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THE EIGHT HOURS DAY IN VICTORIA

A WEEK before the May-day demonstrations of last year, at which the working men of Europe and America assembled and cried together to their governments for an eight hours day of labour, the happier working men of Victoria were celebrating the thirty-fourth anniversary of the attainment of the boon. The 21st of April was Eight Hours Demonstration Day, which has now grown to be the national festival of the colony, and drew to Melbourne last year the greatest throng of people ever seen in the city. The usual procession of the eight-hour trades—composed of 8,000 men and representing fifty separate trades—marched through the principal streets from the Trades Hall, the parliament-house of labour, on to the Friendly Society Gardens, labour's beautiful pleasure-ground. Before them was borne the old patched but venerated banner of 1856, inscribed with the principle, 'Eight hours work, eight hours recreation, eight hours rest.' Then came the fifty trades in the order of ballot, each with its flags and music and appropriate historical and industrial tableaux, while the rear was brought up by two drags containing the pioneers of the movement, the last grey survivors of those who fought in its first battles and walked in its first processions thirty years ago. In 1857 only 700 men and only nine separate trades took part in the demonstration, and though they played 'God Save the Queen' as they passed the government offices, they kept the balance right by playing the 'Marseillaise' when they reached the Houses of Parliament; but now there is not a turbulent thought; Parliament adjourns for the day, the Colonial offices are closed, and the Governor-General, after witnessing the show from the Treasury windows, drives on to the Gardens, receives a loyal address as the representative of the Queen, and then, with leading statesmen and some of the largest employers of labour, sits down to a banquet as the guest of the

working men. Speeches are made in which capitalists, politicians, and labourers, all rejoice together over an experiment that once caused many anxieties, but which they now acknowledge has, without doing any injury to trade, given the workpeople time to live the life of rational beings, and in the opinion of some of the speakers, has even developed that remarkable love of out-door enjoyments which is now creating a Merrier England under the Southern Cross. Meanwhile, the great body of the procession disperses over the grounds, where they are joined by their wives, families, and friends, and busy themselves with sports, music, and dancing till nightfall. Thirty thousand people swarm about the gardens, but intemperance is not common; and the whole drawings of the day, always a very considerable sum, are given to a public charity as a thank-offering for the blessing whose acquisition is commemorated. Only one shadow falls across the impressive celebration—labour's inevitable shadow, it appears, even under an eight hours system in a new country—the unemployed, a handful of whom attempted last year, as a demonstration that the eight hours day was no general panacea, to break their way into the procession under a black flag, inscribed with the fierce legend, 'Feed on our flesh and blood, ye capitalist hyena; it is your funeral feast.'

It is natural to think that the prolonged and now almost national experiment, which is the occasion of such universal congratulation every year in the community of Victoria, must, if we could only ascertain the facts of it with any degree of accuracy, have light to throw on some of those puzzling questions on which the oracles are now returning contradictory answers. It is true the system has only become general in the colony very recently, and it is not so general yet in Ballarat and Geelong as in Melbourne. The building trades, everywhere the pioneers of short-hour movements—the masons, quarrymen, bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers, plumbers, painters, and builders' labourers—have enjoyed it uninterruptedly, though not without severe struggles, since 1856. The coachbuilders also won it at the same time, but lost it in 1859, and did not recover it again for more than twenty years. In amends, however, the iron trades—the engineers, boiler-makers, and iron-moulders—obtained it in 1859, but for the next ten years the only accession to the movement were the shipwrights. From 1869 to 1879 only five more trades joined—the seamen, sailmakers, brickmakers, gas-stokers, and mill-sawyers. In 1879 there were seventeen eight-hour trades in Melbourne, in 1883 there were still only twenty; but in 1884 there were nine new

accessions, in 1885 there were five more, in 1886 ten more, and in 1888 four. The new accessions include every variety of occupation, skilled and unskilled—bakers, brewers, saddlers, tobacco-nists, glassbottle-makers, bootmakers, wharf-labourers, agricultural implement-makers, tanners and curriers, cutters and trimmers, pressers, brassfounders, portmanteau-makers, timber-yard employés, aerated water and cordial makers ironworkers' assistants, railway and public service labourers (navvies), wood-turners, brushmakers, wicker-workers, cigar-makers, corporation labourers (scavengers), engine-drivers, maltsters' assistants, furniture trades employés, confectioners, coopers, coachbuilders, felt hatters, printers, bookbinders, tinsmiths and japanners, farriers. The only trades who still work long hours are the dyers, the tailors (except the cutters, trimmers, and pressers), the textile workers, and the ropemakers. Agricultural labour, too, remains out of the short-hour movement; but the miners, the most numerous industrial occupation in Victoria, among whom the eight hours shift had obtained for many years only very partially, have now adopted it more generally in consequence of the Mines Regulation Acts 1883 and 1886. These Acts, however, do not apply to alluvial mining, in which accordingly long hours still prevail. Though, as thus appears, less than a third of the trades of the colony have twenty years' experience of the eight hours day, these trades include much more than half the whole working class; and it is now estimated that only about a fourth of the workpeople of Victoria work more than eight hours a day.

I have been admonished by a weighty political writer that all this experience contains no possible lesson for England, because the circumstances of a new colony are entirely different from the circumstances of the mother country. And no doubt it may be easier to secure shorter hours at first and to maintain them afterwards in a new country, where wages and profits are both relatively higher, than in an old one, where they are both a little lower; because neither employers nor employed will feel quite the same difficulty about the loss they frequently—with reason or without it—fear they must incur by the change. But what if the lesson be that this very fear itself is groundless? Whether colonial peculiarities make any difference to the initiation of the reform, they make none to its effects, to the influence, for example, of a reduction in the working day to eight hours on production, on wages, on the personal efficiency and character of the labouring class, or on the value of legislative intervention as a means of enforcement. Besides, even on the

point of initiation, it must be remembered that the eight hours day is not in Victoria confined in the least to the well-paid trades. It has been adopted in many branches of labour, both skilled and unskilled, in which the usual wages, when compared with the usual cost of living, are worth decidedly less than the wages of the larger and better-paid trades in this country. It is certainly not higher wages that has given the dock-labourers or the tanners of Melbourne a shorter day than the masons and engineers of England; and though the artisans' real remuneration is probably as high in California as it is in Victoria—his money wages is twice as high—yet in California, according to the recent Foreign Office Return on the Hours of Adult Labour, none of even the powerful trades enjoy an eight-hours day except the plasterers, and the mass of the labouring population work longer hours than they do in our own country. Victoria and California are practically of the same age; they are peopled with the same stock, and they correspond in climate, production, and industrial history, yet the one is a ten-hour State while the other is an eight-hour one. Colonial peculiarities, therefore, play manifestly a less important part in the matter than other causes.

