to handle. The loom-tender is a sort of foreman, and must have worked at the looms himself. I noticed a young fellow of nineteen before one of the looms, and was told that he was going to be a loom-tender. He began at spinning, went on to weaving, and will soon be capable of the supervision required from a loom-tender. Further on in the same room I saw an elderly man at a loom, for whose feeble arms the beams were too heavy. These two cases show that a loom-tender must not only have experience but also physical strength. Loom-tenders earn 30s. a week, which is not a high salary for a foreman, considering the wages earned by the work-girls. It proves that technical knowledge is reduced to a very small matter, and that the value of physical strength has also depreciated. The high development which machinery has reached in this industry dispenses almost entirely with painful effort.

In the spinning and washing departments, and in the processes of cleansing and carding, machinery plays a considerable part, more so even than in weaving, if we include pattern-weaving, where hand-loom only are used.

I witnessed the whole process, from the time the wool comes to the mill till it is spun. The foremen are almost the only persons who can be definitely classed as skilled workmen, and even their functions are partly administrative, and require personal rather than technical qualifications. The foreman in charge of the carding department earns £2 : 10s. a week. His father, who filled the position before him, used to earn £3 : 10s. No doubt his age and experience gave him greater weight, which proves that administrative capacity tends to determine the scale of a foreman's wages.

In the spinning department a workman has charge of four to six looms, and is paid by the piece according to the quantity spun. Out of this he has to pay as many boys as there are looms, for superintending them. He is thus a contractor on a small scale. The boys begin at 8s. a week at the age of thirteen or fourteen, and their wages are gradually raised by the firm, who deduct the amount from the total sum due to the man and pay it directly to the boys. This is all that remains of apprenticeship, and there is no contract between the employer and the boys.

I asked Mr. Brown why he employed lads instead of women, as is usual in cotton mills. He replied that it was the custom in Galashiels, and this evasive reply was the true one. Female labour is at a premium, owing to the demand in the twenty-two tweed mills, and the rate of wages is high. Consequently it pays to employ boys at the spinning looms. They are not paid more than 12s. or 15s. a week on an average, though I was informed that some got as much as 18s. Most of them look upon it merely as a temporary occupation, to be taken up until they are old enough to leave home and seek work in a more advantageous centre.

The foremen who superintend the boys do not generally earn more than 25s. a week, and men do not find it profitable to settle in Galashiels. Those who stay are generally induced to do so by the high wages which their daughters earn. There is, however, a large tannery, two factories engaged

in manufacturing machinery, and a furniture manufactory, all of which employ men only. Nevertheless the balance is clearly in favour of female labour.<sup>1</sup> In proof of this, I may mention the case of a girl who was in service in Galashiels, where she earned £16 a year. Yielding to the attraction of a city life, she went to Edinburgh, where she found she could not get more than £13. She had never taken into consideration the favoured position enjoyed by women in her native town, owing to the number of occupations open to them.

It is interesting to observe the result of these economic conditions on a working-class family. In my various visits to the mills I conversed with several of the men, and found them willing to give me any information, but I had some difficulty in finding a typical case. One man had only two children, whereas the average family in Scotland is a large one, another was unmarried, and a third had only sons. I mentioned my difficulty to one of the partners in the firm of Laidlaw and Fairgrieve, and on learning it he pointed out a pleasant-looking man, and recommended me to apply to him. It took me a couple of minutes to learn that he was Thomas Clippendale, a native of Galashiels, who had lived there all his life, that he had six children, one son an engineer in America, a second in Newcastle, two daughters working in mills in the town, and two other children. I asked whether I should be intruding if I spent an evening with him at his home, and an engagement was made for the same evening.

It was pitch dark when I reached Hill Street, and I had some difficulty in finding the house, which was number six. I had struck several matches, and discovered to my surprise that number seven came next to number four, when my movements attracted the notice of a neighbour, who told me that number six was up the close, pointing to a narrow passage between the two houses. At the end of this passage I found an outside stair with two doors at the top, which were numbers five and six. This is a Scottish fashion, intended to give each

<sup>1</sup> It must not, however, be supposed that the Galashiels mills employ more females than males. Married women do not generally work in the mills, and thus the quantity of available female labour is always less than the quantity of available male labour.

family a separate entrance, without renting the entire house. Each block has four doors, two opening on to the main street and admitting to the two flats on the ground floor, and two up the close, at the top of a stone staircase giving access to the flats on the first storey. Such an arrangement combines economy with independence. On the other hand, it gives less accommodation to each family, and English working men in the same circumstances would not consent to be so crowded in a small town like Galashiels.

The front door led into a narrow passage, out of which opened, on the left, the principal room, in which I was received. It was a kitchen, measuring about 13 feet 9 inches by 15 feet, and containing two beds, a sofa, two arm-chairs, a table, a sideboard, and three or four chairs. When we were all seated, father, mother, three daughters, and myself, there was no room to turn, and the heat of the stove was suffocating. Another very narrow room contained a bed, and there was also an attic under the roof, reached by a ladder from the passage. To my surprise I learned that the rent was £7:6s. a year, without taxes, which at 3s. in the £1 on the rateable value make a total of about £8:12s. A better house could certainly be got for this rent in Manchester or the Lancashire manufacturing towns, where a rent of 3s. 6d. a week (including taxes), amounting to a little over £9 a year, would secure a separate house with a good-sized room on each floor and a little free space. Clippendale has a bit of garden at the back of the house, but even with this the house is dear. I was told that the use of stone, which is abundant and of very fine quality, is more expensive than brick, and further that the land of Galashiels is in the hands of a single landlord, who can make his own terms and obtain a high feu-duty.<sup>1</sup> I suspect, however, that the habits of the people have something to do with the rent paid for such narrow accommodation. With the help of Building Societies, and by substituting brick for stone, English workmen have succeeded in getting better houses, and would refuse to be packed so tightly. House-owners would either be obliged to build differently, or they

<sup>1</sup> According to information furnished by the chamberlain of Galashiels, the feu-duty amounts to £30 or £40 an acre. An ordinary house for four families generally pays an annual feu-duty of £3, and costs from £500 to £600 to build.

would find it difficult to get tenants except at a low rent. Here, on the contrary, when a working man lives in his own house, he lives in one quarter of the house and lets the other three. He is evidently comfortable as he is, a trait of Scottish life which we have had occasion to remark before.

The room in which we sat, though small, seemed to be kept with great care, although it is true that my visit was not unexpected. The two young women appeared to have smartened themselves a little in honour of my visit, but Clippendale was still wearing the working clothes in which I had seen him in the afternoon. The hearty tone of his answers prevented any suspicion that they were premeditated.

I first inquired as to the family income. The mother, of course, earns nothing, but the two daughters who work in the mills add their wages to the 25s. a week earned by their father. One of them, whom I questioned as to the total she earned, looked at her parents before answering, as if it were their business.<sup>1</sup> The eldest, who has worked for fourteen years in a cloth mill, and is at present employed at a machine for winding thread on the bobbins, earns £1 a week, and the second, a girl of twenty or twenty-one, who has been in the same mill for seven years, earns 17s. or 18s.

Living in Galashiels is very much the same as we have seen in other parts of Great Britain, though the frugality of Scottish habits diminishes the amount spent on food. Mrs. Clippendale, who comes from the Highlands, makes porridge every morning, and, by the way, her recipe was quite different from all the others which had been given to me! Less meat is eaten than in England, and two Co-operative Societies tend to

<sup>1</sup> So far as I could gather, it is not the rule for mill girls to hand over the whole of their wages to their parents. Some do so, like Clippendale's daughters, but most of them pay a fixed sum for board and spend the rest as they please. I was told that in Galashiels the usual payment for board was 7s. or 8s. in the case of girls, and sometimes as much as 12s. for young men. I have often heard in various manufacturing towns that mothers and daughters frequently disagree on the question of dress. When a girl pays all her earnings into the common purse, she has to account for what she spends whenever she dips into it. It is generally boots, dresses, and hats about which a question arises, the mother insisting that the old ones are still quite fit to wear, and the daughter replying that she has a right to what she earns. A fixed payment for board prevents these disputes, which frequently take an angry turn.

lower the price of other commodities. Clippendale gave me to understand that these Societies offer an advantageous investment to working men, and I gathered that he was speaking from experience.

This, then, is a family whose material needs are well provided for. The marriage of the daughters would, however, disturb this happy state of things, for without their wages the parents' home would not be very well supported, and the married daughters would have nothing but their husbands' earnings. I was not surprised to find a young woman of seven or eight and twenty unmarried, for she would be less comfortably off after marriage, unless she married a first-class workman. We shall not find in Galashiels that girls marry anybody when they are twenty as they do in mining villages. The high wages paid in the textile industry make them willing to remain single, or to accept serious attentions only, and have the double advantage of rendering them more independent and less hasty in taking the most serious step in a woman's life.

Clippendale's two sons began by working under their father in Messrs Laidlaw and Fairgrieve's mills. As foreman of a shift Clippendale can choose what boys he employs, subject to the approval of his employers, who have no objection to their men employing sons of their own, provided the lads fulfil the conditions required by the Factory and Education Acts. Many weavers employ their sons under their own supervision, and it is a good opening for the lads, none of whom earn less than 8s. a week. Clippendale, in comparing the new state of things with the old, told me that he served three years' apprenticeship in a hand-mill and began at 4s. a week.

At first sight it seems that this custom of entering the father's trade and working under his supervision would form a link difficult to break in the future, and that the lads would be condemned to work all their lives in cloth mills. We saw that such a result was brought about among miners, where a boy goes down the pit with his father at the age of fourteen or so, becomes a collier on his own account at eighteen, and remains a collier for the term of his natural life. Here, however, almost all the lads who begin in the mills leave them later on, and there is no better proof that the textile



industry has reached a much more advanced stage of evolution than the mining industry, than the fact that it pushes young men out into the world, instead of attaching them to its own fortunes.

It is, however, a great advantage to be able to earn 8s., 10s., 12s., or more a week on leaving school, and while still living at home, but the development of machinery which makes this possible also tends to bring down the wages of grown men. Clippendale earns only 5s. a week more than his eldest daughter. The mill, therefore, does not offer a very brilliant career to young men, and as it employs but few in any case, there is no choice but to leave it and seek work elsewhere.

Thus the occupation is *essentially temporary* in the case of boys. Clippendale kept his two eldest sons till they were seventeen, when they left Galashiels. The eldest, who is now twenty-seven, went as apprentice to an engineer, and works in Newcastle, in one of the great shipbuilding and gunmaking works, employing, as his father told me, 17,000 men. The second went to America, to a sister of his father's who had settled at Worcester in Massachusetts. "He was too young," said Clippendale, "to be sent abroad without anybody to look after him." This is very Scotch! The motive of emigration is, more often than in England, to rejoin a relation or friend, and the Scot dislikes complete isolation. A Scotsman who has done well abroad will often invite a compatriot and pay his passage. This clannishness is a mark for English sarcasm. "I'll be hanged if you ever catch me sending any money for a friend to come out here," said a Queensland colonist to me. "I left Lancashire with my own money and with nobody's help but my own. Let others do the same and come to Australia if they like." Such a sentiment would have scandalised Clippendale, and most other Scotsmen. Clippendale's sister crossed the Atlantic to join her intended husband, who was doing well in Worcester, and she has induced her nephew to come out, who in his turn is doing well. The strength of family ties among the Lowland Scots has been a fruitful and effective cause of the expansion of the Scottish people and not an impediment to it.

Clippendale has a third son, a youth of eighteen, apprenticed

to an engineer in a neighbouring town, in Selkirk, I think he said. When the two elder sons were in Laidlaw and Fairgrieve's mills the family income was much smaller than at present, for the daughters were earning little or nothing, and the lads had therefore to remain longer in Galashiels, as their wages were a consideration. Now, however, the income is larger, and the remaining son has been emancipated earlier and helped a little at the start. An engineer's apprentice earns only 3s. a week to begin with, with an increase of 1s. a year. Apprenticeship lasts six instead of seven years, as the Amalgamated Union of Engineers has but few members in this district and cannot enforce its restrictions.

The Clippendales are also more ambitious for their third daughter than for her two elder sisters. We always find the same thing, that is to say, that when working-class families begin to be in easier circumstances, as the number of wage-earners living at home increases, they spend more on the education of the younger children, while the elder ones are to some extent sacrificed to the necessity for making both ends meet. Thus the youngest little girl, who is only eleven, told me in a very decided way that she was going to be a teacher and not a mill girl, and her parents only smiled. She will hardly be able to keep herself before she is twenty, but her parents will find the means.

The trade which furnishes this family with wages is also in a position to guarantee regular employment. The backwardness of the Trade Union movement in Galashiels is no doubt due to the absence of crises of unemployment, and to the high wages which the manufacturers have always been willing to pay to their hands. Clippendale told me that there was no Union so far as he knew, and his statement was confirmed from other sources. The chamberlain told me there had been no strike since 1849, and that the relations between masters and men were satisfactory. The employers called my attention to the fact that wages had risen from 20 to 30 per cent in the last few years, notwithstanding the absence of any organisation on the part of the men.

Mr. Brown, ex-M.P. for the Border Burghs, the head of the firm of Brown Brothers, gave me the key of the riddle. Two causes contribute to this remarkable state of social peace and

economic prosperity, the character of the inhabitants, and the nature of the industry.

The inhabitants, as we have remarked, are inclined towards distant ventures, bold decisions, and emigration, and it needs good wages to induce them to stay at home. Otherwise they would go, or only the less capable would stay. A man with whom I had a chat told me quite as a matter of course that his seven brothers, his mother, and his sister were in America. One of his brothers earned £2000 a year, and another was starting a drug store. Two of them had not done well, but that was their own fault. Such cases, which are very numerous, are a constant reminder that a man can make a living outside Galashiels. If things become too hard in their native town they can go and do better elsewhere as others have done. This the employers know and they very prudently take it into account.

In the next place, when machine power was first applied to the manufacture of tweeds, there was no temptation to attract a crowd of outsiders who were readier to take a low wage, and swamp the local population with a more or less disorganised element. Tweeds of a particular kind cannot be produced recklessly, for patterns must be constantly varied, lest the market should become overstocked with one class of goods which might lose its hold on the popular taste. "Our trade," said Mr. Brown, "depends on novelty; we do anything for a little change. In my opinion," he added, "this contributes greatly to keeping the balance normal, and it is on this account that our trade is in a healthy state." It is certainly an excellent hygienic condition, preventing over-production and the crises of unemployment which over-production causes.

The spinning of yarns for the manufacture of tweeds is also indirectly affected. Most of the mills are engaged both in spinning and weaving,<sup>1</sup> and those which are engaged in spinning only must be guided by the needs of the special branch of weaving in which their yarns are employed. They have no other market, for the yarns intended for tweeds cannot be employed for other stuffs, nor for hosiery, and only a small proportion is exported. Messrs. Laidlaw and Fairgrieve

<sup>1</sup> Out of twenty-two tweed mills in Galashiels, two are occupied exclusively with weaving and three with spinning, the rest do both.

told me that only a tenth of their yarns are sent out of the United Kingdom to France. Thus this industry is closely dependent on the home or rather the local market.

The manufacture of tweeds employs wools of different qualities and kinds, according to the tweeds in fashion. In the raw material department of Messrs. Laidlaw and Fairgrieve's mills, I saw Cape wool, Australian wool, New Zealand wool, and English Cheviot wool for Cheviot tweeds. The Cheviot wool has not yet found a successful rival, though attempts have been made to substitute the wool of the New Zealand cross-bred sheep, which is long and resisting; but though this wool is less rough than the Cheviot wool, it is inferior in resistance. There were merino wools for Saxony tweed, which is a softer and inferior kind of tweed. There were also skin wools, or wools shorn off skins to be tanned, the quality of which has been injured by the lime used in the tanning process, and which are only suitable for a few special uses.

It is obvious that no wool spinner can venture to work up any particular variety of wool without knowing in what quantity it will be required for weaving. He must work to order, and I was informed by Messrs. Laidlaw and Fairgrieve that orders are sent direct from the weaver to the spinner. This shows how close is the link between these two industries, and how directly the circumstances which we have seen affecting weaving also affect spinning.

They have also an indirect effect upon another industry. I visited the tannery of Messrs. Sanderson and Murray, in the heart of the town. Most of the men employed are skilled workmen, for practice and a certain dexterity are required to remove the wool without injury to the skin, as well as in sorting the wool, dressing the skins, and preparing the lime baths. I was told that five years' apprenticeship is the rule. There is, however, no Trade Union, for the 160 men employed by Messrs. Sanderson and Murray are not in an environment favourable to Trade Unionism. Their work is regular, although the tannery stopped work for a part of 1892, and as their daughters go to the mills, and their lads to the spinning mills, the absence of the father's wages for a week or two does not bring the family into extremities. Thus the prosperity of the

tweed industry has an important bearing on the position of tanners in Galashiels.

We must now leave this special branch of the woollen manufacture in order to observe a more general type. Bradford, in Yorkshire, one of the most famous centres of this manufacture, is the example I have chosen.

Bradford offers especially favourable conditions, as a town essentially industrial and almost exclusively engaged in the woollen manufacture. In 1820 it was a mere village, to-day it has 200,000 inhabitants, an increase due entirely to the development of this manufacture. The phenomena which present themselves there will therefore probably be less entangled than elsewhere.

I visited the Greenwood Mills under the escort of Mr. H——, the son of the director, who had spent thirteen months at Roubaix about 1870, and seemed well acquainted with the textile industries of Northern France, a circumstance which facilitated my inquiry, as Mr. H—— was able to furnish me with points of comparison whenever I asked him for explanations.

The mills employ 800 persons of both sexes, but only a small part of these are skilled workmen. The only really delicate task is the sorting process, for which the sorters have to be experts in wool, and must have served an apprenticeship. They generally begin at the age of sixteen, and are paid 8s. a week for the first year, but in the second year, though still apprentices, they are paid by the piece, like ordinary workmen, though 6s. is deducted from their total weekly earnings as a set-off for the time which an experienced foreman has to spend in superintending them. As Bradford contains a large number of mills of the same kind, formal contracts are made between the master and his apprentices for the whole period of apprenticeship, without which either side might see fit to break the bargain.

