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A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich.

By JOHN WOOLMAN
(QUAKER, OF NEW JERSEY, 1720-1772).

WITH INTRODUCTION AND BIBLIOGRAPHY.

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By JOHN WOOLMAN.

INTRODUCTION.

"People may have no intention to oppress, yet by entering on expensive ways of life their minds may be so entangled therein, and so engaged to support expensive customs, as to be estranged from the pure sympathizing spirit." ("Remarks on Sundry Subjects." First printed, London, 1773.)

JOHN WOOLMAN, the author of this hundred-year-old tract, lived in the New England Colonies, in the days when they still paid allegiance (and taxes) to the British Government.

He is usually known as a Quaker advocate of the cause of the slave, at a time when slave-holding was still looked on, even by most of his co-religionists, as an essential part of the normal and heaven-ordained state of society. It is, however, frequently overlooked that he perceived clearly that the question of slavery was but one phase of the Labor question: he wrote not only "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes," but also "On Merchandizing," "On Trading in Superfluities," "On Schools." In his writings he enunciates, in simple religious phraseology, some of the truths which economists are only now beginning to understand: he is, as it were, the voice in the wilderness, the John the Baptist of the Gospel of Socialism.

The following essay contains the most connected account of his views on social questions. Though first printed in 1793, it was probably written about 1771, shortly before Woolman's death, and just before the publication of "The Wealth of Nations." But the ten years spent by Adam Smith at Glasgow University and Balliol College, Oxford, were passed by his American contemporary in work on his father's farm and in a small country store. So that the question naturally arises, by what authority is it that the working tailor

says these things? Woolman's answer may be found in his Journal: his writings are "openings from the Lord," his words are spoken "from an inward knowledge that they arise from the heavenly spring." "There is," says Woolman,* "a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names; it is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any, when the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, they become brethren."

John Woolman was, he tells us in his Journal, "born in Northampton, in Burlington County, West Jersey, in the year 1720." He was one of a large family, and, his parents being Quakers, he was brought up in conscientious Puritan fashion. He received "schooling pretty well for a planter," probably at the small country school of the village. This he supplemented by work in winter evenings, and with much reading of "the Holy Scriptures and religious books." Till he was about twenty-one he lived with his parents and worked on his father's farm. Then he left home for the neighboring village of Mount Holly, New Jersey, "to tend shop and keep books," for "a man in much business as a shopkeeper and baker." Here, in a small Quaker community, he made his home, and the plain, two-storey, whitewashed house in which he lived was standing fifty years ago, still overlooking a country rich with farms and woodlands. Here, on the 18th of eighth month, 1749, he was married to "a well-inclined damsel," Sarah Ellis; and here he brought up his little family.

But it was not his lot to die in this spot where he had passed so much of his life. In 1772 he felt a "religious concern" "to visit Friends [Quakers] in the northern parts of England." Notwithstanding the wishes of his friends, he thought it right to travel "steerage," and doubtless suffered from the thirty-eight days' voyage across the Atlantic. In his journeying through England he usually went about on foot in order to avoid participating in the cruelties under which post-boys and stage-horses suffered. Five months after leaving home he fell a victim to small pox, and died at York on the 7th of tenth month, 1772.

His business career illustrates the principles he advocated. Perceiving that "a humble man with the blessing of the Lord might live on a little," he learned the trade of tailoring and settled down in Mount Holly as a tailor, with a small retail business in trimmings, linings, and cloth—in spite of the temptation to enter the lucrative calling of general storekeeper, and his "natural inclination to merchandise." But even in his tailor's shop "trade increased every year, and the way to large business" in cloths and linen appeared open; but he tells us, "I felt a stop in my mind," "believing that Truth required me to live more free from outward cumbers." Not without some regret, some natural longing after the position of ease and wealth which he might have won for his family, he laid down merchandise in 1756 and lived as a working tailor without even an apprentice. Part of the time and energy thus freed from the

* "Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes," 1762.

cares of this world, he devoted to tending his garden and orchard, believing that "if the leadings of the Spirit were more faithfully attended to" . . . "more people would be engaged in the sweet employment of husbandry, and in the path of pure wisdom, labor would be an agreeable healthful employment."* He gained leisure, moreover, to write many valuable essays, and to undertake journeys through the States in the service of the slaves. It is probable that his work was an important factor in the ultimate abolition of slavery.

The whole life of Woolman was a protest against superfluities. He saw with singular clearness that "every degree of luxury hath some connection with evil." Thus it is to an excess of fatigue, to an "increase of labor beyond that which our Heavenly Father intends," that he attributes the undue use of spirituous liquors among the poor. He held "that if such as had great estates generally lived in that plainness and humility which belong to a Christian life, and laid much easier rents and interests on their lands and moneys, and thus led the way to a right use of things, so great a number of people might be employed in things useful, that labor both for men and other creatures would need to be no more than an agreeable employ, and divers branches of business, which serve chiefly to please the natural inclinations of our minds, and which at present seem necessary to circulate that wealth which some gather, might, in this way of pure wisdom, be discontinued" †—an idea which he expanded in Section IV. of his pamphlet. He carried his principles into even the smallest details of life. He did not feel easy to drink from vessels of silver at the house of a friend. He stipulated in his last illness that no medicines should be given that come "through defiled channels or oppressive hands." Believing that the dyeing of garments injured the material and led to uncleanness, he gradually adopted a costume of "natural colored" garments; yet he suffered much from the fear of ridicule, especially as light-colored hats were coming into fashion at the time, and his motives might therefore be misunderstood! There is wonderful pathos in his simple account of these and other of his practices; and there is much practical sense in his longing that "people might come into cleanness of spirit, cleanness of person, and cleanness about their houses and garments." ‡

The following extracts constitute about one half of the pamphlet. § Omissions are, in every case, indicated, and the cross-headings have been added by the editors.

* "Remarks on Sundry Subjects." † "Journal," eighth month, 1761.

‡ "Journal," 13th, ninth month, 1772 (the date of the last entry).

§ Published with "The Journal of John Woolman, with an Introduction by John G. Whittier." London: Headley Brothers, 14 Bishopsgate Street Without, E.C. Eleventh edition, 1896. 2s. 6d. and 3s. nett.

A WORD OF REMEMBRANCE AND CAUTION TO THE RICH.

Section I.

WEALTH desired for its own sake obstructs the increase of virtue, and large possessions in the hands of selfish men have a bad tendency, for by their means too small a number of people are employed in useful things, and some of them are necessitated to labor too hard, while others would want business to earn their bread, were not employments invented which, having no real usefulness, serve only to please the vain mind.

RESULTS OF HIGH RENTS.

Rents on lands are often so high that persons of but small substance are straitened in taking farms, and while tenants are healthy and prosperous in business, they often find occasion to labor harder than was intended by our gracious Creator. Oxen and horses are often seen at work when, through heat and too much labor, their eyes and the motions of their bodies manifest that they are oppressed. Their loads in wagons are frequently so heavy that when weary with hauling them far, their drivers find occasion in going up hills or through mire, to get them forward by whipping. Many poor people are so thronged in their business that it is difficult for them to provide shelter for their cattle against the storms. These things are common when in health, but through sickness and inability to labor, through loss of cattle, and miscarriage in business, many are so straitened that much of their increase goes to pay rent, and they have not wherewith to buy what they require.

