

Catholic Studies in Social Reform

A SERIES OF MANUALS

EDITED BY

THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL GUILD

II.

SWEATED LABOUR

AND THE

TRADE BOARDS ACT

EDITED BY

The Rev. Thomas Wright

Second Edition : thoroughly revised and brought up to date

LONDON
P. S. KING & SON
15, ABINGDON HOUSE, WESTMINSTER
1913

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

WHEN the Wise Man wrote, "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety,"¹ he presumably had in view a society wherein the fundamental principles of belief and conduct were not in dispute. Nowadays his assertion cannot be accepted without much qualification. In matters of purely temporal concern, it is doubtless prudent to hear every side before coming to a decision; but in matters affected by the unchanging moral law, it is prudence that suggests recourse to whatever authority exists to preserve and interpret that law. Catholics believe that they have such an authority in the Church of Rome, and to the teaching of that Church they naturally turn when faced with any project of political or social reform which has a moral bearing. In the multitude of counsellors that beset them safety, they feel, lies in following that one in whom the Spirit of Truth and Wisdom permanently abides.

The series of Manuals on Social Questions, of which the present volume is the second to appear, has been planned by the Catholic Social Guild with the express object of examining current problems of citizenship in the light of Christian principles, thus furnishing, for the benefit of those who are bewildered by the number and variety of the social panaceas proposed, some means of distinguishing what is

¹ Prov. xi. 14.

ethically sound from what is based upon false or distorted ideals. As has often been pointed out, it is no part of the Church's direct mission to originate or promote works of merely worldly utility. Her business is to teach the individual to observe the laws of justice towards God and man, and to secure his soul's salvation. She rejoices, of course, in the fact that their observance is also highly conducive to the well-being of the community, but that is not her first or chief care.

Hence it is that the Church claims, in the interest of her children, the right of criticising such measures of social betterment as are not entirely material in their scope and effect. Those who believe in her claims have no difficulty in accepting her decisions, for they know that the Divine assistance, which guarantees the correctness of her final judgments on moral questions, operates also to prevent her judging on insufficient or unsafe grounds. Where principles of morality are not involved, or where their precise application is really doubtful, she is careful not to interfere with the liberty of her members.

In this series, then, it is proposed, after a sketch of the history of each question, to show in what points and in what degree Catholic doctrine is involved, what projects are, at least negatively, sound, what motives exist for energetic action, and what Catholic agencies are already at work. It will thus be abundantly clear that the Church, which played so prominent a part in social reform in the past, has a distinct and very salutary message for the present generation—a message which it is the duty of her faithful members to promulgate with all the zeal and energy in their power.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

MUCH has already been published on the Sweating Problem. Another book on the subject may seem to cater for a demand long since over-supplied. If the last word on sweating had been said, and the contributors to this little work had brought nothing more than worn-out argument and stale fact, our venture were surely worse than idle. We are bold enough to think, however, that "Sweated Labour and the Trade Boards Act" is not a threadbare question in a new garb. Since 1908, the year in which appeared the Blue-book on Home Work, the social evil of sweating has undergone considerable change. Its history has entered upon a fresh phase, which, except in desultory writings, has not hitherto been stated. We have endeavoured to collect the scattered data and to bring the subject up to date. We believe that the recent information contained in these pages is of sufficient interest to acquit us of the charge of triteness.

However that may be, we cannot be accused of repeating worn-out argument. For the first time the Catholic aspect of the sweating evil has been presented with any fullness in the English tongue. Whether the reader agrees or disagrees with our

point of view, he will at least acknowledge that until it had been put the last word on sweating had not been written.

As this little work has been primarily written for Catholics the hints regarding co-operation for the redress of sweating have been confined to Catholic organizations. Should the book have the good fortune to fall into the hands of those outside the Church, we trust that it may prove of sufficient practical suggestiveness to enable them to devise some means through their own religious or social societies of espousing the cause of the sweated.

An excellent bibliography on the question of sweating is given in "Books for Catholic Social Students," p. 24 (published by the C.T.S., price one penny).

The Editor desires to acknowledge his great personal indebtedness to Mr. J. J. Mallon, Secretary of the National Anti-Sweating League, and to the Rev. Charles Plater, S.J., for their valuable assistance in the compilation of the book.

THOMAS WRIGHT.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE fact that this little volume has been for several months out of print has served to emphasise the continual demand there has been for it, a demand which, in turn, is an emphatic sign that this attempt to apply Christian principles to the greatest industrial problem of the day has met with very favourable acceptance. The two years which have elapsed since its first publication have made considerable revision necessary and the fifth chapter has been entirely rewritten. The Editor renews his thanks to his collaborators and others who have helped him to see the book through the Press.

T. W.

May, 1913.

SWEATED LABOUR

AND

THE TRADE BOARDS ACT

CHAPTER I

SWEATING—DEFINED AND EXPLAINED

SWEATING means that

“work is paid for at a rate which, in the conditions under which many of the workers do it, yields to them an income which is insufficient to enable an adult person to obtain anything like proper food, clothing, and house accommodation.”¹

Originally sweating denoted a method of sub-contract, by which the middleman was enabled in certain trades to victimise the helpless poor

“by making an altogether inadequate payment for work upon which he obtained a large and quite disproportionate profit.”

While this system of shameful injustice has always existed in the lowest strata of our commercial enterprise and exists to an appreciable extent nowadays, sweating has for many years included a much wider area of unfair dealing. Thus the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System, appointed in 1888 under the presidency of Lord Dunraven, reported that

¹ Report of the Select Committee on Home Work, No. 246, p. iii., § 3.

" although we cannot assign an exact meaning to sweating, the evils known by that name are shown in the foregoing pages of the

Report to be—

- (1) An unduly low rate of wages.
- (2) Excessive hours of labour.
- (3) The insanitary state of the houses in which the work is carried on."

Yet while they attested as their deliberate judgment that the evils of sweating " can hardly be exaggerated," the evils remained rampant, almost as unrestricted as ever. Befogged in accidental issues, the Committee had lost sight of the one essential point. The question of sweating is a question of wages, and to trouble about an amelioration of sanitary conditions and excessive hours of work so long as the wage question remained unanswered is akin to worrying about the trimming of the beard when the face of society is bruised and gashed. Had Lord Dunraven and his Committee focussed their attention on the unduly low rate of wages, their painstaking report would have brought the country to grips with the problem. As it was, their muddled description left sweating precisely where it stood: the same methods, the same theories, and the same ideals have been carried out by employers—no doubt, to a considerable degree, in spite of themselves—with the result that wages have in most of the sweated industries been gradually cut finer and yet more fine; insanitary conditions have continued through domestic uncleanness, with a like danger to public health, even though drainage, ventilation, and all that constitutes structural sanitation have improved, and the increased difficulty in obtaining the means of subsistence has necessarily entailed either protracted hours of labour or the demoralising aid of the Poor Law.¹ The sum-total of the investigation of the Lords' Committee amounted to an immense store of evidence concerning sweating but an almost complete lack of suggestion for the mitigation of the evil.

It is with gratification that we turn to the level-headed and courageous Report on Home Work of the House of Commons Select Committee, compiled in 1908, under the chairmanship

¹ Report, p. iii, § 3.

of Sir Thomas Whittaker. Unquestionably circumstances favoured the Committee. Twenty years had elapsed since the sitting of the House of Lords Commission, a period full of helpful and suggestive incident. The experience gained from the Dunraven Committee, the development of the factory and health laws at home, the knowledge of the successful working of legalised Wages and Conciliation Boards in the Colonies, the advent of a new school of economists, the sympathy aroused by the dramatic *Daily News* Sweated Industries Exhibition, the ceaseless and effective action of the National Anti-Sweating League, had all assisted to perfect the chart, and the House of Commons Committee were able, not only to steer safely, but to sail in on a flowing tide.

Straightway they made for the heart of their task.

"In the opinion of your Committee, the second proposal—for the establishment of Wages Boards—goes to the root of the matter, in so far as the object aimed at is an increase in the wages of the home workers. No proposals which fail to increase the income of these people can have any appreciable effect in ameliorating their condition. Improved cleanliness in many cases is very desirable, but the poverty, the miserably inadequate income of so many of the home workers is the great difficulty of the situation. With an increase in their earnings, many of the other undesirable conditions which intensify and in turn are aggravated by the ever-present burden of grinding poverty would be appreciably modified and improved."¹

By these facts, comparisons, and brief criticisms, the real nature of the sweating evil will be readily understood. As a basis all must concede that the definition of the Whittaker Committee is sound; it embodies the principle of the living wage—the principle at stake: in extension it is wide enough to cover both classes of workers affected by sweating, viz., the home and the factory workers.

