

forgotten how many children, mere infants, are employed in the production of those cheap goods in the manufacture of which colonials are unable to compete with older countries. In the sixties there were seven thousand children employed in straw-plaiting, generally in the fourth and often between third and fourth year of age. In 1864, a Parliamentary Commission reported that babies of two and a half years old were at work. There are now seventy thousand children employed under the English Factory Act. The *Schoolmaster* thus describes the daily work of one of these, a girl of eleven, under the "half-time system": "The child rose soon after 5 a.m., and walked through the frost and snow nearly two miles to the mill. Work commenced at 6 a.m., and continued till half-past 8 a.m., when there was an interval for breakfast, the child not leaving the mill. At 9, work again till half-past 12, and then dinner in the mill. At twenty minutes past 1 the child trudged off to school." The overwork arising from a combination of educational drudgery and manual labour performed on the same day must have a deleterious effect upon the growing frames of infant workers. Our New Zealand children know no such terrible strain upon their nurture and development as their cousins over-seas. Our Factory Act, while making provisions for bodily health by limiting the age when work in factories should begin to those over fourteen years of age, also provides for their intellectual culture by directing that the children must have passed the Fourth Standard of the State Schools, or an equivalent examination, before engagement.

The provision made in the 3rd clause of the Shop Act should also apply to factories—viz., that, whenever any day in the week is a public holiday, then it shall not be incumbent on any occupier who closed his factory on such public holiday or half-holiday to close it also on the half-holiday provided by this Act. As a case of hardship in point, I may adduce the fact that in one town in which the half-holiday is on Wednesday the factory-owner closed for a public holiday on Tuesday, and still had to close for the half-holiday on Wednesday.

Any workrooms beneath the surface of the ground, as in cellars, &c., should be prohibited. Even if they are dry and warm, which is sometimes doubtful, they need artificial light so long, especially in winter, as to be trying to the eyesight and general health of workers.

The section of the Act, allowing the Inspector to grant permission to work overtime on certain half-holidays, has caused some dissatisfaction among those who do not grudge working overtime on the evenings of ordinary days. The circumstances under which such overtime on half-holidays should be granted should present evidence of extreme urgency before permission is allowed; and I have instructed Inspectors to regard with jealousy any attempt at infraction of the sacredness of the half-holiday allowed to wage-earners. Complaints have also been received as to the forty-eight hour working-week for women. They state that the provision made in the old Act for an eight-hour day, with a holiday after 1 o'clock on the Saturday, or other half-holiday, gave a forty-five hours week for workers, while they are now compelled to work more than eight hours a day to get the half-holiday. It is a point for legislators to decide whether the strict eight-hour day for women shall be adhered to, or the forty-eight-hour week.

The ticket-marking section of the new Act has had a good effect in preventing owners of factories giving out material to be made up by people whose dwellings are unfit to be used as workshops in which human clothing should be manufactured. It has probably not prevented poor women from obtaining work, but now, where any two persons (such as mother and daughter, or two friends) choose to work together, they can register as a factory, and their workshop be under proper inspection. I would strongly recommend the introduction of a Bill to abolish fees for such small establishments as those in question, and would suggest that no fee should be charged for registration of a factory unless more than two persons are working therein.

The present regulation as to ticketing goods has had no deterrent effect on industry, but has had its intended result—viz., to confine, as far as possible, the manufacture of clothing, &c., to well-ventilated, wholesome workshops, where the lives of employes are more safe and comfortable than if the workers were driven by competition to slave for unlimited hours at starvation rates in filthy hovels. Of course, the competition induced through piece-work, executed by women for pocket-money, or by girls partly supported by their parents, will always be a curse to the genuine workwoman so long as piece-work is allowed to be given out at all.

The wages paid to factory-workers in the Australasian Colonies are justified by the economic result. The class of factory-hand on this side of the world is so much stronger and better in every way—in physique, intelligence, and education—that the principle of high wages for superior work is established. I have been informed by an employer having large establishments in Great Britain, and some in this colony, that the average rates paid by him to women workers in England is from 10s. to 15s. a week. The New Zealand branch of his firm pays its girls from £1 to £1 10s. a week, and can well afford to do so, because the superior strength and ability of the colonial hand allows a class of material to be committed to their charge which is never allowed to be touched by the employes in the Old Country. The manager of Messrs. Bell and Black's match factory tells the same story—that it pays to give colonial girls more in response to the more effective output of the individual.

In regard to the establishment of match factories, especial attention has been given to the sanitary conditions surrounding the manufacture. The occupiers have the advantage of their premises being selected and arranged under a strict Factory Act, and close inspection. In older countries all sorts of buildings (some, generations old) are used for trade purposes for which they were never built or intended, and the health of workpeople was, until lately, thought of little consequence. It is comparatively easy for a firm starting a new business in properly-arranged buildings to see that hygienic conditions are attended to. Under such provisions there is little danger to the working-girls of contracting "phossy-jaw" or other diseases to which makers of matches are liable, as the girls are mostly employed in filling boxes. If the hands are washed before food is touched there is little peril to the worker. One or two men, employed in well-ventilated outbuildings, manage that part of the business in which the melted phosphorus gives off fumes.