Hence one poor woman, in providing for her family and attending the sick, does as much business as would for the time be suitable employment for two or three; and honest persons are often straitened to give their children suitable learning. The money which the wealthy receive from the poor, who do more than a proper share of business in raising it, is frequently paid to other poor people for doing business which is foreign to the true use of things.

"UNIVERSAL LOVE" AS AGAINST LAWS AND CUSTOMS.

Men who have large estates and live in the spirit of charity; who carefully inspect the circumstances of those who occupy their estates, and, regardless of the customs of the times, regulate their demands agreeably to universal love, being righteous on principle, do good to the poor without placing it to an act of bounty. Their example in avoiding superfluities tends to excite moderation in others; their uprightness in not exacting what the laws and customs would support them in tends to open the channel to moderate labor in useful affairs, and to discourage those branches of business which have not their foundation in true wisdom. . . .

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Section II.

GOD'S OWNERSHIP.

The Creator of the earth is the owner of it. He gave us being thereon, and our nature requires nourishment from the produce of it. He is kind and merciful to his creatures; and while they live answerably to the design of their creation, they are so far entitled to convenient subsistence that we may not justly deprive them of it.

MAN'S TENURE.

By the agreements and contracts of our predecessors, and by our own doings, some enjoy a much greater share of this world than others; and while those possessions are faithfully improved for the good of the whole, it agrees with equity; but he who, with a view to self-exaltation, causeth some to labor immoderately, and with the profits arising therefrom employs others in the luxuries of life, acts contrary to the gracious designs of Him who is the owner of the earth; nor can any possessions, either acquired or derived from ancestors, justify such conduct. Goodness remains to be goodness, and the direction of pure wisdom is obligatory on all reasonable creatures.

NO CONTRACT JUSTIFIES OPPRESSION.

Though the poor occupy our estates by a bargain, to which they in their poor circumstances agree, and we may ask even less than a punctual fulfilling of their agreement, yet if our views are to lay up riches, or to live in conformity to customs which have not their foundation in the truth, and our demands are such as require from them greater toil or application to business than is consistent with pure love, we invade their rights as inhabitants of a world of which a good and gracious God is the proprietor, and under whom we are tenants.

Were all superfluities and the desire of outward greatness laid aside, and the right use of things universally attended to, such a number of people might be employed in things useful as that moderate labor with the blessing of Heaven would answer all good purposes, and a sufficient number would have time to attend to the proper affairs of civil society.

Section III.

GREAT ESTATES ARE A TRUST.

Section IV.

Our blessed Redeemer, in directing us how to conduct ourselves one towards another, appeals to our own feelings: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

HOW THE POOR LIVE.

Now, when some who have never experienced hard labor themselves live in fulness on the labor of others, there is often a danger of their not having a right feeling of the laborer's condition, and of being thereby disqualified to judge candidly in their case, not know-

ing what they themselves would desire, were they to labor hard from one year to another to raise the necessaries of life and pay high rent besides. It is good for those who live in fulness to cultivate tenderness of heart, and to improve every opportunity of being acquainted with the hardships and fatigues of those who labor for their living; and thus to think seriously with themselves, Am I influenced by true charity in fixing all my demands? Have I no desire to support myself in expensive customs, because my acquaintances live in such customs?

THE GOLDEN RULE.

If a wealthy man, on serious reflection, finds a witness in his own conscience that he indulges himself in some expensive customs which might be omitted consistently with the true design of living, and which, were he to change places with those who occupy his estate, he would desire to be discontinued by them; whoever is thus awakened will necessarily find the injunction binding: "Do ye even so to them." Divine love imposeth no rigorous or unreasonable commands, but graciously points out the spirit of brotherhood and the way to happiness, in attaining which it is necessary that we relinquish all that is selfish.

Section V.

"AS OTHERS SEE US."

Let us reflect on the condition of a poor innocent man, on whom the rich man, from a desire after wealth and luxuries lays heavy burdens; when this laborer looks over the cause of his heavy toil and considers that it is laid on him to support that which hath no foundation in pure wisdom, we may well suppose that an uneasiness ariseth in his mind towards one who might without any inconvenience deal more favorably with him. When he considers that by his industry his fellow-creature is benefited and sees that this wealthy man is not satisfied with being supported in a plain way, but to gratify a desire of conforming to wrong customs increaseth to an extreme the labors of those who occupy his estate, we may reasonably judge that he will think himself unkindly used. When he considers that the proceedings of the wealthy are agreeable to the customs of the times, and sees no means of redress in this world, how will the sighings of this innocent person ascend to the throne of that great and good Being who created all, and who hath a constant care over his creatures! He who toils year after year to furnish others with wealth and superfluities, until by overmuch labor he is wearied and oppressed, understands the meaning of that language, "Ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Many at this day who know not the heart of a stranger indulge themselves in ways of life which occasion more labor than Infinite Goodness intends for man, and yet compassionate the distresses of such as come directly under their observation; were these to change

TO THE CONDITION, BUT NOT TO THE REQUESTED SIGN OF LEAVE. DE SIGNEN.

circumstances awhile with their laborers, were they to pass regularly through the means of knowing the heart of a stranger and come to a feeling knowledge of the straits and hardships which many poor innocent people pass through in obscure life ; were these who now fare sumptuously every day to act the other part of the scene until seven times had passed over them and return again to their former states,

THE GOLDEN RULE ONCE MORE.

I believe many of them would embrace a less expensive life, and would lighten the heavy burdens of some who now labor out of their sight, and who pass through straits with which they are but little acquainted. To see their fellow creatures under difficulties to which they are in no degree accessory tends to awaken tenderness in the minds of all reasonable people ; but if we consider the condition of those who are depressed in answering our demands, who labor for us out of our sight while we pass our time in fulness, and consider also that much less than we demand would supply us with things really useful, what heart will not relent, or what reasonable man can refrain from mitigating that grief of which he himself is the cause, when he may do so without inconvenience ?

Section VI.

TOO MUCH LABOR A CAUSE OF THE CRAVING FOR STRONG DRINK.

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Section VII.

ACCUMULATION OF WEALTH FOR OUR CHILDREN.

If by our wealth we make our children great, without a full persuasion that we could not bestow it better, and thus give them power to deal hardly with others more virtuous than they, it can after death give us no more satisfaction than if by this treasure we had raised others above our own, and had given them power to oppress them.

Section VIII.

CHRIST'S TEACHING.

The greater part of the necessaries of life are so far perishable that each generation hath occasion to labor for them ; and when we look towards a succeeding age with a mind influenced by universal love, instead of endeavouring to exempt some from those cares which necessarily relate to this life, and to give them power to oppress others, we desire that they may all be the Lord's children and live in that humility and order becoming his family. Our hearts, being thus opened and enlarged, will feel content with a state of things as foreign to luxury and grandeur as that which our Redeemer laid down as a pattern.

For, as he lived in perfect plainness and simplicity, the greatest in his family cannot by virtue of his station claim a right to live in

worldly grandeur without contradicting him who said, "It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master."

