

Fabian Tract No. 50.

# SWEATING: ITS CAUSE AND REMEDY.

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# SWEATING: ITS CAUSE AND REMEDY.

BETWEEN 1886 and 1889 the public became very much excited over the horrors of the "Sweating System." The revelations of hideous suffering, overwork and want brought home for a brief space to the minds of the middle and upper classes "how the poor live." Gradually the excitement died away: new topics absorbed the interest of the public; and of Sweating and the Sweating System we heard no more. But all the horrors continued as before. The excessive hours of toil, the insanitary conditions, the starvation wages remain to-day practically unaltered. The present tract is an attempt, not to revive the useless public excitement, but to set plainly before the workers themselves—and especially before the organized Trade Unionists, who can do most to bring about a reform—the actual facts as to Sweating, and the way in which it can be abolished.

## What is meant by the Sweating System.

The phrase, the Sweating System, is misleading. All experts agree that there is no one industrial system co-extensive with, or invariably present in, the Sweated Trades. Mr. Booth expresses this by saying that it is not with one but many sweating systems we have to deal: Mr. Schloss says that no sweating system whatever is discoverable;\* and the House of Lords Committee, whilst reporting that the evils complained of could "scarcely be exaggerated," said that they had been unable to find any precise meaning attached to the phrase. An enquiry into sweating resolves itself, therefore, into an enquiry into the conditions under which the "sweated industries" are worked. Here at least a painful and striking uniformity is met with, and accepting it as a starting point, the Lords Committee

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\* Most information on Sweating is to be found in the *Report and Evidence of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System* (H.L. 62 of 1890). Price 37/11 (including evidence and index). A summary is published by the Women's Liberal Federation, price 1d. See also *How best to do away with the Sweating System* by Beatrice Potter (Mrs. Sidney Webb), published by the Co-operative Union, Manchester, price 1d. The organization of the Sweated Trades is described in Mr. Charles Booth's *Labor and Life of the People* (Macmillan: 4 vols.; 3/6 each); and Mr. David Schloss's *Methods of Industrial Remuneration* (Williams and Norgate; 3/6). Some additional facts are given in Mr. J. A. Hobson's *Problems of Poverty* (Methuen; 2/6). The following magazines contain useful articles on the subject: *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1890 (by Mrs. Sidney Webb); *Economic Review*, October, 1892 (by D. Schloss); *Fortnightly Review*, December, 1887; April, 1890; and January, 1893 (all by D. Schloss); *National Review*, October and November, 1888 (by A. A. Baumann).

Mr. Sydney Buxton's Bill, No. 61 of 1891, contains precise proposals for legislative reform in exact parliamentary form; and the House of Commons Return, No. 189 of 1892 (price 2½d.) contains the Fair Wages and Anti-Sweating clauses in the Government contracts.

defined Sweating as :—

- 1.—Unduly low rates of wages.
- 2.—Excessive hours of labor.
- 3.—Insanitary state of the workplaces.

Mr. Schloss has added the important point, taxing of working-power to an unreasonable extent, or getting sixpenny-worth of work out of fourpenny-worth of pay ("driving"). A brief description of the sweated industries will explain this definition.

I.—In the lower grades of tailoring, and in other clothing trades, the method, as regards the sweated portion of the employees, is for the wholesale house to provide the material, and to leave other people to hire the workers. Or the wholesale house dispenses with the distributor and itself gives out the work to out-workers to make up at their own homes : women's earnings, often only 1/- a day.

II.—Another method is for the sweated workers to buy material and put labor into it in the hope of selling both together, either to the wholesale house, or direct to the consumer. This is the form sweating takes in the cabinet-making trade, where it is a "terribly efficient engine of oppression" ; or in the manufacture of slippers, or some kinds of cheap toys.

III.—Or a chamber-master obtains a constant supply of learners, usually poor foreigners or young girls, who as "greeners" work unlimited hours in return for bare keep, and who, having acquired what little skill is necessary, are promptly turned adrift to make room for new unpaid workers. This is specially applicable to the lower grades of the Boot and Shoe and Slipper and Fur trades.

IV.—In the Nail and Chain industries material is given out by a "fogger" to people who work either at their own forges, or who rent a forge elsewhere. These victims are defrauded at every step. Their hours are limited only by capacity for endurance, and the women earn less than 1s., men only 3s., a day.