Another explanatory word seems necessary in view of a popular but very misleading exaggeration. It is stated that 30 per cent. of the population are on the "verge of starvation." Now if by starvation it is meant to convey that the needs of the sweated are so extreme as to threaten life, the

¹ Report, p. xii., § 32.

assertion is at complete variance with authoritative facts. It has been observed with much point that were so large a proportion of the population "on the verge of starvation," there would be many deaths from starvation. The Annual Report of the Local Government Board, issued in 1911, affirms on coroners' returns that deaths due to or accelerated by starvation for the year 1909 number 119, of which 54 occurred in London and 65 in the provinces. The political Socialist renders small service to the cause of the oppressed by an overstatement or a misconstruction of facts. If "the earnings of a large number of people are so small as alone to be insufficient to maintain life in the most meagre manner," their miserable earnings do not stand alone, supplemented as they are in so many cases by charitable and Poor Law "relief."¹ The "verge of starvation" being interpreted is equivalent to the brink of pauperism.² On that account the definition of sweating contains the words "to obtain anything like proper food, clothing, and house accommodation." The widespread need of a decent livelihood, not the total lack of the necessities for subsistence, forms the pressing problem of which the Trade Boards Act is a tentative, and we trust a successful, solution.

SOME EXAMPLES OF SWEATING

Since sweating is actual and concrete, some examples are essential for any adequate conception of its nature. A lifeless list of low-rated payments, however, made by a large number of sweated trades will do little to impress the reader. A brief account of the circumstances under which the wretched remuneration in the sweated industries is earned, will serve a more useful purpose. An obvious preference leads us to describe the conditions of one or two trades first placed upon the schedule of the Trade Boards Act.

The largest sweated industry is Wholesale Tailoring. The most general description of tailoring represents the trade

¹ Report, p. iii. § 3.

² "The Creed of Socialism," by Joseph Rickaby, S.J., M.A., pp. 22-3.

trunk bearing two distinct branches, machining and finishing. Machining is

“that process which consists of running all the seams by machine and putting the garment together.”

“Finishing includes everything after the seams have just been sewn up—that is, the turning up of the hems and hemming them, the finishing off where the machine has left loose ends, the binding round the tops, the buttonholes in many cases, and the putting in of the lining which has been already seamed.”

Sometimes it happens that finishing will likewise involve pressing, a long and exacting work, which on account of the small space at the disposal of the homeworkers is “rendered extremely difficult and often brings them under penalties of fines for damage to the goods.” Tailoring varies considerably in different districts. In London the home-workers complete the whole process of making, *i.e.*, both the machining and finishing of the garments, while at Leeds homework is almost altogether confined to finishing. Before the Act came into operation the prices paid in London for boys’ knickers machining and finishing was 2*d.* per pair; men’s coats realised from 4*d.* to 9*d.* each, vests with five pockets 3½*d.* each. The pay for common coats at Bristol ranged from 4*d.* to 8*d.* each and vests from 6*d.* to 8*d.* Trousers were made throughout at Reading for 4*d.*, 5*d.*, and 6*d.* per pair. For finishing a dozen pairs of trousers, including pressing, a London worker would commonly receive 2*s.* 9*d.*, and 1*s.* 3*d.* to 1*s.* 9*d.* without pressing, and the rate at Leeds was still lower. Nor yet must it be supposed that the figures quoted show the exact earnings of the workers, for the machinists had to provide themselves both with machine and cotton; and since the adverse interpretation of the Truck Act of 1896 against these defenceless operatives, exorbitant fines were sometimes imposed with impunity in the case of damaged work.

The lace industry has its own technical processes, such as drawing, clipping, scolloping, and ripping, terms which have little meaning to those outside the trade. Rates of pay are adjusted according to the different kinds of work, and also according to the pattern of the work. It is clear that any attempt to value labour on the basis known to the lace-

workers would be unintelligible to the ordinary reader. An estimate, if somewhat wide, but exact enough for our purpose, was arrived at by taking the average rate of payment. The best class of work yielded 3*d.* an hour; 1*d.* and 2*d.* an hour were the usual rates for the commoner class. Striking a mean, then, the lace-worker averaged from 1*d.* to 3*d.* an hour, and if she were a skilled hand and capable of carrying through any process in the trade, she might by systematic labour earn from 8*s.* to 13*s.* a week. But the lace industry is subject to great fluctuation and regular employment is by no means certain.

It has been stated on reliable testimony that children of no more than six years of age were compelled by their mothers to work in order to assist them in increasing their poor wage. This dread aspect of the Nottingham lace trade was vividly depicted by Miss Squire in her evidence before the Home Work Committee:—

“If you visit at dinner-time you find the children without having removed their hats or jackets busy at the lacework, and then something will be given to them to eat as they go to school. They will be at work in the evening on their return and in the neighbours' houses as well as in their mothers' houses.”

The danger to public health arising from sweating might be well illustrated by the machine-made lace trade, but as wages is the real issue of the problem, we must content ourselves on this point with a passing allusion. In estimating the amount of earnings of the sweated workers in the manufacture of lace, previous to the administration of the Trade Boards Act, serious note must be taken of the presence of the middlewoman. None would deny that in many respects the middlewoman was a beneficent helper. She received the webs from the warehouse, portioned out the work, collected and returned it. She was held responsible by the manufacturer for the cleanliness of the lace and the efficiency of the work done. She has had to meet incidental expenses. Though a manufacturer maintained that she was not too highly paid, she claimed for her services a fifth, a fourth, and sometimes even a greater fraction of the earnings of the workers. What these deductions of farthings and halfpen-

nies meant to the workers will be readily calculated: on a week's work 8s. became 6s., and the subtraction of 2s. was a subtraction, not from luxuries or superfluities but from the bare necessities of subsistence. But no guarantee to stand by the tariff prices of labour could be given for the middle-woman. While as a class they might have dealt fairly by the employees, cases of truck payment were within recent time brought to light.

THE EXTENT OF SWEATING

To what extent sweating obtains defies precise statement. Nor is an accurate computation necessary for the purpose of this chapter. Surely it suffices to know that the under-payment of labour is prevalent enough in nearly all parts of the country to constitute a national evil.¹ It has been ascertained with some approximation to truth that about three hundred thousand workers were affected in the four originally scheduled trades of the Trade Boards Act, yet what do numbers count when, not four, but more than a score of trades foster the sweating evil? A list of such industries embraces

"tailoring in all its branches, wholesale dressmaking (which includes the making up of mantles, jackets, blouses, pinafores, aprons, and skirts), the white trade (shirts and all kinds of underwear except hosiery), the cheap boot and shoe trade, chain and nail industries, the making of locks, latches, keys, and files, clipping and finishing machine-made laces and nets; cap-making, tie-making, belt-making; making, repairing and finishing of umbrellas and sunshades, artificial flower-making, tent and sack-making, covering of racquet and tennis balls, box-making, paper bag making, glove-making, beadwork, manufacture of clay-pipes and cigarette-holders, military embroidery, cheap saddlery, shawl-fringing, carding and boxing of buttons and hooks and eyes, brush-making, feather-sorting, fur-pulling and sewing, basket-making and the manufacture of stuffed toys."²

To the employees in the above-mentioned trades must be added a large number of labouring men, *e.g.*, dockers and the unskilled in the iron-trade, whose earnings are insufficient to prevent them from sinking below the line of "primary

¹ Report, p. iii., § 3.

² "The Case for Wage Boards," Constance Smith, pp. 10-12.

poverty." Nevertheless, while the trades enumerated are often called the "sweated industries," and the social disease thus created has been popularly designated the "sweating system," we owe it both to the trades and to ourselves to guard against the over-statement involved in these terms. Exceptions, in which a fair standard of payment for labour is maintained, are frequently found in the sweated industries.¹

THE CAUSES OF SWEATING

The causes of sweating may be considered from two stand-points—concrete economic facts and abstract economic principles—but it is obvious that the true nature of the problem can only be conceived by a study which shows distinctly the relation of fact to principle.