THE TYRANNY OF SELFISHNESS,

Tyranny as applied to a man riseth up and soon has an end ; but if we consider the numerous oppressions in many states, and the calamities occasioned by contending nations in various countries and ages of the world, and remember that selfishness hath been the original cause of them all ; if we consider that those who are unredeemed from this selfish spirit not only afflict others but are afflicted themselves, and have no real quietness in this life nor in futurity, but, according to the sayings of Christ, have their portion "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" ;

CAUSING UNREST :

if we consider the havoc that is made in this age, and how numbers of people are hurried on, striving to collect treasure to please that mind which wanders from perfect resignedness, and in that wisdom which is foolishness with God are perverting the true use of things, laboring as in the fire, contending with one another even unto blood, and exerting their power to support ways of living foreign to the life of one wholly crucified to the world ;

AND WASTE OF LABOR.

if we consider what great numbers of people are employed in preparing implements of war, and the labor and toil of armies set apart for protecting their respective territories from invasion, and the extensive miseries which attend their engagements ; while they who till the land and are employed in other useful things in supporting not only themselves but those employed in military affairs, and also those who own the soil, have great hardships to encounter through too much labor ; while others in several kingdoms, are busied in fetching men to help to labor from distant parts of the world, to spend the remainder of their lives in the uncomfortable condition of slaves, and that self is the bottom of these proceedings ;—

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

amidst all this confusion, and these scenes of sorrow and distress, can we remember that we are the disciples of the Prince of Peace, and the example of humility and plainness which he set for us, without feeling an earnest desire to be disentangled from everything connected with selfish customs in food, in raiment, in houses and in all things else ? That being of Christ's family, and walking as he walked, we may stand in that uprightness wherein man was first made, and have no fellowship with those inventions which men in their fallen wisdom have sought out.

Section IX.

The way of carrying on wars common in the world is so far distinguishable from the purity of Christ's religion that many scruple to join in them. Those who are so redeemed from the love

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of the world as to possess nothing in a selfish spirit have their "life hid with Christ in God," and he preserves them in resignedness, even in times of commotion.

As they possess nothing but what pertains to his family, anxious thoughts about wealth or dominion have little or nothing in them on which to work ; and they learn contentment in being disposed of according to His will who, being omnipotent and always mindful of his children, causeth all things to work for their good ; but when that spirit works which loves riches, and in its working gathers wealth and cleaves to customs which have their root in self-pleasing, whatever name it hath it still desires to defend the treasures thus gotten.

CONNECTION BETWEEN WEALTH AND WAR.

This is like a chain in which the end of one link encloseth the end of another. The rising up of a desire to obtain wealth is the beginning ; this desire being cherished, moves to action ; and riches thus gotten please self ; and while self has a life in them it desires to have them defended. Wealth is attended with power, by which bargains and proceedings contrary to universal righteousness are supported ; and hence oppression carried on with worldly policy and order, clothes itself with the name of justice and becomes like a seed of discord in the soul. And as a spirit which wanders from the pure habitation prevails, so the seeds of war swell and sprout and grow and become strong until much fruit is ripened. Then cometh the harvest spoken of by the prophet, which "is a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrows." Oh that we who declare against wars, and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the light, and therein examine our foundation and motives in holding great estates ! May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions. Holding treasures in the self-pleasing spirit is a strong plant, the fruit whereof ripens fast. A day of outward distress is coming, and Divine love calls to prepare against it.

Section X.

THE EARTH ONLY A CONDITIONAL GIFT.

"The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's ; but the earth hath he given to the children of men." As servants of God our land or estates we hold under him as his gifts ; and in applying the profits it is our duty to act consistently with the designs of our Benefactor. Imperfect men may give from motives of misguided affection, but perfect wisdom and goodness gives agreeably to his own nature ; nor is this gift absolute, but conditional, for us to occupy as dutiful children and not otherwise ; for He alone is the true proprietor. "The world," saith He, "is mine, and the fulness thereof."

THE TRUE JUBILEE.

The inspired lawgiver directed that such of the Israelites as sold their inheritance should sell it for a term only, and that they or

their children should again enjoy it in the year of jubilee, settled on every fiftieth year. "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine, saith the Lord, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." This was designed to prevent the rich from oppressing the poor by too much engrossing the land; and our blessed Redeemer said: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

When Divine love takes place in the hearts of any people, and they steadily act in a principle of universal righteousness, then the true intent of the law is fulfilled, though their outward modes of proceeding may be various; but when men are possessed by that spirit hinted at by the prophet, and, looking over their wealth, say in their hearts, "Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?" they deviate from the Divine law, and do not count their possessions so strictly God's nor the weak and poor entitled to so much of the increase thereof, but that they may indulge their desires in conforming to worldly pomp.

THE LUST FOR LAND.

Thus when house is joined to house and field laid to field, until there is no place, and the poor are thereby straitened, though this is done by bargain and purchase, yet so far as it stands distinguished from universal love, so far that woe predicted by the prophet will accompany their proceedings. As He who first founded the earth was then the true proprietor of it, so he still remains, and though he hath given it to the children of men, so that multitudes of people have had their sustenance from it while they continued here, yet he hath never alienated it, but his right is as good as at first; nor can any apply the increase of their possessions contrary to universal love, nor dispose of lands in a way which they know tends to exalt some by oppressing others without being justly chargeable with usurpation.

Section XI.

THE EXPANSION OF THE EMPIRE: TREATMENT OF NATIVE RACES.

Section XII.

While our minds are prepossessed in favor of customs distinguishable from perfect purity, we are in danger of not attending with singleness to that light which opens to our view the nature of universal righteousness.

THE DIVISION OF LABOR.

In the affairs of a thickly-settled country are variety of useful employments besides tilling the earth; so that for some men to have more land than is necessary to build upon and to answer the occasions of their families may consist with brotherhood; and from the various gifts which God hath bestowed on those employed in husbandry, for some to possess and occupy much more than others may likewise so consist; but when any, on the strength of their possessions, demand such rent or interest as necessitates their tenants to a

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closer application to business than our merciful Father designed for us, it puts the wheels of perfect brotherhood out of order, and leads to employments the promoting of which belongs not to the family of Christ, whose example in all points being a pattern of wisdom, the plainness and simplicity of his outward appearance may well make us ashamed to adorn our bodies with costly array or treasure up wealth by the least oppression.

RIGHT AND "RIGHTS."

Though by claims grounded on prior possession great inequality appears among men ; yet the instructions of the Great Proprietor of the earth are necessary to be attended to in all our proceedings as possessors or claimers of the soil. "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord," and those who are thus guided and whose hearts are enlarged in his love give directions concerning their possessions agreeably thereto ; and that claim which stands on universal righteousness is a good right ; but the continuance of that right depends on properly applying the profits thereof. The word "right" commonly relates to our possessions. We say, a right of propriety to such a division of a province, or a clear, indisputable right to the land within certain bounds. Thus this word is continued as a remembrancer of the original intent of dividing the land by boundaries, and implies that it was equitably or rightly divided, that is, divided according to righteousness. In this—that is, in equity and righteousness—consists the strength of our claim. If we trace an unrighteous claim and find gifts or grants proved by sufficient seals and witnesses it gives not the claimant a right ; for that which is opposite to righteousness is wrong ; and the nature of it must be changed before it can be right.

AN UTOPIA.