One of the most recent investigators into the subject, the Special Commissioner of the United States, Mr. McGoppin, in his Report on Labour in Australasia, represents the eight hours day as a fruit of the protectionist system; but nothing is more certain, when we examine the facts, than that though the eight hours day is more general in Victoria than in New South Wales, the protectionist system has had little or nothing to do with that result. A United States Commissioner might have suspected a conclusion which attributed to the very low tariff of Victoria effects that have never come from the very high tariff of his own country; and as a matter of fact, out of the fifty trades which enjoy the eight hours day in Victoria, the tariff could not possibly have so much as softened the way for its introduction in more than twelve or fourteen at the most, and in these it is impossible to say how far the tariff has been an efficient cause. Nearly half the fifty trades are trades on which tariffs have no operation; they enjoy a natural protection, because their work can only be done on the spot, and they enjoy that protection as completely in ten-hour countries as in eight-hour ones. Such are the building trades, the gas-stokers, sailors, bakers, printers, stevedores, engineers, farriers, wharf-labourers, slaughter-men, scavengers, railway servants, and the various groups of unskilled labourers. On the other hand, the trades which still work ten hours in

Melbourne are almost all protected trades. Then the sail-makers, who have never been protected, have had the eight hours day for a quarter of a century, and the carpenters, iron-moulders, boiler-makers, and smiths, though now protected to some extent, enjoyed the eight hours day for a good many years before there was a protective tariff in the colony; while the coachbuilders, who possessed the eight hours day for a time and lost it again before the tariff was introduced, were not enabled by eighteen years of protection to recover what they lost.

The Victorian tariff was first introduced in 1866, when a series of low duties were imposed running from 5 to 10 per cent. *ad valorem*, and the principal subsequent changes have occurred in 1874, when the duties were raised, most of them to 20 per cent., in 1883, when they were further raised to 25 per cent., and finally, in 1889, when some of them were again raised to 35 per cent. This last rise has as yet led to no result, not a single new trade having joined the movement last year; but what is more important to observe, only one protected trade, the brickmakers, joined it in the long period between 1866 and 1883. In that latter year twenty trades walked in the annual procession, nineteen of which had come into the eight hours system without any possible assistance from the tariff, and the accession of the twentieth cannot be reasonably ascribed to an influence which was in operation for seventeen years without producing the effect. Yet because thirty new trades joined the movement in rapid succession between 1884 and 1888, it has been thought that this fresh start must have been due to the small rise of 5 per cent. which the tariff underwent in 1883. But of these thirty accessions, ten were trades like the printers and wharf-labourers, for example, which were not protected at all, and six more, though protected, got no rise of duty at that particular time.

It is impossible, therefore, to trace the origin of this fresh movement to a tariff revision in which only a minority of trades who moved had any interest. Its true origin was in the fresh impetus given to opinion by the evidence taken before the Commission on Shop Hours in 1882 and 1883. The movement began among the bakers—a trade with no concern in tariffs except to a trifling degree in the matter of biscuits—and several of the Melbourne bakers stated expressly, when they appeared as witnesses before that Commission in 1883, that this agitation had been set agoing by the impression made upon them and their workfellows by the evidence given to the Commission in the end of 1882. Before then the bakers of Melbourne had been working

fifteen hours a day. They bethought them—so they reasoned—that they had been for a long time paying for short hours to their neighbours, and that their neighbours ought now to pay for short hours to them; they resolved to have their day reduced first to ten hours, and then, after a few months, they resolved again to have it reduced to eight, and though far from being a powerful trade—for they are scattered in very small shops employing only two to four hands each, so that in a strike their places are easily filled—they succeeded in securing this great reduction of their working day, and what is not a little remarkable, in securing it without putting a farthing on the price of the loaf, without losing a sixpence of wages, and without providing room for more than half the unemployed bakers in the city. Their victory made an impression on the other trades, and the movement spread. In obtaining that victory they owed much to the support given them by the powerful organization of the combined eight-hour trades, but they owed nothing to any change of law or any rise of wages. Their wages, indeed, were very low at the time—only 25s. to 35s. a week in 1883, as compared with 40s. to 42s. in 1881, or 50s. in 1885. Nothing had changed in their circumstances, but only in their will to have what they saw other working men have; and that change was caused, as changes of opinion very commonly are, by the publication of facts which excited discussion among them, and awakened their ambition to obtain the social advantages which others of their own class had long been enjoying. Possibly a new and better educated generation had risen, but anyhow, they came to set a value on the short day they had not set before, and to feel it to be for them, what it already was for so many of their friends, an essential of existence. One more section of the working class had added the short day to their standard of life, to the sum of comforts which the opinions and habits of their class make daily necessities of being; and the sentiment passed on from trade to trade, and stopped only when it reached those which are largely affected by the opinion and habits of women. The principal branches of industry in which long hours still prevail in Melbourne are those in which women are largely employed—the tailor trade in which two-thirds of the hands are women, and the textile factories, like the wool mills, for example, in which there are three women employed for every four men, or the rope and jute works, in which there are three women for every two men. Some of the clothing factories run only eight hours a day, but then they usually give out work to their tailoresses to be done at home after factory hours, or they have a number of out-workers, who work any hours

they like, and who would only like there were more than twelve hours in the day. Women's wages are very low in Melbourne as elsewhere, and women are therefore willing to work longer than men because an hour's pay has more value for them than an hour's leisure. The English Ten Hours Act was always more popular, both before it passed and after, among the adult males, whose earnings it incidentally reduced, than among the female operatives for whose special protection it was devised. Its advocates had never done complaining of the apathy with which it was viewed by the married women, and the persistent opposition of the unmarried. And in Melbourne the voice of the female factory hands before the Shop Hours Commission in 1883 and 1884 was raised in favour of the long working day. They did not find ten hours in a mill too much for their strength; they were never exhausted at the end of the day, and they much preferred walking home in the cool of the evening to walking home in the heat of the afternoon. Their real preference, no doubt, was for a little more money, and as long as women's wages are low, and even their reasonable requirements in matters like dress are comparatively expensive, women will always give up an hour's leisure for an hour's pay. The Factory Acts of Victoria of 1874 and 1885, accordingly, which provide an eight hours' limit for female work in factories, have remained in suspense from the first at the female operatives' own request.