V.—In the Cutlery trades of Sheffield, home-work does not prevail for want of room in the houses, but nevertheless work is given out. Industry is organized on a small scale. A cutler hires a "side," a file-cutter a "seat," in some shop where bench-room is let out by the owner. Even where steam-power is used, the factory-system is modified to suit the backward condition of the industry. An owner fits up a house—in some cases two-hundred years old—with steam-power, shafting, belting, etc., and divides this "wheel" into a number of rooms or "hulls" where the individual grinder or hafter can hire a "trough" for his grindstone. The building is in the eyes of the law not one factory, but a congeries of small factories, each individual occupier paying rent for his space and power.\*

\* It seems best to limit the term "sweating" to the particular forms of industrial oppression specified above, for which particular remedies are required. But low wages and insanitary conditions are combined in other cases (for instance, the rope and jute workers and lucifer match makers), whilst "driving" prevails under the "piece-master" system in many factories, and throughout the building trades. The remedy against these forms of industrial oppression appears to lie chiefly in Trade Union organization, though the general adoption of the clause against Sub-Contracting and Tasking, which is given at page 11, would be useful to the building trades.

In all these cases the workers labor, not in a mill or factory provided by the capitalist employer, but in a room in a tenement house, or a small workshop provided by themselves. In all instances of sweating, the actual work-places escape, either by defects in the law or the imperfection of its administration, from the regulation and control of the Factory Acts. Such work-places are generally insanitary, overcrowded, devoid of proper conveniences, badly ventilated and lighted, and ill-supplied with water. Mr. Lakeman, the Factory Inspector, gives a general description of a small or domestic workshop in the tailoring or other clothing trades: "Going into some workshops," he says, "you find a filthy bed on which the garments which are made are laid; little children—perfectly naked little things—are lying about the floor and on the beds; frying pans and all sorts of dirty utensils, with food of various descriptions on the bed, under the bed, over the bed, everywhere; clothes hanging on a line . . . ashes all flying about, and the atmosphere so dense that you get ill after a night's work there." Dr. Bate and Dr. Squire gave evidence that in these pestilential workplaces they had found persons dying from consumption or suffering from scarlet fever, smallpox, or measles; and covered over on the bed by the garments on which the workers around them were engaged.

### The Middleman.

There is much that is plausible in the popular association of middlemen, machinery, and sub-division of labor with sweating. But they are not cause and effect. For while in the staple industries, such as the textile manufactures, the functions of making the commodities and of distributing them are distinct, and the presence of more than one middleman is the rule, and while precisely in these industries machinery is most highly elaborated and sub-division of labor most perfected, the evils of sweating are unknown in them. On the other hand, in less organized industries, the steps between manufacturer and customer become fewer and fewer, until in the worst sweated of all occupations the middleman is altogether dispensed with. Where in the Sweated Trades we find the sweating associated with the presence of a distributor or garret-master, we must look for the cause, not in him, but in the circumstances that brought him into existence. In London, for instance, we have on the one hand a large employer with a varying amount of work to be done for which he does not care to provide a factory or to engage regular hands; on the other we have a dispersed mob of necessitous and unskilled workers working in their own homes or herded in the little "sweating dens." To bring these two together is the function of the middleman, and also his opportunity of profit. But to absorb this profit the wholesale houses in the tailoring trades have opened branch offices all over the East End, where they give out work direct. The pay of the out-workers is not raised by this change, nor does the employer trouble himself to enquire to what garrets and cellars his work is carried, nor how many hours of the day are passed in toil. The middleman has been abolished; but the sweating of the home-

workers remains. In a similar way distributing contractors take large orders for shirts, etc., from wholesale firms, do part of the work themselves, and give out the rest to women, who occasionally themselves sub-let part of the work; but their place is being taken by small wholesale firms which employ in-workers, and give out the remainder to be done at home. The earnings of these direct employees of the wholesale houses are, says a competent witness, "the very lowest in the whole trade." But let us hear one of these wholesale employers (whose respectability neither the Lords Committee nor popular opinion dreamed of offending by the term "Sweater" before the Enquiry) speak for himself: "We give out our work," says he, "to whoever will take it, to the man who will do it best and cheapest, and we get off with the least trouble."