Suppose twenty free men, professed followers of Christ, discovered an island, and that they with their wives, independent of all others, took possession of it and, dividing it equally, made improvements and multiplied ; suppose these first possessors, being generally influenced by true love, did with paternal regard look over the increasing condition of the inhabitants, and, near the end of their lives, gave such directions concerning their respective possessions as best suited the convenience of the whole and tended to preserve love and harmony ; and that their successors in the continued increase of people generally followed their pious example and pursued means the most effectual to keep oppression out of their island ; but that one of these first settlers, from a fond attachment to one of his numerous sons, no more deserving than the rest, gives the chief of his lands to him, and by an instrument sufficiently witnessed strongly expressed his mind and will ;—

TWENTIETH PART OF UTOPIA UNDER A LANDLORD :

suppose this son, being landlord to his brethren and nephews, demands such a portion of the fruits of the earth as may supply himself, his family and some others, and that these others thus supplied out of his store are employed in adorning his building with

curious engravings and paintings, preparing carriages to ride in, vessels for his house, delicious meats, fine wrought apparel and furniture, all suiting that distinction lately arisen between him and the other inhabitants ;

RESULT—IN POLITICS ;

and that, having the absolute disposal of these numerous improvements, his power so increaseth that in all conferences relative to the public affairs of the island, these plain, honest men, who are zealous for equitable establishments, find great difficulty in proceeding agreeably to their righteous inclinations—suppose this son, from a fondness to one of his children, joined with a desire to continue this grandeur under his own name, confirms the chief of his possessions to him, and thus for many ages there is one great landlord over near a twentieth part of this island,

IN RISE OF A “ PREDATORY ” CLASS.

and the rest are poor oppressed people, to some of whom, from the manner of their education, joined with a notion of the greatness of their predecessors, labor is disagreeable ; who, therefore, by artful applications to the weakness, unguardedness, and corruptions of others in striving to get a living out of them, increase the difficulties among them, while the inhabitants of other parts, who guard against oppression and with one consent train up their children in frugality and useful labor, live more harmoniously ;—

“ QUO WARRANTO ? ”

if we trace the claims of the ninth or tenth of these great landlords down to the first possessor and find the claim supported throughout by instruments strongly drawn and witnessed, after all we could not admit a belief into our hearts that he had a right to so great a portion of land after such a numerous increase of inhabitants.

The first possessor of that twentieth part held no more, we suppose, than an equitable portion ; but when the Lord, who first gave these twenty men possession of this island unknown to all others, gave being to numerous people who inhabited the twentieth part, whose natures required the fruits thereof for their sustenance, this great claimer of the soil could not have a right to the whole to dispose of it in gratifying his irregular desires ; but they, as creatures of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, had a right to part of what this great claimer held, though they had no instruments to confirm their right.

CONCLUSION.

Thus oppression in the extreme appears terrible ; but oppression in more refined appearances remains to be oppression, and when the smallest degree of it is cherished it grows stronger and more extensive.

To labor for a perfect redemption from this spirit of oppression is the great business of the whole family of Christ Jesus in this world.

JOHN WOOLMAN (OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS) "OF MOUNT HOLLY IN THE JERSEYS, NORTH AMERICA."

Born 1720. Died 1772.

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21. A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich. By JOHN WOOLMAN, of Mount Holly in New Jersey, who died in the year 1772. Dublin; 1793. Small 12mo. S., B.M.
22. No. 21 reprinted. London; 1794. Small 12mo. S., B.M.
23. No. 14 reprinted. Dublin; 1794. 8vo. S., B.M.
24. No. 14 reprinted as a "third edition." Philadelphia; 1800. 12mo. S., B.M.
25. Avis rememoratif. . . . Dublin; 1800. 8vo. B.M. *Note.*—A translation of No. 21 by J. Desmanoirs.
26. Another translation of No. 21 is mentioned in Smith, with the title "Un mot de Caution Addressé (*sic*) Aux Riches." No date, etc., given. S.
27. No. 7 and No. 21 reprinted together. New York; 1805. 12mo. S.
28. On Loving Our Neighbors as Ourselves. Written by JOHN WOOLMAN, of Pennsylvania. (First printed in 1794.) With a Préface by JOHN THORP. Macclesfield; 1807. 8vo. S.

29. Memoir of John Woolman. Chiefly extracted from a Journal of his Life and Travels. London; 1815. 12mo. S.
30. A French Translation of No. 29. Londres; 1819. 12mo. S.
31. No. 6 reprinted with a preface by J. B. [John Barclay]. London; 1820. 12mo. S.
32. No. 14 reprinted. "A new edition." London; 1824. 8vo. S., B. M.
33. John Woolman's Letters and Fragments in—The Friends' Miscellany: being a collection of Essays and Fragments designed to preserve in remembrance the characters and views of exemplary individuals and those manuscripts left by them Edited by JOHN and ISAAC COWLY, of Byberry. 12 vols. Philadelphia; 1831-39. 12mo. S., B. M.
- Note.*—Some of the volumes reached a 2nd edition.
34. No. 14 reprinted. 1832. 32mo. B. M.
35. No. 14 reprinted as Vol. i. of "The Friends' Library." Edited by WM. ALLEN. Lindfield; 1832. 16mo. S.
36. No. 14 reprinted. 1833. 12mo. B. M.
37. No. 35 reprinted. Second edition. Lindfield; 1833. 16mo. S.
38. No. 14 reprinted. Edited by JOHN COMLY. Philadelphia; 1837. 12mo. S., B. M.
39. No. 35 reprinted. Third edition. Lindfield; 1838. 12mo. S.
40. No. 14 reprinted as Vol. iv. of "The Friends' Library." Edited by WILLIAM and THOS. EVANS. Philadelphia; 1840. 8vo. S., B. M.
41. No. 14 and No. 21 reprinted. Edited by JAMES CROPPER. Warrington; 1840. 8vo. S., B. M.
- Note.*—This edition contains some verses by Bernard Barton.
42. John Woolman's Works printed with "No Cross, No Crown." By WM. PENN, the founder of Pennsylvania. Manchester; 1844. 12mo. B. M.
43. No. 14 reprinted. New York; 1845. 8vo. S.
44. No. 30 reprinted. Londres; 1845. 12m. S.
- Note.*—Smith mentions that there were many other reprints. See No. 47.
45. No. 14 reprinted. London; 1847. 8vo. S.
46. No. 14 translated into German under the title "Tagebuch des lebens John Woolman." London; 1852. 8vo. B. M.
47. No. 30 reprinted. Londres; 1854. 12mo. S., B. M.
48. Selections from the Writings of John Woolman. Published by the Tract Association of the Society of Friends, as No. 21 in their series. London; 1855. 12mo. B. M.
49. No. 29 republished by the London Tract Association as No. 15 in their series. London; 1856. 12mo. S., B. M.
50. No. 14 reprinted. London; 1857. 8vo. S., B. M.
- 51-53. See *infra*.
54. No. 14 reprinted. With Introduction by J. G. WHITTIER. Boston, Mass.; 1872. 8vo. B. M.
55. No. 54 reprinted. Glasgow; 1882. 8vo. S.
56. See *infra*.
57. A small paper on Prayer, headed "During a season of severe illness John Woolman had the following committed to writing," mentioned by Smith. 12mo. S.
58. No. 54 reprinted. 11th edition. London; 1896.
- Note.*—Printed in Boston.