The history of the movement in Victoria, in fact, is just a history of the successive ripening of an eight hours opinion among the working class; trade by trade. The trades that first obtained the boon—the building trades, who wrought in the sun, and the iron trades, who wrought before fire—looked upon the shorter day as a simple necessity in the Australian climate, which they would not do without, and were quite prepared, if necessary, to pay for by some corresponding sacrifice of wages. Even when they asked for the change in the interests of rational and intellectual recreation, the speakers seemed to lay less stress on the long hours leaving them no time for such things, than on the long hours leaving them too exhausted to care for them. A Ballarat blacksmith said he was very fond of philosophical studies, but after ten hours before a smithy fire in Victoria he was in no condition to apply himself to such subjects with any pleasure. They may have been mistaken, as many people say they were, in thinking the climate of Victoria so enervating. The temperature of Melbourne is very much the same as the temperature of Lisbon or Marseilles; and a climate cannot be really debilitating which has developed so universal a delight in out-door sports, and

produced athletes like the cricketers and scullers of Australia. But whether the idea was mistaken or no, it undoubtedly had a principal influence in creating in these trades their original determination in favour of short hours. It was always the main plea of the pioneers of the movement. A joiner, who had wrought in the West Indies and in Brazil, said he found it far more trying to work in Victoria than to work in those countries. Doctors came forward, both at Melbourne and at Ballarat, and declared ten hours a day in the glaring sun of Australia was deadly, and left a man fit for nothing but drink or sleep. Many of the employers, too, having been themselves workmen when they first settled in the colony, agreed the more readily to the shortening of the day because they admitted, from their own personal experience, that eight hours a day was long enough for any man to labour in that climate in the open air. And it is certain that the masons, slaters, plasterers, and bricklayers are the most unhealthy of the skilled trades in Victoria, except the dyers, whereas in this country many other trades are more unhealthy. Victorian statistics on the subject only exist for the three years 1880—1882; but, according to the mean of these years, while the general death-rate of Victoria was 14·73 per 1,000, the death-rate of the masons, slaters, plasterers, and bricklayers was 25·43 per 1,000. The masons complained much too that the stone of Victoria was particularly hard to work.

In these trades, therefore, the eight hours question never really was a wages question at all. The men were willing from the first to purchase the reduction of hours by a sacrifice of wages. When they began their agitation in 1856 their wages had fallen to half what they were two years before, and, as we learn from official figures, they went a much less way in the purchase of commodities than labourers' wages have ever gone in that colony either before or since; but the men freely offered their employers to take a shilling a day less wages until the expiry of existing contracts. And when a further, and, indeed, very serious fall of wages became inevitable in 1859, they still steadfastly refused to break that fall in the least by returning to long hours; and through all the bitter and protracted conflict of that year they held immovably by the position that wages were matters for arrangement, but on the eight hours day there should be no surrender. This conflict of 1859 was the real fight for the eight hours day, and it was one of the severest in the annals of labour. In 1856 the eight hours day had been won almost without a struggle. There was neither strike nor street demonstration.

The masons at Melbourne University began to moot the subject in February; the building trades had their first public meeting about it on the 21st of March, and they wrought their first eight hours day on the 21st of April. But in 1859 the situation had changed. The decline of the gold-fields had left a great redundancy of labour in the colony. Relief works were started in Melbourne as far back as April, 1858, and before the end of that year one-third of the masons of Victoria were out of employment; many of the carpenters were taking sub-contracts, from which they made no more than 6s. a day after working ten or eleven hours. At last one of the largest employers of labour, the contractor for the new State railway—who, by the way, had shortly before quoted with approval an observation made to him in a private letter from John Bright, which I think is worth repeating here, because Mr. Bright is so usually supposed to have been an opponent of short hours: ‘If you ever suffer the ten hours system to rear its head in Victoria again, you are unworthy of the name of men’—this very contractor now seized the opportunity to enforce simultaneously a reduction of wages and an extension of hours. The men said they would take any reduction of wages the state of the labour market required; but in the words of Mr. Don, their parliamentary champion, ‘as to the eight hours question, they had nailed their colours to the mast, and if they were shot away, they would fight for the holes left by the shot.’ There is no need to relate the history of the struggle which followed, one of the most skilful as well as hard working men have ever conducted; but after being four months out on strike they succeeded, as men with that spirit must needs have done, in preserving their short day, and it has never been threatened since.

The coachbuilders, on the other hand, who had obtained the eight hours day in 1856, a little later than the building trades, lost it again in this year 1859, because, working under cover, they did not set the same store by short hours as the masons and bricklayers, and preferred to keep their wages up by returning to the ten hours day. When their hours were reduced to eight, their employers began to pay them by the piece instead of by the day, and, finding they did not earn so much in the eight hours as they used to do in the ten, many of the men had already repented of the change, and as Mr. Healey, the Postmaster-General of the colony, and himself a coachbuilder, stated in the Legislative Assembly, they had, many of them, long since been praying for the ten hours system again. Consequently, when the contractor for the carriages of the new State railway restored the ten hours system in his work-

shops, his men were too divided in opinion to resist, and his example was soon followed by the rest of the trade. The coachbuilders remained a ten hours trade till the general recrudescence of the eight hours movement in 1884. A ten per cent. import duty was imposed on carriages in 1866, and a twenty per cent. duty in 1874; but these availed nothing to restore to the coachbuilders the short day. What, then, happened before 1884 to enable them to recover then what they had lost for a quarter of a century? A new generation had arisen in the interval, which probably set more store by the short hours for their own sake, and which certainly felt stirred by the example they had before them of other trades enjoying the leisure of a short day now for so many years without appearing to suffer anything in consequence. A certain awakening of opinion took place—indeed, in 1884 a curious wave of social awakening passed successively over every country of the world. And—not the least important factor—the federation of the eight hours trades, the Amalgamated Trades Association, which was founded at the origin of the movement in 1856, and to which every trade is admitted as soon as it acquires the eight hours day, had now grown into a very powerful organization, which was able to be of the most effectual assistance to the weaker trades in their efforts for the short day. It helped them to set agitation agoing, to establish unions, and to undertake the risk of strikes. This body is probably as powerful a working-class organization as exists in the world, composed as it is of the unions of more than fifty different trades, all knit compactly together under an executive known at first as the Operatives' Board of Trade, and now as the Trades' Hall Council, and quartered in a spacious mansion-house erected by the trades themselves on a site presented to them by the Government. This federation has made the eight hours day the cornerstone of the whole labour movement of Australia. It has committed mistakes—grievous mistakes, for example, in the recent strike—but when one thinks of the political force it could exert if it chose, one is astonished at its moderation. Lord Hopetoun was right when he told the working men of Melbourne last Demonstration Day that it was their organization that made them so loyal and law-abiding. It has made them independent of the State's offices, good or bad, and when they can do so much for themselves, they have the less reason to ask anything from the State, or resent the State's refusal. Anyhow, in this whole eight hours history they have had little assistance from Government, or from legislation.

