

the ideal for artisans and mechanics, and for all those employed in any highly-developed industry in which the division of labor is carried far. The case of farmers and agricultural laborers is different from that of work-people in cities. Agricultural labor does not make the same demands upon the nervous system; it is more varied, it is pursued in the open air, and it is less exhausting. And apart from this, the farming community has, in our Northern States at any rate, periods of comparative leisure of considerable duration. The farmer may work eleven or twelve, or even more, hours in summer, but I do not believe—in those parts of the country with which I am familiar, at any rate—he works on an average more than six hours a day in the winter.

It may be asked why eight hours should be regarded as the ideal. Physiology and hygiene ought to be considered in determining the normal length of the working-day. It is well-known that the average length of life among wage-earners is far less than among the more favored portions of the community. All statistics which have been gathered on this subject point unmistakably to this conclusion. It is probable that eight hours in employment in which machinery is used is as long a time as can be worked without a gradual exhaustion and weakening of the physical powers of the workers. It must, of course, be remembered that a large proportion of these workers is generally composed of children, young persons, and women. Furthermore, there is more reason why the working-day should be shortened now than formerly. On the one hand, the wealth which can be produced in a given time is so much greater that it is not necessary that we should work so many hours per day; and, on the other, the work itself in all highly developed industries is more mechanical and mentally and spiritually deadening. As industries develop, there is a tendency for the work of an increasingly large number of artisans and mechanics to become mere soulless routine. We may go into factories and find a man or woman whose entire occupation consists in making a few simple motions over and over again for the entire day, and day after day, and week after week, and even year after year. I have seen a man employed in a large manufactory whose sole occupation consisted in raising a heavy sledge-hammer and letting it fall. Formerly, when the labor was not so much subdivided, an artisan or mechanic had a more varied occupation, and passed from one round of operations to another, and he was obliged to use different parts of his body and his various mental faculties. There was inspiration, there was life, in the occupation itself of a skilled mechanic in former centuries. We can see evidences in the work of artisans of the Middle Ages of what has been called work-pleasure, and this work-pleasure is simply incompatible with the drudgery of the modern factory. The modern working-man must have time outside of the occupation which yields him his daily bread for recreation, and for mental, social, and spiritual development. He is obliged to cease his work to find the opportunities which work of a certain kind gives. This may be brought into connection with remarks often heard concerning the long number of hours worked by superintendents, employers, and the professional classes. When the normal working-day has been discussed in preachers' meetings, it is quite customary for some preacher to assert that he is obliged to work twelve, thirteen, or even more hours per day, and he implies that, as he finds it no hardship, he does not see why artisans and mechanics should demand an eight-hour day. My physician considers it a good joke to allege that I work seventeen hours a day to help establish the eight-hour day. Not long ago this subject was brought up in conversation with an esteemed bishop, who referred to a strike of street-car employees for a reduction of the working-day from seventeen hours to twelve hours. This bishop told me that about the time of the strike he was conversing with one of the drivers, who gave an account of his hardships, whereupon the bishop rejoined that he knew of only one class of men who worked harder than the street-car employees, and that was the bishops. He proceeded to describe his working-day to the street-car driver, and told him how long he was kept busy each day. At the close of the conversation the street-car driver held out his hand and said, "Shake hands, bishop!" He felt sympathy with the clergyman who was also obliged to toil so many hours. All these comparisons, however, are misleading. Managers, large employers, and professional men generally find in their varied and often delightful employments those opportunities for development and self-culture which wage-earners can only secure after they have ceased their regular occupation. When the wage-earner stops work, or desires to stop work, it is not infrequently that he may engage in precisely the same kind of work which occupies the attention of professional and literary workers. He wants to attend meetings, take part in discussions, or study up some social topic which interests him.

The demands of modern life must be given weight in any discussion on the length of the working-day. Modern life is complex, and its problems difficult of solution. They tax the mental capacities of all, and wage-earners have in all modern nations their part to perform in political and social life. They are intrusted with the ballot, and they cannot exercise it intelligently and in such a manner as to promote their interests and the interests of society at large unless they have sufficient leisure for study, discussion, and reflection. The Greek philosophers thought that no one should be allowed to vote who was engaged in any manual occupation, because, they held, the citizen must be a man of leisure in order to perform with intelligence his duties as a citizen. We must now hold this claim of the Greeks to be an exaggerated one, but we must at the same time grant that those fall into an opposite and equally serious error who expect intelligent political and social action from citizens without leisure or culture.