And the existence of the middleman does not necessarily imply sweating, for skilled workers, such as the best "waistcoat hands," almost always get good wages. On the other hand, the worst cases of sweating are found where there is no sub-contracting. There is but little sub-contracting in the badly sweated Sheffield trades. The small maker of tables and chairs in London buys his own materials on credit, and makes for stock to be disposed of to the dealers, or, in default of a sale there, hawks his wares along the Curtain Road, often glad to sell them at less than cost price in order to meet his immediate necessities. But hard as his condition is, it is not due to sub-contract.

Now all this points but to one thing: the popular indignation, in fastening upon the middleman, has fastened merely upon the obvious figure in the Sweating Tragedy, and has neglected the power that moves him. "The middleman," says the Lords' Report, "where he exists, is not the hand of the oppressor, but the instrument of oppression." Mr. Charles Booth's minute enquiries reduce this execrated figure of the middleman, for the most part, to a humble, hard-working, often not unkindly individual, whose sole advantage over the workers he employs is that his poor earning is, taking the year round, a more secure and regular one than theirs. In the Trunk and Saddlery trades, Mr. Schloss depicts him as actually pressed out or existence by the rising wages and strong trade organization of his own skilled employees. And wherever and in whatever trade he holds on, it may be accepted as a rule that the labor he gathers into his miserable workshop is unskilled and incapable, under its present conditions, of high discipline and organization.

### Machinery and Sub-division of Labor.

The evils of sweating are often attributed to the introduction of machinery and the sub-division of labor. And it is true that the worst features of sweating in some trades appear upon the introduction of machinery and improved tools. Not only has the substitution of unskilled for skilled labor been fostered, but an immense sub-division of labor has been made possible. In cabinet-making, for instance, the component parts of a piece of furniture are made by separate unskilled workers with the aid of machinery, and are put together in the shop. Nevertheless, in the

Leeds clothing factories, the Leicester boot factories, the shirt-making shops of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society, and the furniture factories near Glasgow, where steam-power and machinery are freely used, and the sub-division of labor is carried on to a great extent, the condition of the operatives is better than anywhere else in these industries. Generally speaking, the smaller the workshop the less use is made of machines, the less is labor sub-divided, and the greater are the evils of sweating. And in the making of chains and nails, and the "finishing" of the cheapest kinds of clothing, boots and slippers, where the work is not sub-divided and is entirely done by hand, the worst examples of sweating can be found. In most industries the invention of machines has driven manufacture from the home to the factory because they require steam-power, and in these cases the condition of the workers is much improved. The remedy for sweating is not to leave off introducing machinery, but to work it by steam-power in large factories under public regulation or control.

### Alien Immigration.

The third great cause which has been assigned to sweating is the influx of foreign paupers, especially Jews from the Polish districts of Russia, Germany and Austria. The facts of the case have been exaggerated. Between the years 1882 to 1886 the total number of Jews who settled in London was from twenty to thirty thousand, but in the same time the Jewish Board of Guardians sent back some twelve thousand. After 1886, the rush ceased, and in 1888-9 the emigration exceeded the immigration. The renewal of the Russian persecutions caused a fresh incursion of Jews into this country, but the tide has ebbed again. The 1891 Census showed that in all London there were then only 26,742 Russians and Poles, men, women and children; a number not equal to the births in a single quarter. Out of London, Russians and Poles are to be found, in any appreciable numbers, only in Manchester and Leeds; but sweating exists in nearly every large city. The total number of foreigners of all kinds in England and Wales was, in 1891, only 198,113, or one in 145—a number far smaller than that of Englishmen in foreign countries. And though the foreign Jews in East London, Manchester, and Leeds dominate one branch of the tailoring trade (the cheap coats), slipper-making, boot and shoe "finishing," and the fur trade, there are only as small proportion in other branches of cheap tailoring (such as trousers and juvenile suits) or in the shirt-making and furniture trades, and none at all in the cutlery, or nail and chain-making industries, yet there the sweater flourishes. Even in the tailoring trades, the competition of destitute foreigners is as nothing compared with the great mass of unskilled and unorganized female labor which crowds the market. These figures dispose of the idea that sweating can be prevented by prohibiting the immigration of pauper aliens. The removal of all the Jews from the sweated trades would therefore be but a partial and temporary relief. The evil effect of the Jew's competition lies in the characteristics which render him a fit subject for the pestilential conditions of home-work: he

overcrowds whole districts with his habit of living in misery ; and his ingenuity has positively created or organized new industries to suit the circumstances. In the factory, English skilled labor has the preference : abolish the conditions that now specially favor the demoralizing competition of the Jew, and the difficulty will be got over without an impracticable policy of exclusion.