The other workers, excluding the sorters, are not skilled workmen. The machine does the work, and they have only to attend to the machine. The wool after being washed and dried is combed, an operation which corresponds for the finer kinds of cloth to the carding of the rougher wools used for tweeds. The wool, when combed, is spun and woven without any further effort, except that of superintending the machinery.

Weaving looms are generally served by women, as in Galashiels, but the wages they earn are not so high, and 16s. a week was mentioned as a maximum rarely reached. Little girls earn from 8s. to 8s. 6d., and half-timers get 3s. 6d. a week. In Bradford a child of twelve who has passed the fourth standard may be employed as a half-timer, and may work full time when he can pass the sixth standard. A member of the Bradford School Board, who gave me this information, drew my attention to the drawbacks of the system. "Children," he said, "hurry through their standards to get rid of school, and may leave for good at twelve years of age, which is much too soon." On the other hand, it is only fair to free satisfactory scholars from restrictions which prevent them from earning their living, and no doubt those who are in the greatest hurry to enter the factory are not, in the long run, the least cultivated.

The scale of women's wages is lower in Bradford than in Galashiels, although the skill required seems to be the same, and at first sight the difference is difficult to explain. The only causes I can suggest are, first, that in a town of 200,000 inhabitants, even when like Bradford it owes its large population to the development of the woollen manufacture, the supply of female labour is much more abundant than in a small town of 20,000 persons. The daughters of shopkeepers and employés of all sorts compete with the girls of the working class for employment in the factories, while in Galashiels retail trades, banks, and transport industries employ only a very few persons. Secondly, the population of Bradford is less homogeneous, and, as a whole, of a somewhat lower class. The suddenness of its development attracted a number of different elements—Irish agricultural families, and people in search of work, driven from home by failure or poverty, and ready to accept relatively low wages.

If, however, the rapid extension of the woollen manufacture in Bradford has led to this influx of heterogeneous elements, it must not be forgotten that it has secured them regular work. Unemployment is rare, and the woollen manufacture has grown steadily for the last ten years, without leading to over-production except in rare cases. It is, doubtless, to these happy conditions that we must attribute the satisfactory relations

between masters and men, and the infrequency of strikes. In the winter of 1893, during the long interruption of the textile industries of Lancashire, the woollen mills of Yorkshire did not stop. At the time of my visit in June 1893 a strike was going on in one of the mills, owing to a dispute between the employers and the sorters, but it was an individual and not a general matter. Mr H—— told me that the firm had recently purchased a lot of wool of inferior quality and very difficult to sort, and at the existing rate the sorters could not make their usual wages, and consequently asked for an alteration. This small quarrel did not in any way threaten the peace of the industry as a whole.

At the time of my visit to the Greenwood Mills trade was extremely busy, and the men were working overtime every day, as the ordinary week of fifty-six hours was insufficient for the execution of the numerous orders on hand. Bright goods made of South American and Cape wool were very fashionable both in England and abroad. Mohairs were also very popular, and in the spinning department I saw a large number of spindles engaged in spinning the long wool of the Turkish goat, of which mohairs are made.<sup>1</sup> However, the same caprice of fashion which is of advantage at one time is a danger at another. It is true that this danger is lessened by the variety of the goods which are manufactured in these mills, but nevertheless a crisis would occur if bright goods suddenly lost their popularity.

In what position, then, is the population of Bradford for meeting such a crisis? To judge of this we must see something of working-class families. I visited several working-class dwellings, many of which were well built and respectable in appearance. I saw none of the London tenements, and no contrivances for crowding four families into one house, as in Scotland. Notwithstanding the mixture of heterogeneous elements in the working class, and the large number of Irish, the English system of the separate home prevails. It is true there are a considerable number of houses built back to back,

<sup>1</sup> About 1,300,000 lbs. of mohair yarn of English manufacture have been annually exported to France for some years, and in 1893 the total increased to 2,000,000 lbs. The advantage was chiefly felt by Bradford. (Report of Messrs. Grandgeorge and Tabourier, already quoted, p. 70.)

without any space between, and with no yard or free space, but a recent bye-law of the Local Board of Health has refused to sanction the erection of back-to-back houses, and stipulated for a passage of not less than two yards between the backs of each two.

This question of back-to-back houses is a suggestive one. We find in Bradford a section of the working class which is perfectly contented with such houses, which desires cheapness before everything, and is not hard to please. There is, however, a general desire for better things, a striving for respectability and for a decent material life, and this finds expression in the bye-law referred to above.

This is only one indication of a radical difference between two well-differentiated types. On the one hand, there are the inefficient, who are attracted by the facilities of employment offered by a manufacturing town, but who are not qualified to derive the full benefit from them. The other class consists of the vigorous and efficient, who succeed in extracting the very utmost from modern conditions of labour, and who have transformed the village into a rich and active town. This is the directing class. But the other class is nevertheless compact. It is little affected by progress, for it assimilates with difficulty, and it is a heavy drag upon the whole. A crisis would be disastrous to this class, for even in periods of general prosperity it suffers, stumbling over every stone in its way, and wounded by every thorn.

The Irish element forms the bulk of this class, and by examining their position we shall be better able to form an idea of the nature of the failings which keep them in poverty or mediocrity. A Roman Catholic priest accompanied me in my quest, and together we visited some of the houses in his parish. I select a few samples.

We found a family of eleven persons, father, mother, and nine children, occupying a back-to-back house, containing one room downstairs, one room upstairs, a small coal-house, and a recess with a tap for washing. The rent was 4s. 6d. a week, and the family were on the point of moving to a more expensive house, owing to the want of room. "Good people, these," said the priest. "The children are beginning to go to



the mills, which is making them better off, but I don't think that any of their children will ever rise above their class. They have no ambition and never see further than to-morrow."

From this point of view the next family was a more favourable specimen. There was a small garden in front of the house, and a comfortably furnished sitting-room distinct from the kitchen. Two daughters were at work in mills, and the father, formerly a working lithographer, had just set up on his own account and seemed to be doing well. Here there was evidently a tendency to rise. The priest told me that this man and his wife were Yorkshire people, who had recently become Roman Catholics. Here, therefore, we are getting out of the Irish milieu.

We next visited a young Irishwoman. The house was new, and everything had been cleaned till it shone. The rent was 5s. 6d. a week, but there was a very great difference between the back-to-back house at 4s. 6d. and this pleasant house, which had a little grass in front, and contained a sitting-room, a small kitchen, a back kitchen, a tiny yard, and two rooms upstairs. "Everybody might have a home like that," was the priest's comment, "but the public-house, idleness, indifference, and irregularities of one sort and another prevent it."

We entered an untidy house, in which a young man was dozing over the kitchen fire. It was Monday, and he had not yet got over his Saturday drinking-bout. The mother was ill in bed, and the daughter had remained away from school to nurse her. The priest administered a talking-to to this great lout of thirty, whose unsteady eyes and generally besotted appearance bore witness to his recent debauch. I do not know whether this sobered him a little, but we were hardly in the street before he came running after us. He took the priest aside and asked if I were a police inspector, and when reassured on this point, he began to promise that he would never do it again, and that in future he would go to mass on Sunday and to work on Monday. He was nothing but an overgrown child, and notwithstanding his promises the whiskey would easily get the better of him again.

Next we found a family struggling bravely against misfortune. The father was not only blind, but paralysed in both legs, yet he managed to work at basket-making. The mother

kept a little shop, where she sold odds and ends like cheese, potatoes, and petroleum. There were eight children, and yet the house was fairly clean. One child worked half time and another full time in a mill, and they managed to get along.<sup>1</sup>

The sight of this brave struggle to keep the wolf from the door was cheering whilst it was pathetic. It was touching to see the simple heroism with which these poor souls accepted their hard lot, and one felt a sort of irritation at finding, only a few doors away, families without any energy or spring, the easy prey of any circumstance which was against them. Many a house bore witness to an idle and shiftless mother. The children were unkempt, and were either not at school or else failed to pass their standards. The good priest did not spare well-meant reproof, recommending a little care in outward things, or expressing surprise that a particular child was not earning his living. "What, still a half-timer at his age! And this one, hasn't he begun to work?" His flock accepted his advice and reproof with docility and submission, but docility is not strength, and submission cannot produce energy and go. This is the essential want in the Irish character, admirable enough in its passivity and patience, but the easy prey of drunkenness, and incapable of pushing to the front. Thus, even in an active centre like Bradford, the Irish remain inert while those around are getting on in the world, and notwithstanding the thousand and one openings offered to bold initiative, they remain in inferior positions at inferior work, and take no active and spontaneous share in the stirring life around them. They are a permanent source of danger, and through

<sup>1</sup> Here, of course, the double affliction of the father, who is both blind and paralysed, is quite exceptional. But one malady, consumption, is extremely common in Bradford, and claims many victims. In many of the houses visited I saw young girls bearing evident traces of consumption. I mentioned the fact to the priest who was with me, and learned that doctors attribute the frequency of chest diseases to the fact that these girls work in over-heated rooms. The temperature is kept very high in woollen factories, and no visitor who has been through one in June can forget it. It was on a very hot day that I visited Greenwood Factory, and the head of the firm, after warning me with a smile that I should be baked, handed me over to his son, saying, "Here is a gentleman who wants to be boiled. Take him through the works." This is no doubt the reason why mill girls wear a woollen shawl over their head and shoulders when they come from work, but this is not a sufficient protection against the sudden transition from the mill to the outside air, especially in winter, when there is often a cold, thick, penetrating fog.

their existence the slightest industrial vicissitudes are fraught with the gravest consequences, not in Bradford only but in all industrial towns similarly situated. They form a large and compact mass, which in the event of a crisis cannot weather the storm, and which even in times of general prosperity finds it difficult to provide for its own individual welfare.

### III. *The Cotton Industry.*

When we left the Yorkshire silk mills to examine the position of the workers engaged in the woollen industry, we remarked how our horizon was widening, and the same thing occurs when we pass from the woollen to the cotton industry. Here Great Britain preponderates to an overwhelming degree, and possesses as many spindles as the other countries in the world put together,<sup>1</sup> while India, where production has doubled in nine years, may from this point of view be regarded as an extension of Great Britain.

Instead of a few towns like Galashiels or Bradford, we have a whole district given up to cotton. Lancashire, with its great central market of Manchester, now in direct communication with the sea since the opening of the Ship Canal, with great towns, once mere villages, like Oldham, Rochdale, Blackburn, Bolton, and others, and with a population so densely aggregated as to make South Lancashire one immense manufacturing centre, owes its prodigious development entirely to cotton.

Nor is the cotton industry confined to Lancashire. Cotton mills are not rare in Yorkshire; a little town in Fife is entirely occupied with cotton weaving; and at Glasgow we shall visit a spinning mill employing 5000 persons. Notwithstanding

<sup>1</sup> I give some interesting figures taken from *Cotton Facts*, by Mr. A. B. Stephenson of New York, and quoted on p. 82 of the Report of M.M. Grandgeorge and Tabourier, to which frequent reference has been made.

TABLE of the number of SPINDLES employed in Europe, America, and India in 1884 and 1893.

Year.	Great Britain.	Continent of Europe.	United States.	India.	Total.
1893	45,270,000	26,850,000	15,550,000	3,576,000	91,246,000
1884	42,750,000	22,650,000	13,300,000	1,790,000	80,490,000

the well-marked tendency of industries to form into groups of the same variety, and to concentrate production on a given centre, cotton mills may be found almost everywhere throughout Great Britain.

The cotton industry, like the woollen, is considerably developed both in the scale of production and in the elaboration of its methods. It has triumphed over two powerful rivals, flax and hemp, which, though used for finer articles, have been replaced by cotton for ordinary purposes.

In the earlier part of this work we glanced at the linen industry, of which Belfast is the most important centre, and we shall not go back to it again. It supplies the demand for an article of luxury, and is therefore not organised on modern lines. The linen workers have neither the same anxieties and difficulties nor the same means of solution as the operatives engaged in the cotton trade, who are at the opposite pole.

It must not, however, be inferred that all cotton mills have reached the same point of evolution, nor that there is an unvarying type among the operatives.

If we first select a small town, remote from Manchester and lost amid a number of other industries, we shall find a population less dominated and penetrated by cotton than would be the case in Lancashire. If, in such a town, we study a mill where cotton is not spun but woven, employed that is to say for a particular purpose, we shall have the best chance of finding skilled workmen, if any remain.

We will therefore select the Scottish town of Dunfermline, in Fife, and observe that branch of the cotton industry which is least advanced along the lines of that double evolution, material and social, technical and personal, the phases of which we are engaged in tracing. The study of these phases will lead us from weaving to spinning, and from the isolated small town to the great industrial hive of Lancashire.

Dunfermline is as well known for its damask table-linen as Galashiels for its tweed. It has about the same population of 20,000 persons, and there are many other points of resemblance between the two towns. One important difference, however, should be noted. Dunfermline is surrounded by collieries on all sides, for Fife is very rich in coal and employs

a large number of colliers. Colliers who work in pits in the neighbourhood of Dunfermline send their daughters to the mills in the town, and a great many live in Dunfermline and go to the pit every day. The two industries are complementary.

The Dunfermline mills employ chiefly women, and female labour is most in demand, as we saw in Galashiels. In Dunfermline, however, the vicinity of collieries, and the consequent demand for male labour, restores the balance.

Let us now select a particular mill, which will do more than any generalities to give us a clear and precise idea of the position of men and matters.

Mr. Robertson employs 400 hands, of whom 300 are women. The men are warp-dressers or loom-tenders, as in most cases where weaving is done. The loom-mounters are also men, and a few more work at the fabrication of looms. Mr. Robertson has had looms set up under his own direction and at his own expense, and states that he has gained both in price and quality. Women superintend the working of the looms, and are the only real cotton operatives. The men are either engaged in preliminary work or in supervision.

Wages approach those paid in Galashiels. The firm kindly permitted me to see the pay-books, and I made a few notes at random. As an example, I may quote the wages for five fortnights earned by a work-girl who was paid by the piece fortnightly.

1st Fortnight	.	.	.	.	£1	7	6
2nd	„	.	.	.	1	7	4
3rd	„	.	.	.	1	8	5
4th	„	.	.	.	2	3	6
5th	„	.	.	.	1	19	4
Total for 10 weeks					£8 6 1		

This gives an average of 16s. 7 $\frac{3}{10}$ d. a week, with a minimum of 13s. 8d. and a maximum of £1:1:9 a week.

Two other books gave averages, taken for three fortnights, of 19·56s., and 18·48s., ranging from 20·08s. to 17·08s. a week.

The warp-dressers earn about 31·2s. a week, according to the pay-books which I examined, and loom-tenders are paid

28s. a week for superintending 40 looms. Female labour is consequently paid at much the same rate as in Galashiels, and male labour a little higher, probably because of the neighbourhood of collieries.

The girls serve no apprenticeship. They go to the mill at thirteen or so, and earn 3s. 6d. a week, and between the ages of sixteen and twenty, according to their skill and industry, they rise to the wages quoted. Thus their probation is neither long nor difficult, though it is not so simple as in spinning mills. They have their proper pride, however, and my attention was called to the fact that they are skilled labourers, and a superior class, and "not a low class of girls like spinners." I am quite willing to bear testimony to their good behaviour and respectability, but so far as their technical skill is concerned, although there is not very much of it, it can but bind them more closely to their trade and their native town, and we already know that such indissoluble alliances between a workman who has got to live and an industry which is subject to crises are fraught with terrible danger.

In Dunfermline this attachment to the trade is strengthened by the remoteness of the other seats of the textile industry, while the facility with which a man can find work in the pits has an appreciable tendency to check emigration and produce stagnation. Two loom-tenders in Mr. Robertson's mill, with whom I had a long conversation, told me that they had worked there for twenty years. They were born in Dunfermline, and had entered Mr. Robertson's mill soon after finishing their apprenticeship in another. "You see," said one of them, "we stick to our trade when we have once taken to it." "Born in Dunfermline and likely to stay," was the reply of his comrade to my inquiry as to where he was born.

The girls, too, find employment in the mills, and sometimes the sons as well. Each of the two men just mentioned had a son with him as an apprentice, and one had one daughter and the other had three employed at the looms. This is another circumstance which makes you "stick" to a trade, but at the same time it puts you at its mercy.

Hitherto, fortunately, work has been regular, and these two loom-tenders had only been out of work once, when the looms stopped for three or four months about ten years ago. The

nature of the manufacture permits a certain accumulation of stock, for fashion does not change so rapidly in table-linen as in wearing apparel, and as Mr. Robertson does a large export trade, he produces articles in ordinary demand beforehand, in order to be in a position to supply his customers promptly. The United States are the great market for Dunfermline goods, and many manufacturers in that town have either a partner or a representative in New York. At that time (1893) the McKinley tariff regulations were in full vigour, but I was told that the trade of Dunfermline had suffered little in consequence, owing to the character of the goods exported. These are fine goods and damask table-cloths, which are not much made in the United States, and had been leniently treated for this reason. Customers who required articles of this quality were quite willing to pay the increased price resulting from the custom-house duties.

Without wishing to be a prophet of evil, it is not difficult to see in the prosperity of this trade, and of those to whom it gives employment, the germs of a crisis which it would be difficult to surmount. The United States may any day begin to manufacture fine table-linen, thus not only closing their markets to British goods but possibly also becoming successful rivals. They produce and spin cotton, and these are advantageous conditions tending to compensate American manufacturers for the higher wages which they would be obliged to pay in consequence of American economic conditions. The Dunfermline operatives would then be taken unawares. They have no experience of such vicissitudes, and trade has been so steady that there are no Trade Unions even among the women, though they are employed in great numbers. They have no organisation or reserve fund to fall back upon during a period of unemployment, and though there are Friendly Societies and a prosperous Co-operative Society in Dunfermline, yet these are only for promoting the better use of the means of existence derived from another source. There are no preparations for a sudden emergency, and the working class have hitherto been content to rely on the security of their trade and the wise administration of their employers.