In Section 10 of the Report on Home Work, "eleven facts" are stated to explain "why their earnings are small."² These facts may be classified under two heads—viz., Labour Competition and Trade Competition. The readiness with which unskilled work can be accomplished, the preference of the home to the factory as a workplace on the part both of employer and employee, the selection of only the fittest, the most alert, the most regular, and the most trustworthy for the factory, are reasons for the overflow in the labour market, and, supply exceeding demand, for the consequent cheapness of labour. Of set purpose women vie with women, the young with the old, the strong with the feeble, those in dire need of a livelihood with wives and daughters who live in comfort and whose work is little more than a hobby, so that the value of labour of necessity depreciates. But an issue neither perceived nor understood is that the keenness of competition among female workers entails a fall in the price of men's labour. The lower the scale of payment for female labour descends, the further sinks the level to which the wages of men inevitably drop. The system forms a vicious circle, and the grinding grows as the circle widens its circumference. How far this truth may be applied to wages in general is a difficult and complex question, nor shall we pursue it, for its

¹ Report, p. 11, the evidence of Mr. Douglas Sholto Douglas.

² Report, pp. v. and vi., § 10.

practical issue, if direct, is certainly not immediate. But its application to single groups of workers, *i.e.*, workers in the same trade, needs only to be stated to be accepted, borne out as it is both by economic science and the gruesome pages of the industrial history of England through the last hundred years or more.¹

Under the division of Trade Competition may be briefly enumerated the following causes of sweating:—

1. "Production in competition with machinery, and the cost of making the articles by machine," forming the basis of payment.

2. Competition with the general public.

3. Foreign competition.

4. Unorganisation of the workers.

5. The intervention of the middleman.

6. The "fierce competition" among the employers in some of the most sweated trades.

Of course these causes do not equally affect all the sweated industries alike. Nevertheless, viewing each cause in itself and assigning to it its due influence, the two chief sources of sweating are undoubtedly the unorganisation of the worker and the

"fierce competition by which the less reputable employers underbid their competitors and seek to recoup themselves by reducing the remuneration of the workers."

Like hounds, mutually assisting each other in their breathless chase of their weak and defenceless quarry, do they pursue the sweated workers.

The isolation of the home, if a boon to the sweated worker, has likewise been his curse. To the master it means evasion of the factory laws, a saving of rent and rates, a release from expenditure in plant, etc., but its greatest asset is that it leaves the worker unprotected and helpless. The manufacturer is immune from loss through strikes, almost from the discomfort of their threatenings. He is free to cut under the market prices so long as he may hope to realise a profit by

¹ Ryan, "Living Wage," p. 226; O'Riordan, "Catholicity and Progress in Ireland," Chap. VI.; S. & B. Webb, "Industrial Democracy," vol. ii., p. 1765.

squeezing his workers. Indeed, if altogether unscrupulous, he may regard the market as a field of adventure where the operatives have to take the risks of his plunging. Since labour is the only commodity remaining the price of which can be diminished, labour must always suffer. Hence the conclusion becomes clear that the more the value of labour is reduced, the greater grows the difficulty in uniting the labourers. It is not merely that they are unable to spare their weekly contribution to the support of a union from their straitened resources, but, demoralised, unmanned, desperate, they are without heart to amend their lot.¹ "Fierce competition," however, is a factor nearer to the root of the evil of sweating than any other, and accordingly we deem it necessary to deal with it at some length.

Machinery will always remain a disturbing factor in the labour-market, and therefore will ever tend to disarrange wages. New inventions will be introduced, old inventions will be improved. In itself, however, the use of machinery, while adding to its complexity, does not place a lasting obstacle in the way of a sensible solution of the wage problem. Of this the history of Trade Unionism through the past fifty years is abundant proof. Similarly administrators of a scheme for a living wage have to face barriers such as the presence of the middleman, public competition, foreign competition, and the woeful state of disorganisation among the workers, but they are not dismayed by these formidable obstructions. Not that the complications involved by such perplexing questions can be lightly shelved, but already remedial measures have to some extent been applied with success. The spirit of "fierce competition" between manufacturer and worker and between capitalists themselves is, let it be repeated, the most obstinate cause of the prevalence of sweating, and the most virulent opponent to the principle of the living wage. *It is not merely that the unjust system of industrial rivalry among low-grade traders forms the whole or even the greater part of the difficulty, but that business as a whole is built upon an unethical competitive basis.* Else why has not sweating been condemned these fifty years? Else why

¹ Report, pp. vi. and vii., § 10.

have the afflicted workers had to wait till their case is extreme before the public mind realises the presence of a national evil, and only then devises a cure to be compulsorily applied? Business men of England may repudiate the fact with some show of honest indignation, but the fact remains that English business methods have more than tolerated sweating—in truth, have secretly abetted it. Ingrained notions, however baseless, offer almost as stubborn a defiance to any attempt to uproot them as first truths, and unbridled competition is held to be the life of our commercial methods. To put a restraint upon competition is to destroy business: history, science, the law of the land, the daily experience of the markets have all declared competition right, sound, and just. That a distinction between various degrees and shapes of competition should be observed, both for the sake of correct understanding and much more for fair dealing, is obvious, if one pauses to think, but the whirl of business permits little or no pause. For over three centuries custom has given its sanction to unchecked competition. Even at this distance of time the mass of the people, literate and illiterate alike, have failed to recognise that the religious revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was in effect a social and economic revolution as well, and that individualism in matters of faith was only a cloak to cover an individualistic theory regarding the rights of man. Oblivious to his own duties, or, what amounts to the same thing, to the rights of others, the capitalist sought to produce and possess, and so long as he kept within the bounds of the widest interpretation of favouring laws, he saved his good name and rested his elastic conscience. Economics and ethics became estranged from each other both in theory and in practice, and the natural and inevitable consequence of commerce uncontrolled by moral equity has been the immense fortune of the few and the degraded pauperism of the many. It was only such a system as this that could make the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century possible, and render a Government powerless to cope with the social upheaval attendant upon it. A crisis of the nature of the Industrial Revolution was bound to be met by a counter-policy. Through it the

nation was stirred to give the first set-back to the spirit of individualism. Production had had liberty, even unto licence, but licentious liberty had at length displayed its inherent injustice. Laws were passed for the protection of health and morals and for the regulation of hours of labour, and their penalties for infringement were a national confession that the balance between rights of capital and rights of labour had been overturned. Yet despite the enactment of factory laws to mitigate the conditions of the working class, Southey wrote in 1833, the year of the abolition of the black-slave trade. "The slave trade is mercy compared with the factory system." The public mind, however, worked very slowly and very confusedly. Nothing more incongruous can be imagined than that the extension of the factory laws should coincide with the publication of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations." While Smith was expounding a theory of economics which was in truth a scientific statement of the gospel of individualism, concurrent legislation proved it to be both false and immoral. The proof from law was undoubtedly meagre and weak; the real cause of the social evil was still hidden and the law was satisfied to lop off twigs and branches; it has taken a hundred years to discover where the root lies buried.

Smith's economics were distinctly partisan; he was all on the side of capital. Consumption he consigned to a happy chance. Thus economy, interpreted into the language of everyday life by man's ambition and greed for gain, resolved itself into a method of grab, in which the awards fell to the strong, the cunning, the unscrupulous, with small pity for the weak and defenceless, and with no great sympathy with the honest.

"Every man, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice, is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest in his own way and bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man or other men,"¹

is Smith's judgment, and it expresses a sentiment specious enough to embalm the dead conscience of a hemisphere. Evidently all will depend upon what Smith understood by

¹ "Wealth of Nations," Smith, Bk. IV. Chap. IX.

"the laws of justice," and this he was careful to explain at the very beginning of his work.