The following Biographical Notices of John Woolman have been published:—

5. "To the memory of John Woolman." By T. M. [Thomas May]. 1772. Broadside. S.
51. "Saint John Woolman." Reprinted from the *Eclectic Review* for June, 1861. Ipswich; 1864. 8vo. S., B. M.
52. John Woolman. A biographical sketch by DORA GREENWELL. London; 1871. 8vo. S., B. M.
53. John Woolman. A paper read at the Friends' Institute. By D. DUNCAN. London; 1871. 8vo. S., B. M.
56. John Woolman. A study for young men. By Rev. T. GREEN, of Ashton-under-Lyne. Manchester; 1885. 8vo. B. M.
59. No. 56 reprinted with Introduction by Rev. H. C. G. MOULE, DD. London; 1897. 8vo.

to the condition, but he was requested to sign or leave. He signed.

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Labor in the Longest Reign. By SIDNEY WEBB. Special Library Edition, bound in cloth, large type, with diagram of percentage of Unemployment in two Trade Unions. Of all booksellers, 1s.; or post free from Fabian Society, 1s.

Some eighteen months after a quarrel ensued, and the assistant left Messrs. Bladon and Co. and shortly afterwards secured a situation with another firm of drapers in Hull. Messrs. Bladon and Co. thereon applied for a perpetual injunction restraining Davidson from continuing in employment as a draper's assistant within the area specified by the agreement. The injunction was granted, and, although the local Trades Council interceded with Messrs. Bladon and Co. on Davidson's behalf, the legal decision was enforced, and the assistant was made bankrupt to defray the cost of the action.

An assistant, working in Bradford,* signed an agreement not to

* Messrs. Gallon and Co. v. H. Rogers, Grocer, 1894.

accept employment in a similar capacity within a mile of any of the firm's branch shops. As this firm has twenty-five to thirty branch shops scattered over several neighboring towns, it practically amounted to a contract not to accept employment with any other firm in those towns. In this case the assistant did accept employment contrary to his contract, and the firm, who were a party to the contract, applied for a perpetual injunction and £50 damages. The Bradford Branch of the National Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks took up the case, and the firm agreed to compromise by withdrawing the claim for damages, on condition the assistant left the situation he then held.

Hours of Labor.

If eight hours is the daily allowance for a man's toil, then many shop assistants do the work of two men in one day. The work, while they are at it, is both laborious and tedious. In very few places do the assistants have either time or strength after it for recreation and social intercourse. We must not judge the length of hours only by the time the shops keep open; there is much to do, before and after, in arranging and sorting stock; but the weekly hours given in the examples which follow only include the hours in which the shop is open to the public.

The House of Commons' Committee which received evidence on Shop Hours in 1886, reported that "The hours of labor in shops range as high as 85 per week. The Lady Commissioner says the hours compare unfavorably with those permitted in industries protected by the Factory Acts," and that "the idea that a shop assistant's work is less arduous than that of a person in factories seems also to be erroneous." The representatives of the National Union, when giving evidence before the Royal Commission on Labor (November 9th, 1892) estimated the average hours per week as from 80 to 84. The Secretary of the London Early Closing Association stated to the House of Commons Committee, on the Shops Early Closing Bill, 1895, that, "where there is an early closing day in London, hours still average from 80 to 82 per week, and, where there is no early closing day, from 82 to 84 per week." Other witnesses put the hours from 68 to 100 per week.

Mr. Henry Cushen, an official of the Metropolitan Grocers' and Provision Dealers' Association, and a tireless opponent of Parliamentary limitation of Shop Hours, stated that "The following are the hours, in my experience, in London: Monday, 13½ hours; Tuesday, 9½; Wednesday, 13½; Thursday, 13½; Friday, 14½; Saturday, 16½ hours. Total: 81 hours per week, less half-an-hour each for *dressing*, breakfast, dinner, tea and supper = 2½ hours per day, being 15 hours per week, net total of working hours 66 per week." Mr. Lomax, Secretary of the Loughborough Shop Assistants' Association, stated, at the Shop Hours Conference, Manchester, 1892, that he had worked in a shop where, during four years, he had never had an opportunity of putting on his coat or his hat, except on Sundays.

Mr. Charles Booth gives the hours of men in drapers' shops in London as from 59 to 70 in first class shops, and hours of women as from 56 to 67 (exclusive of meals). The difference between the hours of men and women who work in the same shop is explained by the fact that women seldom enter the shop before breakfast. The hours of labor in first class suburban shops, Mr. Booth "estimates as from 62½ to 74½: medium shops, from 71 to 76, and in some places more; small shops have no quotable hours. The grocers, oil and colormen, work longer hours. The almost universal time of opening is 8 a.m. . . . The usual closing hour for the first four days is 9 or 9.30 p.m.—in some districts there is an early closing day from 5 p.m. On Friday few shops close before 10.30 or 11 o'clock, and on Saturday the usual hour is 12 p.m."

The Women's Co-operative Guild, in their June (1896) Report, state that of the 1,554 women and girls employed by 104 societies, 8 per cent. work 48 hours or less per week; 31 per cent. work 49 to 53 hours per week; 48 per cent. work 53 to 57 per week; 11 per cent. work 57 to 60 hours per week; and 2 per cent. 60 hours or upwards. The longest hours worked are 63 hours, and the shortest 40½ hours per week. The 1,554 women and girls include shop assistants, dressmakers, clerks, milliners, etc.

In small shops, and in those shops where meals are provided on the premises, the assistants rarely leave the shop *during the day*. In medium and lower class shops the number of hours during which assistants are confined to the shop cannot, in large cities, be less than 78 hours per week on the average. In those places where a half-holiday is customary, the average would be less, but, in far too many cases, the larger average is exceeded. In country towns and in first class shops the hours are fewest.





SHOP ASSISTANTS.

Modern Shopkeeping.

It would be difficult to point out any industry which has altered more rapidly in its social aspects within recent years than shopkeeping. The small shop is rapidly losing its place in the economy of distribution, and the "respectable shopkeeper" is disappearing as the Store and the Limited Liability Company step in to do his work.

This change has not been on the whole of benefit to the shop assistant. In former times he* worked in close contact with his

* In this Tract the masculine pronoun includes the feminine.

employer; he had opportunities of gaining a wide knowledge of his trade; he had social advantages almost on a level with those of his master; and a reasonable prospect of some day being in business on his own account. Now he is a machine in the employ of a firm; dependent for his comfort and security on a foreman who is part of the same machine; and having before him practically no chance of advancement, and, worse still, no chance of employment when his hair begins to turn grey and he is past his prime. What becomes of the old shop assistant is a problem that weighs like a nightmare upon the thoughtful man; he is scarcely ever to be seen behind the counter; and we know that he has not received a training which will fit him for any other work of a paying nature when the shop machine no longer needs him.

There is something of the nightmare even about the lives of the young men and young women who serve us so briskly and obligingly on our shopping expeditions. Although they work under such varied circumstances, some still serving almost single-handed in small shops while others are massed together by the hundred or thousand by some Universal Provider, yet there is a similarity in the conditions of almost all, which may be summed up in the words "long hours, small pay, and unhealthy mode of life." Let us examine their grievances more closely.