### **The Real Cause : Home-Work.**

Sweating is the significant symptom of the existence in our midst of certain phases of industry which once were normal, but which the development of our Industrial system has laid aside. The staple industries of the country passed through two or three stages before they reached the Factory System, the present normal condition of industrial production. The abandoned phases may, rather widely, be described as follows : 1. The craftsman worked at home, owning the instruments of his trade and the raw material, and being his own salesman and distributor. 2. The craftsman worked at home with his own instruments on material owned by the capitalist, the capitalist sending this material from hand to hand for the various processes, and owning and selling the product when done. In the Factory System the operative owns nothing but his labor : he forms one of a large band who work collectively in buildings which they are not called upon to provide, under a directing manager who is legally responsible for the conditions of their employment, the product being owned, sold, and distributed by others than themselves. The sweating den of the little middleman, where the raw material of the real employer is worked up, is an intermediate stage between Home Work and the Factory System, combining the worst features of both, with the advantages of neither.

An example of an industry being arrested at the first stage is the sweated grade of cabinet-making, where the worker owns the material and puts his own labor into it in his own home, afterwards selling the finished product to the wholesale dealer, or hawking his wares about the street. Examples of the second stage are to be found in shirt and tie-making and other sweated employments of women in fur and the low grades of tailoring. Wherever these two stages of an industry linger, production is carried on by workers in their own homes, that is, in the wretched garret that serves the purpose of living and sleeping room and working place ; or in small insanitary workshops hidden away in back lanes. A special encouragement is given to the introduction of women's labor, unskilled and unorganized ; and though the middleman and the alien immigrant, where they exist, often intensify the evil, it is the prevalence of home-work which hinders the progress of the industrial evolution, and keeps these backward industries from advancing to higher stages of organization. Home-work is therefore the real cause of Sweating.

### **Growth of the Factory System.**

Such of the Sweated Trades as have the persistency of real life in them ought gradually to pass out of their backward condition and to

take up the normal industrial form of the Factory. Already we see that the ready-made clothing is steadily tending to centre in Leeds, where the Factory System is growing. In 1881 it had only seven or eight clothing factories; in 1891 there were fifty-four, some employing over 1,000 hands. Upon this change from home-work to the normal method of industry, follows a corresponding improvement in the condition of the workers. Contrast the following with Mr. Lakeman's description of a sweater's den before-quoted: "Taking the clothing factories all round, they are clean, roomy, well-ventilated. . . . Some of the most recently built factories are all that can be desired for the comfort of those employed. There are large lofty work-rooms, dining-rooms and kitchens for those living at a distance. The workshops, though not all that could be wished for, are in most part fairly satisfactory." The hours are specified and shorter, and the wages proportionally higher than in London. The wholesale Boot Trade, which is for the most part a man's industry, has in Leicester and (to some extent) in London, been rescued from the "demoralising slavery of the death-dealing domestic labor," through the action of a strong Trade Union, the workers being removed from sweaters' dens to factories or large workshops, where they get better pay and work shorter hours. The beneficial effect upon them is eloquently described by Mr. Lakeman: "To those who are acquainted with the former state of the trade, and who have been permitted to see these men at work in their new shops, there is great cause for rejoicing, and truly I can say that already one sees an improvement in the expression of the workers, once so stolid, so unimpassioned, but now showing an intellectual countenance and an eye of penetration. The new rules prevent overcrowding, no work to be taken home, no meals to be taken in the workshop, labor continuous, and the men satisfied. Those who are losers are the sub-contractors. . . . The masters tell me they are now pleased with the change. . . . I am told that men work better and are happier; congregation influences all of them." (Chief Inspector of Factories' Report for Year 1890.)