"In exchanging the different productions of different sorts of labour for one another, some allowance is commonly made for both. It is adjusted, however, not by any accurate measure, but by the higgling and bargaining of the market, according to that sort of rough equality, which, though not exact, is sufficient for carrying on the business of common life."¹

Unquestionably Adam Smith was sincere in his conviction. As a practical economist he honestly believed that his theory was the sure, unfailing cure of the prevailing social ills. Justice of the rough-equality type would secure freedom in competition to satisfy any capitalist, while at the same time it guaranteed to the worker by reason of the increase in production a higher level of distribution. Whatever the inconsistencies of which Smith was guilty, his fatal mistake was in his optimistic view of human nature. As the fortune of Dives increased apace, Lazarus received more sparingly of the crumbs of his table. The school of economists which followed Smith developed the inequity of his system, and, whether the commercial world is conscious of it or not, the meagre fairness upheld by them is the standard according to which business relations for the most part continue down to the present day. The "higgling of the market" is a remorseless method of meting out justice, which at its best means the survival not necessarily of the fittest, and at its worst the bankruptcy of cut-throat and upright competitors alike and the pauperisation of the wage-earner. If there is room in the market for the honest entrepreneur or business-man—and his place is nowadays hard to hold—large space must be provided for the "sweater,"

"consisting in a stony heart, a brazen forehead, a deceitful tongue, the power of exacting from the workpeople the utmost work, of taking the utmost advantage of the weakness and ignorance of others, the art of ruining rivals most utterly and expeditiously and of enticing the utmost possible number of victims to indulge in depraved consumption."²

¹ "Wealth of Nations," Smith, Bk. I. Chap. V.

² "Political Economy," Devas, p. 113.

Far from securing freedom of contract, the higgling of the market necessarily entails unrestrained competition, and the burden of injustice from unrestrained competition falls first upon the shoulders of enfeebled labour. Isolated, totally ignorant of market prices, pressed on all sides by dire necessity, the worker is evidently fettered, and not free, and as evidently under such circumstances the wage-bargain, presupposing as it does two sides more or less of equal knowledge and moral strength, is no bargain at all. Another point, no less absurdly wrong and as disastrous in its issue, is the current creed in business that labour is an "abstract idea." To give labour a money value, irrespective of the worth of the labourer—his dignity as a man, his right to live, his duty to his family—is manifestly immoral. He may not justly be robbed of the coat on his back, he has a just claim to air for breath, but neither coat nor breath are more part of him than his labour, nor possible to him without it. Yet in the higgling of the market

"to-day men are of less consequence than machines: they are the servants of machines. The machine, in its wonderful development, has become almost human; while man has been reduced, as far as possible, to the condition of the machine."¹

Thinking men have for some time past pierced the bubble blown by Smith and his followers and have disclosed its vaporous absurdities. Another school of economists has arisen and has loudly condemned its unethical basis and economic wastefulness. When competition has abused its freedom so as to render sweating not to say actual but even possible, it has over-reached the limits of liberty, and in the words of Viscount Milner "means industry essentially rotten and unsound."

From a practical point of view Trade Unions have long won great victories on behalf of the oppressed, and the organised labourer has in consequence been enabled to live in accord with the dignity that befits his manhood. At length Parliament, on behalf of the subjects for whose protection it is responsible, interposed to stay unreined competition,

¹ Allen Clarke, quoted by O'Riordan: "Catholicity and Progress in Ireland," p. 78.

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and to enforce for the unorganised sweated workers in home and factory the principle of a minimum living wage. The Trade Boards Act, 1909, was justice long over-due, but, being justice in its truest and strictest sense, may its schedule be so extended as to cover every sweated industry and remove the hideous blotch of unfair wage payment and its attendant evils from the face of the country!

CHAPTER II

THE LIVING WAGE

I. INTRODUCTION

THE social effects of a heresy, especially when it has had time to penetrate into the core of society, are, like its spiritual effects, disastrous. Protestantism, soaking for three centuries into the English nation, rotted out of it that wholesome germ of the Faith which during a thousand years had slowly energised Christian civilisation. The result has been an oppression of the poor, more terrible in its extent and its persistence than any that has disgraced the Western world since the days of its paganism, as well as a social philosophy, justifying that oppression on principles which are a flat negation of Christian ethics. The schools of economic doctrine that started in England with Adam Smith and now, as the result of a series of reactions, culminate in the fashionable movement towards the "Servile State," have all put forward theories of wages, each contradictory of its predecessors and all profoundly anti-Christian. Yet time and the slow pressure of the patent consequences of a false philosophy have wrought a significant change. Of late years the conviction has been growing (owing largely to the Socialist criticism of industrialism) that, whatever may be the *maximum* resultant of all the forces influencing wages, the *minimum* should be fixed by the State (or, better, by Gild pressure and current morals), at a point preventing grave physical deterioration of its citizens and thence harm to itself. That is to say, the patent failure of non-Christian economics to prevent an oppression of its weaker members disastrous to the community, has

forced non-Christian theorists to approach again the traditional Christian theory of the remuneration of the worker.

2. THE TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN VIEW

Now, the common Christian view, in this matter, as usual, in accord with the common sense of mankind, is that *it is but just that the labourer should be able to support himself and his family decently by the work of his hands*. This principle, which even to-day will seem axiomatic to the immense majority of ordinary toiling human beings, is proclaimed throughout the Old Testament,¹ is sanctified by our Lord and His Apostles,² and is taken for granted in the social teachings of the Fathers of the Church and the mediaeval theologians. For, in the arguments of the schoolmen on the "just price" of commodities, their constant insistence was upon the cost of production as one of its main determinants, and in mediaeval times labour was the chief item in cost of production. So, in estimating labour-cost, the just measure was always assumed to be the customary needs of the labouring class. There was, of course, in those days, no wage-system such as now prevails. There was customary service, there was apprenticeship, there was villeinage and the rest, but in all these relations of master and man it was assumed, as a minimum of just dealing, that the worker and his family should live by his toil in such rude comfort as was customary to his class. That this standard was not always attained, or was deliberately evaded by the covetous, is very probable. But the fact remains that this *was* the standard generally recognised and officially taught, and any falling-off therefrom was considered reprehensible.³ Certainly, the clear teachings of the schoolmen tended to be obscured and, in a sense, explained away in the period closely following the Reformation. The canonists and moral theologians dis-

¹ Deut. xxiv. 14, 15; Tob. iv. 15-17; Ps. cxxvii.; Prov. xiv. 23; Eccles. v. 17; Eccles. xxxiv. 25, 26; Mal. iii. 5.

² Luke x. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 7, 10; 2 Thess. iii. 8; Jas. v. 4.

³ W. J. Ashley, "English Economic History," i., 181 (London, 1892-3); Henri Garnier, "De l'Idée du juste prix" (Paris, 1900); Victor Brants, "Les Théories économiques aux XIII^e et XIV^e Siècles" (Louvain, 1895).

played an increasing readiness to identify customary wages with just wages. This, however, is only an additional testimony to the universality of the opinion that the customary wage would, as a matter of course, be sufficient for the worker's needs. But, as is by no means uncommon, the reiterated phraseology of the learned in time ceased to correspond with reality, the assumptions underlying that phraseology ceased to apply to actual social conditions. The corroding influence of heresy upon human relationships, the industrial fruits of an exaggerated individualistic philosophy prevalent in the northern States of Europe, were not, as time went on, without some baneful influence even upon current Catholic opinion. By the eighteenth century the dicta of Reiffenstuel had practically translated the "customary wages" of the schoolmen into "current wages," and the "common estimate" of a just remuneration into what soon became the resultant of competitive bargaining.¹ But Bishop von Ketteler (1811-77), Canon Moufang (1817-89), Baron von Vogelsang (1818-91), Cardinal Manning (1808-92), and many others led the return to better things and, in 1891, the principle of the living wage was authoritatively pronounced by Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*.² In this great summary of economic justice the passages bearing on the living wage are of the highest importance.

"A man's labour," says the Pope, "has two natural characteristics. First, it is *personal*, for the exertion of strength is proper to an individual and belongs entirely to the person who both exercises it and was given it for his own advantage. Secondly, it is *necessary*, for the fruit of labour is the means whereby a man preserves his life, and the preservation of life is a dictate of nature that must be obeyed. Now, if we merely consider its *personal* aspect, there is no doubt that the workman has a right to accept wages as low as he may choose, for, just as he may work or not as he wishes, so he may accept low wages, or none at all, if he will. But if we consider the aspect of *necessity*, as well as that of *personality* (and the two are not really separable), the conclusion is very different. Self-preservation is really the duty

¹ A. Reiffenstuel, "Jus Canonicum Universum," ii., Decretal, tit. xviii., 108-14. (Freising, 1700).