References.

Shopkeeping is an easy profession to enter without training and without references; but then you must serve in it, whether you are child or adult, for six months or more without pay and with no teacher except the pains and penalties which follow on your own mistakes. To enter a good situation the assistant must have references from his last employers; and the system, or want of system, which obtains with regard to these is most unsatisfactory. As a rule they are kept secret from the employee, so that however unjustly or carelessly they may be drawn up he cannot defend himself; and often most impertinent and irrelevant questions are asked as to the employee's religion, parentage, etc.; and the result of the farce is that very little store is set even upon good references by the employer who insists on demanding them.

Engagements and Dismissals.

The same competition which makes it difficult for the assistant to get work makes it also difficult for him to keep it. It is a common practice with large firms (the London Army and Navy Stores are the worst sinners in this respect) to engage extra hands for each busy season of the year, giving them to understand that, if they prove suitable, the engagement will be permanent. At the end of the season very few are found to be "suitable," and these are only retained in place of less "pushing salesmen" who were there before them. The rule in most houses is, that the employer has the power to dismiss an assistant at a moment's notice, but that the assistant must give one or more week's notice. No wages are paid in lieu of notice, and the only provision to ~~make~~ that the assistant shall not be absolutely penniless when he leaves is the retention, by the employer of the first week's or fortnight's wage, which is paid them on dismissal. In one shop six girls were dismissed on Christmas Eve, without any reason being assigned and with no extra pay. The girls, being allowed to buy things in the shop and have them entered during the month, and then, not expecting to have notice given them, might have been only just out of debt when dismissed.

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SHOP ASSISTANTS.

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Agreements.

Employers often demand from assistants the signing of certain agreements as a condition of engagement. These may prohibit after employment in the same neighborhood, enforce obedience to all rules on pain of instant dismissal, or grant the right of search to the employer's inspectors; whatever they are, the assistant will probably sign away his liberty with scarcely a glance at what he is doing, for it is a choice between that and losing the place. It must be borne in mind that the shop assistant is a worker who, when employed, only receives sufficient remuneration to pay the cost of subsistence; whose chance of *obtaining* or *retaining* employment very largely depends upon a neat and prosperous appearance. He dare not risk his situation or the prospects of obtaining a situation by non-compliance with regulations, though these may hamper him in his business career. He must sign the customary agreement or seek other employment. The case of *Bladon v. Davidson*,* of Hull, was that

* *Hull Daily*, May, 1892.

of a draper's assistant who accepted the position of shopwalker in the employ of Messrs. F. F. Bladon and Co. Some time after he had occupied that position he was requested to sign an agreement that he would not accept any position in the drapery trade within a radius of ten miles or in the town of Hull, should he at any time, for any cause, leave the employ of the plaintiffs. The assistant objected to the condition, but he was requested to sign or leave. He signed.

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Wages.

The table compiled by the Labor Commissioners gives, for male assistants, an average of 23s. 11d. per week. A representative of the National Union of Shop Assistants, when giving evidence before the Commission, put the average wage at 23s. The *Lancet* Sanitary Commissioners estimated the hourly earnings of assistants at from 2d. to 6d. Mr. Charles Booth tabulates the earnings of assistants with twenty-five firms, representing grocers, oil and colormen, tea, coffee and cocoa traders. 770 adult men were employed, 64½ per cent. of whom received under 30s. per week; 20 per cent. from 30s. to 35s. per week; and 15½ per cent. received over that sum. The same firms employed 314 women, of whom 41 per cent. earned under 12s. per week; and of 344 boys employed, 62½ per cent. received under 12s. per week. The average hours of the class of traders mentioned are about 80 per week. More than half the boys and women would be paid less than 2d. per hour; 33 per cent. of the adult men would be working for 4d. per hour, and 85 per cent. were receiving less than 6d. per hour. Drapers are better paid than grocers, and work fewer hours. Mr. Booth gives similar particulars about the earnings of drapers employed by thirty-six wholesale and retail firms in London. 2,268 assistants were employed, of whom 1,177 were men, 931 women, and 160 apprentices (115 lads and 45 girls). Of total 2,002 "lived in," and 411 "lived out"; of the 115 lads returned as apprentices, 34 received some remuneration, which in most cases was under £10 per annum. None of the 45 girls received any salary; board and lodgings were provided.

Mr. Booth says further that "to compare the earnings of drapers' assistants with other workers, allowance must be made for premiums and also for food and lodging." About "half the men are little better off than a workman earning 30s. per week. . . . On the other hand, life, so far as the drapery trade is concerned, ends much earlier." The returns upon which Mr. Booth has based his estimate of wages current in the drapery trade in London include too many wholesale firms to give any other than the most favorable average. His estimated value of board and lodgings at 10s. is certainly above the actual cost to the employer, and even a much lower estimate would be qualified by the varying quality of food and accommodation provided. Mr. Booth estimates premiums to average 5s. per week. This estimate may be correct for the firms to which his enquiries have been confined, but as an average throughout the trade it is too high; and even if that figure were accepted it should be considered in its relation to the prevalence of fines. Premiums fluctuate and are largely reduced by fines. The Scottish Shopkeepers' and Assistants' Union put in a statement to the Royal Commission on Labor in which they estimate the average wage of drapers' assistants in Scotland to be—men 25s., women 10s. per week. The Women's Co-operative Guild, in the Report already mentioned, stated that of 1,349 women and girls employed by 104 societies, 108 girls received no remuneration; 103 received under 5s. per week; 401 women and girls received 5s. and under 10s. per week; 438 received 10s. and under 15s.; 182 received 15s. and under 20s.; and 117 received 20s. and upwards per week. There are two classes of women and girls who seek employment as drapers' and milliners' assistants, induced to do so by the apparent gentility of such occupations, whose competition for employment and indifference to the wage question have done much to injure the prospects of the women and girls who seek such employment as the sole means of winning a livelihood. The most numerous of the two classes are those whose parents are in fairly comfortable circumstances and can augment their daughters' earnings; the second class is that which seeks luxury by an immoral life. The latter class, always well dressed and well supplied with money, are dangerous associates for the poorer and vain juniors who look upon such possessions with envy.

Premiums and Commissions.

The system of giving premiums on special goods sold (often old stock or that most difficult to get off) or commissions on total amount sold is bad, both for shop assistant and customer. It makes the

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The system of giving premiums on special goods sold (often old stock or that most difficult to get off) or commissions on total amount sold is bad, both for shop assistant and customer. It makes the former push things which are not wanted by the latter, and perhaps keep back things which are cheaper or do not happen to have a premium put upon their sale; and it also is bad for the assistant, because it introduces an element of uncertainty into his wages. These additional sources of income, given as rewards for "special attention to business," are quoted to justify the low wages prevalent, and are put before the assistant as part of his possible earnings, often at a much higher figure than they can actually reach.

Compulsory Peculators.

One discreditable phase of modern trading, accentuated by the branch shop system, is that of giving short weight and the selling of articles of inferior value for and at the price of superior and well-known articles. It is the practice to invoice to managers of branch shops all goods at weight, length, and number specified on the wholesaler's or manufacturer's invoice, but at *retail* prices. Few firms allow for "shortage," and most of those who do, do not allow sufficient. Deficiencies in stock have to be made good by the manager, and frequently the only way of avoiding them is to give short weight to customers, and he instructs his assistants accordingly. Those who disobey run the risk of being discharged, while those who obey and then are found out will also lose their place.