The great success of the shirt and furniture factories at Shieldhall, Glasgow, belonging to the Scottish Wholesale Co-operative Society are further instances. In Sheffield machinery is beginning to supplant hand-labor in the making of cheap cutlery; whilst at Cradley Heath the nail and chain-makers are a diminishing community owing to the introduction of machinery. At St. Ninians, a former seat of the trade, hand-labor has completely vanished before the machine. But in the Metropolis, the clothing trade, the lower grades of cabinet-making, the fur trade, and numerous minor industries where the worst sweating prevails, remain practically unimproved. Even in London the workers in the factories of the great clothing contractors are far better off than the out-workers employed by the same firms. And the Army Clothing Factory maintained by the Government at Pimlico, with its fixed Eight Hours Day, its regular, if low wages, its abundant use of machinery, and its sanitary conditions, points the way along which industrial evolution should progress. This industrial evolution is, in certain directions, now



checked and hindered, not only by the existence of a mass of helpless unorganized labor, but also by the defects of the law.

### Why Home-work Continues.

The result of the system of giving out work to be done by small masters, or by home-workers, is that the real employer, the wholesale dealer, is relieved of all responsibility for the conditions under which the work is done. If he employed his workers in his own workshops he would be subject to the regulations of the Factory Acts. The premises would have to be in a healthy condition, suitably fitted with sanitary conveniences, equipped with means for lighting and ventilation, and the number of workers would be limited by a legally fixed minimum of accommodation. Women would not be allowed to work more than sixty hours a week, exclusive of meal-times, the labor of young persons and children would be circumscribed by stringent regulations, and the working day would be limited to specified hours. He would work in the light of day, under the influence of public opinion, and within the knowledge of the Factory Inspector. By putting out his work he not only evades all these restrictions and responsibilities, but he also directly gains by throwing some part of the expenses of rent, taxes, gas, fuel, etc., on his out-workers. He gives out his work to a scattered set of people, over whom he exercises no supervision, and incurs no penalty if their workplaces are insanitary, or if they have to toil sixteen or eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. On all hands he makes extra and illegitimate profits—from the misery and ignorance of his employees, which lead them to accept starvation wages, and from the facility with which they evade the law. The homes of the out-workers are practically free from all regulation. Small workshops hidden away in dwelling houses easily escape the observation of the factory inspector, and even when known are inefficiently inspected owing to the smallness of the staff. The small master and the home-worker, ground down by poverty, seize every opportunity of earning a few more pence by breaking the laws devised for their protection; and the real employer, the wholesale dealer, forces down his rates of pay, because his victims can so easily break the law.

### How Sweating Affects the Skilled Trades.

The well-organized Lancashire cotton-spinners, the sturdy Northumberland coal-hewers, and the comparatively well-paid engineers often imagine that sweating does not do them any harm. This is not the case. It may not be easy to see the connection between the spread of sweating in London or the "Black Country," and "short time" in Lancashire mills or Northumberland mines. The Amalgamated Engineer drawing out-of-work pay may not realize that his lack of employment has anything to do with the cheapness of the sweated cutlery of Sheffield, or the ease with which the exporter of slop-clothing can evade the responsibilities of the Factory Acts. Yet nothing is more certain than that every industry in the country is vitally concerned in stopping any degradation in the Standard of

Life of any other industry. Every year enough commodities have to be exported from England to pay for the food and raw materials which are imported.\* Whether the exports take the form of cotton cloth or slop clothing, agricultural machinery or sweated knives, coal from Northumberland or the chains and nails made in the wretched smithies of Cradley Heath, depends largely on the extent to which the workers in the Sweated Trades can be oppressed. If the mill-owner and mine-owner are hemmed in and regulated by Factory Acts and Mines Regulations Acts, whilst the export clothing of the East End of London is allowed to escape from all similar responsibilities, the export trade in slop clothing will grow at the expense of the coal miner and the cotton spinner. During the last twenty years this trade has increased by leaps and bounds. How long will the skilled Trade Unionists be content to see their work slipping from them because they leave their less fortunate fellow-workers to the tender mercies of the Sweater?

### THE REMEDY.

The remedy for Sweating lies in a quickening of the industrial evolution—in taking such steps as will hasten the transformation of the Sweated Trades into factory industries, in which at least a Minimum Standard of Life can be effectually secured to every worker. In the complicated circumstances of modern industrial life, this remedy consists in no one panacea. We cannot at one blow prohibit home-work, or immediately replace all sweating dens by well-appointed factories. It would be equally futile to attempt any immediate legal reduction of the hours of labor in the Sweated Trades. Such an Act would discriminate against the large factories and workshops where it could easily be enforced, while it could with facility be evaded in small workshops in dwelling-houses. In the present keen competition it would simply foster sweating instead of curing it. The only remedy is patiently and persistently to urge on such reforms as will put pressure on the employers who give out work, encourage the introduction of the factory system, facilitate the extension of direct public employment, and bit by bit screw up the Standard of Life of the unfortunate victims of industrial disorganization.