The Government did give some help to the original movement

in 1856, for perhaps half the labourers in Victoria were employed at that time by government contractors on public works of one kind or another, and the labourers were fortunate in having in the Minister of Works (or Surveyor-General, as he was then called), Captain (now Lieutenant-General Sir Andrew) Clarke, a very warm friend of their cause, whose word had great weight in smoothing their difficulties with the contractors. Moreover, when all the contractors had given in except one, the contractor for the Houses of Parliament, the Government then removed this last obstacle by refusing the contractor's request for leave to suspend operations for a month in order to fight the matter out, but undertaking to compensate him for any loss he might sustain through the reduction in the hours of labour. They did pay him this compensation. But when the great struggle of 1859 broke out a new ministry was in power, and they were disposed at first to take the employers' side. When the masons struck, this ministry gave the railway contractor permission to substitute iron or wood for stone in the construction of the bridges; they refused to interfere with the railway carriage contractor for raising the hours to ten, on the ground that he could justly come upon them for compensation if they obliged him to go back to eight; and they at first flatly declined introducing the eight hours system into their own engineering works at Williamstown, on the plea that the change would involve extra expenditure for which no provision had been made in the estimates, and therefore could not be undertaken without the sanction of the legislature. They afterwards yielded, however, because they felt that as eight hours was the rule in private engineering works, it would be impossible for the Government to hold out as an exception. In Victoria, accordingly, Government works did not set the example but followed it. The eight hours day is now the rule in all public work, and was introduced as a mere incident of administration by the executive Government without Act of Parliament.

The subject has been repeatedly before the Victorian Parliament. A general election took place in 1859, the very year of the great struggle, but the legal eight hours day played no figure in it, though it did occasionally appear upon the scene. Immediately on the opening of the new Legislative Assembly in the same year, Mr. Don, the parliamentary leader of the working class, moved a resolution, 'That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that all future contracts should be let on the understanding that eight hours should be considered the term of the day's work.' He held that the eight hours day was a simple necessity of the climate,

and that it must become the rule everywhere in the colony if it once became the rule in public works, because Government was practically much the largest employer in the colony, and its example was therefore bound to be followed. He said there were 8,000 men engaged on public works, either directly under Government or under government contractors, and all the other employers in the colony put together did not employ another 8,000. No direct negative was proposed to this resolution, but two amendments were introduced, representing the chief modifications of opinion on the subject which we find prevailing among ourselves now. Mr. Bailey proposed, 'That in all future contracts involving the question of day labour, the payment of wages should be computed on the principle of eight hours for a full day's work,'—*i.e.* the eight hours normal day as a mere basis for charging overtime; and Mr. Healey, the Postmaster-General, proposed, 'That in all cases where a trade had established the eight-hour system, the contracts should recognize it.' He would support trades in acquiring the eight-hour day voluntarily, but he would not have it forced on any of them, for he said he was once a working man himself, and thought it wrong to prevent a man from working extra time when he wanted to improve his condition or provide for his family. After a very little more discussion Mr. Don withdrew his resolution entirely, and the question was dropped without going to a vote. No further legislative action was taken on the subject till 1869, when an eight hours Factory Bill was brought in by Mr. Casey, and passed the second reading, but was then discharged from the notice-paper. It was reintroduced by him in 1870, but got no further than the first reading; but a little later in the same year Mr. Everard succeeded in carrying a resolution affirming the necessity of legalizing the eight hours day, though the House afterwards refused to apply the principle practically to workshops and factories. This was done, however, at length by the Factory Act of 1874, and renewed in the new Factory Act of 1885, which forbids the employment in any factory or workroom of any female, or of any male under the age of 16, for more than 48 hours in any one week in preparing or manufacturing articles for trade or sale. But these Acts contain a proviso that the Minister of Trade may, if he think fit after inquiry, suspend the operation of the Act in any or all workshops and factories, and in consequence of this provision the Acts have practically remained in abeyance from the first. Employer and operative, male and female, all petitioned the Minister for the suspension of the eight hours clause, and no attempt has ever been made to enforce it. In a

democratic community, a ministry cannot afford to offend any considerable section of the population by inflicting penalties on them for judging for themselves on what they will think the purely personal question, whether they will have an hour's pay or an hour's leisure. A few of the factories—clothing factories chiefly—seem, however, to have adopted the eight hours rule of their own accord, but now they usually give out work to be done at home after factory hours, and no doubt specially to be paid for. But in the less important factories, and especially in private workshops, there is, according to the Report of the Royal Commission on *Employés in Shops* in 1884, no rule about hours of labour. 'Employés generally commence at 8.30 or 9 A.M., and with half an hour's, or sometimes only a quarter of an hour's intermission for meals, they continue to labour often far into the night. Some of the hands also carry home the work with them, and labour for many hours after the factories are closed. In millinery and dressmaking there is often a show of complying with the more humane system of eight hours work daily; as a matter of fact, however, this is the exception rather than the rule. The front doors are closed, and young girls are kept for many hours, and during the busy season all night, to work and execute the orders received. There is reason to believe that no appreciable extra remuneration is given for the work done during over-hours. The greatest offenders in this respect—and this shows another of the means by which the eight hours Factory Act has been nullified—are employers who contract to evade the provisions of the Act by engaging only the number of hands that exempt them and their premises from the operation of the Act, and young girls are for the greater part the sufferers.'

There are a few special Acts with an eight hours clause in them, but even these seem to have been attended with some difficulty in the execution. Mr. Fairfield mentions two in his interesting essay on 'State Socialism in the Antipodes' in Mr. Mackay's *Plea for Liberty*. One is the Regulation of Mines Act, 1883, which forbids the employment of any person underground, except in case of emergency, for more than eight consecutive hours from the time he commences to descend the mine until he is relieved of his work, and for its better enforcement this Act was supplemented in 1886 by an Amending Act, which threw the burden of proving innocence of charges under it upon the mine-owner. The other is the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Act, also of the year 1883—the year in which, through the Shop Commission and general causes, public attention was specially

awakened to the hours of labour. This Act also contains an eight hours clause, but permits overtime for special payment to such an extent as shall not make the total time wrought more than sixty hours a week. Occasionally some of the ordinary trades, while they were still working long hours, thought of applying for Eight Hours Acts. The engine-drivers in Melbourne flour mills were working in 1882 twelve hours a day—two twelve-hour shifts; but they had no trade union, and some of them came before the Shop Hours Commission of 1882-3, and said there was no remedy but legislation, because while they themselves believed there was no risk in the reduction, many of their workfellows could not see things in that light. And the bakers, who had already established a union, and even obtained a reduction of their hours by it, came before the same Commission with the same request for short-hour legislation, because they feared they could not maintain even the ten hours limit so long as some employers were still allowed to adhere to fifteen. But before another year passed engine-drivers and bakers were both walking in the eight hours procession, the bakers under a banner on which they inscribed the secret of their success, 'They who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.'