² Published as No. 3 of the Catholic Social Guild Pamphlets; by the Catholic Truth Society, 1d.

of one and all, and it is a crime not to fulfil it. From it necessarily arises the right to procure those goods whereby life is sustained, and the poor can procure them in no other way than by wages for work. Let it be granted then that the workman and his master may freely make agreements, especially as to the amount of wages ; nevertheless there is an underlying principle of natural justice, greater and older than any free desires of the contracting parties, to wit, that the wage must be sufficient to support a frugal and steady workman. For if the workman, compelled by his needs or influenced by fear of worse evils, agrees to harder terms, which he *must* unwillingly accept, because the master or contractor so insists, he becomes the victim of force that justice condemns."

In this Encyclical, then, it is officially laid down that *the labourer has a natural right, which neither he nor his employer can evade, to receive in return for his work a living wage.* It will be well to examine more fully

3. THE NATURE OF THIS RIGHT

A "natural right" is an inviolable moral claim to the means whereby alone an individual can attain his natural end—*i.e.*, a meet and reasonable existence in this world. Every human being has a sacred and inviolable claim to all that is necessary to self-preservation and self-perfection, so far as this claim is capable of being satisfied and does not conflict with the equal claims of his fellows. And this claim is based on nothing else than *his intrinsic worth as a person*, created by God in His own Image and Likeness, gifted with freewill and reason, destined to serve Him in this world and in the next. As his faculties and his duties are appointed to him by his Creator, so also is his right to the means by which alone he can exercise those faculties and fulfil those duties. Within reasonable limits this right is sacred, its validity depends solely on the will of the person to whom it belongs. Within those limits the natural rights of the individual must be respected by his fellows and protected, if need be, from arbitrary or unnecessary interference. And the limits of natural rights are determined by the indispensable needs of personal development ; *i.e.*, as regards material goods, they extend to all things necessary to the proper development and

enjoyment of the faculties given by God to each individual. Roughly speaking, all human beings have the same *number* of natural rights, for all human beings have the same end and approximately the same central faculties and rational nature.

"The most important of these [rights] are the rights to life, to liberty, to property, to a livelihood, to marriage, to religious worship, to intellectual and moral education."¹

All individuals possess all these rights to a greater or less degree. But the extent of each of these rights will vary with each individual and

"proportional justice requires that individuals endowed with different powers should possess rights that vary in degree."²

Yet *practically every individual possesses faculties, to which correspond rights to such a minimum of respective material goods as is requisite to the reasonable development of personality.* These constitute that "sufficiency of bodily goods whose use is necessary to virtuous action."³ And, as has been indicated above, each individual is endowed with these rights *because he is a person.*

"The dignity of personality imposes upon the individual the duty of self-perfection; he cannot fulfil this duty adequately unless he is endowed with natural rights."⁴

Utilitarian considerations have little bearing on the question. It is quite true that it may be to the advantage of both the individual and of the State that the worker should receive a living wage. In most cases that will be so. But no one is bound *morally* to seek either his own or his neighbour's temporal advancement, however wise it may be for him to do so. Moreover, in certain cases, it might be actually either to the individual's or to the State's advantage to ignore the claim to "life and liberty" of certain individuals. If the rights of the individual depend upon "social utility," then obviously those who are less useful to society have no rights that are valid against those who are more useful: the

¹ John A. Ryan, "A living Wage," 51 (London, 1912).

² *Ibid.*

³ S. Thomas Aquinas, "De Regimine Principum," i. xv.

⁴ John A. Ryan, *loc. cit.*, 50.

workman would have no claim to any wage at all, unless it could be proved to be to the advantage of the State to pay him one. In fact, there is no valid basis to "the right to a living wage," or, indeed, to any right at all, save that which is essentially the Catholic teaching,

*"that every individual by virtue of his eternal destination is at the core somewhat holy and indestructible; that the smallest part has a value of its own, and not merely because it is part of a whole; that every man is to be regarded by the Community, never as a mere instrument, but also as an end."*¹

4. THE RIGHT TO SUBSISTENCE

It follows, then, from the foregoing considerations, that every human being has a right to subsistence—that is, to such a minimum of this world's goods as will enable him to repair the expense of tissue caused by labour, to be modestly and warmly clothed, and to have dry, warm, and wholesome shelter against the inclemency of the weather. And this right is certainly his in strict justice. It is so certainly his that, *in default of other means of obtaining this minimum*, he may claim to preserve his life by means of the superfluity of his fellows—*i.e.*, from anything belonging to them which is not strictly needed by them for their own subsistence.

"The right of access to the material means of living is as important and as valid in one man as in another,"²

and

"when we offer necessities to the needy, we are not making a present, but giving them their own: not doing a work of mercy, but rather paying a debt of justice."³

5. THE RIGHT TO A PERSONAL LIVING WAGE

Every individual, then, has a right to subsistence, and, in the modern State, there is no other way by which the immense majority of mankind can attain this subsistence

¹ Otto Gierke, "Political Theories of the Middle Ages," 82 (Cambridge, 1900).

² John A. Ryan, *loc. cit.*, 70.

³ St. Gregory the Great, "Pastoral Care," xxii.

save through the wages paid by their employer for their labour. And, as a right to anything implies the right to the sole means whereby it may be attained, it follows that every person who works for an employer has a right to be paid such a minimum wage as will enable at least him *personally* to live in a manner worthy of the dignity of a human being. There is this distinction only between the right to subsistence and the right to a personal living wage. The former is a right shared equally by every individual, and is of such an absolute nature that (granted the material *possibility* of meeting it) it would justify, if necessary for the preservation of life, even the taking away of all superfluous private property above what is required by the owners thereof for their own subsistence. The right to a personal living wage is of a less pressing nature. In the first place it only holds where, as is now almost universal in Western civilisation, one man is selling his labour-power to others; and, in the next place, where a personal living wage is denied to the workman in return for his labour, this denial does not justify his forcible assumption of the superfluous goods of others, but only an appeal to the justice of the community to remedy the injustice of the employer. Nevertheless, the workman's claim to a personal living wage is a claim of commutative justice,¹

"valid . . . against the person or the industrial or social institution² to whom society has transferred the function of distribution."³

And this is so, not merely because commutative justice demands a strict equivalence between the thing given and the thing received—*i.e.*, between the energy expended and the means thoroughly and entirely to repair that energy—not merely because the notion of a *just price* requires that both contracting parties shall be benefited proportionally, for it is practically impossible to state the just price of labour in terms of wages, or to determine the relative gains

¹ *I.e.*, strict justice, obliging to restitution if violated.

² *E.g.*, the manufacturing company, the municipal "Works Department," etc.

³ John A. Ryan, *loc cit.*, 79, 80.

of employer and employed. Both of these are excellent reasons, *so far as they go*, but neither is of much practical use in determining whether the labourer is receiving a living wage or not. The right to a personal living wage rests on the principle that "man . . . possesses . . . the right of providing for the sustenance of his body,"¹ and that, in the modern system, there is no other means whereby the worker can exercise that right and fulfil the corresponding duty. For this reason his wage must be a "subsistence wage"; that is to say, it must be sufficient to provide "whatever is necessary to a sober, well-conducted man for living suitably—food, lodging, dress, fuel, etc."² On this all Christian economists and moralists are agreed. Every employer (whether individual, or joint-stock company, or State institution) is bound, *in strict justice*, in all ordinary cases, to pay a "subsistence wage" to each person fully employed in his service. This applies, of course, mainly to men, for Christian economics assume that married women and children will usually be supported by the head of the family. But where women and children are forced by circumstances to support themselves they have undoubtedly the same right as men to what is *to them* a "subsistence wage"; and, if they are for any reason performing work equal in efficiency to men's work, distributive justice requires that they shall receive the same remuneration as men.

This is the normal right to a *personal* living wage. Is there also

6. THE RIGHT TO THE FAMILY LIVING WAGE?

To this question the answer given by Christian economists and moralists is not so clear or unanimous as to that just considered. Or rather, they are not agreed, either upon the grounds or upon the sanction of the claim to a *family* living wage. But as to the claim itself all Christian authorities are agreed: *the wage paid to the workman ought to be such as would enable him to support a normal family in decent and frugal comfort, if he chose to exercise his right to marriage.*

¹ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*.

² J. Schrijvers, C.S.S.R., "Handbook of Practical Economics," 226 (London, 1910).