#### (a). Public Employment.

To begin with, it will be evident that the Abolition of Sweating is an important incidental advantage of direct public employment. The establishment of the Army Clothing Factory has saved 1,575 workers from sweating dens, without any increase in the cost of production. The enlargement of that factory so as to produce in it not only some but all the clothing required for the Army, Militia and Volunteers, would rescue thousands more from their present fate. The workshops at Woolwich could be expanded so as to render unnecessary that contracting for saddlery work, chains and hardware,

\* Due allowance being made for payments for Freight, Interest, and Banking Commission, and for Foreign Loans and Dividends.

which now promotes sweating. A Navy Clothing Factory might supersede all sweating of the garments of sailors, coastguards, and marines. The Government Factories should produce also all the uniforms of the Customs, Police, Prisons, Post Office, and other official staffs.

And if local authorities followed suit—if the London County Council were given power to set up its own clothing factory, and to supply other local governing bodies—if it became the practice to manufacture all Asylum, Hospital, Police, and Fire Brigade uniforms required by any Town or County Council or other public body, either in its own factory, or in that of some other public body—if a similar course were pursued with regard to boots and shoes, saddlery, and general leather work, chains, furniture, and other commonly sweated wares, a large part of the evil would have disappeared. For it is certain that the factories of the Government or the Town Council would be well-built, well-ventilated, and well-equipped; that the hours of work would be regular and short; that the employment would be steady, and the wages at any rate as high as those paid in the best shops elsewhere.

**(b). Anti-Sweating Clauses in all Public Contracts.**

But however rapidly we press on the establishment of public factories for the supply of public wants, many public bodies will, for a long time to come, have to buy goods which are at present usually the product of sweating. All such public bodies ought therefore to follow the example of the Board of Trade, or the London County Council, and put an anti-sweating clause in all their contracts. This is not the "Fair" or Trade Union Wages Clause, which 150 local authorities have already adopted,\* and which is effective chiefly for the building trades. In the Sweated Trades there is no Fair or Trade Union Rate of Wages, because the existence of Home Work practically prevents Trade Unionism. To put down sweating, the contract should contain a clause prohibiting Out Work. Here is the clause in the Board of Trade Clothing Contract:—

The contractor undertakes that all garments included in this contract shall be made up in his own factory, and that no work shall be done at the homes of the workpeople. Any infringement of this condition, if proved to the satisfaction of the President of the Board of Trade, shall render the contractor liable to a penalty not exceeding £100 for each offence.

The London County Council adopts the following form:—

The contractors hereby expressly undertake and agree with the Council that all work and labor matters and things whatever under this present contract shall be executed done and completed by the contractors upon their own premises in . . . . ., under a penalty of £50 to be recovered by the Council for every breach as often as the same shall happen in case of default by the contractors under this clause as a debt due to the Council from the contractors or the said amount of £50 may in every case be retained by the Council and deducted by them from any moneys due or which may become due to the contractors from the Council under this or any other contract with the contractors.

\* House of Commons Return, No. 435 of 1893.

Moreover, the "New Contract of Her Majesty's Office of Works for Works and Repairs in the London District" provides that: "The contractor shall not assign or underlet his contract, or any part or parts thereof, without the consent of the Commissioners being first obtained, and shall not, without like consent, make any sub-contract or sub-contracts for the execution of the works, or any part or parts thereof, *or employ any taskmen in, upon, or about the works or repairs.*"\* These clauses should be rigidly enforced. Arrangements should be made for independent inspection and enquiry during the execution of the contract, and any discovery that the contractor is giving out work or sub-contracting should lead to a stern refusal to give any future contract to that firm, however low may be its tender. By the establishment of public factories wherever possible, and the rigid enforcement of the anti-sweating clauses in all public contracts, a great blow will be struck at Home-Work, Sub-Contracting, and the "driving" of the taskmaster.