Rules, Fines and Deductions.

"What kind of men are they who work under such rules, and what work can be expected under such conditions? . . . Fines such as are enforced in English houses do not exist (in German houses), nor would a firm employ people for whom such rules are necessary." (Miss H. Jastron, late Secretary Berlin Women Clerks' and Shop Assistants' Association, writing in the *Drabers' Record*.) Most of us who know of the petty annoyances to which the shop assistants are continually subject would share her indignation.

There are rules in every establishment, amounting sometimes to as many as 100 or 150, dealing with all the details of the business and of meal-times, etc., and often there is a fine, varying from 1d. to 2/6 or 5/-, attached to each rule. Compulsory and exorbitant deductions are sometimes made for library, piano, breakages, etc. This custom again introduces an element of uncertainty into the wages, some assistants losing many shillings by fines; and it also places the assistants at the mercy of the shopwalker or manager, who can give short wages at the end of the week without the assistant having any chance of appeal. Any good manager can keep order without these artificial aids, while the assistant who is persistently late or careless ought to be dismissed instead of running into debt with his employer for constant fines. Some of the largest firms have abolished fines, acknowledging that they are an unnecessary cause of irritation and of loss of self-respect amongst their employees; and the inclusion of shop assistants in the Truck Amendment Act, 1896, will do much to regulate and ultimately to abolish the system.

The Living-in System.

From motives of economy, convenience and discipline, assistants are frequently compelled to board and lodge on premises provided by their employers. The system has, no doubt, grown out of the old custom of boarding and lodging apprentices until their period of apprenticeship had expired. It is mainly confined to the drapery and grocery trades; but it is more prevalent in the former than in the latter; and, as with the system of apprenticeship, it is more prevalent in the South of England than in the North. In Scotland or in Germany or France the system does not exist.

To "live-in" was very advantageous for young people who had to go far from home to learn a business, when, as formerly, they lived with their employer and were treated as members of their employer's family. Now they are lodgers without freedom of choice as to the food they eat, the rooms they occupy, the person they sleep with, the time they may come and go after business hours, the opinions they may express, or the associations they may belong to.

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Premiums and Commissions.

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† See Report of last revision. St. Pancras division: a large number of assistants were struck off the register because the partition between their bedrooms did not reach the top.

Even under the best firms the system is bound to curtail the liberty and independence of the assistants; but the physical comforts of this barrack life vary, as might be expected, with the character of the employer.

The Quality of the Food.

The Lady Commissioners* say frequent complaints were made

*C-6894 XXIII., Royal Commission on Labor Report.

about the poor quality and insufficiency and want of cleanliness in the food supplied. The Lady Commissioner who conducted the enquiry in Wales specified the complaints on the quality and quantity of food supplied under five heads, as follows: (1) Weak tea; many of the witnesses said they spent money in buying tea and making it for themselves. (2) Badly cooked food. (3) Nothing nourishing for breakfast, which generally consisted of tea and thick bread and butter. The girls spent money in buying bacon. (4) No variety of food; the eternal beef and mutton, with resurrection pie, and pudding with cold meat. (5) No fruit or green vegetables, causing indigestion and poor health. One witness (No. 71) says drapers deal with their customers in turn for bread, meat, etc., and put up with any stuff they choose to send in. A shopkeeper, who claimed damages from the father of an apprentice who had run away from business, was asked: "Have you given them (the apprentices) bread

* Birmingham County Court, February 3rd, 1892.

and cheese for dinner every Saturday?" He replied: "There was always something else on the table, such as pickles." He was also asked: "Was it true that on Saturdays, when they worked sixteen hours, they had bread and dripping for breakfast, bread and cheese for dinner, bread and butter for tea, and bread and cheese for supper?" The reply was: "No, not invariably; they have sometimes had ham and eggs for tea, or perhaps—sausages"!!

and even six assistants sleep in the room. One witness "six in a room" was obliged to consult a doctor, who attributed her illness to foul air.* In one house, described as comfortable enough, C—6894 XXIII., page 88, Royal Commission on Labor.

there were eight assistants sleeping in separate beds in one large room; but the girls differed on the subject of ventilation. One suffered from headache, because some of the others refused to have the window open at night, even in summer-time. In the premises provided by a London firm, "which advertised itself as one of Christian workers, the rain came through the roof of the assistants' bedroom."* It was reported of one West End drapery house, that

Ibid, Witness No. 10.
"the bedroom linen was not changed for months." It is no wonder that our shop assistants so often are anæmic and narrow-chested, and that so many break down in health.

Condemned to Celibacy.

Two causes condemn the large majority of shop assistants to celibacy. One is that his salary is seldom sufficient to keep a family; the second is that the living-in system does not provide accommodation for married assistants, so that even where marriage is desired or possible with some degree of comfort the employers' permission must be obtained, and is generally refused unless the assistant holds one of the higher positions. Under any circumstances, the fact that two assistants of opposite sex show a special interest in each other's society, would in many cases lead to the dismissal of one or both delinquents. While the men are forced to shun marriage for fear of losing their work, the women hail it as a means of escape from their slavery, and would, as one girl expressed it, "marry anybody to get out of the drapery trade."

REMEDIES.

We have now given some idea of the conditions under which shop assistants do their work, and have found that their grievances are many and serious. Let us now see what has been done to remedy these, and what is the most hopeful direction for further effort.

I.—Organization.

Numerous attempts during the past fifty years have been made to form some organization to promote earlier closing, but as the method has been to combine philanthropists, employers, and assistants, few have lived beyond a season. The exception is the Early Closing Association and Traders' Parliamentary Alliance, on whose behalf Sir John Lubbock has introduced from time to time an Early Closing Bill, and who did much to pass the Act now in force for limiting the hours of young persons in shops. Where a weekly half-holiday or early closing has been obtained by voluntary effort it is always liable to break down by the competition of even one shopkeeper who disregards it. No attempt to form a Trade Union, on lines similar to those adopted by workers in other great industries of the country, appears to have been made until 1889, when unions were started in Manchester, London and South Wales. In March, 1891, a conference was held in Birmingham of delegates from existing unions and as many associations as could be induced to attend. The present National Union of Shop Assistants was then formed. This has now about forty-five branches in different towns. Its objects are: to secure fewer hours; to abolish unjust fines; to secure definite and adequate time for meals; to secure proper supervision of the sanitary arrangements of shops; the abolition of the living-in system; to give legal aid to members, financial assistance during sickness and want of employment, etc. The question of a minimum wage and a list of fair shops has also been under consideration. Attempts have been made to amalgamate with this the United Shop Assistants' Union, but so far without success.