That is, they all admit the right to a family wage, but are at variance on the basis of that right, and consequently as to whether the corresponding obligation is one of charity, of legal justice, or of commutative justice. There are, therefore, three schools of thought on this question, each of which is supported by weighty authority and careful reasoning, and any of which is presumably tenable.

The first school founds itself on an answer given by Cardinal Zigliara, at the request of Pope Leo XIII, to an inquiry by Cardinal Goosens, Archbishop of Mechlin. Cardinal Zigliara¹ held that, if the wage received is equivalent to the labour expended, the demands of justice are satisfied. Now, clearly the labourer's family contribute nothing towards the product which is the result of his personal labour. Therefore *justice* exacts no more than a wage sufficient to repair the expenditure of his own energy. Nevertheless, if he receive but a personal wage, his family will generally be in want. And *charity* requires that the well-to-do shall assist those who are in want, especially those poorer neighbours with whom they have most to do. But an employer has most to do with his own workmen and their families. Therefore, charity demands that the employer shall preserve his labourers' families from distress; and the most obvious way to do this is to pay the labourers a family living wage. And, as Pope Leo XIII, quoted with approval by Pope Pius X, has laid it down, the

"obligation of charity for the rich and for those who have means to help the poor and needy . . . is of such binding force that, at the day of judgment, as Our Lord Himself tells us (Matt. xxv.), a special account of its fulfilment will be required (Enc. *Rerum Novarum*)."²

The second school, whose most prominent exponent

¹ It must not be forgotten that this opinion is no more than that of "one weighty theologian," it is not in any sense an official pronouncement. It bears the authority of Cardinal Zigliara's learning and nothing more. Moreover, it refers only to present economic circumstances, not to other possible systems.

² "Pope Pius X on Social Reform" (Catholic Social Guild Pamphlet, No. 4), 8.

is Père Charles Antoine, S.J.,¹ holds that the labourer's right to a personal living wage, being founded upon the equivalence of wage and energy expended, is one of commutative justice; but his right to a family living wage, being founded on considerations of social welfare, is one of legal justice, and not of charity or of commutative justice. It is agreed that *charity* does not bestow any *right* to alms upon the poor. Nor can it be pretended that God intended the majority of families to be dependent upon charity for their sustenance, or in its default to live in misery. To base the claim to the family living wage upon charity alone is at once to mistake the nature of this virtue and to impugn the providence of God. Nor can the claim be based upon *commutative justice*: for that virtue merely demands strict equivalence between the personal energy expended and a personal living wage, while to support this doctrine by reference to the duty of a father to sustain his family is to ignore the voluntary, optional nature of marriage. On the other hand, it is certain that social welfare requires that fathers of families shall be normally able to fulfil their duty of supporting their wives and children, and that the majority of families shall be so supported and not in a chronic state of destitution relieved by charity. That is to say, the labourer has a claim, based upon the requirements of *legal justice*, to a wage sufficient to support his family as well as himself.

The third opinion, that the claim is based upon considerations of *commutative justice*, is, perhaps, the most widely supported. In the first place, this opinion is based, not upon the equivalence of personal wage to personal energy expended, for it is held that there is no such equivalence ascertainable. An average labourer's work is of greater value than what is needed to support himself alone and is roughly equivalent to the cost of supporting a normal family. Now, it is not practicable that a man's wages should rise and fall according to the varying needs of his family, or that distinction should be made between the wages of the

¹ Charles Antoine, S.J., "Cours d'Economie Sociale," 606 (Paris, 1899).

married and of the unmarried. Further, every man has a right to marry, whether he choose to exercise that right or no, and, if he marry, at once incurs the duty of supporting his family. But, if the valid exercise of his natural rights involves the fulfilment of duties, then clearly he possesses the right to the necessary means whereby alone the duties can be fulfilled. And in the case of the modern workman this necessary means is normally wages. Therefore the labourer has a *right* to a family living wage. Now, this right must rest either upon charity, or upon social justice, or upon commutative justice. It has already been shown, by the upholders of the second opinion, that it cannot rest upon charity. Nor can it rest upon legal justice, for legal justice is merely that moral virtue which inclines the members of a society to perform specific virtuous acts *with the motive of benefiting the community*. But unless any person neglects any particular virtue *with the intention of opposing the welfare of the community*, he does not sin against legal justice, but only against the particular virtue neglected. Therefore the failure to pay a family wage could only be a sin against charity (which is already rejected), or against commutative justice, except in the practically impossible case of an intention thus to injure the community.¹ But there are more direct reasons for assigning commutative justice as the sanction of the family living wage. In the first place, common opinion, the usual determinant of value, is and always has been that a man's work is worth a wage that will support him and his family. Next, God, who has given to the average man the right to marry and procreate children, has thereby laid upon him the duty of supporting his family, and that duty necessarily carries with it the strict right to the necessary means of fulfilling it. Therefore whoever pays the labourer a wage insufficient to support him and his family ignores his right to gain, in the only way at present possible to him, the means of fulfilling his duties

¹ It must not, however, be forgotten that the State owes *distributive* justice to the labourer; *i.e.*, it is the duty of the public authorities (and so of those who elect them) "to make such provision that fair wages can be paid and are paid" (see C. S. Devas, "Political Economy," third edition, p. 505).

and of exercising rights involved in his dignity and worth as a human being. For all these reasons it is concluded that the labourer's right to a family living wage is one of commutative justice.

7. RECAPITULATION

We have seen, then, that the traditional Christian view as to wages is that they should at least amount to what is now known as "a living wage"; that this view is supported by the definite teaching of theologians and moralists; that it is definitely enunciated in the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* as a "right"; that this right is of the most stringent nature—absolute (within the limits of possibility) as regards *sustenance*; binding, as a matter of commutative justice, as regards a *personal* living wage; and, as regards a *family* living wage, also binding, at least in charity, and probably also as a matter of either legal or commutative justice. As to the sanction of this last right, the family living wage, authorities are at variance, *but it must not be forgotten that they are all agreed as to the imperative nature of the right.*

8. WHAT DOES IT AMOUNT TO ?

But, having ascertained the principle, we must at least try to ascertain roughly how it would work out in money value in this country, if this inquiry is to touch actuality. What is meant by "the support of a frugal and steady workman and his family"? In estimating this amount, it is not sufficient to consider merely what a man requires to maintain himself as an efficient instrument of production. *Christian* sociology must have regard also to *what is due to him as a human being possessed of rights and duties.* Now, there are many estimates by economists, sociologists, labour leaders, priests, etc., which, though varying in some important points because of the varying points of view of their authors, are yet surprisingly in substantial accord.¹

¹ Cf. John A. Ryan, *loc. cit.*, 127-31; B. S. Rowntree, "Poverty," Chaps. III, IV (London, 1902); Charles Booth, "Life and Labour of the People," ix, Chap. XIII (London, 1897).

What they all practically amount to for present purposes is this :—

1. The labourer should have command over sufficient food, clothing, shelter, fuel, etc., to enable him to preserve himself and his wife and children in health and reasonable comfort ; to make it unnecessary for his wife to leave the care of the home in order to earn wages, or for his children to become wage-earners before they are reasonably grown and educated (*i.e.*, before they attain the age of at least sixteen years) ; to provide all with warm and decent clothing, in sufficient quantity for cleanliness and neatness ; to own (or at least have reasonably secure control over) a home of at least five rooms, plainly but sufficiently furnished, and in a proper state of repair.

2. The labourer must also be normally able, out of his income, to provide against sickness, accidents, old age, and unemployment, by contributions to a friendly society, a medical club, his proper Trade Union, and any contributory State fund established for any of these purposes.

3. Further, he should be able to satisfy his mental and spiritual needs by payments, congruous to his state, in support of the Church and charitable institutions, and by reasonable access to periodical and other literature, to public educational establishments (museums, galleries, etc.), and to a moderate amount of recreation.

Now, if we take an *average* working class family to consist of a man, his wife, and four children¹ (for a less number of children per family would mean that the population was decreasing), and if we accept, in relation to current prices, the estimates of careful investigators² as to the *minimum*

¹ Of course there will be many workmen's families larger than this ; indeed, very possibly the *normal* working-class family contains more than four children. If that be so the minimum due must be correspondingly raised. Four children represent the smallest average possible, if the nation is to remain healthy and progressive. As to the whole question of large and small families, see Cardinal Mercier's Pastoral, *The Duties of Conjugal Life* (Catholic Truth Society, *id.*).