But for this grave omission, there are many elements of well-founded and lasting prosperity. Profound religious

convictions are found, especially among the educated classes. A lawyer, whose hospitality I enjoyed, had some hesitation about inviting a friend of his, a manufacturer, to dinner on Sunday evening, and when doing so he expressed himself with the greatest caution, asking first whether he would have any religious scruples. At church time the streets are thronged with groups of people going together to the kirk, either to the Established Church, the Free Church, or elsewhere. Except for this purpose it is not considered respectable to take a stroll on Sunday. My host, a man of liberal views, as well as of sincere religious convictions, was kind enough to show me the way to the Catholic Church before going to the Free Church himself, and it might have scandalised the rest of the congregation had they known that on his way to the kirk he had enabled a heretic to take part in the rites of a Popish superstition. The intolerance of the sixteenth century still prevails in Dunfermline, and the inhabitants keenly enjoy theological discussions, which are conducted with a narrow and pitiless logic. I am far from considering this as a proof of an enlightened faith, but I note it as evidence of the strength of their convictions.

Other favourable signs struck me in my visits to working-class dwellings with Mr. R——. Some of the lodgings are sufficiently unattractive in appearance, but I was assured that they are all highly respectable. The mill girls who live in them are generally miners' daughters, whose parents live too far off for them to come in to work every day, and they generally spend Saturday afternoon and Sunday at home. Many of the working-class dwellings are new and prettily built. I visited a man named Wilson, a stoker in one of the mills, who has just built, with the assistance of a Building Society, a house in which he and his family occupy the ground flat. A staircase with a separate entrance leads to an upper flat, which is let to another family, though it seemed to me that both flats would not have been too much for the nine children. However, there is the cost of building to be taken into consideration. The house is built of a good stone, and cost £300, £250 of which Wilson borrowed from the Building Society. The interest on the loan comes to £12 a year, and the ground annual comes to 21s., and with the addition of



taxes and the water rate Wilson is somewhat heavily burdened. The upper flat, however, is let for £6, which cancels half his debt to the Building Society. It is a pretty flat, airy and beautifully kept, and furnished with taste according to the English standard, by which I mean that it bears witness to that love of home which suggests a hundred inartistic and far from decorative contrivances to the women of a family. A mantel border with painted flowers appliquéd upon the material seemed to me to deserve these epithets, but criticism is disarmed by the pretty embroidered muslin curtains of immaculate freshness in the window of the tiny parlour, and by the scrupulous cleanliness of every corner. A widow and three daughters are the occupants, a state of things which in many places would mean abject poverty, but their position is not a bad one in Dunfermline, where there are openings for young girls in the mills.

On our way down we went into Wilson's little garden, where to my surprise I found a little greenhouse in which he and his daughters kept a few plants. On the other side of the garden wall I saw a neighbour's garden, which had just won the prize of £5, offered every year for the best flower-garden belonging to a working man, by Mr. Andrew Carnegie, Dunfermline's most distinguished son. I visited several other houses, and all confirmed my favourable impression of the level to which working-class families have risen in Dunfermline. Though they are unprepared for possible industrial crises, most of them are at any rate able to live respectably, and are no strangers to ambition. The efforts this involves are, if rightly understood, an indirect preparation for the bitter struggle which would be their lot if any blow were struck at the prosperity of their local industry.

We must now leave Dunfermline. There are no spinning mills in that town, and it is to a spinning mill that we must go to observe the furthest point of evolution reached. The one we shall visit presents a complete type of despecialisation under the factory system—5000 hands, 4000 of them women, absence of apprenticeship, large capital, engines of 12,000 horse-power, a world-wide custom—here we have every characteristic of the modern system of production. This factory is the Sewing Thread Factory belonging to Messrs.

J. and P. Coats and Company, at Paisley, a short distance from Glasgow, and consequently in the heart of a region of extraordinary activity, in the neighbourhood of a great port, and in close proximity to a great city. This sum of conditions tends to make the evolution of working-class families more rapid and more complete.

There is nothing requiring special description in the processes employed. Machinery has simplified to the utmost the work of the persons engaged in this industry, so much so that in this immense factory I did not find a single individual who could properly be called a skilled workman. If we leave out the engineers engaged in superintending the engines, who really take no part in the operations carried on in the factory, and who would be equally good engineers in a foundry, the rest are only the servants of the machinery or foremen engaged in keeping order and general supervision.

The spinning looms are entirely in the hands of women. Girls of sixteen or eighteen, with a little practice, are quite capable of undertaking such a simple task. From time to time a broken thread needs to be joined or a defective layer of cotton wool must be taken away, but for the rest of the time they have nothing to do but to watch the spindles pursuing their incessant toil.

The reeling, labelling, and packing are also done by women, who, in a word, follow the cotton through its successive transformations, from the time the bales arrive at the factory to its final stage, when it is wound on a wooden reel and placed in a cardboard box.

Men are employed only in subsidiary tasks, such as superintendence, repairing the looms, and making reels.

The last operation, which is carried on in huge workshops, is a very simple one, and requires only a short apprenticeship. The wood is sawn by a steam saw into square lengths of uniform thickness, and these are then put into a machine and rounded. Another machine cuts them into little cylinders of the proper length for reels. Nothing then remains but to pierce the hole in the middle and to hollow out a place for the thread, and the reel is finished. Both these operations are done by machinery. It is also by the aid of machinery that the workshop is kept free from the *débris* which would other-

wise accumulate very rapidly. A broad band, so arranged on the floor as to form an endless moving carpet, carries the sawdust and shavings to the end of the workshop.

As I have said, in Messrs. Coats's factory, both among the male and female hands, we find only unskilled labourers, individuals whose technical skill is reduced to a minimum. Therefore if the reflections upon the slavery of the worker under the modern industrial system, which we so constantly hear, were well founded, and if it were true that machinery, by depriving him of his professional skill, had at the same time deprived him of his dignity, and if by closing the little workshop in which he had a chance of becoming an employer, it had at the same time ruined his independence, it is among textile workers that we should find the most degraded condition and the least efficient organisation. It is there that energy would be most discouraged and confidence most disabused, and that we ought to find, not merely the greatest suffering, but also the most complete inability to devise any remedy.

But the real facts of the case are quite different. Although some regrettable traits are to be found among the textile workers of Glasgow, arising from the mixture of the population already noted and the constant immigration of the incapable, yet it must not be forgotten that these are peculiar, not to the industry, but to the environment, and that they are found among those belonging to other trades in Glasgow. Or again, in the case of the inferior position of the girls engaged in spinning and weaving jute in Dundee, it must be taken into account, if we would understand the phenomenon aright, that this industry has been established very recently, and that the population of Dundee was ill prepared for the evolution which the introduction of the jute manufacture necessitated. When the application of machine power to production revolutionised manufactures, and led to the birth of a new order of things, there was a general bewilderment and shock, and a general perturbation before equilibrium was restored. Those were the days of *Sybil* and *Mary Barton*, when general alarm was felt at the spectacle of the enormous proletariat of workers, born in the midst of social convulsions and material disturbances.

These were, nevertheless, the precursors of a new order,

and the truth of this may be seen to-day in the district where the textile industry has been carried to its highest development and supplies a livelihood to the greatest number of persons, that is to say, in Lancashire.

We have already had occasion to note some very significant facts bearing on the social condition of Lancashire. When we visited the great works of Messrs. Platt of Oldham, we were brought into contact with an artisan population possessing a very remarkable aptitude for raising itself. Readers will remember the cotton spinning mills of 75,000 to 100,000 shuttles managed by a committee of working men shareholders, the pleasant, well-built, well-kept working-class dwellings, and the flourishing Building Societies, an unmistakable proof of the initiative and capacity of the labouring classes and a powerful means of helping them to acquire property. The centres of the cotton industry round Manchester offer a similar spectacle, and whether our observation is directed to Rochdale, Bolton, Blackburn, or Oldham, we shall only obtain a confirmation of what has already been remarked. It would be tedious to describe afresh the working-class dwellings let at 4s. a week, the families where every adult member finds a lucrative occupation within his reach, the steady habits and general earnestness of the operatives as a body, etc.

I cannot, however, omit a brief reference to one well-known fact, one of the economic glories of Lancashire, which illustrates the energy, sagacity, and organising power of Lancashire men. At Rochdale, under the auspices of the Rochdale Pioneers, the first of those Co-operative Societies was founded which, for the last forty years, have played so important a part in the material well-being of the working classes.

Nor is this an isolated phenomenon, such as might be ascribed to a lucky accident or a fortuitous combination of favourable circumstances. I was assured that the Saturday half-holiday, now universally adopted, had been customary in Manchester for the last fifty years, while it was quite unknown anywhere else in the country. There, too, the movement for the reduction of the hours of labour has found its strongest support and its clearest justification, owing to the fact that there, speaking generally, the working class was best fitted to use its leisure in a rational and intelligent manner.

Many characteristics of English life and character are carried to an extreme in Lancashire—activity, love of responsibility, the spirit of enterprise, decision, and rectitude. A large Manchester merchant who was advising me as to my inquiry, gave me the following piece of advice: “Go straight to the point, ask right off for the precise piece of information you require, and you will find people willing to help you as well and promptly as they can. If they think it better not to answer they will tell you so, but they are practical business people and will never beat about the bush if you put a precise question to them.” I found the same thing in the United States.

Another remarkable sign of vigour is that the Manchester School gave its name to the movement in favour of free trade. It is not difficult for anybody who has seen these energetic merchants, and the operatives who transform the cotton grown on the plains of Louisiana or India into goods which are sent to all parts of the world, to understand that it is to their interest to throw down the barriers reared by protection, and to open wide the vast arena of international competition. With full confidence in themselves, they do not fear to measure themselves against other manufacturing countries; there is nothing that they desire so much, knowing that they will be victorious in the struggle. Daudet has a scene in one of his stories in which a sturdy monk, attacked by a bandit, turns up his sleeves and offers this simple prayer, “O Lord, all I ask is that Thou wilt remain neutral, and I will manage the rest.” This monk might stand for England, and above all for Lancashire, which first claimed the honour of engaging on equal terms in the lists of commerce with the whole world as rivals, rejecting protective measures as superfluous, confident of its own strength and afraid of no one.

The ardour of the Lancashire free traders of to-day is worthy of the compatriots of John Bright, the Rochdale cotton-spinner. No one who knows how averse the English mind is to academic theories, and how existing opinions are constantly examined and modified in the light of fresh facts, can doubt for a moment that the free-trade policy is not the result of any infatuation, but that it is due to considerations of practical convenience. After due experience, Manchester has found

that the best safeguard for her prosperity and the best security for the progress of her manufactures are to be found in the opening of markets. How keen are the convictions of Manchester men on this point may be judged by listening to the leading merchants and members of the Chamber of Commerce. The slightest and most guarded expression of doubt as to the complete efficacy of an absolute system of free trade with the United States, let us say, is resented as almost a personal matter, and calls down a storm of arguments intended to confound the unfortunate author, who feels, from the wealth of argument, that these are weapons carefully chosen from an arsenal at the service of every Manchester merchant. "Don't you see," said one man to me, "that when a country puts a protective duty on one of its products it is the same thing as advertising that it can no longer produce it itself?" Such arguments follow each other in rapid succession, and with an energy which proves how much the speaker has the matter at heart.

A very suggestive advertisement caught my eye one day in one of the streets of Manchester. It represented a Hindoo dressed in white garments, with a brightly-coloured girdle, sitting in front of a sewing-machine and trying to work it. His bare feet were pressed upon the pedals, and seemed to be moving in a way which showed that the wondering Oriental was learning the secret of the contrivance, and was on his way to become a fresh client of the celebrated firm of ———. Such is British commercial enterprise! First our merchants sell cotton goods to the Hindoos and then sewing-machines for making them up, and their aim is to sell sewing-machines and cotton goods to every race on the face of the globe. In this Lancashire has succeeded even better than the rest of England.

But the great industrial and commercial activity of Lancashire does not necessarily prove that the operatives who are its instruments possess qualities analogous to those required by the manufacturers and merchants who direct it. To judge the operatives we must see them when they are thrown upon their own resources, and more particularly in a crisis.

The famous textile strike, which lasted from November

1892 to March 1893, showed very clearly both their power and their good sense, and will enable us to appreciate the social status of these factory workers, who have reached the most advanced point in the modern evolution of industry.

The causes of the strike are well known. Towards the end of 1892 the cotton market was greatly burdened. There was a real crisis of over-production, and prices were constantly falling. The American cotton crop of 1890 and 1891 had been enormous, exceeding the average of the three preceding years by about 2,000,000 bales, or more than 880,000,000 lbs., and this excess in the American crop, which chiefly feeds the cotton industry throughout the world,<sup>1</sup> was depressing prices. In 1891 profits had already diminished considerably,<sup>2</sup> and in 1892 the situation was so gloomy that the syndicate of employers came to the decision that it would be impossible to keep the mills open without reducing wages 5 per cent.

The next thing was to obtain the consent of the operatives to this reduction. Like the employers they had their syndicate, powerful, rich, well organised, and composed of intelligent and energetic men, who were thoroughly acquainted with the interests of those they represented and well able to defend them.

The proposals of the syndicate of employers were submitted to the syndicate of operatives and were not accepted. The representatives of the workers did not attempt to deny the gravity of the situation or of the difficulties with which the employers had to cope, but they had a different remedy

<sup>1</sup> See the Report, already quoted, by Messrs. Grandgeorge and Tabourier, for the figures giving the quantity of cotton furnished for manufacturing purposes by the different producing countries. During the years 1890 to 1893 the annual average of the cotton crop throughout the world rose to more than 5,500,000,000 lbs. Of this the United States furnished about 3,800,000,000 lbs., India more than 1,130,000,000 lbs., Egypt more than 400,000,000. The remainder came from Brazil, Peru, Central Asia, and the region of the Caucasus (pp. 80-85).

<sup>2</sup> While 90 limited liability cotton spinning companies in Lancashire realised profits of £376,041 in 1890, 93 companies in 1891 only made a profit of £10,763. The capital of these 93 companies was £3,622,031, and the dividend was 6s. per cent. In 1890 it was £10:18s., in 1889 £6:12:6, and in 1888 £7:8:3. Things were better in the majority of English cotton mills than in the limited liability mills, but a comparison of the figures given will give some idea of the state of the cotton industry in England in 1891. (Report just quoted, pp. 58, 59.)

to propose. What they said was substantially this, "You are suffering from over-production, and should therefore attack the root of the evil and produce less. Close the mills for one or two days a week for the next few months. This will mean a heavy loss for us, since we shall work a shorter time and consequently receive less wages, but at least we shall feel that our sacrifices are not thrown away. Further, we see a danger in accepting a reduction of wages, which it would be difficult to reverse at a later period, and which might lead to further reductions." "If we had accepted the employers' terms," said Mr. Maudsley, secretary of the Cotton Spinners' Federation, "over-production would have continued and prices would have gone on falling. Then there would have been a fresh reduction, and so on till the minimum subsistence wage was reached."

The employers' reply was to the effect that if they continued to pay the same rate of wages the net price of production would be so high as to prevent their getting rid of their goods in the existing condition of the market, and that unless the net cost of production could be reduced all other means would be useless.

The discussion was continued on both sides without any rancour or bitterness, as it might have been at a conference of economists, but instead of being entirely theoretical it had an immediate practical bearing. Two remedies were proposed, one by the masters and one by the men, and unless they could agree upon some arrangement the only possible issue was a strike.

This actually took place on 4th November, notwithstanding the efforts made by the Mayors of Liverpool and Manchester to get the matter referred to arbitration.<sup>1</sup> 60,000 persons found themselves thrown out of work, and about 13,000,000 spindles stopped. This, however, was only the beginning, and by February as many as 100,000, and later as many as 125,000, persons were on strike.

<sup>1</sup> "If only profits and losses are taken into consideration," wrote Mr. Maudsley, "the manufacturers are right in demanding a reduction of wages, as they have done." He went on to admit frankly that the operatives had refused to accept arbitration because the arbitrators would have considered only the question of profits and losses, and thus it was a foregone conclusion that the employers would win. (Extracted from an article by Mr. Maudsley published in *Justice*, a Socialist organ, and quoted by *Le Temps*, 5th Dec. 1892.)



But were they really on strike? I should hesitate myself to use the term, which generally implies that the operatives were the first to take steps likely to lead to a suspension of work, and that they felt a certain amount of animosity towards their employers. Here, on the contrary, the strike was rather due to the action of the employers, and throughout the strike the best relations were maintained between the representatives of the two parties.

The day after the strike was declared the secretary of the employers' federation notified that he was always ready to receive any communication which the men might have to make. A long period, however, elapsed before an agreement was arrived at. The market was so encumbered that even the suspension of production brought about no immediate result. The stocks of cotton were exhausted but slowly, and prices went up only very slightly. When work was resumed at the end of twenty weeks it was found that, owing to the enormous stock over from 1892, the Manchester market alone had been able to meet the demand, notwithstanding the strike.<sup>1</sup> This explains the failure of the numerous conferences which were held at various times during these twenty weeks between the representatives of the employers and of the operatives. The market was still overstocked, and the suspension of work had not yet restored the balance, nor were the masters in a position to resume work at the old rate of wages.

At last, in March 1893, the situation began to improve, and the men having consented to a slight reduction of wages, an understanding was arrived at, and this strike, which had been conducted with admirable moderation on both sides, was ended by a treaty of peace which was a real charter of organisation. It not only settled the question at issue, but it also established permanent boards composed of representatives of both parties. Thus the operatives' associations took rank as a constitutional element in the textile industry, and were recognised as a part of the managing body. Henceforward, they will, to a certain extent, have a voice in the solution of the complex questions relating to the general state of the cotton industry.