The eight hours system in Victoria, therefore, depends hardly at all on law, but we may say wholly on opinion, on working-class opinion, the opinion of men who want the short day for the sake of the short day, and are willing to purchase it, if necessary, even by a reduction of wages. The advocates of the movement in Victoria never seem to have entertained the idea—I have at least never seen it in any of their remarks—of obtaining the eight hours day merely as a means of charging more overtime; and though I have repeatedly found them, in the early beginnings of the agitation in 1856, harbouring the delusion that shortening the hours of labour was the sure road to higher wages, that idea seems to have disappeared under subsequent experience; for in the movement of 1884 the argument always used by the bakers and other agitating trades was, 'We have been hitherto paying for the short day the masons and the carpenters have been enjoying, let them now pay for a short day for us.' Their hope was to save wages by a rise of prices.

What has been the effect of the eight hours day on wages in Victoria? To all outward appearance, at any rate, it has had no effect on wages at all; it has neither raised them nor reduced them. The wages in all the building trades remained exactly the same from 1856, when they shortened their hours of labour, till

1860. Some of the men may have taken a shilling less than the current rate till the expiry of the contracts they were working on, but the current rate for all these trades was 15s. a day in 1856, and continued 15s. till 1860. It fell in that year, and stood from 8s. to 10s. till 1872, when it rose to 10s. as a minimum, and has remained at that figure ever since. The fall in 1860 had nothing to do with the shortening of the hours; it was due to the redundancy of labour of which I have spoken, and to the great fall that had taken place since 1856 in the cost of living. The Registrar-General of the colony published figures in 1861 showing the effect of this cheapening of the necessities of life on the working man's budget. He estimated the wages and expenditure of the Melbourne artizan to be as follows in the years 1854, 1857, and 1861 :—

Year.	Wages per day.	Expenditure per Week.	Surplus per Week.
1854	30s.	£7 0 3½	£1 7 8½
1857	15s.	3 13 4½	16 7½
1861	12s.	2 7 4	1 16 8

Though his money wages, therefore, had fallen, his real wages had, in fact, materially risen, and as the cost of living has gone on cheapening ever since, and has, according to the evidence given by working men before the Tariff Commission, not even been affected by the protective duties, what the working men of Melbourne have been experiencing has been a constant rise in their real wages. But this rise has not come from the shortening of the hours or the employing of the unemployed, but obviously from other causes.

Blacksmiths got the eight hours day in 1859, just before the general fall of wages in 1860, but this shorter day had no influence in saving them from that fall. Their wages, which were 13s. a day in 1859, sunk to 11s. in 1860, and settled at from 8s. to 10s. in 1863, rising again, with those of the other trades, in 1872, to from 10s. to 12s. We have figures for only some of the trades which obtained the eight hours day in 1883 and the following year, but these figures show the same result. The wages of those trades have neither risen nor fallen. The bookbinders, who got the eight hours day in 1883, had from £2 to £3 a week in the years 1880-83, and they had still £2 to £3 a week in the year 1885-87. The coopers, who obtained the boon the same year, had 10s. a day in 1880-83, and still had 10s. a day in

1885-87. The boot-makers, becoming an eight hours trade in 1885, were still paid in 1887 at the old rates, but then these were piece rates. The tanners adopted the system in 1886, and were still paid the same old rate of wages in 1887. The saddlers, who first joined the procession in 1885, had £2 to £3 a week in 1883-85, and still had £2 to £3 a week in 1886-88. The printers and hatters, who were paid by the piece, effected a small rise, but whether enough to keep their daily earnings the same as before I am unable to say; and the farriers' wages, which did not rise the first two years after the change, showed a tendency to rise in the next two. The bakers, who had been paid 40s. a week up to 1881, received only from 25s. to 35s. in 1882 and 1883, but after the reduction of their hours from 15 to 10 in the latter year, their wages rose to 50s., and when their hours were a few months afterwards again reduced from 10 to 8, their wages remained unchanged, and have been 50s. a week ever since. The experience of the coachbuilders is a little peculiar. They got the eight hours day in 1883 or 1884, when their wages had been for some years from £3 10s. to £5 or £6 a week, and for the first year thereafter—1885—their wages continued at the same figure; but in 1886 they sank a little, and for the three years 1886-88 they stood at from £3 to £4. The peculiarity is that this fall in wages took place, as will presently appear, simultaneously with a considerable and progressive increase in the number of hands employed, and in the annual production of the coach works.

The very notable rise in bakers' wages was a result of the same agitation which procured the shortening of their hours, but was not occasioned by any increased demand for labour that shortening may have caused. When the first reduction of their hours from fifteen to ten took place, only thirty of the unemployed bakers were taken on, and sixty still remained. The short day had only been introduced into 50 out of the 200 bakeshops of Melbourne, but these 50 shops employed not less than 200 men, and yet, though the hours of these 200 men were suddenly reduced by a third, it needed less than a sixth more new hands to do the same work. If the reduction from fifteen hours to ten made so little difference in the number of the unemployed, the reduction from ten to eight would make less.

The prevailing idea that a uniform eight hours day will abolish the unemployed is of course chimerical, because shortening the hours of labour reaches none of the more common causes that produce the unemployed; and in Victoria the problem of the unemployed often assumes much graver proportions than it does

at home. I have already mentioned the great redundancy of labour in 1859, due to the decline in the production of the gold-fields, and an eight hours day could obviously do nothing to check that. Then Victoria has its own measure—one sometimes thinks a double measure—of the unsettled class, the ‘sundowners,’ ‘swagmen,’ remittance men, ne’er-do-weels, who will work now for a season at sheepshearing or again for a season at the diggings, but are found most of the time wandering about the country from station to station looking for work, and generally preferring not to obtain it. An eight hours day is no remedy for this complaint. Then even in the ordinary occupations there seems to be in some ways more unsteadiness of employment in Victoria than at home, more changing of masters, and more time lost consequently between job and job. That was remarked upon by several of the witnesses before the Shops Commission. Mr. John Reynolds, for example, a working engineer, who emigrated to Victoria in 1870, said, ‘There is a great difference in steadiness of employment here and at home. At home you may serve your time in a shop, and be in it till you are an old man. There is one case, perhaps, out of every hundred where that is the case.’ That, he said, never occurred in Victoria, and he thought this irregularity of employment in the colony was so considerable that it kept wages down. The same circumstance is noted in a report issued by the Operatives’ Board of Trade of Melbourne on the 15th of April, 1859, which complained that though wages in Victoria were nominally high, they were barely sufficient to maintain a man in the position held by his fellow-workmen in Great Britain, ‘through the time he loses from one job to another looking for employment.’ This peculiarity also is one which an eight hours day has no charm against. Nor has it any charm against those great depressions which the whole world feels in common. The *Australian Ironmonger* for 1887 (p. 47) quotes a report of the Boilermakers’ Society of England, stating that out of a total of 28,000 members, it had on an average 8,000 unemployed for the previous three years, and then mentions that there were then fifty boilermakers unemployed in Melbourne out of a total of 230. The proportion is smaller, but it is more striking when we reflect how much of the Australian work must be repairs, and it shows plainly enough that the great trade depressions make little difference between an eight-hour country and a ten-hour one. From these or other causes there is, as the American consul reports in 1884, almost every year an outcry about the unemployed in Melbourne in the dull season, notwithstanding that immigration

is now rather discouraged than otherwise; that the colony is virtually exempt from some of the most fertile causes of interruption of work elsewhere, for example, bad weather; and that it possesses in tolerable perfection the two correctives for the evil which are most confidently pressed upon us at home: (1st) access to the land and an active demand for agricultural labour, and (2nd) a constant supply of Government work undertaken to some extent with the very view of providing employment and preventing wages from falling.