² B. S. Rowntree, *loc. cit.* ; P. H. Mann, "Life in an Agricultural Village in England," in the *Transactions of the Sociological Society* for 1904 ; M. F. Davies, "Life in an English Village" (London, 1909).

cost per head per week for food, clothing, rent, etc., in the countryside, in moderate and in large towns respectively,¹ it should be possible to arrive at a rough estimate of the money value that would represent the above necessities of decent life. For sheer *subsistence* this will work out at a family cost of £1 3s. 6d. per week in the country, of £1 6s. in medium-sized towns, and of £1 9s. in the large towns, as prices are at present. If we add a small sum, rising from about 2s. 6d. in the country to about 6s. in the large towns, to represent those further expenses which have been enumerated under headings 2 and 3 above, as the reasonable necessities of a frugal and decent life, we arrive at the result that *a family living wage in this country amounts to about 26s. a week in the country, 30s. a week in medium-sized towns, and 35s. a week in the large towns.*² And this, it must not be forgotten, is the wage due to agricultural labourers and unskilled workmen; as the skill of the workman, and therefore his social position and reasonable standard of life, rises, so will the family living wage due to him.

It will, of course, be objected that thousands of families can and do subsist, in apparent comfort, on much less than the wage suggested above.³ They do, but at what ultimate

¹ *I.e.*, food, per head, per week (over sixteen), 3s.; (under sixteen) 2s. 3d.; clothing, per head, per week (over sixteen), 6d.; (under sixteen), 5d.; fuel, about 1s. 10d. per week; rent, per week, in the country, 2s. 6d. to 4s.; in medium sized towns, 5s. 6d. to 7s. 6d.; in large towns, 6s. 6d. to 11s. 6d. It will be noted that the rent here suggested for country cottages of five rooms is that at which it would pay the average landlord to build. Any reduction of rent below this point is merely a form of "truck" wages. [Since the first edition of this essay was published, Professor Ashley has shown good reason to believe that, during the ten years, 1902-12, the prices of most of the necessities of life have risen by at least 10 per cent. This means, in round figures, that about 2s. a week should now (1913) be added to each of the above estimates of a family living-wage in country and town respectively.]

² In the United States, where, of course, the cost and standard of living among the working-classes is much higher than in England, Father Ryan works out the family living wage at about \$600 a year (*i.e.*, about £2 9s. a week) in the smaller towns, and \$938 a year (*i.e.*, about £3 19s. a week) in the large towns.

³ The average "cash-wages and earnings" of the country labourer to-day (1913) is about 19s. (and his perquisites, garden, etc., certainly do

cost to the nation in infant mortality, in impaired efficiency, in diminished power of resistance to disease, in desperate resort to bodily pleasures, in crime, and finally in pauperism, is but *partly* shown by the national expenditure on the Poor Law, the prisons, the reformatories, the hospitals and the asylums, and by the statistics of child mortality, of illegitimacy and of drunkenness. The payment of less than a living wage is, even from a merely commercial point of view, too costly in the long run to the nation that permits it.

9. THE OBLIGATIONS CORRESPONDING TO THE RIGHT

The obligation of paying a family living wage to all labourers rests *primarily*, not on the State or on any of its subdivisions, but on "the industrial community in which the labourer lives"—that is to say, on those members thereof that control its operations. For instance, in the mining industry, the labourer's claim is against those who control the mines in which he works; in the cotton industry, against the cotton manufacturers who employ him; in the agricultural districts, especially against the farmer or landlord in whose service and to whose advantage he works. Only in a secondary and indirect sense has he a claim against the State, as the authority which should protect his rights, if violated. The duty, then, of paying a family living wage to their employees rests primarily with the employers in any industry, for "the economic position of the employer is such that the obligation falls naturally and reasonably upon his shoulders."¹ Now, there are at least two kinds of employers: the individual who manages his own business and employs (at least mainly) his own capital; and the responsible manager of a joint-stock company, appointed by and subject to the directors, and, ultimately, to the shareholders. The former kind has two claims upon the product of the business—a *primary* claim to "wages of management," *sufficient for a*

not amount to anything like another 7s. a week); while Mr. Rowntree and Sir Charles Booth have shown that in York (a typical medium-sized town) about 28 per cent. and in London about 30 per cent. were habitually in receipt of wages well below the "subsistence wage" given in the text! Compare with this wage the amounts set forth on pp. 15, 16.

¹ John A. Ryan, *loc. cit.*, 239.

frugal and reasonable livelihood suitable to his position in the community; and a quite *secondary* claim to interest upon his capital, *at such rate as the proper conduct of the business will fairly allow*. The former claim naturally precedes all others, even that of his employees to their living wage, but it must be interpreted as a *suitable living wage for himself*, not as a claim to riches or luxury.¹ The latter claim is of comparatively minor importance, resting, as it does, merely upon the same basis as any other right of ownership. It is, certainly, a valid claim, justified by considerations of social welfare; but it is inferior to that of the labourer to gain a decent livelihood by means of his toil, a claim based upon human worth and dignity, which is a greater thing than social convenience. Therefore, next to the employer's own claim to his own living wage, comes that of his employees to their living wage, and their claim must be satisfied (if the gross product will allow of it) before any other claim upon the product be satisfied. Given the *possibility* of doing so, the duty of paying a living wage to all employees is binding upon all employers; involving restitution, if neglected, in the case of the personal living wage, and, very possibly also, in the case of the family living wage.²

¹ It is difficult to give any *precise* meaning to these terms. "A suitable living wage for himself" will naturally vary with the employer's position in life. Thus a peer, a Cabinet Minister, a great landowner, will fairly have a higher standard of life than (say) the manager of a newspaper, a farmer, or the manager of a mine. It is certainly fitting that those who hold a great position in the State should be able to expend *comparatively* large sums on hospitality and even occasional display. But nobody needs many houses, or constantly-changing costly clothes, or trips to Monte Carlo; or gorgeous cotillon presents, or any of the ever-increasing modern excuses for wasting money on mere show and triviality. "*The amount of money that can be expended for the convenience of life, the ornamental and hedonistic side of life, consistently with due regard for health, mind, and character, is very much smaller than the majority of men, rich and poor, habitually assume*" (Ryan, *loc. cit.*, 273).

² Rural landowners managing their own estates are in an analogous position to employer-capitalists. But landowners, in town or country, *who merely draw rents* and hand over the management to paid agents, without exercising any useful function in the community, have no claim to "wages of management" and their claim to payment for the loan of land is (like that for the loan of capital) *only rightly to be satisfied after a living wage has been paid to the real producers*.

As to the manager-employer, he is not to the same extent a free agent, and is usually himself only a salaried servant. Yet he should do his utmost to persuade the directors of the company, *upon whom the obligation really rests*, to permit the payment of a living wage to all employees, and should even refrain from insisting on any increase to his average salary that will make it *higher than a suitable living wage for himself in his own position*, until such proper wages can be paid to the employees.

So, too, with the shareholders. In so far as they really have any power to enforce the payment of living wages by the company from which they draw dividends, they must exert that power to the uttermost, even if it means much trouble and loss of superfluities to themselves. *Much of the underpaying of labour is due to the demand for high dividends on the part of shareholders in joint-stock companies*—that is to say, for a higher return for the loan of capital by those who merely *own* than is consistent with justice to those who *produce*. Again, those who consume the product should not seek to do so at the expense of those who produce it. The rage for mere cheapness of commodities is not without its influence both upon the quality of the goods and upon the possible remuneration to the producer. There is a "just price" due for every commodity, even though it may be difficult to ascertain, and the main item in that price is the cost of production *as far as determined by the provision of a decent livelihood to the producer*. And in general, every person who is living wholly or partly upon wealth produced by the labour of others, whether he be landowner, factory-owner, or shareholder, or Government or municipal bondholder, is bound to make use of every means at his command to ensure that those who produce his income shall receive in return a decent family living wage. And, in so far as he is powerless to effect this through his tenants, or the directors of the companies that pay him dividends, or his representatives in public bodies, or Parliament, he is bound to make, out of his superfluity, such wise and charitable restitution as he can to the victims of industrial and social injustice.