The principal clauses of this agreement were that work

<sup>1</sup> Report of Messrs. Grandgeorge and Tabourier, p. 86.

should be resumed at once at a reduction of 7d. in the £1, or rather less than 3 per cent. To avoid future disputes, and to facilitate as far as possible peaceful solutions, the following arrangements were made:—

1. The next increase of wages to be equal to the present reduction or to any other thereafter judged necessary.

2. No alteration in wages to be made before the expiration of a year, after which the only change to be an increase or reduction of 5 per cent. A month's notice of such proposed change to be given on either side.

3. Any strike or lock-out to be preceded by an attempt at conciliation.

4. Any question affecting the general interests of the cotton industry to be considered by a joint committee of employers and men.

The last clause marks the assumption of an entirely new rôle by organisations of labour. It admits the operatives to a share in the government of the industry, and thus, when the furthest stage of contemporary evolution is reached, we find the workers beginning to recover something of the control which they would seem to have lost for ever with the advent of the factory.

Such results are not trifling, and in an industry where the operatives are capable of obtaining them the Labour Question will be less vexed in the future than in the past. I am glad at the conclusion of my inquiry to render homage to the precursors of a pacific and normal organisation of labour, in the persons of these Lancashire cotton spinners and weavers, admirable types of complete despecialisation and of the modern industrial system.

It is well to contrast this powerful industry with the ruined or failing trades with which we began, and to compare the aristocracy of labour engaged in the first with the incapable or mediocre workmen who are vegetating in the second. Nowhere, hitherto, have we seen interests of such magnitude handled by mere workmen with so much success, firmness, and foresight. Other labour organisations have exhibited strict discipline and prudent administration, but none have been animated by such enlightened foresight, while many have endeavoured to thwart the evolution of industry and to

neutralise its effect. Here, on the contrary, organisation takes the new conditions into account, and seems, notwithstanding initial difficulties, to be on the way to discover a solution.

Is it necessary to repeat that this discovery is due, not merely to the fact that artificial means of resistance have been rendered useless by the important transformations which the cotton industry has undergone, but also to the personality of the Lancashire people? It is not an accident that the most interesting type of evolution is found where the industry is most modern in its general constitution, and where the operatives as a body are most capable of intelligent initiative, that is to say, where the evolution of industry and the personal evolution of the workers have both been carried as far as possible.

## CHAPTER III

### THE INDUSTRIES OF TRANSPORT

*The Workman wholly independent of any Special Kind of Manufacture.*

THE principal agent of modern commercial evolution is undoubtedly the extraordinary development of transport. But for the openings presented by the wider facilities of communication, the application of machinery to manufactures would not have led to the results we see, and the power to produce on a vast scale would have been of no avail without the power to sell on the same scale.

Transport therefore plays a considerable part in the general organisation of labour, owing to its influence on economic conditions. Considered apart, it also forms an important branch of industry. Railway traffic and draught, warehouses and docks, employ a very large number of persons, and the Labour Question occasionally makes itself felt in a very acute form.

All the industries of transport have one feature in common, which distinguishes them very clearly from the manufacturing industries. They are not concerned with one particular material; they transport anything, agricultural produce or manufactured goods, coal or precious metals, passengers or luggage. Thus they are essentially despecialised, and not bound up with any special branch of industry. They depend on the exchange of the products of all possible branches of industry, and are the instrument of trade. They thrive in any country which is rich, active, and productive, but without being injured by the ruin of any branch of agriculture or trade so long as it is

brought about by the triumph of another. The only thing which would be fatal would be if a country engaged in a particular kind of cultivation or production were so seriously disturbed that its general wealth was affected to a considerable extent. Then trade and transport would forsake a country which was no longer able to support them, and which had no longer produce to export, or capital with which to import goods. The industries of transport are at the disposal of any one who has anything to transport, and as exchange fluctuates they develop or diminish.

Owing to their essentially mobile character, these industries escape in great measure the crises which affect a particular country, for they are as little dependent on the prosperity of a given country as on the prosperity of a given branch of labour. This is especially true of transport by sea, for a ship which trades between Liverpool and New York can quite as readily trade with India, China, or Africa.

An interesting study might be made of the mercantile navy, to which England owes her supremacy by sea, and which is at once the instrument of her foreign trade and a witness in every part of the globe to her power and wealth. Unfortunately such considerations are beyond the scope of the present work, and in this review of the Labour Question in the manufacturing and mining industries I must confine myself to pointing out that it is also present in the industries of transport.

The question of the mercantile navy of England would therefore carry us too far, for the question is bound up with the foreign trade of England, a complex and important subject which would require a work to itself.

Sailors, moreover, are in some respects highly specialised, and although they pass readily from one country to another, and from one kind of cargo to another, they are practically unaffected in their quality of seamen. It is true that they have become more despecialised since the introduction of steam, which has introduced a new element in the shape of engineers and stokers. The rôle of the latter, however, though important, is subsidiary, and the sailor remains the distinctive individual, whom we easily recognise by his gait, his habits, and his strong attachment to his profession.

The sailor, therefore, whose occupation is of a highly specialised kind, would distract our attention from the actual industries of transport which, owing to the essentially variable nature of their material, are necessarily despecialised, and would break the sequence of the types studied, inasmuch as he is less despecialised than the textile operative. If we wish to keep the sequence which we have begun, we must select the most despecialised of the persons engaged in the industries of transport.

Railway employés would do admirably but for the fact that they are protected against crises by holding yearly engagements. They are not, strictly speaking, men who can be taken on or dismissed as occasion requires, but, in a sense, officials. We must therefore leave them out of the question.

Dockers, on the other hand, satisfy both conditions. They are almost or completely despecialised, and their employment is very precarious. They are not dependent either on special skill of their own or on an employer. The Labour Question therefore, so far as it concerns them, presents itself under quite modern conditions, similar to those towards which the general organisation of labour is tending. Thus they are proper subjects of inquiry at the close of our examination of the Labour Question.

### I. *The Organisation of Labour in the Docks.*

It is difficult for any one who has not beheld it to conceive of the importance and activity of a great English port. Nowhere is this so strongly felt as in Liverpool, where the docks extend along the Mersey for nearly five miles. An overhead railway runs the whole way, at about the level of a second storey, and the scene which the traveller beholds is truly astonishing. Enormous accumulations of bales of cotton, vast buildings filled with grain, huge stacks of timber and coal, and an endless line of warehouses along the quays filled with produce from the ends of the earth. The background consists of masts and funnels, and their bulk, exaggerated by comparison with the neighbouring buildings, appears even more imposing than in the vast estuary which puts them into communication

with the sea. A similar scene may be witnessed on the Clyde at Glasgow, but the Thames, notwithstanding the amount of traffic, gives but a feeble idea of the number of vessels which enter its docks. Instead of a continuous line, the docks form great indentations off the river-bank, and are divided into distinct and separate groups—Saint Katherine's Docks, East India Docks, Royal Albert, Royal Victoria Docks, etc. It is hardly possible, consequently, to get a single view of the whole.

It is in London, nevertheless, that docks and dockers afford the most interesting study. In the first place, the infinite variety of the foreign trade is more conspicuous in London than in Liverpool, which is chiefly concerned with cotton. In London we feel that we are in the largest, most active, and most complete commercial centre in the world. Everything that can be bought or sold finds a market in London, and the docks are a concrete sign of the business done in the city.

In the second place, the *personnel* of the docks is more variable in London than anywhere else. Although a Dockers' Union has been formed,<sup>1</sup> and London furnishes a large number of members, their occupation is hardly in any sense an occupation apart. Neither in Liverpool, Glasgow, Hull, nor obviously in ports of less importance, can we find dockers who are, as a body, so little of professionals.<sup>2</sup> And, finally, it is the London dockers who occupy the largest share of public attention.

There are well-marked differences among the dockers.

<sup>1</sup> The present Dockers' Union is the outcome of the great strike of 1889, but some organisation existed previously, owing to the persevering efforts of Mr. Ben Tillett (*Trade Unionism New and Old*, by G. Howell, M.P., chap. vii. § 8).

<sup>2</sup> We might be tempted to believe the contrary on reading the resolution passed in August 1890:—"That, recognising that our Metropolitan membership is quite equal to the labour requirements of London, resolved that instructions be sent to each branch secretary in the Metropolitan area that no candidates for membership be accepted after 13th August 1890, except by special sanction of the district committee, and each district committee to be informed that no men known to be physically weak or otherwise incompetent are to be accepted under any consideration. Special arrangements are to be made for the enrolling of those engaged in special industries, such as brewers' men, sawyers, etc., etc."

This attempt at monopoly has been a complete failure, and has only proved the strength of the obstacles attacked. It is impossible to raise barricades around the dockers' trade in London, and the dockers are drawn from every source (*Trade Unionism New and Old*, chap. vii. § 8).

The stevedores come first, and constitute the aristocracy of the dockers. They require technical knowledge, and serve a sort of apprenticeship. It is an art to load a vessel, and the first chance person cannot do stevedore's work. If casks of wine, for instance, are put on board without proper precautions the probability is that half of them will be empty on reaching port. The stevedore, who is accustomed to the work, will stow the barrels so that they suffer no damage.

The stevedores, who have this skill at their backs, have formed powerful Unions. The stevedores whom I saw at work at the Royal Albert Docks are engaged by the day, which consists of nine hours, and earn 6s. a day. Overtime is paid at 1s. an hour, and they receive an extra shilling a day for loading vessels with a certain quantity of dirty cargo. They are consequently well paid, but they are not insured against unemployment. Their Union, however, organises a sort of fund, and their wages are high enough to enable them to face a certain amount of unemployment if it does not occur too often. All would be well if they were not the victims, in times of crisis, of the skill which is a protection to them in ordinary times. When the docks are not busy, or when new methods of loading cargo dispense with their experience and knowledge, they find themselves without employment. Like all other skilled workers they are too dependent on their skill, and when unfavourable circumstances beyond their own control present themselves, they are unfitted to struggle against them.

The position of the stevedores would be quite independent of that of the dockers but for the connection between their work. We shall see that the stevedores played an important part in the recent conflicts in London and Hull.

The dockers are the men engaged in discharging cargo. They are really porters, and there is nothing in their work which requires either technical knowledge or technical education. A few, however, retain one sort of skill. These are the men engaged in carrying heavy loads. Their physical strength, their endurance, their skill in balancing their load, mark them off from the rest. At Milwall Docks, where timber and grain are the principal cargoes discharged, great strong fellows may be seen moving enormous masses, and carrying sacks



weighing as much as  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. Such men cannot be replaced by the first man who wants work. Such a one would sink beneath his load, for his shoulders have not the callosities which would enable him to carry great logs without discomfort, and his back would refuse to bear the heavy sacks of grain. Consequently the men employed at Milwall Docks do not come into the ordinary category, and may be left out of the question.

At the Royal Albert Docks we shall see an excellent sample of the ordinary work of dockers. I was piloted through the labyrinth of quays and warehouses by Captain S——, and enabled to watch the process of discharging cargo. I was astonished at the different varieties of merchandise, but in no case was special ability or exceptional muscular strength required. There were potatoes and bananas from the Canary Islands, potatoes dug in Australia six weeks before, bales of wool and cotton, bamboo from China, sacks of rice, sugar, and tea, barrels of petroleum, tinned meat, maize and oats from America, and butter and cheese from New Zealand. A vessel with freezing chambers which had come into dock was sending its cargo of 40,000 Australian sheep into warehouses kept at a low temperature. A sort of wooden causeway connected the hold of the vessel with the warehouse, and the frozen carcasses passed in quick succession down the inclined plane and were piled up round the sides of the freezing-house. Nothing could have been simpler than the work of discharging this cargo.

Among the men engaged I noticed a young man whose white shirt was a great contrast to the clothes of the rest. He was wheeling camphor, and his unaccustomed hands were badly blistered. I was told by Captain S—— that he was a clerk out of employment. Here was one man who would get a meal, thanks to the docks. I noticed ill-looking fellows, prisoners just discharged from gaol, prowlers, thieves, public-house loafers, and all the scum of a great city, faces of a type I had often seen in my rambles in the East End. But the majority of the dockers are decent-looking men, though with a somewhat depressed air. You feel that life is hard on them, and that their privations are many. Suffering has left its print on many a countenance where no trace of vice is to be seen.

The London dockers, as a body, are better than their reputation, which suffers from the presence of the lower element and the fact that any man who is out of work can present himself at the dock gates in a morning with some chance of obtaining employment. All the incapable, the déclassés, the incorrigibly idle, the criminals, may prowl about the docks and call themselves dockers out of a job. It is a ready answer to inquisitive policemen and to charitable individuals and societies. How, indeed, is one to refuse the title of docker to a man who happens to have helped in discharging a vessel for a few hours in the week? Everybody knows that employment is very irregular at the docks, and any idler may pose as the victim of this irregularity.

Miss Beatrice Potter (Mrs. Sidney Webb), whose interesting study of the dockers may be found in the first volume of Mr. Charles Booth's *Labour and Life of the People*, estimates the number of casual workers in the London Docks at 10,000. Out of this number the average number employed is only about 3000 a day, that is to say, there are 7000 dockers out of work every day. This is excluding the stevedores, who are occasionally out of work, the permanent dockers, and the preferred dockers, whose employment is not absolutely guaranteed.

The situation is a heartrending one. More than 7000 men, most of whom have families, are daily thrown on the streets of London without any means of subsistence, with mouths to feed that day, and rent to pay at the end of the week. More than 7000 men are daily exposed to the temptations of hunger, intensified by the sight of luxury around them. More than 7000 men, deprived of the means of making a living, hear it said on every side that society is wrongly organised, and that every man has a sacred right to work and to live. Is not this enough to move every one who has a heart to the deepest sympathy, and to make the most indifferent of the well-to-do classes tremble?

In the face of the sufferings and the dangers which result from such a state of things, it is our duty to ask upon whom the responsibility rests. It is often said that the evil is incurable, and that the irregularity of employment in the

docks is due to the variations in the quantity of cargo to be discharged day by day. A little observation will convince us that the cause put forward is only a partial one.

Undoubtedly the docks cannot, like a great factory, employ thousands of hands at once without their number varying from month to month, and often from year to year. When a vessel belonging to the Peninsular and Oriental or the Allan Line comes into dock, a large number of hands are required to discharge her cargo, which represents a considerable capital. The owners cannot afford to have this capital unproductive for very long, and so a large number of dockers are employed. When several large vessels come into the same dock at once there is a great demand for dockers, while two or three days later the dock may be empty and none are required. Certain kinds of produce arrive almost at the same time. After the Australian shearing season, for instance, St. Katherine's Docks are crowded with wool for a while, and then a period of depression follows. Climatic conditions also contribute to the irregularity of employment in the docks. In spite of the decrease of the number of sailing vessels, some docks, like the East India Docks, receive a great many, and their activity is greatly affected by the direction of the prevailing winds, which favour or retard their entrance into the Thames. Steady rain also leads to suspension of work, except where vessels are discharged under cover, and when a London fog shrouds the Thames it prevents ships from arriving and dockers from working. According to a table given by Mr. Geoffrey Drage in his recent work on the unemployed, there were days in the month of December 1891 when as many as 6000 dockers were forced by the fog to remain idle.<sup>1</sup>

But the effect of all these causes taken together can be measured exactly. If we take the maximum and minimum numbers of those employed at the docks and note the difference, we shall have the extent to which employment varies at the docks. Now, even when the greatest activity prevails, the total number of dockers in London are not required. Evidently the number of dockers is too great, or rather the unemployed of other trades are reckoned as dockers.

<sup>1</sup> *The Unemployed*, by Geoffrey Drage, Secretary to the Labour Commission. Macmillan, London, 1894. Plate V.

Mr. Geoffrey Drage estimates the total number of men of all sorts who are counted as dockers in London at 22,000, without counting those who drift in occasionally from other trades.<sup>1</sup> Out of these about 16,000 are employed fairly regularly, leaving an average of about 6000 unemployed every day. These figures correspond with those given by Miss Beatrice Potter.

Are these 6000 casuals necessary for the traffic in the docks? If we take the maximum number of dockers employed in any day in the year between April 1891 and April 1892 we find it comes to 17,994, or in round figures 18,000.<sup>2</sup> There remain 4000 dockers to encumber the market to no purpose.

For these 4000 unemployed, therefore, the docks are not really responsible. Their existence is due not to the docks and the irregularity of work in the docks, but to the abnormal state of the trades of East London.

The permanent state of crisis in the East End has already been described. Trades organised on antiquated lines, which retain the small workshop and the skilled workman and give rise to the sweating system, are suffering from an endemic malady, and the suffering falls on the class which is least well fitted to bear it. It is this class, which is placed in a false economic position and involved in the difficulties which beset small trades of the ancient type, which goes to swell the crowd at the dock gates and gives rise to the congestion we have seen. The unemployed belonging to the vanquished trades, who are always in hopes of finding work in their own line, temporarily quit the workshop for the docks, in the hope of providing for their immediate wants by earning a day's wages. The disorganisation of labour in the workshops of London reacts upon labour at the docks.

I wish to lay special stress on this point, because it is usual to lay the blame for the docker's hard lot on the London docks and on the modern methods of navigation, which are accused of having introduced into work at the docks an uncertainty unknown under the old coasting system. Ship-owners and contractors who discharge cargo are charged with

<sup>1</sup> *The Unemployed*, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

aggravating the evil, the former by their peremptory attitude and the latter by their indifference. But no one accuses the chief culprit, the set of decaying trades which attract to London crowds of men for whom they are unable to furnish normal employment. Dockers are in a better position in Liverpool, Glasgow, and Hull than in London, and for the reason just given.

Even in London dockers who are steady men and good workers do not suffer in the same way as the less respectable or less industrious. It would be a great mistake to suppose that the men required for discharging cargoes are chosen by accident, or by a foreman's caprice. There are well-marked and recognised grades among dockers, and the best men have a good chance of regular employment.