### (c). The Trade Union Label.

Private consumers could also do something. Every purchaser might do something to boycott notorious sweaters; to avoid purchasing goods made by firms which are pilloried for infringing the Factory Acts, or which have been exposed as unfair by the Trade Unions concerned; at any rate the committees of working men's clubs, co-operative societies, friendly societies and Trade Unions might scrupulously pass by the "rat-shop" printer, however cheaply he may offer to do the work. Something may come, too, of the Trade Union label, agreed to by the Trade Union Congress and Co-operative Congress of 1893, and already adopted by the Felt Hatters and Trimmers' Union.†

Unfortunately, it is seldom possible for the customer to ascertain where or how his purchases have been produced; and though the "education of demand" may do a little to check sweating, much cannot be hoped from it.

### (d). Enforcement of the Factory and Public Health Acts.

Most sweating, moreover, is carried on, not for the supply of public authorities, or even for the English customer, but for export. A great deal might be done to stop it if only the existing law were put in force. Any energetic Trade Union or Trades Council might, if its members chose to take the trouble, bring such pressure to bear on the local Medical Officer and the Factory Inspector as greatly to improve the conditions of work, and make it very uncomfortable for the "giver-out-of-work," who is the real sweater.

Under the Public Health Act every place used as a workshop must be kept in a sanitary condition, free from effluvium, properly

\* House of Commons Return, No 189 of 17th May, 1892.

† Particulars can be obtained of the Secretary of the Union, Mr. George Wilde, 207 Manchester Road, Denton, near Manchester. Massachusetts and Connecticut Acts of 1893, make it a crime to copy or forge a Trade Union label; and Massachusetts Act 246 of 1893 compels all garments made in a tenement-house workshop to be marked with a special tag or label.

cleaned and ventilated, and supplied with adequate closet accommodation *separate for each sex*. If a workshop is defective in any of these respects, or is overcrowded, the Medical Officer of Health or the Sanitary Inspector can summon its occupier, and compel him to remedy the nuisance. For all structural defects the owner is liable. This law applies to all workshops, however small, whether the workers in them are men or women, and whether they belong to the same family or not. The duty of seeing that the law is carried out rests on the Local Authority—in London, the Vestry or District Board, in municipalities, the Town Council, and elsewhere, the Local Boards, Boards of Guardians or the new District Councils. The Factory Act of 1891 threw on these local authorities practically the whole responsibility for the sanitary condition of workshops (as distinguished from factories employing power). Unfortunately, few of them have yet made any thorough attempt to put the law in force. No complete register of workshops has been made, and in very few cases have any additional inspectors been engaged for the new duties.\* The result is that little, if any, improvement has taken place; and the great majority of the little workshops, smithies, and forges, together with the garrets in which the home-workers labor, are in nearly all towns still in an insanitary state. But these wretched workplaces are also subject to the Factory Acts, and it is the duty of the Factory Inspector to visit all of them as thoroughly as he does the large factories. If any child or young person under eighteen (not belonging to the occupier's family) is at work, no adult women and no young persons may be employed before 6 a.m. or after 7 p.m., (2 p.m. on Saturdays), or for more than 60 hours a week. If no young persons are employed, the work may be carried on until 10 p.m., and no later, but must not exceed 60 hours a week. Even if no one outside the family is employed, the hours must not exceed 60 per week, women must not work after 10 p.m., or 4 p.m. on Saturdays, and children must have a half-holiday every day. The Factory Inspector can therefore do much to stop over-work of women or young persons who labor at home (in the so-called Domestic Workshops), as well as those employed by the chamber-master or other sub-contractors. Moreover, under the provision of the Act of 1891 all employers in the clothing, boot-making, cutlery, and electro-plating trades who give out work, are compelled to keep registers of their out-workers, so that the Factory or Sanitary Inspector can look them all up, one after another, and see that they work in compliance with the law.†

\* At Nottingham the Town Council in 1892 added one inspector. The Vestry of Kensington in 1893 engaged two women for the work.

† Unfortunately this provision is of little use in its present form. The local Medical Officer for the City of London, for instance, gets the addresses of the out-workers of the City firms. But these out-workers live all over London, outside his district. The Home Office is making some effort to remedy this by collecting and dissecting the lists as far as London is concerned. It ought to be made compulsory on the giver-out of work to send a copy of the list to the Factory Inspector, who should then communicate with the Medical Officers of the districts concerned.