The eight-hour working-day gives the laborer in the city opportunities for social and intellectual improvement, and also for recreation, of which the ten-hour day too frequently deprives him. I have thought of this as I have watched the wage-earners employed near my own residence. They begin at seven and stop at six, but most of them live a long distance from the place of their employment, so that the working-day for many practically begins a little after six and does not stop much before seven. After these wage-earners reach their home they have to eat their supper, and then they must "wash up," as they say, and change their clothes if they wish to go away from their home for purposes of recreation or improvement. It is manifest that it is very difficult for them to do this. It will often be half past eight o'clock before they are ready to leave home, and then it is too late. On the other hand, to cut off an hour in the morning would enable them to rise at a more seasonable hour, to partake of their morning meal more leisurely, indulging in conversation with members of their family, to return home after the close of the working-day, to take their evening meal in comfort, and then have opportunity to spend the evening as it is spent by the more favored portion of society.

When I say that the eight-hour day seems to be the ideal, I mean not only that it is long enough, but that it is not too long. I am not able to become enthusiastic about promises of a three or four hour working day in some future Utopia. It is good for men to work, and eight hours a day seems to be not too much employment to attain the best results materially and spiritually for men at the present day. It may be at some future time, when we have a higher order of men to deal with, a still shorter working-day would be desirable, but I do not believe that it is at the present time. I am convinced that it is better that men should work eight hours than six hours, even if they receive as high wages for the shorter day as for the longer.

It may be inquired what attitude we ought to take in regard to current agitation for an eight-hour day if we are convinced that it is the ideal. We ought to attempt to moderate desires and passions of both parties engaged in the controversy about the eight-hour day. The extravagant expectations which many entertain concerning the blessings which would be brought to us by an eight-hour working-day are on the one hand groundless, and on the other the fears of opponents rest upon no solid basis. The proposed measure is a good one, and we ought gradually to work toward it, and every legitimate and proper means look-

ing to its attainment deserves support. Legislation should, as a rule, regulate the length of the working-day for children, young persons (that is, those not over eighteen years of age), and for women. It is not desirable under ordinary circumstances to limit the working day of adult males, but in exceptional instances it may be desirable. There are certain employments which are of special concern to the public. Railways may be mentioned in this connection. A long working-day for railway employees is dangerous, not only to the employees themselves, but also to the traveling public. It is just and proper that the law should regulate the number of hours per day to be worked by employees of railway corporations, and should reduce them to a desirable limit. The public, from which franchises for enterprises like street railways and government works proceed, is interested in their management, and it is intolerable that the entire public should be put to inconvenience by the quarrels of employers and employees who are operating public works of this nature. The course followed in Baltimore in reducing by law the number of hours for street-car employees is one to be recommended without reservation, and suitable machinery ought to be found for the enforcement of the law. We have fared much better under this system in Baltimore than people have in other cities who have left it to employers and employees to fight out the contest between themselves, regardless of the comfort and convenience of the public at large.

SUGGESTIONS ON SOCIAL TOPICS.

[A series of monthly articles, copyrighted, for *The Christian Advocate*.]

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IX.

SOME REMARKS ON THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY.

It is interesting to follow the course of social reforms. We always encounter a class of opponents who make it necessary to fight for every step taken in advance. When the reforms are once accomplished, these opponents are forced to acknowledge that they are beneficial, and it might be supposed that they would experience a change of heart which would lead them to take a more considerate attitude with respect to future social improvements. This is, however, too seldom the case. The same opposition from the same class of men arises again and again, and they seem to learn nothing from past experience. They will acknowledge that the progress up to the present has been a good thing, but wherever we may be at any given moment they claim that we have at last reached the end.

The ten-hour day has become general in this country during the past generation, and in England the working time has been reduced as a rule to about fifty-four hours per week, an average working-day of nine hours. The present working time in both countries is a reduction from a labor-day of twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and even more hours. The proposal to shorten the working-day was in both countries stoutly resisted. All sorts of dire disasters were predicted in case the daily working time of the wage-earning classes was shortened, either by legislation or other means. One standard argument always advanced was that the country or part of a country where it was proposed to shorten the working-day would be unable to compete with other producers with a longer working-day. A glance at the history of the past shows that this apprehension has in every instance proved groundless. I challenge any one to bring forward any historical proof that a shortening of the working-day in manufacturing establishments has anywhere injured those establishments in competition with producers where a long working-day obtains. On the contrary, those regions and countries are most dreaded where the working-day is the shortest.

Objections of another class relate to the disastrous effect on the habits of the wage-earners which it was alleged would be produced by more leisure. Idleness and intemperance would, it was maintained, be increased. There would be more time for beer-guzzling and gambling and loafing, and the wage-earning classes would become more demoralized than they were. The pessimists who have prophesied this have also proved to be false prophets. As the length of the working-day has become shorter the habits of the masses have improved. Intelligence has spread, and the use of intoxicating beverages has decreased. It may be true that wage-earners have been inclined at first to make a use, not by any means the best, of increased leisure, but soon they have learned how to employ it advantageously as a rule, and quite as advantageously, I have no doubt, as the wealthier social classes.

What shall we say in regard to the proposal to shorten the working-day to eight hours? Does the experience of the past warrant us in asserting that the very general demand which is now made that wage-earners shall work only eight hours is one to be encouraged? The eight hour day is, it seems to me,