I am here speaking of ordinary dockers, and not of stevedores, who have been classed as skilled workmen, nor even of the men engaged at Milwall Docks in discharging cargoes of wood and grain, whose physical strength and endurance make them, in a sense, skilled workmen. I refer, not to artisans, but to mere unskilled labourers. These cannot be grouped according to the degree of their technical knowledge but only by personal worth. This is stated in Miss Potter's conscientious study of the London docks.<sup>1</sup> "The most striking fact observed by those who live among these people is that there are definite grades of wage-earning capacity or wage-earning luck corresponding to a great extent with distinct strata of moral and physical condition noticeable in the dock and waterside population of Tower Hamlets."

Indeed, in all the docks we find a class of permanent dockers. According to the figures given by Miss Potter there are 247 permanent dockers in the West and East India Docks against 1311 men in irregular employment, and 420 in the London and St. Katherine's Docks against 2200 casuals.<sup>2</sup>

But among these casuals there are the preferred men, or royals, or ticket men, as they are called in different docks, who are always taken on in preference to other applicants. These are to some extent permanent dockers. Miss Potter

<sup>1</sup> *Labour and Life of the People*, vol. i. p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

gives 700 such men at the West and East India Docks, and estimates the number of casuals at the same docks at a minimum figure of 600. In the London and St. Katherine's Docks the ticket men number 450 and the minimum number of casuals employed is not under 1100. In practice the ticket men are permanently employed.

Thus there are two classes of dockers who are freed from much uncertainty of employment because they are known to be industrious, steady, and worthy of trust.

This proves that the trade is not so badly organised as is asserted, and that a respectable man finds it worth his while.

It also indicates in what direction a remedy should be sought. It will not be found in a different organisation of the docks, nor in their administration by a public body under a system of municipal socialism.<sup>1</sup> The docks might possibly be administered in this manner, but that would not give work to 6000 or 7000 unemployed who present themselves at the dock gates, nor would it secure regularity of employment for the best of them. The problem would remain unchanged.

On the other hand, it is easy to conceive that the most respectable and industrious of the dockers, those who form the better class, might succeed in organising a business-like association which would include the better men among the occasional dockers, who might be selected by the simple method of a high enough subscription; in this way a reserve fund might be created against times of unemployment. This would clear the docks of the idle, the criminal, and the drunken, and thus improve to a very appreciable extent the position of those who remained.

It is clear that the dockers suffer from the inrush of the scum of East London. The calling needs to be purified by the elimination of the sham docker, a measure which would make a very great difference to the position of the rest.

We must, however, beware of radical or puerile remedies. No one, no government, no municipality, no official body, no philanthropic society, no authority, no devotion, can bring

<sup>1</sup> Miss Potter thinks that a system of public trust might improve the dockers' position (*Labour and Life of the People*, vol. i. p. 206).

about this selection of the fittest. No one but the masters and men themselves are qualified for the task.

The London and India Docks Committee have recently introduced what is known as the List System. Its object is to increase the number of permanent men as far as possible, and to divide the others into three classes according to their efficiency and steadiness.<sup>1</sup> Class A is always employed in preference to Class B, and Class B in preference to Class C, for occasional jobs. Regard is also had, though less rigidly, to the position a man holds in any of these classes, so that men may be hired in order of merit. In this way the best men get the work. The attempt is a recent one, and it is too soon to judge of its fruits, but it attacks the problem from the right side.<sup>2</sup>

The men can give useful assistance in the task of selection to the masters who form the joint committee, by supplying a rough classification which might facilitate their task.

Their success depends entirely upon themselves. They must be sincere in their desire to co-operate with their employers as far as possible, and they must find men capable of grouping and leading them, and of understanding and defending their true interests.

This is no visionary scheme or fanciful solution. We shall shortly see that the Union movement is growing among the dockers, and that it has already led to results. Before examining the general case, we will, in order to understand the force involved, rapidly observe a prosperous docker, and judge what material, intellectual, and moral resources such a one can bring to a Dockers' Union.

## II. *An East End Docker.*

James Molony is a docker at St. Katherine's Docks. He does not belong to any privileged class, and is neither a stevedore, a permanent docker, nor a ticket man. Every morning he is at St. Katherine's Docks before six in search of

<sup>1</sup> *The Unemployed*, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Charles Booth, who is an authority on all questions relating to labour in London, thinks the best remedy for the dockers' difficulties would be a List System of a perfect kind.

employment, and he is almost always successful. He told me he had only lost four days since the great strike of 1889, that is to say, in four years. I was greatly surprised, and he added that steady men had no difficulty in getting employment.

This, it should be noted, was at St. Katherine's Docks, where only 450 permanent hands are employed, of whom Molony is not one. There are, consequently, men who are really permanently employed, though not officially recognised as such. Employment is considered to be particularly irregular at St. Katherine's Docks because of the quantity of wool discharged, which only comes into the port during six out of the twelve months. Here is a man who, notwithstanding these unfavourable conditions, gets regular employment because he is a steady man.

Molony is paid 6d. an hour like all dockers, and as he is generally employed every day and all day, he earns on an average 30s. a week.<sup>1</sup> He sometimes works overtime at the rate of 7d. an hour, which increases this total, but on the other hand he is sometimes discharged before he has completed a ten hours day. He estimates his average wages at 30s. a week.

This is a high wage, if we compare it with those of other workmen we have studied. It is more than is earned by Clippendale, the Galashiels weaver, and though it is generally exceeded by miners in the Midlands during winter, yet in summer they do not earn any such sum, as they are obliged to work less than the full week. Many engineers are satisfied with such a wage.

Here, however, rent is a heavy item. Molony pays 6s. 6d. a week for accommodation which is nothing to boast of. He has two rooms, together measuring about 30 square yards, in which he lives with his wife and eight children. Of course there is no chance here of workmen owning their own houses or of occupying a house to themselves. St. Katherine's Docks are near the Tower, and the dockers employed there are obliged to live in the populous and crowded neighbourhood of Tower Hill, in order to get to their work in the morning. A two-storey house with two front windows lets for £1 a week

<sup>1</sup> Saturday is generally a half-holiday at the docks.



in Great Prescott Street. It contains about the same space as the house of a working-class family in one of the Lancashire industrial centres, but what working-class family could afford a rent of £1 a week! Thus these houses, originally built for a single family when rents were lower, now contain three, or four, and sometimes more, for many families are contented with one room. It is the tenement house system with all the drawbacks resulting from promiscuity, bad hygienic and moral conditions, and high rents into the bargain.

Around the Royal Albert Docks, which are further out, rents are not so high, and I was shown houses which do not cost more than 8s. or 10s. a week. But this is far too much for the immense majority of working-class families, and the tenement house is the general rule. The smaller houses are sometimes occupied by only one family, but such a family generally lightens the rent by taking a single man as a lodger.

In the Tower Hill district a man must resign himself to the tenement as Molony has done, though it is a good deal crowded when there are eight children! A good wife, however, manages to keep her tiny home in fair order, notwithstanding the want of room. Mrs. Molony's rooms are thoroughly respectable in appearance, the children have clean faces, the furniture is carefully kept, and there is a general air of propriety about the place. On Sunday, when Molony repairs to a sort of workman's club to which he belongs, he presents a most respectable appearance, with his clothes well brushed, a white shirt, a watch-chain, and his boots carefully blacked. Being an Irishman, he goes regularly to church, and much of his conduct shows the influence of his religious convictions. Moral elevation and a regular mode of life are here combined.

But how does Molony manage to keep a wife and children on 30s. a week, when 6s. 6d. has to go for rent? His eldest daughter has assisted him for some time in this difficult task. She is employed by a dressmaker who gives her her dinner and tea and 2s. a day. This makes 12s. a week in money, but practically it is only 9s. a week, because she has to spend 3s. in travelling. This gives the family a total of 39s. a week.

These resources will increase rapidly as the children reach an age when their work brings in something. However, London, and especially this part of London, does not offer the same facilities in this respect as manufacturing towns in the strict sense of the term. There are not the same chances of employment, especially for girls, as in Oldham, Rochdale, Galashiels, Dunfermline, etc. There are no large factories in the neighbourhood to pay high wages, and the daughters of the St. Katherine's dockers generally work for Jewish tailors, who exploit them by overworking and under-paying them. Here again we find the sweating system, the cause and disastrous consequences of which have already been considered, and we now see that the faulty organisation of labour in London indirectly affects the position of dockers' families.

Certainly, neither the social environment nor the economic conditions are favourable to a speedy improvement in the position of steady industrious men, nor is it easy for them to push to the front. The metropolis is greatly inferior in this respect to busy manufacturing centres like Birmingham, Leeds, or the Lancashire towns, where the industrial evolution is much further advanced and more general than in London. Yet here is a family, not differing from many others, of Irish origin, burdened with young children, and obliged from the nature of the father's work to live in a poor and overcrowded quarter, which nevertheless succeeds in solving the problem of existence by its own unaided efforts. These efforts and the results thus achieved are the measure of its worth.

Let us hope that there are many such. Persons who are brought into constant contact with dockers have assured me that, as a body, they are making evident progress. An official connected with the docks told me that education has been spreading for years, that the language is less coarse, and that there is a growing desire among the men to better themselves. He lives in Poplar, which is a dockers' quarter, and there the free libraries are always full of men reading for information on solid subjects. One copy of *Engineering*, a practical periodical devoted to mechanical inventions, and sometimes more than one, is always taken at the libraries, and there is always a rush for it.

Thus are there scattered elements of promise, and the question is whether they are capable of effective organisation. The history of the recent strikes, and of the formation of the Dockers' Unions, will show.

### III. *The Dockers' Unions.*

Dockers' Unions appeared on the scene at the time of the great strike in the summer of 1889. Their first recognition and their first success date from this strike, at the close of which the dockers obtained certain very real advantages, which marked their first step in the paths of an efficient organisation of labour.

The real cause of the dockers' rising, the original and underlying cause, was the instability of the conditions of labour caused by the excessive congestion of the trade, which, in its turn, was due to the abnormal state of the small trades carried on in London. This cause is a chronic one, and nothing but an opportunity was needed to precipitate a serious crisis.

It came in the shape of an incident which did little honour to the administration of the docks belonging to the joint committee. I give the story as it was told to me by an eye-witness, who was well acquainted with the organisation of the London docks, and whose position would have disposed him to side against the dockers.

This is his version of what happened. The dock companies are in the habit of paying a bonus in certain cases to induce the men engaged in discharging a vessel to get through their task quickly. In addition to the wages which they are paid by the hour they receive an additional sum fixed by the piece according to the rapidity with which the vessel is discharged. The sum is calculated with reference to the nature, the volume, and the weight of the cargo, but as this involves a variety of arithmetical operations and only the companies know the data, the dockers have no power of checking the amount, and have to rely on the good faith of their employers.

However, those who work at the docks regularly can form an approximate idea of the sum due. One day a squad of

dockers had been engaged in discharging a vessel which often came to London, and for which the same number of men working the same number of hours with much the same cargo had received 1s. 4d. extra apiece after a recent voyage. They were therefore very disagreeably surprised to see a notice that the extra amount due was only 2d., and so unjustifiable did the difference seem that they refused to accept it. Next morning a notice was posted stating that the amount was 6d., and that the company had made a mistake. The breach of good faith was obvious, and the concession was a blunder. The dockers, who had been excited by the incident of the preceding evening, left the docks, and thus the strike began.

It was long and painful. The dockers had no large strike fund like the miners of the Midlands and the Lancashire textile operatives. It was easy for the dock companies to fill their places, and without the support of the Stevedores' Unions the strike would unquestionably have failed. The opposition of the stevedores greatly embarrassed the dock companies, for though they could prolong the strike they could not nullify its consequences by taking chance individuals to load vessels.

Thanks to the stevedores, the dockers' strike led to results which benefited the whole trade. At the same time some well-known men were engaged in the useful task of organising the Dockers' Union and forcing the dock companies to recognise it. John Burns, Tom Mann, and Ben Tillett called meetings, and Cardinal Manning intervened in the dispute. When it ended a new situation had begun to develop.

A Board of Arbitration was established to prevent disputes in the future, which implied that the companies would treat with the dockers on equal terms, and opened the door to conciliation and to the settlement of possible difficulties by diplomatic methods.

The dockers also obtained other advantages. Their wages were raised from 5d. to 6d. an hour, and a very important clause provided that no docker should be engaged for less than four hours. Thus every man who was hired in the morning at the dock gates was assured of earning at least 2s., which was a marked improvement upon the former position. Previously, it had frequently happened that in order to facili-

tate the unloading of a vessel a large number of men were engaged, and then dismissed, sometimes at the end of the first hour. In that case the unfortunate docker was only entitled to 5d., and had no chance of being re-engaged. This was a crying abuse, which had the double disadvantage of meaning the loss of a day's work to the men dismissed, and of leading to the congestion of the trade by multiplying and exaggerating the chances of employment.

This assertion of the right to a minimum day of four hours is the first important step in the way already pointed out.<sup>1</sup> It tends to reduce the excessive supply of unskilled labour which is a burden to the docks, and to keep out professional loafers, who are glad enough to earn the price of a glass of beer or whiskey, but reluctant to undertake four hours' steady work.

Thus the Dockers' Union, though organised in the midst of a crisis, and therefore under very unfavourable conditions, succeeded in obtaining a valuable reform, and this by its own efforts and without the intervention of any public authority.

They have more to do yet. They must carry on the process of selection which has already been begun by the establishment of the four hours day, and which, as we have seen, some companies are trying to organise by grouping together the better elements among the dockers.

The Hull strike in 1893 witnessed progress in this direction. It began in a dispute in which it is difficult to decide which side was to blame. Mr. C. H. Wilson, M.P. for Hull, the head of one of the largest firms of shipowners in the kingdom, had shown the greatest interest in the Dockers' Unions in their early days, and had been among the first to recognise them. This was in 1889, at the time of the great dock strike in London. In April 1894 the friendly relations which had existed for more than four years between the shipowner and the Unions had become extremely strained. Mr. Wilson complained that the dockers were always wanting fresh concessions, and not only claimed the right to organise themselves, which he was willing to grant, but also wished to impose upon the masters

<sup>1</sup> At Liverpool the right to the half day has long been admitted. This shows that there it is possible to organise labour in the docks in a more normal manner than in London, and without a struggle. Liverpool, unlike London, is not crushed by the number of unemployed which results from the dying condition of the small industries of the metropolis.

impossible conditions and complicated regulations, which would be found excessive and impossible to realise in practice. It is by no means improbable that this was so, and that the Dockers' Union, intoxicated by its recent success, had fallen into the mistake which has been pointed out in the case of other organisations of labour. Like the Midland Counties Miners' Federation, it may have believed itself stronger than circumstances, and omitted to take into account the difficulties inherent in the constitution of the trade. Hence would arise the masters' complaints.

The dockers, on their side, had serious grievances to make known through their leaders. Mr. J. Havelock Wilson, M.P. for Middlesborough, the founder of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union, Mr. Tom Mann, and others affirmed that the ship-owners did not keep their promises, that they took back privately the concessions they made publicly, and that on the pretext of being unwilling to shut out men not belonging to the Union they were burdening the trade with incompetent men and bringing down wages.

So far as one can judge, it would seem that the Union wished to limit the number of men employed at the docks by artificial and hasty means and by combinations tending to the corporate type, while the shipowners were averse to the formation of a body of preferred dockers, and kept an excessive number of dockers at Hull in order to stimulate competition and escape any control on the part of the Union. Both sides were endeavouring to thwart each other instead of uniting their efforts, by which method alone could any satisfactory result be attained.

Early in April 1893 a strike was declared by the Hull Dockers' Union. The shipowners appealed to free labour, but were obliged to ask for military protection for those who responded. Some bloodshed occurred, and the strike was not uniformly well conducted, in which respect it differed from the greater number of English strikes. The Dockers' Union had not long been formed, and was betrayed into some youthful indiscretions from lack of experience on the part of its leaders. It was too young to have reached the mature wisdom of the older Unions—the Miners' Federation, the Amalgamated Union of Engineers, or the Textile Operatives' Union.

The Hull strike differed from most strikes in another respect. It was not caused by any dispute about the rate of wages, and the best proof of this is that the shipowners agreed to pay non-union men 1s. a day more than the ordinary rate, in order to guarantee them lodging, beer, tobacco, etc. The question at issue was really whether the Shipowners' Federation, which the firm had joined at the beginning of the struggle, was to yield to the Dockers' Union or whether the Union was to declare itself beaten?

As the debate increased in bitterness, both sides began to increase their claims, and aimed at crushing the rival organisation. All Dockers' Unions felt themselves menaced. Mr. J. H. Wilson, M.P., whose official connection with the Sailors' Union made him a prominent figure in the eyes of the dockers in every seaport, set to work to stir up their zeal and provoke a general strike. Things seemed to be on the eve of a crisis which would spread from Hull to London, Liverpool, Bristol, Cardiff, and other ports.

On 16th April the representative of sixteen London Dockers' Unions held a meeting at which it was resolved to suspend work on the afternoon of the 17th. Great excitement prevailed in Liverpool and Cardiff, and the outlook was a gloomy one.

Next day, however, symptoms of a better state of feeling appeared. A meeting of delegates from the Dockers' Unions belonging to different ports rejected the resolution of the London dockers, and urged that before resorting to a general strike a settlement should be proposed to the Hull dockers and employers. The proposed settlement contained an important concession. Hitherto the Hull Dockers' Union had openly refused to accept the federation ticket issued by the Shipowners' Federation, which bound them to allow the presence of non-union men in the docks and to work along with them. In the settlement proposed by the general meeting of dockers' representatives, the Hull Union dockers were to abandon this uncompromising attitude, on condition that the bureau of free labour should be placed under the control of the Board of Trade, instead of being entirely dependent on the shipowners. This was intended to prevent the shipowners from overstocking the labour market with incapable men.