Any member of a Vestry or District Board in London, or of a Town Council or Local Board elsewhere, might usefully move a resolution asking the Medical Officer to report what has been done to enforce the provisions of the Public Health Act in workshops, and especially the action taken since the Factory Act of 1891 came into force. The report would almost invariably show the necessity for the appointment of additional sanitary inspectors, and one or more should then be appointed with special reference to workshops.

Any person knowing of an insanitary workshop should send information about it to the local Medical Officer and to the Factory Inspector. If the informant runs any risk by so doing, he may remember that an anonymous post-card to the Home Office, London, will be attended to. Exact details of what is complained of should always be given.

#### (e). Amendments of the Law.

But it is hopeless to expect the Sanitary Inspector to visit all the two or three hundred thousand small workshops and domestic workplaces of London, and it would be of little use to insist on perfect sanitation by the wretched victims of sweating, or to fine the women sewing for a bare livelihood for the crime of working excessively long hours. The virtual employer—that is, the trader who gives out work, to be done at home or in a sweater's den—must be made responsible for the sanitary conditions under which his work is done, and for the observance of the law in regard to hours, just as if the workpeople were employed in his own workrooms. The owner of any materials being made up on any premises where an offence under the law was being committed should be made responsible just as if he were in direct occupation of these premises.

The landlord who lets out his premises for manufacturing purposes, or permits dwelling houses to be so used, should be held responsible for the condition and proper use of the premises. If such a proposal became law, the landlord would be bound to keep the place in proper tenantable repair, to do lime-washing, to prevent overcrowding, and to comply with the regulations as to ventilation; sanitary conveniences, etc. The owner of the Sheffield slum factories who rents out bench-room and power to a number of small occupiers of "sides" and "troughs," would be made responsible for the provision of proper ventilating and dust-dispersing machinery.

To make the employer and landlord effectively co-responsible for the proper organization of industry, it is necessary that we should accurately know what are the places where out-work is done, and who are the owners of such premises. The register of out-workers above referred to is the first step, but all authorities are agreed that registration of workshops is necessary. The Massachusetts Act, 246 of 1893, and the Victorian Factory Act, 49th Vic., No. 862, provide for registration by the occupier opening a workshop, just as the English Factory Acts do in respect to a factory. But we might make the landlord also responsible for registration. In collecting his weekly rents he has abundant opportunities of obtaining the neces-

sary information. Between the employers' register of out-workers, the landlord's register of his own premises, and the occupier's notice of opening a workshop, the factory inspectors would be able to obtain a pretty complete record of the places where work was done.

### RESULTS.

The shifting of responsibility for the conditions of industry on to the shoulders of those who profit by disorganization and want of sanitation would revolutionize the sweated trades. The tenement landlord would be slow to let out single rooms as combined homes and workshops when he rendered himself liable to heavy penalties for overcrowding and bad sanitation, and incurred the additional responsibilities formerly attaching only to the occupiers of workshops. His illegitimate gains would be destroyed, and it would be to his interest to discourage home workshops. The wholesale dealer would find himself bound either to provide healthy workrooms for his employees, or else to do as certain West End tailors already profess to do, namely, keep an inspector to ensure that his goods were not being made under conditions which would necessitate his appearance in a police-court. The indiscriminate giving out of work would no longer be profitable, and home-work would continue only in cases in which the conditions were satisfactory. In this way the development of the sweated trades towards the factory system would be rapidly accelerated. With the improvement of the workplaces would follow the physical and mental improvement of the workers, as Mr. Lakeman found to be the case in one year among the boot-finishers. From the condition of the victim of the sweater to the comparative prosperity of the cotton spinner would be an immense advance. Trade unionism would be fostered by the aggregation of the workers into large masses working together, and with the growth of combination would come a rise in the standard of life. Only when the factory had been substituted for the garret and the sweating den, and evasion of the law made difficult by regular inspection and a strong Trade Union, could an Eight Hours Act become operative in these trades.

There is no danger that these ameliorations of the conditions of the workers would raise the price of goods, when the greater productivity of the labor and the better quality of the product are taken into account. The universal experience is that the gain from good organization and the higher efficiency of labor counterbalances the increased expenditure. The community cannot afford to allow sweating to continue. The Trade Unionists, if only to stop its unfair competition with their own employers, must insist on its abolition.

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