There are very few available data as to the immediate effect of the reduction of hours in particular branches of trade in Melbourne upon the number of workmen employed in those branches, and the data which exist can support no definite conclusion. They show the most opposite results, and are of little value without a knowledge of the concurrent causes that have obviously conspired in their production. Brewing was a growing trade when the eight hours day was adopted by it in 1885, and it has gone on steadily increasing both its plant and its number of hands employed every year since; but if the increase of horse-power may be taken as an index of the general increase of plant, then in the year when it first shortened the day it increased its hands in a larger ratio than that of the increase of its plant. The breweries employed $2\frac{1}{2}$ men for every horse-power in 1884, and they employed $2\frac{1}{5}$ in 1886, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ in 1887 and 1888, but they employed as many as $2\frac{1}{8}$ in 1885. The coachmakers have gone on year by year increasing the number of hands employed since they adopted the short day, while the saddlers and bootmakers have gone on reducing it, and the agricultural implement makers reduced it the first two years after the change, but are recovering ground now. The tanners had thirty-eight fewer hands employed the year after the reduction of hours than they had the year before. Most of these figures will be given later on in connection with another part of the subject, and there is at least one conclusion of practical importance which they amply support. They show the utter folly of the assumption, so much pressed by the more ignorant advocates of an Eight Hours Bill, that the shortening of the day of labour has the necessary, certain, and uniform effect of abolishing the unemployed.

On the whole the reduction of the working day to eight hours has had no very sensible influence on the numbers of the unemployed in Victoria any more than on the rate of wages, and both these circumstances point to the conclusion, to which other and more direct evidence also conducts, that shortening the day has

exercised but very inconsiderable effect on the amount of the workmen's production. A shortening of hours has always two immediate effects—it improves the mettle of the masters, and it improves the mettle of the men. The masters set themselves at once to practise economies of various sorts, to make more efficient arrangements of the work, to introduce better machinery or to speed the old, to try the double shift and other expedients to maintain and even augment the production of their works. The men return to their toil in better heart after their ampler rest, reinvigorated both in nerve and muscle, and make up in the result sometimes in part, sometimes wholly, by the intensity of their labour for the loss of its duration. Victorian experience shows the recouplement almost complete.

There is an occasional tendency, apparently, to a diminution of the number of establishments in a trade after the shortening of the day, but none to the diminution of their gross produce. Probably some of the weaker employers—those with insufficient capital or inferior skill or old-fashioned plant—are forced by the change to go to the wall or to amalgamate with a more enterprising neighbour.

The brewers of Melbourne conceded the eight hours day in 1885; and some of them, as I am informed through private sources, had recourse within the following years to the double-shift system, and acknowledged that while they had looked with great dread to the effects of the short hours before they were granted, they have found themselves now more prosperous than ever. But the effect of the short hours in reducing the number of establishments and of the double shift in increasing the number of hands and of the whole change on the general production of the Victorian breweries may be gathered from the following table, taken from the official statistics of the colony:—

Year.	No. of Establishments.	Horse-power.	Hands.	Gallons of Beer produced.
1884	70	425	860	13,723,371
1885	74	444	955	14,400,749
1886	74	472	975	14,753,152
1887	72	502	1,037	16,088,462
1888	68	512	1,063	17,828,453

These figures are for the whole of Victoria, and the eight hours day may not have been introduced into provincial establishments at the same time as it was introduced in the town of Melbourne,

and for that matter may not be introduced into them even yet, but then Melbourne contains half the people of the colony and much more than half the industry.

The saddlers also adopted the eight hours day in 1885, and in their case likewise there is a diminution in the number of establishments and an increase in their produce, but at the same time, curiously enough, a decided decline in the number of hands employed.

Year.	Establishments.	Hands.	Product.
1884	63	636	£87,131
1885	62	593	87,054
1886	63	579	89,905
1887	53	496	90,970
1888	57	465	97,592

The bootmakers, who also received the eight hours day in 1885, show a decline in the number of the establishments, a decline in the number of hands employed, and a slight but not immediate decline in the product.

Year.	Establishments.	Hands.	Product.
1884	94	4,165	£203,351
1885	107	4,088	203,968
1886	91	4,100	205,773
1887	92	3,574	189,028
1888	97	3,886	199,228

The agricultural implement-makers obtained the eight hours day in 1886,¹ and in their case there followed an increase in the

Year.	Establishments.	Hands.	Product.
1885	54	1,152	£114,419
1886	55	1,023	139,794
1887	63	948	143,937
1888	62	1,051	151,608

¹ When I speak of these trades as having obtained the short day in a particular year, I mean that they walked for the first time as an eight hours trade in the procession of that particular year on Demonstration Day, 21st April. They may have actually obtained the concession any time between that date and the same day the year before, but I have no means of stating the time more precisely.

number of the establishments and in the value of the general product, but a temporary diminution in the number of hands employed.

The coachmakers introduced the eight hours day in 1883 or 1884 (I am unable to ascertain more exactly), and have gone on steadily ever since increasing the number of their establishments, the number of hands employed, the general amount of their product, and as is also the case in most of the other examples I have adduced, the amount of product per hand employed.

Year.	Establishments.	Hands.	Value of Product.
1884	162	2,124	£256,868
1885	168	2,204	247,361
1886	174	2,395	288,695
1887	183	2,407	290,135
1888	195	2,720	361,690

Of course, differences in the value of the product are not the same thing as differences in its amount, and the figures must be taken for what they are worth. Only I think they tend to support the conclusion that the shortening of the day to eight hours has not been followed by any corresponding loss of product, but rather—whatever it be due to—by an increase of product, and even by an increase per hand employed. Much of that result flows, no doubt, from better management on the part of the employers and other general causes of progress, but much of it also undoubtedly arises from an improvement in the industrial efficiency of the artisans themselves, the direct effect of the leisure they have acquired.