This proves that notwithstanding the excitement of the struggle the dockers' representatives were amenable to reason. This fact is worthy of note, for it shows that, young and recently organised as they were, the Dockers' Unions knew how to choose reasonable men as leaders. *This is the best proof of fitness for self-government.* At the moment when the excitement was at its height, on 1st April, the *Times* correspondent met Mr. Tom Mann in the lobby of the House of Commons and asked him if he apprehended a general strike. "No," said Mr. Mann, after a moment's thought, "I hope and believe that nothing of the kind will happen."<sup>1</sup>

It did not happen, thanks to the good advice given to the London dockers by John Burns, Ben Tillett, and Tom Mann, the very men who had urged them to resistance in 1889. The Dockers' Unions, instead of endeavouring to aggravate and embitter the local dispute at Hull by suspending the traffic in all the other ports, intervened to settle it. This marks the beginning of the era of negotiations. Mr. Mundella, on his side, did all he could to bring about an understanding, thus lending the assistance of his experience to the law regarding arbitration, of which he had been the pioneer. These attempts at reconciliation were facilitated by the position of the strike leaders. Mr. T. H. Wilson, M.P. for Middlesborough, could treat on equal terms with Mr. C. H. Wilson, M.P. for Hull. John Burns was M.P. for Battersea and Tom Mann was a member of the Labour Commission. These men were accustomed to discuss and settle important questions in conjunction with persons in high positions, while they were closely in touch with those whose interests they represented.

However, some time elapsed before a settlement was reached, and for six weeks the Hull strike seriously injured both the dockers and the interests of the shipowners. Regrettable scenes occurred, and though the leaders preserved a calm and self-respecting attitude, they found it impossible to induce the bulk of the dockers to follow their example.

At last, on 19th May, an agreement was signed between the Hull dockers and shipowners. Both sides were weary of the struggle, and the terms accepted differed but little from those which had been proposed a month before.

<sup>1</sup> See *Times*, 19th April 1893.



The masters undertook to show no partiality to non-union men, and the Union agreed to allow their presence in the docks. The arrangement did credit to both parties, and much suffering, loss, and disturbance might have been averted but for the heated feeling on both sides which had prolonged the strike to no purpose for four weeks.

From a general point of view, the result of the Hull strike strengthened the hands of the Dockers' Union. The men emerged from the struggle with an organisation which had stood the test, and with leaders who had shown themselves worthy of the confidence of their fellows and the respect of their opponents. The Union, whose very existence had at one moment been threatened by the Shipowners' Federation, was now an established fact.

In addition to this they had learned a lesson. The failure of the Hull dockers to shut the labour market against non-union men by means of strict regulations showed that future solutions would not lie in that direction. The true solution was evidently a serious system of organisation on the part of the dockers, which should be sufficiently flexible to allow of the employment of non-unionists at any given moment, and yet sufficiently strong to make it to the employers' interest to co-operate with the Union.

Directly the Union allows non-union men to be employed in the docks the necessary condition of flexibility is satisfied, and the masters have no longer any cause to resent the tyranny of a labour monopoly which is fraught with grave danger to their interests.

It therefore remains to organise Unions in such a way as to make it to the employers' interest to deal with them. This can be done if the men profit by the example of prudence set by their leaders, by excluding the turbulent elements and grouping together the most industrious and reasonable members among them, in a word, by a process of selecting the fittest. When they have achieved this result shipowners and dock contractors will be only too glad to find the task of selection, which they cannot easily do for themselves, done for them, and to give the preference to the squads indicated by the Union. This will be a List System with a classification agreed to by both parties.

In other words, the docker's calling would be greatly benefited—from the point of view of the masters not less than from the point of view of the men—by a normal organisation of labour associations. It is to this end that the efforts of shipowners, dock companies, stevedores, and dockers should be devoted, since all would gain by it.

Attempts have been made to contrast the processes employed by the old Unions of skilled labourers and the new Unions of unskilled labourers, and it has been said that the former relied on private initiative, while the latter were more disposed to State intervention and Socialism. There appears to be no justification for this distinction between the Old and New Unionism. We saw in the earlier chapters of this work that skilled workmen who are threatened by the evolution of industry cry out for legislative protection for their exclusive tactics, while dockers, who are essentially unskilled labourers, succeed without such assistance in forming Unions to which a powerful organisation like the Shipowners' Federation is obliged to yield, and that private initiative seems sufficient to ensure success. Socialism, with its apparently easy solutions, may fascinate bodies of men who are well disciplined but confronted with insurmountable difficulties, like the plumbers, typographers, and all the other trades in which the members are capable of good organisation, but the conditions of which have been changed by the pressure of circumstances too strong for them. It has an equal fascination for groups without cohesion, hastily organised and incapable of self-direction. To the first Socialism seems a means of constraint fitted to supplement their means of defence, while to the second it seems a ready-made system fitted to supply their incapacity for self-organisation. In both cases a leaning towards Socialism is an evidence of inferiority.

All the strong organisations, in which capable men combine to secure a possible end, will be found on the side of private initiative and free association. The Old Trade Unionism, erroneously so called because its methods have stood the test, instead of being likely to disappear, has before it a vast field, and we do not yet know all its reserve force.

Its best chance of success lies in the adoption of the remedy we have already indicated for the individual difficulties

which the modern workman has to meet. The Labour Question does not admit of two distinct solutions, one for individuals, and one for trades as a body. There is only one solution, and it consists in raising the workman. Let him learn how to act and how to recover himself, let him become capable of combination, and, when inevitable difficulties arise, of arriving at a peaceful solution in concert with his employers, and he will find amid the incessant changes brought about by material progress the moral stability which he needs.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MEANS OF ELEVATION WITHIN THE REACH OF ENGLISH WORKING MEN FOR THE SOLUTION OF THE LABOUR QUESTION

THE course of our inquiry has led us to a general conclusion.

We have seen that the mere fact of belonging to a trade, no matter what it may be or how strongly it may be organised, is not in itself enough to guarantee the workman against unemployment.

We have also seen that amid the general instability of the various trades there is one efficacious method by which a man can ensure his own individual prosperity.

The most striking type of an energetic and well-organised career which we have encountered in the course of our inquiry was in a doomed trade whose ruin is imminent.<sup>1</sup>

It has also been pointed out that there is danger in clinging too tightly to a trade which owes to some special circumstance its temporary immunity from unemployment, without taking into account the changes which the future will probably bring.

In short, the workman is no longer secure in clinging to a trade, and it is folly on his part to throw in his future lot with the uncertain future of his trade. Security can come only through his power to judge for himself as to the best mode of employing his abilities, to decide on his course at every step, and, in a word, to undertake the direction of his own life.

Before the application of steam power to industrial purposes, a steady industrious man when once admitted into a

<sup>1</sup> Part I. chap. i.

skilled trade was likely to remain at it as long as he lived, without a very wide outlook, but without any serious anxieties. No doubt frequent difficulties arose, and the trade guilds were constantly bringing suits against each other for encroachments, which plainly meant that they were anxious to crush successful competition. But resistance was easier and the suits dragged on, for both triumph and defeat were slow processes and there was plenty of time.

Under these circumstances, the prudent though not adventurous course, which in practice was generally sufficient, was for a youth to enter a trade young and remain in the same groove all his life.

This was convenient, but it did not conduce to bring out what a man had in him. It created an artisan class which was doomed to mediocrity, from the lack of anything to call for manly effort.

All this is changed. The workman no longer finds his trade a protection against unemployment, that is to say, against the most acute form of the Labour Question, and the most formidable crisis which can affect him. He must learn to protect himself. At the same time a far wider field is opening before him, so that the development of his personality may lead him further and higher.

Whether he is content to remain a workman or whether his ambition and his abilities push him towards a position of authority, the essential thing is that he should rely chiefly on what he is in himself. He must be capable of bettering himself, of getting on, and of acting for himself. Nothing can take the place of these indispensable requirements.

It remains to be seen what facilities an English workman finds in his environment for the acquisition of these indispensable qualities.

As a practical conclusion to a series of observations which have shown that the true solution of the Labour Question is the elevation of the worker, a word must be said as to how the worker can raise himself and how far he has already done so.

Four different sets of influences tending to this end are at work, and the means of elevation within the reach of the worker may be classified under the following heads:—

1. Means of elevation due to the evolution of commerce and industry.
2. Means of elevation due to the private initiative of the directing classes.
3. Means of elevation due to legislative interference.
4. Means of elevation due to the English character.

I. *Means of Elevation due to the Evolution of Commerce and Industry.*

The evolution of commerce and industry has furnished the worker with direct means of elevation, and has improved his position generally, by paying higher wages, multiplying the chances of employment, and creating a large number of new factories, often under the direction of an ex-workman. Our examination of the social condition of the workers under the factory system has brought these points into prominence and it is not necessary to return to them.<sup>1</sup>

But this evolution has brought about another result. The destruction of the greater number of small workshops has deprived the artisans of their proprietary rights in their trade, and of the control of their labour, which they possessed under the old system. At the same time it has grouped them in

<sup>1</sup> I should like to point out that this result, which is often overlooked, has not escaped clear-sighted and fair observers who have studied the question without bias or prejudice. As an example I may cite the work published in 1869 by the Comte de Paris, entitled *Les Associations ouvrières en Angleterre*. At a time when the effects of this evolution were more difficult to trace than they are to-day the author expressed himself to the following effect:—"The extreme division of labour which is often a necessary consequence of our modern industrial system would be most inimical to the intellectual progress of our time if it co-existed with the old traditions which confined an individual, or generation after generation of a family, to the same special branch. Machinery, however, by diminishing the workman's labour and rendering less and less necessary the long apprenticeship which was needed under the old system in order to acquire a special knack, no longer confines the worker within the same narrow limits as did his hardly acquired manual skill, but is opening wider and more varied fields to the exercise of his intelligence. The case of the United States proves that this mobility, far from impeding the industrial development of a nation, increases its capabilities. *It makes men, instead of living machines, and prepares them for citizenship*, and by throwing down useless and antiquated barriers it opens a vast career to individual initiative and energy" (*Les Associations ouvrières en Angleterre*, par M. le Comte de Paris. Édition Germer-Baillière, 1869, pp. 215, 216).

large numbers in great factories, and has enabled them to combine and thus acquire a new power. From this has sprung the great modern movement known as Trade Unionism.

We have seen what the workers under the factory system have gained in the way of regular wages, reduction of the hours of labour, etc., from the formation of Unions. These in themselves are important advantages, but the development of Trade Unionism has also given a marvellous impulse to all the other forms of associated action, and has contributed in the most powerful manner to the personal elevation of the working class.

All Trade Unions, however, have not exercised an equally beneficial influence in this direction. Those which endeavour to resist the progress of evolution, to maintain by artificial means an antiquated condition of things, and to restrict admission into a trade when circumstances have thrown it open, are leading the artisan into a wrong path. No doubt they develop certain qualities by accustoming him to manage men, but they close the future to him, and thus their line of policy is at once dangerous and precarious. Those, on the contrary, which strive to organise the evolution of industry instead of resisting it, which resolutely face the present and aim at fitting themselves for the future, offer the double advantage of training the workers to associated action and of turning their energies in the direction in which they will bear fruit.

I have already introduced to my readers several of the officials of different Trade Unions, men remarkable for good sense, moderation, and a practical turn of mind. I have not disguised the fact that some of them cherish illusions, but the general impression left is that of men of upright and manly character. They are really men.

It is often surprising, in reading reports furnished by ordinary workmen to their Union, to see what questions these reports deal with, what interesting views they put forward, and what ability they denote on the part of their authors.

Take, for example, a report furnished by Mr. W. J. Davis, general secretary of the National Union of Brassworkers, of a visit paid to the Electrical Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1892. The brassworkers were alarmed lest the development

of electric lighting might be prejudicial to the use of gas, and consequently that the gas-fittings manufactured by them would no longer be in demand. Mr. Davis was appointed to investigate the following questions:—

1. Is electricity likely to supersede gas?
2. In that case would the fittings required for electric lighting be made of the same materials as gas-fittings?
3. Would they come into the brassworkers' line?
4. Would the manufacture of these fittings require more or less labour than those at present in use?
5. Would the number of lights be increased or diminished?

The general sense of the report was to the effect that electric lighting would have a favourable effect upon the brass trade, but each of the questions was examined and discussed, if necessary, in the most careful and intelligent manner, and it is difficult to say which was the more remarkable, the artisan who could treat this complicated question in such a luminous manner or the men who took steps to obtain his report. Obviously such men are not to be taken by surprise by some unforeseen crisis, for they not only study questions of supply and demand, but are fully competent for such a study.

The same author has published a substantial little pamphlet entitled *A Short History of the Brass Trade*, which shows at a glance the changes undergone by the trade, from the time of hammered brass to the modern methods of working by steam power, the development of alloying processes, the different uses of brass, etc.

These works, and many others of the same kind, are an incontestable proof of the high intellectual development of some Trade Union secretaries.

It is not only on the side of pure intelligence, however, that Trade Unions have encouraged progress among the working classes. Their most important result has been to fit them to undertake the normal organisation and control of their own lives.

Many other forms of association have sprung from Trade Unions, and not only prove how much progress has already been accomplished, but will be an important element of progress in the future.

Such are the Building Societies, by which the thrift of the



working classes is utilised in assisting working men to acquire their own homes; the innumerable Friendly Societies; and the Co-operative Societies, which have now developed to such an enormous extent. At the Congress held in 1893 at Bristol, 1655 Co-operative Societies were represented, and we have already seen how greatly they benefit the working classes, especially in small towns. All this is due to the initiative and energy of ordinary workmen, and is the fruit of their personal administration. I visited the secretary and treasurer of a local Co-operative Society at D——. He was a little, thin, dry man, very exact in his accounts, a little faddy, I was told, but the real pillar of the institution. He had been a weaver and then a postman, and he now manages the accounts of all the various branches belonging to the Society, the butcher's, the baker's, the grocery department, the boot and clothing branches, etc.

The success of Co-operative Societies does great honour to those who are at the head of them and form their mainspring. But the principle of co-operation is not sufficient in itself to secure the prosperity of enterprises conducted on that basis without the intelligent activity, the honesty and ability of those who wish to put the principle into operation. In many large towns, and especially in London, Co-operative Stores suffer severely from the competition of retail dealers. This is not surprising, for although Co-operative Societies have conferred a benefit of the highest order on their customers by checking the exploitation of the consumer by the retail dealer, yet after this has been done and dealers have taken the lesson to heart and contented themselves with a small profit, they have an advantage over the Co-operative Societies, inasmuch as they are spurred by self-interest and have complete freedom of prompt decision and action. This is one more proof that systems are but secondary matters and that personal force is the first essential of success. English Co-operative Societies have been successful because the English race has a genius for carrying private enterprises to a successful issue. To-morrow, it may be, it will resort to other means, for capable men are never at a loss for a suitable system. A system is a tool procured or manufactured or invented for the occasion, and laid aside when it has served its turn. Thus systems are less worthy of admira-

tion and imitation than this method of training men, which is the true secret of the power of the race. Our object in drawing attention to the great success of Co-operative Societies in England is not to preach a crusade in favour of co-operation, but to bring into prominence the personality of the men to whom it is due, and thus to give some idea of what English working men have succeeded in achieving.

We should not omit to mention Athletic Clubs, Working Men's Clubs, the Young Men's Christian Association, etc., in enumerating the different forms assumed by the spirit of association among the English working classes. Trade Unionism gave a powerful impulse to this general movement, and it is no exaggeration to trace a connection between them.

Trade Unionism has contributed to raise the workers in yet another way, by diminishing in an appreciable degree the antagonistic feeling towards employers. Mr. Burnett, one of the heads of the Labour Department, in his report on strikes and unemployment, published in 1893, noted a growing tendency among the representatives of labour organisations to consider a resort to arbitration in trade disputes as the normal and desirable solution. Such a symptom is important. Moreover the most prominent miners seem little affected by the class jealousy and the mania for equality which is often betrayed by the acts and speeches of Continental agitators. They are gradually being initiated into the difficulties of industrial direction, by being associated with their employers in the discussion of interests of great magnitude and in the joint settlement of certain questions. Thus they are beginning to understand the superior rôle played by employers, to appreciate how much is required of them, and to recognise that it is in virtue of superior qualities that they are at the head of large concerns. They have also found in many employers a sincere wish to improve the position of the workers as far as possible, and, not infrequently, these forced relations, due in the first instance to disagreement, have forged links of gratitude and affectionate esteem.

There still remains one last means of elevation which Trade Unionism has put within the reach of working men. It does not affect the rank and file, indeed, directly, it affects only a very few picked men, but in a more or less distant future the

working class as a body will be indirectly benefited. We have already pointed out the results of Trade Unionism in the modern organisation of labour, and in the workers' private life, and we have now to see its results on political organisation and public life.

Twelve labour members sat in the last House of Commons, representing the working-class vote. Conspicuous among them were Mr. Thomas Burt, an ex-miner, Parliamentary secretary of the Board of Trade, Mr. Woods, Mr. Pickard, president of the National Federation, Messrs. Wilson and Fenwick, representing Durham and Northumberland and strong opponents of legislative intervention in the matter of an eight hours day, all miners; Mr. John Burns, of the Amalgamated Union of Engineers; Mr. J. H. Wilson, founder of the Sailors' Union, who began life as a cabin boy on a coaling vessel; and Mr. Keir Hardie, the fiery moving spirit of the Independent Labour Party, who began life as a miner, but now represents the general labourer.

These members had been working men in the strictest sense of the term, and yet they occupied an honourable position in the esteem of their colleagues in the House of Commons. They cannot be said to have forced themselves upon this august body, but they made a place for themselves. There could be no better proof that their elevation was normal and real and not the outcome of a sudden revolutionary movement, which introduced the triumphant passions of the populace into the legislative assembly. They were the political representatives of the modern organisation of labour and of its offspring, Trade Unionism. Each phase of evolution prepared the way for the next, and gave rise to a process of selection among working men as a body, by constantly bringing to the front new groups of more and more capable and picked men as new necessities arose. At last when the day came for them to penetrate to the House of Commons they proved their fitness for their new rôle.

Their presence there was not less significant from another point of view. It not only proved that the working classes of to-day are qualified to pick out and train a certain number of men of commanding abilities, but it also marked the introduction of a new element into the representation of the country. The interests of labour have now come upon the scene.