There are many difficulties in organizing shop assistants. First, it is difficult to get hold of them. They are a nomadic class of workers. "This tendency to move from situation to situation seems to be partly due to anxiety to obtain more experience in their business, partly to the desire for higher wages or shorter hours, and partly to weariness and illness, and to the fact that the atmosphere of air and surroundings compulsory."* Then they have amongst

* Royal Commission on Labor Report, C—6894, XXIII., p. 88.

them a feeling that they are of a superior order, in fact most genteel, and that it is quite beneath them to belong to a common Trade Union such as navvies and factory workers have. They are, however, gradually beginning to recognize that they work under conditions much worse than those of many navvies and factory workers; and that to improve these they must organize as other workers have done. Already there are 2,300 members of the National Union of Shop Assistants; they are represented each year at the Trade Union Congress; an excellent monthly magazine, *The Shop Assistant*, is published at Cardiff by members of the Union; and their annual meeting of delegates at Hull last Easter was the largest and most business-like yet held. But it is estimated that there are about 1,000,000 shop assistants employed in the wholesale and retail distributive trades in the United Kingdom, and more of these must be brought into rank before the Union can exert the force it should.

II.—Legislation.

Under this head little has been accomplished at present. In 1873 a Factory Commission received evidence on Shop Hours, and from 1876 to 1896 no less than twenty Bills have been considered

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Inadequate Time for Meals.

The time allowed for meals varies a great deal. Where meals are not provided on the premises, an hour for dinner and half-an-hour for tea is usually allowed. But in some cases only half that time is allowed. Where meals are provided on the premises, the time allowed varies from ten minutes to half-an-hour. The assistants cannot go to a meal if engaged with a customer at the time, and they must return to the counter when required to do so and as often as they are required during the meal-time.

The *Lancet* Special Commissioner (February 27th, 1892) says :
"Very often only half-an-hour is given for breakfast, dinner and tea ; this is altogether insufficient in itself ; but, in large establishments, it sometimes takes nearly five minutes to go to and from the counter to the dining-room, so that food is consumed in great haste . . . all this naturally tends to interfere with the process of digestion, and dyspepsia is very common among this class of workers."

The Oldham Industrial Co-operative Stores are closed from 12 o'clock to 1 o'clock each day to enable the assistants to have an undisturbed hour for dinner. The population of Oldham is



about 100,000, largely consisting of factory operatives, 70 to 75 per cent. of whom are members of the Co-operative Societies, and whose legitimate convenience must necessarily be considered.

House Doctors and Medical Attendance.

Where the assistants live-in it is customary to make them subscribe 6d. or 1/- a month to a fund for medical attendance. In many cases the system does not work satisfactorily. Complaints are made that the "House Doctor" does not take sufficient interest, and assistants often go, at their own extra expense, to some other doctor. In many cases great kindness is shown to the patient by the house-keeper and the fellow-assistants, while in others they are shamefully neglected. In an Oxford Street house an extra fee of 3/- is charged for medical attendance; add if the assistant is ill more than three days he must go home or to the hospital. Very often the time lost during illness is deducted from wages. Such rules as these do much harm in forcing the assistants back to work before they are fit for it.

Sanitation.

Unfortunately, there is usually only too much cause for illness amongst shop assistants. Bad accommodation, bad sanitation, and bad ventilation are the most frequent and the greatest evils which are met with both in business and domestic premises. In many shops the dining-room is underground, in which gas is burning all day, and the only means of ventilation is through the grating in the pavement of the street. In some cases the odours of defective drains pervades both kitchen and dining-room. "In many shops there is no water-closet accommodation. In hundreds of cases in Glasgow, for instance, the nearest closet is one common to several shopkeepers, and often it is without water, owing to the shopkeepers, who are assessed for it, repudiating using it."* In some cases "two, four,

† C-6894 XXIII. page 314. Royal Commission on Labor Report.
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IN HIS LAST WILL



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such as police officers, sanitary inspectors, school attendance officers, inspectors of weights and measures, inspectors of hackney carriages, inspectors of canal boats, *inspectors of the prevention of cruelty to animals*, inspectors under the Diseases of Animals Act, and others, who, in addition to their legitimate and onerous duties, are supposed to perform those of a shop hours inspector, under an Act which provided no power to solve the difficulties of inspection. The London County Council has only appointed one person to devote the whole official time to such duties; and, what is more reprehensible, that body has in fact deprecated systematic inspection under the advice of Sir John Lubbock, lest traders should be irritated—and this in spite of the conclusive evidence which their 1896 Report contains of the need for rigorous and continuous inspection.

The only other labor legislation affecting shop assistants is the Truck Act, 1896, mentioned above, which has for the first time given the Government inspector the right of entry into a shop.

Dissatisfied with the principles and provisions of the Shops Early Closing Bill of Sir John Lubbock, the National Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks drafted a Bill, which was laid before the House of Commons in August, 1896, by Sir C. Dilke, in the names of Mr. John Burns, Dr. Clark, Mr. M. Davitt, and Mr. E. later. The Bill provides that *all shops shall close on one day not*



... days not later than 7 o'clock, o.
day not later than 9 o'clock, and on one day not later than 10 o'clock p.m. The local authority must fix the closing hours for each day in accordance with the Act. No assistant may be employed for more than half-an-hour after the shop has been closed. No person to be exempted on the ground that he is an apprentice or an improver, or a member of the occupier's family. Every shop to be provided with sufficient and suitable sitting accommodation for females employed in the shop, who may not be prohibited from using such sitting accommodation when not actually engaged in the course of her employment, and reasonable intervals for rest must be provided. A young person or a woman shall not be employed continuously for more than five hours without an interval of at least half-an-hour for a meal. All persons employed in shops to have an interval at noon of not less than one hour, and an interval of not less than half-an-hour between four and seven o'clock in the evening. All premises used for business or domestic purposes in connection with a shop must be kept in a cleanly state and ventilated in an efficient and suitable manner, and suitable sanitary conveniences must be provided for the separate use of both sexes. Every shop must exhibit an extract of the Act and a notice showing the closing hours for each day of the week, and the days when, by special permit, overtime may be worked on forty days in the year. Every shopkeeper shall furnish the inspector in his district, every year, with a return specifying, with respect to the year ending December, the number of persons employed in the shop, with such particulars as to the age and sex of the persons employed as the Secretary of State may direct. It will be the duty of inspectors appointed to enforce the Factory and Workshops Acts, to enforce the provisions of this Act, and for this purpose Sections 67, 68 and 70 of the Factory and Workshops Act shall apply as if a shop were a factory or workshop. The Bill has already been welcomed in very various quarters, and there is good reason to believe that a knowledge of the evils and difficulties involved by existing conditions will provide the Bill with substantial support both in and out of Parliament.

Other countries are ahead of us in legislation for shop assistants. Provisions similar to those proposed in our Bill are already law in New Zealand. Several of the American States make the provision of seats for assistants compulsory, and New York established last September a sixty-hour week for males under sixteen and females under twenty-one years of age. Germany affords our shop assistants a good object lesson, for there, by dint of strong organization (they have a Federation of Trade Unions numbering 130,000 both men women assistants, and 70,000 or 80,000 organized who have not yet joined the "Verbund") they have obtained a law, which will come into force next year, which will obviate many of the grievances which they have in common with our English assistants, and provides, amongst other things, for thorough apprenticeship, good sanitation, sick benefits, just references, and just agreements, with no "contract system."

Among shop assistants, as amongst other workers, the two remedies, organization and legislation, must go hand in hand; and with the advance of these two, the "slavery" which at present too often prevails behind the counter will become a thing of the past.

and