It is almost a universal opinion in the colony that the men work harder now while they are at their work, and that they turn out work of a better quality than they did under the long-hour system. Mr. Hodgkinson, a public man of Victoria, said in his speech at the eight hours demonstration of 1873 that he had often watched men working in the Public Gardens, and that though left to themselves very much they worked as well as when under contractors, that the Government stroke was unknown among them, and that he was convinced they did more work now in the eight hours day than they did before in the ten. A very recent writer, Mr. Charles Fairfield, speaks of the 'go' which is conspicuous in some of the out-door trades of Victoria. 'The leisure enjoyed by colonial workmen, their brisk, cheerful,

and robust appearance, and the activity and “go” displayed by one or two out-door trades (such as masons and house carpenters) who work under the eight hour system are pleasant to behold.¹ An English business man, who has written an account of his visit to Victoria, says he saw men in Melbourne getting as much work to do in a day as would have been allotted to two men in this country, and that the lifts they took were more suitable for steam power than for human beings.² Lord Brassey, in a paper read in 1888 to the Royal Colonial Institute on ‘Recent Impressions of Australia,’ speaks of the ‘remarkable physique’ of the Australian navvy, and in the discussion on his lordship’s paper Rear-Admiral Sir George Tryon said he had on behalf of the Admiralty spent many thousands of pounds in wages in Australia during the previous few years, and that ‘though the wages were high, the work done was good, and the cost not so great as might be supposed. The men,’ he continued, ‘give a good day’s work. It is true that they put down their tools the very instant the dinner-bell rings, but they do not dawdle and prepare for that event half an hour before.’ Captain W. H. Henderson, R.N., for many years in command of H.M.S. *Nelson* in Australian waters, gave even stronger testimony to the same effect. ‘During the time I was out there I was brought into communication with every class of society, from statesmen to the shipping population. I have often had much to do with the lumpers—that is, the men who discharge cargoes, coal especially, and I have no hesitation in saying that they do their work better than in the old country, and will coal a ship three times as fast. I have watched them at their meals also. Many people at home would be astonished at the comparative luxuries in the way of food which they are able to command, and at the excellent way in which their food is cooked, showing that in this respect their housewives have risen to the occasion and have not deteriorated. In the large towns there are means of public recreation and improvement which have hitherto hardly existed with us, and they are fully appreciated and made use of by the wage-earning classes. I have often, for my own part, watched them crowding into the parks, national galleries, and botanical gardens on Bank Holidays, and have been struck with the well-to-do appearance of their wives and children, with their quiet and orderly demeanour and behaviour, and apparent content with their lot.’³

¹ Mackay’s *Plea for Liberty*, p. 163.

² Duncan, *Journal of Voyage to Australia*, p. 153.

³ *Proceedings of Royal Colonial Institute*, xix. 122.

It is, I think, beyond question that the shortening of the day to eight hours has improved the efficiency of the labour during the time employed both as to quantity and quality, and there is every probability that in some trades and some particular kinds of work this cause alone would lead to as much being done in the short day as the long one. The smallness of the sum awarded in 1857 to the contractor for the Houses of Parliament in Melbourne as compensation for the loss he sustained through the shortening of the day, shows that in the building trades the change made very little difference. I cannot say how many men were employed on that building, but the job was a large one, over £400,000. The vote to which the compensation was appended as a supplementary vote was for £20,000, but this supplementary vote for eight months' loss was only £1,800, or the wages of ten men at 15s. a day. Apparently, therefore, he needed only ten new hands, so that the work done by the old ones cannot have been very substantially diminished. Mr. James Stephen, the originator of the movement in Melbourne, is said to have ascertained by practical experiment in his brick-making works, that the men did quite as much in eight hours as they used to do in the ten. In some trades, *e.g.* the confectioners, the prices of their wares were very slightly raised at the time of the reduction of the day in order to meet the extra expenditure on labour the change entailed. The bakers said they would have had to put a half-penny on the four-pound loaf if wheat had not fallen at the time a shilling a bushel. But in the building trades, while there was no change in their wages between 1856 and 1859, the commodity they produce had actually cheapened, and the fall of house-rents was one of the pleas on which their wages were reduced in the latter year. It is true that all prices were falling in Victoria at the time, but had there been any very sensible difference in the amount of the individual artizan's daily production, it would have withstood the general downward tendency.

Moreover, it ought to be remembered that the actual change in the length of the day is not so great as it seems on the face of it to be. The difference between the ten hours day and the eight hours day in Victoria is not two hours, but only three-quarters of an hour. This is distinctly stated by Mr. J. A. Aldwell in an essay on the subject which won the prize offered by the Australian Eight Hours League in 1856. 'It has been broadly asserted,' says he, 'that the success of the eight hours movement would entail a loss of two hours per day to employers. After a stricter examination this statement will not be found

correct. The real difference of time between the old system and the new cannot be proved to be more than three-quarters of an hour per diem. . . . In the face of more and better work in eight hours (virtually nine hours and a quarter) than in ten hours (actually but eight and three-quarters, allowing for the time of meals), no employer can maintain that he would be a loser.' Under the old ten-hour system of Victoria, an hour and a quarter was allowed off for meals, and work was stopped for the purpose twice in the course of the day, each stoppage involving, of course, a certain slackening of energy on the part of the workers. But under the eight hours system there is usually only one break and two steady four-hour spells of work, and it is easily possible that with an industrial stock distinguished like the English above all others for their powers of close and sustained application, the gain from the more continuous concentration of the labour might do more than make up for the loss of three-quarters of an hour in its duration. The double break is not indeed unknown in eight-hour trades, but it seems to be more frequent in New South Wales than in Victoria. Sometimes they work from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. in winter and 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. in summer, with two hours off for breakfast and dinner, but the common rule is from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. with an hour off for dinner. The bakers, it may be mentioned, who have often to wait some time idle for their bread to rise, only count their eight hours from the moment of its rising, when they begin actual work.

What use does the working man of Victoria make of the leisure he has obtained through the eight hours day? The 'go' and energy he is said by so many observers to put into his work is itself good evidence that he does not spend his time in vicious dissipation. If a shorter day in the workshop meant only a longer evening in the tavern he could not possibly show such signs of invigoration, and his day's work and his day's wages would soon have hopelessly declined. The general opinion in Victoria is that the habits of working men have improved and not deteriorated through the short hours. By leaving work early in the afternoon, they are enabled to live out in the suburbs in neat cottages with little gardens behind them, which are almost invariably owned by their occupiers, and they spend much of their leisure tending their little gardens or in some out-door sport or with their families. The two first effects of the Ten Hours Act in this country were the multiplication of mechanics' institutes, night schools, and popular lectures on the one hand, and the multiplication of garden allotments on the other. Workpeople

had neither time nor energy for such pursuits before—the only resource of the languid is the tavern. But with a longer evening at their disposal, it became worth while devising other ways of enjoying it, and the favourite among the English factory hands seemed to be the mechanics' institute in winter and the garden allotment in summer. So also in Melbourne. There is a peculiar affection in the way the working people who gave evidence before the Shop Hours Commission spoke of their gardens, and this little possession has become an established institution among the working class of that city—part of their customary standard of existence. There are regular auctions of building ground on the Saturday afternoons to which the workers go and buy their lots. They then erect their cottage and lay out their garden, and gradually pay off the cost. People are fond of celebrating the social and political virtues of a peasant proprietary, but the city of Melbourne has even a better wall of security in the belt of working-class cottages by which it is encircled, and the pride of the modest owners in their little home and garden diverts them not merely from political but from convivial temptations. The population has thus been undergoing most important changes of national character, which could not have come about at all without the longer leisure provided by the eight hours day.