Under the old industrial system these interests differed little from those of the employers. The head of a small workshop generally worked there himself, and many of his men aimed at becoming small employers themselves, nor were the qualities requisite to achieve this legitimate end of a modest ambition rare. A trade could then be adequately represented by the heads of workshops, who were merely the best workmen of the trade in question.

Now it is not so. The head of a great industrial concern has no doubt a certain number of interests in common with his men, but he has others which are quite distinct from theirs, and many of which, though not really irreconcilable if wisely weighed and discussed, appear so at first sight. It is easy to see, therefore, that the representation of the employer's interests is not enough for the men's interests. What is called the industrial and commercial interest does not include the interest of the workers. Questions are almost always considered from the point of view of the employers, and, in an assembly of employers, superhuman virtue and disinterestedness would be required to prevent this. The English Parliament, which is in great part composed of landlords and manufacturers, is essentially an assembly of employers, and there could be no security for the defence of the separate interests of labour created by the modern evolution of industry unless the representatives of these interests found a place there.

The representatives of these interests have been trained in the school of labour organisations to calm discussion based on precise facts. In the Trade Union Congresses, Parliamentary usages and modes of procedure are jealously observed. I was at the Belfast Congress in 1893, and a regular attendant at the sittings. The impression which I carried away was one of great good sense on the part of the leaders, sustained attention on the part of the members, and of real competence on the part of the majority of the speakers. When I came away I did not feel it surprising that the men I had just heard could hold their own at Westminster.

The Trade Union Congress has often been called the Labour Parliament, and this is no idle compliment, though it may well be a prophecy. The House of Commons itself was originally only the representative of the interests of industry and com-

merce asserting themselves against the agricultural interest, which was then dominated by feudalism. As the agricultural interest freed itself from feudalism, the representatives of the counties were added to those of the burghs, and later on intellectual labour also sent a contingent. This gave county members, borough members, and members for the universities. This distinction, which has lasted until now, clearly proves that the House of Commons was only an assembly of the representatives of all branches of work in which the nation was engaged.

To-day, one of these branches has separated into two distinct shoots, and why, if these are capable of the necessary organisation, should not each have its own distinct representation? Why should not the Trade Union Congress become in the future the Labour Chamber? It has already no inconsiderable political influence, and though not one of the powers of the nation, it plays to some extent the part of those secondary assemblies in which politicians are trained by the management of local affairs.

Unfortunately, such a prospect has somewhat heated the minds of some labour leaders, who are in too great a hurry to wait for time to do its own work, and too eager to give a final form to nascent institutions. From this has sprung the very premature idea of an Independent Labour Party, of which Mr. Keir Hardie is the promotor, head, and chief supporter.

Of the twelve labour members in the late Parliament, ten had accepted the support of the Liberals, another had pledged himself to the Irish Nationalists, and only Mr. Keir Hardie was elected for West Ham as an independent candidate.

It is surely an extravagant claim to sit in a legislative assembly which is called upon to settle a series of questions as diverse as important, and to have no political programme beyond the narrow one of supporting the interests of labour. It is intelligible that the Trade Unions might wish to have a certain number of representatives in Parliament, but not that a constituency composed of varied elements should eliminate from its political calculation everything not concerned with the interests of labour.

The Independent Labour Party also errs in another direc-

tion, for it is no stranger to class antagonism, and the spirit which animates its leader is not conciliatory. These are not the conditions of success. If ever such a party is to achieve its purpose, it must be by means analogous to those which have led the present members to the House of Commons, and not by ill-timed declarations of war.

Nor is it necessary to overthrow the existing state of things in order to establish a new society on its ruins. The working men who are already engaged in organising the representation of their interests within the walls of the House of Commons have come there by natural causes and without revolutions. The interests they represent have their place in the political life of the time, and they will occupy a greater place, as stronger, wiser, and more experienced Unions turn out more men fitted to take a share in the government of the country.

In conclusion, we may say that the Trade Union movement has contributed to the elevation of the working classes in two ways. In the first place, it has brought to light an aristocracy of leaders who would otherwise have been lost amid the crowd. In the second place, it has given to the working classes an indirect though evident share in the control of public affairs.

## II. *Means of Elevation furnished by the Private Initiative of the Directing Classes.*

The elevation of capable workmen has been furthered in the present century by the active good-will of their employers. Those who are anxious to climb the social ladder find hands outstretched, not merely to welcome them, but also to help them upwards.

There is a great difference in this respect between the general feeling of the wealthy classes in France and in England. In France there is a general readiness to help others. Misfortune, however well deserved, awakens sentiments of pity. The incapable are saved from starvation, but there is a lack of vigorous efforts to reduce their number. In England the incapable and destitute are more harshly treated. Poor laws had to be organised in this country long before the

necessity for such legislation was recognised in other European countries, because of the insufficiency of private charity. On the other hand, private initiative is always ready to second any vigorous effort, and to assist the capable to rise.

The same difference may be observed in the education of children. French parents are extremely solicitous for their children: they work for them, save for them, stint themselves for them, and endeavour to make life pleasant and easy for them. All that is expected in return is docility, and parents find it hard to treat their children as men, and would fain keep them children. Many a French mother is inconsolable when her children grow up and she loses them. In England the chief aim is to accustom children to life as they will find it later. Education is an armed vigil, undertaken in preparation for the conflicts of life, and as soon as children are strong enough to fight for themselves the parents' task is finished. English parents do indeed *bring up* their children, they *bring* them *up* to the capacity of grown men. The idea of keeping them children by artificial means would be directly contrary to English notions of education. French parents aim at making good children, and spare no devotion or solicitude to attain this end. English parents possibly make fewer sacrifices, but their ideal is an enlightened one, and their affection, if undemonstrative, aims at the real good of their children, and at making men of them.

Workmen are treated in the same way. The object is not to make good workmen, *who will remain workmen*, but to educate them into capable and independent men, and to develop them by all possible means, without asking what will be the immediate result of such development. It is felt that the more enlightened they become, both intellectually and morally, the more capable will they become, and that the greater their individual worth the fewer dangers will the Labour Question present.

In such a conception there is not only a certain elevation, but also a very clear understanding of the times in which we live. The workman is more than ever responsible for himself, now that the modern organisation of industry has broken down the old framework and artificial protective measures are no longer of any avail. Nothing can supply the place of

capability on his part, and therefore everything should be done to urge him to render himself capable.

Various institutions are inspired by this ideal, and aim at realising it in different ways.

A lady, whose acquaintance I made at Birmingham at the house of a friend, offered to take me to a voluntary night school in which she was interested. I accepted her offer, and at half-past eight the following evening I found myself in a schoolroom belonging to one of the churches. Instead of the regular pupils I found about 250 men, all over twenty-one and some of them gray-haired. They were engaged in the most elementary studies, some spelling, others making pot-hooks with shaky hands which were more accustomed to handle heavy tools than to manage the light penholder which slipped about between their fingers. The more advanced were doing dictation and sums. The teachers were six young ladies, who accomplished their task quite simply, and did their best to assist the well-meant but inexperienced efforts of their scholars, hearing the beginners read, correcting the orthography of the more advanced, and encouraging all. Mutual instruction is of course largely practised, especially in the case of the beginners, who find it easy to get spelling heard by those who need practice in reading.

At half-past nine came prayers, followed by a hymn, and then the party separated with a hearty grasp of the hand. This was the time for questioning the ladies in charge of the work. One of them called my attention to a collecting-box at the door, into which most of the men dropped a penny or half-penny. "That is for lighting," she explained, "they like to do something for themselves and to be independent. Last Friday about 270 came, and we found 8s. 6d. in the box. They are glad to accept the hospitality of the parish schoolroom and our help, but it raises them in their own eyes to pay for the gas which they burn." I can testify that they are glad to prove their gratitude in a more tangible way. One of the ladies present was leaving Birmingham, and on the evening of my visit her pupils presented her with an enormous inkstand. The inkstand was hideous, but the intention was good.

The relations between teachers and scholars are not



entirely scholastic. At Christmas there is a tea, to which the men are invited to bring their wives and sweethearts, and a pleasant evening is spent without copybooks or readers. At one time cups, plates, teapots, etc., used to be hired for the Christmas tea, but this plan was expensive and stiff and not homely enough. The men resolved to remedy this, and collected for some months until they had enough to provide what was required for these modest entertainments, and they now enjoy their tea all the better.

From a scholastic point of view, the results are not to be despised. Men were pointed out to me who had been there every Friday for the last four, seven, and even nine years, and who, though completely ignorant when they started, were now able to write a good hand as well as to read and cypher. In a small adjoining room I saw the advanced class, which consisted of about twenty men, who were watching one of their number work a problem on the blackboard. Among the members were a postman, a blacksmith, and two brass-founders, who all had some education, but were anxious to improve themselves. The postman told me he was working to obtain a better position in the post-office.

It cannot be supposed that the ladies who leave a comfortable home, and give up an evening to teaching these men to read, write, and count, are actuated by anything but disinterested motives. In a town like Birmingham, which consists of more than 500,000 inhabitants, they cannot expect anything from the gratitude of their pupils. When the latter are in a position to profit by what they have learned, they will forsake the night school, but they will have acquired a means of elevation which will be of use to them, and they will remember that in the wealthy classes there are persons ready to rejoice at their success. This is a great preservative against class antagonism.

The example just given is not an isolated one. A Birmingham barrister told me of his interest in an early Sunday School, where much the same work is done as in the voluntary night schools, and expressed his gratification at the results obtained. He told me that to his own knowledge many a man had got his first education at this school, having never had any other within his reach, and had done well in after life. He men-

tioned the case of an ex-mayor of Birmingham, who had begun life as a working man and learned to read in the early Sunday School. There too the relations between teachers and pupils are not purely scholastic. A rich Quaker who teaches in the school, has acted as sleeping partner to fourteen pupils in turn, in order to help them to start business for themselves, and says he has never lost a penny. Such a case is clear evidence of the desire to help capable men to rise, and of the power to discover them.

Every one has heard of the University Extension Movement, under whose auspices lectures and courses are delivered by young University men to working-class audiences in populous centres. There, of course, there is no intention of supplying elementary knowledge of a useful kind. The end in view, though less immediately practical, is inspired by an ideal which is at once just and comprehensive. It is to open the minds of men who are absorbed in their day's toil to the beauties of literature and art, to give them a taste for intellectual pleasures, to make a break in the monotony of a dull life, and to procure them healthy enjoyments. At the same time, the young lecturers engaged in the work learn to understand a class from whom they are separated by their mode of life and education, so that University Extension, which began in an outburst of generous feeling, has had two beneficial results. Both teachers and pupils have learned something; the former have found that the working man possesses latent intellectual abilities, while the latter have had the veil lifted, which hid the treasures of thought from their eyes. Such contact has led to mutual esteem and confidence. From this movement has sprung Toynbee Hall, a link between the notorious quarter of Whitechapel and the flower of the intellectual youth of the country, and a school which has trained many of the younger experts who have devoted their time and talents to sounding the problems affecting the labouring classes, as colleagues of Mr. Charles Booth, members of the Labour Commission, etc. These apostles are eager to spread the work in which they are engaged. It is not so very long since Mr. Geoffrey Drage, secretary to the Labour Commission, delivered a lecture to the Eton boys, entitled "Eton and the Labour Question." Addressing the boys on whom rest the hopes of the English aristocracy, he urged

them to swell the ranks of the University Extension Movement in due course, reminding them that it was impossible to sway the destinies of a people without some knowledge of it, and that they could never know the people aright unless they had felt something of the active sympathy which springs from personal contact. Speaking with the double authority of an old Etonian and a man of the world, he told them that their education would be very incomplete if they remained in ignorance of the lives of the majority of their fellow-countrymen, and that they would be incapable of understanding the part they would be called upon to play and but ill prepared to play it well. Before this exclusive audience he lauded the fine qualities he had met with among the working classes, he explained and condoned the attitude of revolt assumed by certain sections, and strove to dissipate the misunderstandings on which so many social prejudices are based.

Nor does the action of the directing classes aim only at the intellectual development of the workers; it also considers their moral development and their physical well-being. It is unnecessary to quote examples, such as temperance societies, workmen's clubs founded by private individuals, like the People's Palace, refuges, free libraries, and private parks thrown open to the public. Instead of attempting to give a list which would be tedious without being exhaustive, let us rather examine the working of one such institution. We shall find the same salient characteristic as in all the others, a desire to raise the unfortunate to a higher level rather than to help them to bear their misfortunes.

One of the most important of social questions concerns the housing of the working classes. At Glasgow it presents itself in a very acute form, and the reason has already been pointed out. The working-class families are of Irish, Highland, or Lowland origin, with habits of overcrowding which dispose them to put up with unhealthy places of abode. The high value of land makes its influence felt in the same direction, and unemployment, low wages, and the negligence of landlords do the rest.<sup>1</sup> The municipality of Glasgow has been forced to

<sup>1</sup> Cholera seems to have a special affection for Glasgow, and the fact will not surprise any one who has sailed down the fetid estuary of the Clyde or visited the poorer quarters.

check the growing proportions of this evil, and about twenty-five years ago began to condemn certain properties and to purchase and demolish them. At the present time, rightly judging that such a proceeding would be ruinous, and that landlords have had sufficient warning, it now orders negligent landlords to put their property into proper repair or not to let it.

But these police regulations, though justifiable, can produce only a negative effect. The recognition of this truth has led a society of practical philanthropists, known as the "Workmen's Dwellings Company, Limited," to attack the problem from the practical side, and to offer decent houses to the poorer sections of the working class.

The Workmen's Dwellings Company has all the appearance of a financial speculation, and it is so in a sense, with the proviso that, after paying a dividend of 5 per cent, any surplus profit shall be devoted to philanthropic purposes. The Secretary explained the aims and objects of the Company to me in a few words. "We believe it is possible for the working classes of Glasgow to be decently lodged, even the poorest of them. We also think that it ought to pay, and we have proved that it can be made to do so. Our Company is conducted on strict business principles, and no indulgence is shown to tenants who fail to pay, as we consider we should be doing them but a poor service if we let them run into debt. We incur no expense from which we can expect no return, because in that case our example would prove nothing. Now let us take a cab and go over to Cathedral Court."

Cathedral Court was the Company's first experiment. It consists of two new blocks of buildings facing each other, with a large court between. The third side is formed by adjoining buildings, and the fourth is open to allow of the free admission of air. "We bought the land at £1:6s. per square yard," said the Secretary, "and it was too dear, so that we only make 3 per cent on Cathedral Court. To make 5 per cent we ought not to have given more than £1 per square yard; but, as I told you, we began in Cathedral Court, and we had to buy our experience."

Both blocks are alike. There is a stone staircase at the end nearest to the unenclosed side of the court, which com-

municates with the outside air on each landing by means of a large opening with iron railings, a system which, though sanitary, is bitterly cold in winter. Each flat communicates with the staircase by a passage. The designer evidently intended to wage war against microbes, and to admit the piercing wind of the north to the inhabitants' very doors. On the top floor there is a large wash-house common to all the tenants, and there is an abundant supply of water wherever it is wanted.<sup>1</sup>

We visited several families in Cathedral Court. One family, where there were two children and the wife was still young, had only 15s. a week, and paid 9s. a month rent. Next door lived a plasterer, earning from 25s. to 30s. a week, and paying the same rent. Like the last family he was content with a one-roomed house, but there were only his wife and himself. I learned from the Secretary that the average wage of families living in the Court is 23s. a week, including what the children earn. This is not much, but it must be remembered that some of the families have only 15s. or 18s. a week. All the rooms were well kept, although our selections were guided by chance. The population of the Court is poor, but steady and respectable.

There are no rooms to let, and the caretaker has a large number of applications, so that a vacancy is immediately filled. I glanced over the list of applications, each of which must be accompanied by references and certain information. I saw one from two sisters, each earning 12s. a week, who wished to live together. An umbrella-coverer stated that she earned only 8s. a week. A metal-worker earned 22s. a week, and was willing to pay 9s. a month rent. The tenants are drawn, not from among the well-paid workers earning from 30s. to 40s. a week, but from among those who cannot afford to pay a high rent and yet wish to get out of the holes in which they have to live. Applications are refused from those whose wages are sufficiently high to allow them to get proper accommodation elsewhere. The Company hopes to make its property a step ladder, and to

<sup>1</sup> The weekly rent varies from 1s. 7½d. to 2s. 3d. a week for one room, and from 2s. 4½d. to 3s. for two rooms. The average rent is 2s. for a single room, and 2s. 8d. for two rooms. (Report of the Directors to the Fifth Ordinary General Meeting of Shareholders, 29th August 1894.)

enable workers to rise step by step to a comfortable home. The large number of applications proves the need for its existence, and shows that it has met an existing and clearly-felt want.

In George Court the Company has not put up new buildings, but has contented itself by putting a nest of old houses into good repair as far as possible. Light and air have been admitted by the demolition of some of the buildings, water and gas have been put in, and though the result is not so good as in Cathedral Court, yet the working classes get good houses, and the Company makes  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, which helps to compensate in some measure for the 3 per cent which is all that Cathedral Court produces.

To understand how much has been done, the houses near George Court must be visited. We went into one quite near, and our choice was an admirable one. It was a single room on the ground floor, and the floor consisted of great stones and holes alternately. It was occupied by a man and five women, and contained no bed or furniture of any kind. There were no panes in the window, the shutters were closed to keep out the rain, and only a little light struggled in through the chinks. My companion questioned these six persons sternly, and asked what they were doing there, and whether they had the landlord's permission. We were shown a book, which stated that the room was let for 6s. a month, and was inhabited by three persons, as the police regulations require a certain cubic space for each person. We were told that three of the women were visitors, but they were probably deceiving us. The women were of the lowest class, filthy, ragged, and insolent.

As we came away, the Secretary said to me, "If landlords realised their responsibilities, there would be no asylum for vice and crime anywhere in Glasgow, and if they understood their own interests they would build decent lodgings, because, as I have told you, it pays better than to let such holes."

Here is an example of a well-managed undertaking, conducted in such a way as to set an example capable of imitation, which is a great matter. It is managed in a practical manner, with good sense and firmness, and it renders a service of the highest order to respectable but poorly-paid families, who are enabled to escape from moral conditions of odious promiscuity,

and from unsanitary physical conditions. Thus it is really raising them, which is a far better thing to do than to pay the rent in some case of necessity, though far more difficult. In the former case it is enough to give a little money; in the latter case it is necessary to give a part of one's time and a part of oneself. The Secretary often visits the property owned by the Company, which is always in search of new openings, and which, while solving the question of housing an ever-increasing number of families, is teaching a most salutary lesson.<sup>1</sup> It is showing how useful services can be rendered by those willing to devote themselves to such work, and it is teaching landlords that it is bad policy to neglect their duties. This is very characteristic of English methods of social effort, and I have therefore dwelt at some length on the Glasgow Workmen's Dwellings Company. It is an excellent example of the means of elevation put within reach of the working classes by the governing classes.<sup>2</sup>

We can now understand how the English working class has succeeded in rising socially, partly through the nature of the evolution which has aroused and focussed their efforts, and partly by the assistance of those above them. Other causes, however, have contributed to the same end. The State and the municipalities have, to use a hackneyed phrase, done a great deal for the working classes. What have they really done? What part have they played in the general upward movement? This is a question of much interest at a time when Socialistic theories are in great favour.

### III. *Means of Elevation provided by the Public Authorities.*

The means of elevation provided by the public authorities

<sup>1</sup> My visit took place in August 1893, and the Company was then building a third block on the other side of the Clyde. In August 1894 the Directors' Report stated that the new block, Ardgowan Place, had been occupied for sixteen weeks.

<sup>2</sup> Some allusion should be made to Miss Octavia Hill's excellent work in the same direction. Miss Hill, with Mr. Ruskin's assistance, transformed a large amount of property, and the result has been a dividend of 4 per cent on the capital laid out.—*Le Logement de l'Ouvrier et du Pauvre*, par A. Raffalovich, pp. 192 to 201. (Very similar work is being done in Edinburgh by the Edinburgh Social Union, and elsewhere, with similar results.—*Trans.*)

differ considerably, notwithstanding the outward similarity of their form as laws and regulations.

The intervention of public bodies in social questions is too often judged as a whole, and is approved or condemned without distinction. It is an easy method for the partisan, but it errs in including under the same sweeping approval or condemnation measures inspired by very different motives, and producing results of opposite nature.

It is therefore indispensable to draw distinctions, as in the case of Trade Unionism, between measures which tend to facilitate modern evolution and those which endeavour to go counter to it, between those which organise, regulate, and give legal recognition to forces already at work and those which obstruct them.

English legislation affords many instances of action which would come under the first head.

Let us take, for example, the law concerning free education. It has done nothing more in the Lowlands of Scotland, for instance, than consecrate a practice of long standing. Attention has already been called to the development and prosperity of the Scottish educational system under the influence of Presbyterianism. Elsewhere it met a recognised want. When we find pupils whose ages range from twenty to fifty years of age ready to go to evening schools after a hard day's work, or to give up the forenoon of their only day of rest in order to learn to read, as we saw in Birmingham, the need for more universal education is evidently making itself felt. The reason is not far to seek. A factory operative often finds himself at a disadvantage if he cannot read directions or cautions, and he also needs to keep in touch with what is going on in the world in order to betake himself to another town or to a different industry, if he is either dismissed from his own factory or sees a chance of doing better elsewhere. His lack of an elementary education is therefore a drawback to him. This is the general opinion of all enlightened persons in all classes, and the measure aroused no opposition. It may therefore be taken that it merely gave legal force to a general desire. Its results have been very salutary.

Or, again, let us take the law which recognised the existence of Trade Unions as legal, or Mr. Mundella's action with



regard to Boards of Arbitration. These are in a sense customary laws, laws based on concrete precedents, and which merely recognised established usages and ready constituted bodies endowed with full vitality.

In other departments the State has created important official institutions, intended, like the South Kensington Museum, to spread and develop the taste for art, or, like the Labour Department of the Board of Trade, to conduct inquiries, become a centre of information, and throw light on the Labour Question. Such institutions imply no constraint; they are auxiliary means of assistance offered to the working classes.

South Kensington, not content with generously throwing open its galleries to the public, is also at the same time a sort of national school of decorative art. It offers prizes, supplies models, and assists every promising form of effort. "Our principle," said Mr. Alan S. Cole, the director of the Science and Art Department, "is to help all who are doing anything to help themselves *and only those*. Unless they take the first step themselves it is useless to come and ask for our assistance."

Under the head of measures which meet a general want and tend to the organisation of industry, certain compulsory measures must be included.

Among these may be classed municipal regulations relating to unsanitary dwellings, and the laws relating to the inspection of factories and the employment of children. Their effect is chiefly negative, they check the open manifestation of certain abuses, but they do not attack the cause, as we remarked in the case of working-class dwellings in Glasgow. But when, as in Glasgow, the restrictions imposed by public authority are supplemented by the energetic action of individuals, they contribute in a very useful manner to the general end in view. The laws relating to the employment of children and the inspection of factories had been asked for long before they were passed, and the officials entrusted with the task of carrying them into execution found supporters among the workers themselves and no opposition on the part of employers.<sup>1</sup> Here there is

<sup>1</sup> This was not the case in the early part of the century, in 1802, 1819, 1832, and 1847, when the first laws restricting the hours of work of women and children in factories were passed. In 1847 Mr. John Bright, M.P., so clear-sighted a man on other points, opposed the passing of the Act with all his might.

legal compulsion, but it is of a kind acceptable to the nation, and is in fact the expression of a general wish.

We must also bear in mind that the aim of such legislation is to organise, and not to destroy, the new situation created by the industrial evolution. The development of machinery dispenses with physical strength in the workers and makes it possible to employ children in factories. Consequently many poor families would be tempted to send boys and girls of ten or eleven into factories, at an age when their education would be incomplete and their health likely to suffer from too prolonged exertion. Hence arise the innumerable regulations to which we have often had occasion to refer, regulations in large measure left to the discretion of the School Boards, which decide under what conditions children may be employed as half-timers or full-timers. Such regulations are easily modified to suit local conditions, and prevent the ranks of the incapable from being swollen by ignorant and prematurely exhausted factory operatives. Their aim is to rear up a generation of capable men and women.

Here then are a set of cases in which official intervention has roused no objection and has been of service. It is difficult to quarrel with it when employed in this spirit. But we cannot lay too much stress on the fact that in all these cases two important conditions were present which tended to make the law fruitful. In the first place, the legislation in question was the response to a precise and general expression of public opinion, and to the universal wish of the interested parties; and in the second place, it tended in the direction of industrial evolution and not counter to it.

The question of a compulsory eight hours day is a case in point. A large majority of miners are in favour of it, but it is strenuously and uncompromisingly opposed by the Durham and Northumberland men. This circumstance carries sufficient weight to make thoughtful statesmen doubt the expediency of legislation and abstain from voting. Mr. Gladstone explained his position frankly in a letter already quoted. Mr. John Morley's attitude on this question is well known. Thus the existence of a majority in favour of compulsion is not recognised as a sufficient reason for forcing it upon the minority. Such a truly liberal spirit is the best safeguard against the abuse of legislation.

The eight hours question differs in another respect from those included in the first group. It would not only be unjust to a compact minority but it would also restrict production by legislative means. Such a conception is antiquated and borrowed from the methods of the old corporations, aggravated by modern centralising tendencies, and directly opposed to the progress of industrial and commercial evolution. Yet this is evidently what its promoters are aiming at, for they are radically opposed to all proposals for local option, which would enact a shorter working day for districts which wished it. What they desire is to provide work for a larger number of persons, by forbidding those actually employed to work the longer day. Therefore we may without hesitation class the compulsory eight hours day among measures of a Socialistic tendency, which endeavour to resist the evolution at work by resorting to official intervention. If it is adopted for mines in some future Parliament, which is by no means improbable, it will be a new and dangerous innovation in the legislation of this country, and will be the first triumph of the Socialistic spirit which is tending to deflect the Trade Unions from the course to which they have hitherto owed their success.

The Socialist party has been agitating very noisily in congresses, meetings of working men, and various publications. It is quite common to meet working men and public men who are in favour of Socialism. We have frequently pointed out that recourse to legislative protection is, in the case of working men, a clear mark of their own insufficiency, and that the trades which cry out for this protection are either organised on a vicious system which they refuse to change or are in some way involved in the old difficulties of the closed trade. On this point enough has already been said. But although the Socialistic tendencies of the plumbers, coopers, and a section of miners are an evident sign of weakness, it may be that similar tendencies on the part of statesmen and public men are due to another cause. This is a point which must be examined.

It is very difficult to know the real views of the section of the Labour Party which calls itself Socialist. Some, like Mr. Keir Hardie, take up an uncompromising position, while others, like Mr. John Burns or Mr. J. H. Wilson, accept the existing organisation and try to turn it to the best account. Do they

really believe in the efficacy of theoretical Socialism? This is doubtful, but they believe in future changes of an undefined kind which the world of labour expects, and which it expects through Socialism. They are afraid of not being thought Socialists, they think the platform a good one and they do not wish to be robbed of it. Hence arise those discussions in which pure Socialists affirm their principles and secure the votes of the leaders, who in their turn secure the votes of their friends. At the Trade Union Congress of 1893 a discussion of the following kind took place. Mr. Ben Tillet and Mr. J. H. Wilson had proposed to create the electoral association of the Labour Party which exists to-day, and a Mr. James Macdonald introduced an amendment to the effect that every candidate of the association should pledge himself to support the principle of the collective ownership and control of all means of production and distribution.<sup>1</sup> This was complete enough as a programme. Mr. J. H. Wilson, who had couched the motion in terms which did not exact this pledge from candidates, no doubt felt that this was a trap, and spoke in favour of the amendment. Mr. John Burns did the same and the amendment was carried. Thus the Trade Unions formally declared themselves in favour of Collectivism of a very advanced type, and they endorsed this declaration at the Congress of 1894.

Must we conclude from this that they are Collectivists? In our judgment it would be a serious mistake to come to this conclusion from a resolution couched in terms so abstract. Big words do not make much impression on Englishmen.

It would also be necessary to know exactly what their Collectivism or Socialism is, for it frequently differs considerably from the doctrines promulgated under the same name on the Continent. For example, we hear a good deal in England about Municipal Socialism. This illustrates very well the deceptive character of language. Municipal Socialism is the right of a town to undertake the management of its own affairs. If a town controls its own lighting or its own water supply or its own drainage, instead of leaving such matters to private companies, it is Municipal Socialism! The term is a purely fanciful one. Socialism is not the public administration

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of Wednesday, 6th September 1893.

of a public interest, but the public administration of a private interest.

From the success of this so-called Socialism, arguments are sometimes drawn in favour of Socialism in the strict sense. Mr. Chamberlain, M.P., published an article in the *North American Review* for May 1891 on "Favourable Aspects of State Socialism," in which he drew attention to the improvements effected by the municipality of Birmingham. The picture was accurate and masterly, but the argument was based on an unfortunate confusion of terms. The town of Birmingham is one of the best administered in the kingdom, and has been remarkably successful in organising and placing under municipal control the supply of the majority of its needs. But this does not prove that the State could with advantage and without danger come to the aid of badly managed private interests, and it is this which is the very essence of State Socialism.

I had the good fortune to have a long conversation on this question with Mr. Sidney Webb, the chairman of the Technical Education Committee of the London County Council, and a prominent member of the Fabian Society. Municipal Socialism is the most striking feature in his programme, and the one which his own position would best enable him to put into practice. He further avows definite Collectivist views, but the turn he gives them, the end he assigns to them, and the general spirit with which he inspires them would make them unrecognisable in the eyes of a French or German Collectivist.

For instance, he declares himself in favour of the English system of the concentration of land in a few hands. That the Duke of Westminster should possess a whole quarter of London does not shock him in the least, and he regards it as a step towards Collectivism. "I would infinitely rather," he said, "see London divided among ten dukes, as it is, than owned by a crowd of landlords. The great landlords of London are rich, they can build comfortable houses with better conditions of sanitation, and thus all the tenants benefit."

Mr. Webb does not wish to hand over property to the incapable; on the contrary, he exaggerates the qualities necessary to make a landlord. He would not let working men own their own houses, and would centralise land in the hands

of great landlords, and industry in great factories, and trade in great firms. His ideas have much in common with those of Henry George, although he does not think his programme goes far enough, or that the single tax is a panacea sufficient to attain all the ends in view.

Mr. Webb's chief concern is to assure to each citizen, not an equal share of wealth or happiness, but an equal chance to start in life. Although much in his programme may seem to us illusive, yet it cannot be said that he would break the spring of individual energy like the Continental Socialists, nor does he demoralise the working classes by promising them happiness without work.

This point is extremely important. Socialism on the Continent tends to demoralise the worker by favouring his incapacity and dissuading him from personal exertion. Mr. Webb's Collectivism, on the other hand, offers a prize to the most capable, and cannot, therefore, exert the same disastrous influence upon the elevation of the working class, the great necessity of modern times.

However threatening may be the position of Socialism in England, and whatever legislative triumphs it may be destined to achieve, there is no reason to fear that it will check the marked upward tendency of the working class. Its most earnest and prominent advocates do not sacrifice to it the first essential thing in life, the sense of responsibility and the love of effort.

This is due to the influence of the English environment, without some study of which, as it affects the working classes of England, we should not have an adequate conception of the means of elevation within their reach.

#### IV. *Means of Elevation due to the English Character.*

"The mind of England," said Disraeli in his novel *Sybil*, "is the mind ever of the rising race." This country, in which tradition has taken such deep root, has never failed to supply sap to young shoots from the parent trunk which give promise of vigorous life. The feeling of England is always with those who are making their way upwards.

We have again and again alluded to this phenomenon in

education, which is so all-important. The immense majority of Englishmen are educated for work, for a life of activity. Parents are far more concerned to fit their children for the struggle of life than to shield them against the necessity for it. There is no piling up of money for children, who are educated to become capable of providing for themselves, instead of being well provided for but incapable.

As a consequence, work and effort are held in general esteem by the nation as a whole. There is a real sympathy for rising men, which is in itself a powerful incentive to individual energy. The bent given by parents to the education of their children is so strongly in this direction that all the forces of the nation are at work to favour the ascent of the capable.

No means are neglected to bring about this end. There is a deliberate devotion to athletic sports, because they supply physical training to the young and keep older men supple and vigorous, and because they train all to physical endurance and increase their general efficiency.

Muscular development, however, is not enough. There must also be a strong moral fibre, an education of the will, a discipline of endurance for the moral nature, and this necessity is recognised in practice. The national virtue is self-control.

To this must be added the national seriousness. Englishmen joke rarely and with difficulty. They are often witty, but the source of much English humour lies in a philosophic and serious view of things on the part of an individual, which unexpectedly contrasts the reality with the conventional view and brings out its ridiculous side. Examples will be found in the pages of Thackeray, Bulwer Lytton, Dickens, and others, but none of the lightness of French wit. It is not wise to joke with an Englishman unless you explain beforehand that you do not wish to be taken seriously. Nothing so scandalises and disconcerts him as the French tendency to relieve the strain by an unexpected jest when treating a serious matter. He himself acts with conviction, and is not turned from his purpose by side issues, he keeps his eyes fixed on the end in view, and concentrates his whole will and energy on what he is doing. Such a man is often called original by foreigners, when the object in view seems incommensurate with the ex-

penditure of force, but nevertheless it is this habit of throwing the whole of himself into what he undertakes that gives an Englishman such power in life.

Both persuasion and compulsion are called into requisition for the development of self-control and seriousness. These virtues are extolled from the pulpit, and are expected in outward demeanour. Without a show of them at any rate a man would be excluded from all respectable society. On Sunday itinerant preachers are to be found at the street corners and in the public parks urging people to good conduct. Public-houses are shut in many towns to prevent people from getting drunk in public, for to get drunk is to lose self-control.

Outlets have to be found for all the energies aroused and stimulated by such an education. Such outlets have been multiplied to infinity in the nineteenth century, which has witnessed the varied applications of modern science. The whole world has been thrown open to enterprise of every kind by the development of means of rapid transit, and productive forces of unknown power have been put at the disposal of human activity, which is thus assured of a prize of unprecedented value.

England was marvellously prepared to profit by these new conditions, and has succeeded by their aid in developing her immense colonial empire and in creating her triumphant industry. Abroad she has organised the great movement of spontaneous emigration which has created new English lands in every quarter of the globe. At home she has made herself the greatest manufacturing nation in the world, and has thus proved that she need fear no rival. Her sons succeed on foreign shores where others fail, and her commerce proudly rejects any protective barriers, and affirms its superiority by invading those countries where the population is too dense for Englishmen to settle.

All this England has done by essentially simple means, exclusively through the national system of education and through the development of the special capacities of each individual. In case of need, her diplomacy, her maritime power, and her armies lend vigorous aid to the individual enterprises of her sons but do not anticipate them. They are the auxiliaries of private initiative.



In the face of such results, by which the whole nation profits and in which the whole nation co-operates, the English working classes should put their unshaken confidence in these simple individual methods, and all the more so because the evolution of industry and commerce has given them a new efficacy. Under the old system of industrial organisation the worker moved in a narrow sphere, and was, so to speak, caught in toils from which he could only free himself with difficulty. The means of elevation offered by his environment were to some extent paralysed by circumstances. To-day they have freer play. The further evolution advances, and the more the worker's point of departure becomes indifferent, the more easy does it become for him to prove his individual worth.

If he resists this evolution he refuses to rise, he vows himself to mediocrity, he allows his faculties to become atrophied in the deceptive calm of a trade which offers neither horizon nor security.

If he accepts it and girds on his armour, he takes a wise and manly course, which often lifts him out of mediocrity so far as his material life is concerned, and always out of moral mediocrity.

The future belongs, not to those complex methods which permit the worker to remain in mediocrity, but to the simple ones which enable him to rise out of it.

THE END



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