In the same way there has been developed that remarkable love of out-door recreations which is now characteristic of Victoria. The bright warm climate no doubt encourages this disposition, but the shorter day of work allowed the opportunity for its gratification. Nor do the Victorian people neglect more intellectual pleasures. Every visitor to Melbourne, for example, remarks on the magnificent Public Library of the city, thronged with working-class readers on the Saturday afternoons. Sir John Coode found 605 readers there when he visited it—about half as many again as the great reading-room of the British Museum will hold—and he was told by his guide, Sir R. Barry, that that was about the usual number on the Saturday afternoon. In the matter of free libraries, Victoria is very far before us. It has 229 for its population of a million, while the whole United Kingdom can as yet boast only 200 for its population of thirty-six millions. The Melbourne Working Men's College has more than 2,000 students, and 53 per cent. of these are genuine artisans or day-labourers. Shortening the day necessitates developments like these. Leisure now and then may be largely wasted in drinking more, but where the working class get it as a permanent possession they devise, almost of necessity, many different ways

of employing it, and every new device is, so far, a successful rival to the tavern.

The public-house interest in Victoria accordingly have always, I believe, been opposed to the eight hours movement, and at some of the early elections it used all its influence against Ministers like Captain (now Sir Andrew) Clarke, who had shown favour to the cause. Then, according to universal testimony, while the upper and middle classes in Victoria drink a great deal more than the corresponding classes at home, the working classes there do not drink more than the working classes here, and the colonial-born are decidedly more sober than the immigrants. It may not be fair to compare the young colonials with the 'old chums'—the survivors of the early immigrants—because the old chums who are still working are the residuum, if I may use the word without meaning offence, of a class from which numbers of the best members have long ago risen to be employers; and of all working men in the colony the old chums are admitted to drink most. But the born Victorian is also more temperate than the 'new chum,' the recent immigrant from the old country. The foreman of the Australian Glass Company said before the Shop Hours Commission, 'The glass trade is, of course, a thirsty trade, and the imported article, I can assure you, swallow pretty liberal quantities of liquor, but more than half the colonial hands are teetotallers. The others make the excuse that it is such a hot trade. I find the colonial youth generally intelligent, expert, and steady.' Mr. R. Twopenny, in his *Town Life in Australia* (p. 98), says, 'The best workman, when he chooses, and the most difficult to get hold of, is the thoroughbred colonial,' and that though the sudden increase of wages is sometimes too strong a temptation for the fresh incomer, the settled working-class population are at least as temperate as they are in England. 'For often,' he says, 'the sudden increase of wages is too much for his mental equilibrium, and a man who was sober enough as a poor man at home finds no better use for his loose cash than to put it into the public-house till. But, as a class, I do not think Australian working men are less sober than those at home' (p. 96). Then, in spite of their 'larrikins'—the violent young street roughs, who are an irregular and, unfortunately, increasing product of colonial energy—the people of Melbourne need only one policeman for every 700 of population, while the people of London need one for every 350, and the people of Manchester one for every 440.

Now, all these things simply could not be, after thirty-four

years of the short day, if the effect of shortening the day were, as many persons are forward to assert, to increase dissipation, and not, as others say with more justice, to diminish it. We may take it as certain that the working class of Victoria are not as a body abusing their leisure, though, no doubt, many of them may do so. Leisure, like any other means of good, is in certain hands always pervertible into an equally potent means of destruction, and the eight hours day, while it has materially contributed to the elevation of workpeople in general, has not improbably increased the drunkenness of the drunken. At all events, the statistics of petty crime in Victoria—in which fully half the cases are cases of drunkenness—show that the occupations which have the worst record next to the unskilled labourers are the old eight-hour trades—the masons, bricklayers, plasterers, smiths, engineers—which, however, it must be granted, are at the same time the most arduous and exhausting trades. There is a good deal of poverty in Victoria caused by drink; and the consumption of drink per head, if we may judge from the sum spent upon it per head, is as high as that of this country; but consumption of drink is not drunkenness; and though the working class live liberally, there is certainly nothing like improvidence in a community where, with a population of only nine hundred thousand, the savings banks have more than 150,000 depositors, and the building societies nearly £2,000,000 of yearly income.

Altogether, the more we examine the subject the more irresistibly is the impression borne in from all sides that there is growing up in Australia, and very largely in consequence of the eight hours day, a working class which for general morale, intelligence, and industrial efficiency is probably already superior to that of any other branch of our Anglo-Saxon race, and for happiness, cheerfulness, and all-round comfort of life has never seen its equal in the world before. For all this advantage, moreover, nobody seems to be a shilling the worse. It is truly remarkable how immaterial apparently has been the cost of the eight hours day in Victoria. Look for the effects of it where you will, they still ever elude your observation. Wages have not fallen, wages have not risen, production has not fallen except in certain trifling cases; prices have not risen except again in certain trifling instances; trade has not suffered, profits have not dwindled (or we should have heard croaking); the unemployed have not vanished, not so much as shrunk in any perceptible degree; the working classes—the great body of the nation—have an hour more to call their own, that is all. Shortening the day has appar-

ently once again proved its own reward. It was found fifty years ago that in many branches of work the English mills did quite as much in ten hours as they used to do in twelve, and it has been found recently that the mills of Massachusetts do quite as much in ten as they used to do in eleven, the main reason being that the increased rest improved the physical and mental efficiency of the workman as a productive agent to quite the extent required to make the change profitable. It does not follow, of course, that because it was profitable to reduce the hours of labour from eleven to ten, it must be likewise profitable to reduce them from nine to eight ; that is an entirely new problem, only to be solved by actual experiment. Theoretically there must be a limit in the division of work and rest at which the maximum profitableness, or what is the same thing, the maximum efficiency, is reached ; it would probably be different for different nations and individuals as well as different trades ; but the fact that the eight hours day has been introduced without any disadvantage into so many varieties of occupations in Victoria suggests that that limit will be found, for the English race at all events, generally rather below than above the eight hours a day.

JOHN RAE