10. SOME OBJECTIONS

There are three main objections to the universal payment of a living wage. The first is that *in consequence prices will so rise that the workers will gain no real advantage*. But this is contradicted by experience. For the producer and the capitalists who finance him can only throw *part* of the increased cost of production upon the consumer, competition takes care of that. The rest comes, as it should, partly out of interest, rent, and profits, partly from the increased efficiency that is enforced on both capital and labour by the new conditions.¹

The second main objection is that *the national income will not permit the payment of a universal living wage*. Now, this would be valid if it were true. But it cannot be held to be true so long as nearly one-half of the total national income is paid (in the form of rent, interest, and profits) to less than one-eighth of the population; while, of that one-half, two-thirds is received by a small rich group amounting to less than one-thirtieth of the whole nation. *The payment of a living wage is a question rather of the distribution than of the sufficiency of the total product.*²

As for the third objection usually urged, that *the necessity of paying a living wage would ruin certain industries and drive trade into the hands of foreign competitors*, it is an argument invariably brought forward by the opponents of any proposal for the improvement of the lot of the workers, and almost invariably falsified by the result. From the point of view of the economist and the sociologist it has been refuted again and again.

"Competition must be met by increased efficiency, not by low wages. . . . Experience teaches that healthy and well-educated and high-trained men and women living and working under satisfactory conditions provide the industrial army with which thoroughly capable, alert, and enterprising employers can most

¹ John A. Ryan, *loc cit.*, 303-8.

² L. G. C. Money, "Riches and Poverty" (London, 1908). Cf. also the new edition (1911), in which entirely reliable statistics give further emphasis to the above contention.

successfully meet any competition which they may have to encounter."¹

And the few trades that really would so suffer are in their nature *parasitic* trades, existing at the expense of the national health and efficiency.² From the point of view of Christian statesmanship, considerations of human worth and dignity outweigh any considerations of the industrial advantage of certain sections of the nation over possible foreign competitors. "Justice demands that the interests of the poorer classes should be carefully watched over by public authority, so that they who contribute so largely to the advantage of the community may themselves share in the benefits which they create—that being housed, clothed, and enabled to sustain life, they may find their existence less hard and more endurable."³ If we remember that, we shall know what *must* be done, cost what it may, and work to make the living wage an actuality in this country as soon as may be.

¹ Report of the Select Committee on Home Work, H.C. 246, 1908, p. xvii.

² National Anti-Sweating League: "Report of Conference on a Minimum Wage, 1906," pp. 25-9 (London, 1907).

³ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*.

CHAPTER III

THE TRADE BOARDS ACT

THE Trade Boards Act of 1909 strikes a new note in the labour legislation of England. The Christian principles, which in Catholic days governed the spiritual, necessarily influenced the secular side of human existence. Under both the Religious and the Trade Guilds trade interest was never permitted to imperil that sense of brotherhood between the master and his journeyman and apprentice, which Christian teaching has upheld from the beginning. Such barriers between rich and poor, as now confront us, were then unknown. The change in the relations between class and class came with the Reformation. Since the destruction of the Religious Guilds under Edward VI, but especially since the Industrial Revolution, which began in the textile industries with the inventions of John and Robert Kay about 1750, and which obliterated all trace of what remained of the Trade Guilds, the British Parliament has been struggling to restore order in the ranks of English society. The woes of the workers, and still more civilisation itself, demanded that the State should intervene and become the exponent of the fundamental principles of justice maintained through so many centuries by the Church. With the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act (1802) our modern labour laws may be said to have commenced. Their development has steadily progressed through continuous enactments, dealing with the regulation of the hours of labour, sanitary conditions, the abolition of "truck" payment, etc. But in all these laws the rights of labour have been regarded from a general collective aspect. The distinguishing characteristic of the Trade Boards Act is that it stipulates for the defence

of the individual worker. Though the Trade Boards Act is a legislative experiment, it marks a noteworthy growth in our laws for the betterment of the conditions of labour. From another point of view too does the Act indicate considerable advance. By securing a minimum wage, it aspires to raise from that moral degradation no less than to stay the physical deterioration into which many oppressed victims of our labour system have fallen, and thus it tends to remedy evils with which the Factory Acts have been unable to cope. We subjoin a description of the principal provisions of the Trade Boards Act.

The Act applies to the ready-made and wholesale bespoke tailoring trade, and to the box-making, lace-finishing, and chain-making trades. Yet it is determined that the usefulness of the Act shall not be restricted merely to the trades actually scheduled. Other industries may be subjected to a like reform by a Provisional Order of the Board of Trade.¹ The sweating evil is too widely spread and too deeply rooted to permit of any sudden or sweeping change. The Act is to make its way with caution, to tackle the social disorder piecemeal, and to bring its remedial influence to bear with great wariness.

In the first section it is declared on what conditions the Act may place a trade upon its schedule. As the point is important in so much as it discloses the status of the industry to which the Act may apply, and provides an example of the wise discretion which characterises the Act throughout, we will state the clause in its clear and simple wording.

“The Board of Trade may make a Provisional Order applying this Act to any specified trade to which it does not at the time apply if they are satisfied that the rate of wages prevailing in any branch of the trade is exceptionally low, as compared with that in other employments, and that the other circumstances of the trade are such as to render the application of this Act to the trade expedient.”

In the face of such a clause none will be able to think that the Trade Boards Act is a partisan measure, dictated by any other motives than those of fairness and plain duty.

In like manner, should the operation of the Act become

¹ This was done on March 13, 1913: *v. infra*, p. 64.

unnecessary in any trade to which it has been applied, the Board of Trade may by a Provisional Order suspend the operation of the Act in that trade.

In the remaining clauses of the first section the Act stipulates the conditions under which Provisional Orders of the Board of Trade may become law. It is not necessary to give them in detail. It is sufficient to state that they bear witness to the care with which the Act deals with every point of difficulty and endeavours to ensure the best interests of employers and employees alike. However, in these days when confidence in departmental administration has been somewhat shaken by an increasing tendency to assume plenary powers through so-called administrative regulations and orders, it is reassuring to find that no Provisional Order under the Trade Boards Act can be effective without first having been granted the assent of Parliament.¹

Thus these clauses providing for the present and future application of the Act to various trades, while they allow the Board of Trade a wide latitude, guarantee a check upon all hasty and ill-considered action.

The next few clauses deal with the actual establishment of Trade Boards. It is provided that the Board of Trade shall, if practicable, set up one Board in each trade, but may set up more than one according to the nature and extent of the industry in question. The number of Boards will be regulated according to the greater or less practical advantage to be gained. The regulations and determinations of any such Board will apply only to that branch of a trade for which it has been constituted; *e.g.*, should a Trade Board be set up for tailor-finishing, its rate of pay would not apply to tailor-machining or any other branch of ready-made tailoring.

We now come to that part of the Act dealing with the all-important question of fixing the minimum rates of wages. Here the wording of the Act is very explicit:—

¹ This assent, however, is obtained by laying the Orders on the table of the House for a definite period: if no one objects to them in the interval and no one carries his objection, they come into force. It is plain that abuse can enter here, as it has done under the Board of Education.

“ Trade Boards shall, subject to the provisions of this section, fix minimum rates of wages for timework for their trades, and may also fix general minimum rates of wages for piecework for their trades, and those rates of wages may be fixed so as to apply universally to the trade, or so as to apply to any special process in the work of the trade, or to any special class of workers, in the trade, or to any special area.”

This clause in no way interferes with the employers' freedom of paying time rates or piece rates as best suits his interests, but if piece rates are paid the Act provides that at least the minimum piece rates must be given if such have been fixed. If no piece rates have been determined, payment must be made at such rates as will secure the ordinary workers the equivalent of what he could make by time rates.

Again, the remaining provisions of this section are framed chiefly with a view to prevent immature administration. The Trade Board must give due warning—three months—of any rate which it proposes to fix. In the interval it must consider any objections which may be lodged against the rate. Similarly notice must be given before any existing rate may be cancelled or varied. Further, in cases where a worker is incapable of doing average work, whether from infirmity or from some physical injury, the Trade Board may grant him a permit to work for less than the minimum time rate if it is of opinion that the case cannot be suitably met by employing the worker on piecework. All such cases will be considered individually on their merits. With regard to minimum rates in general, the Boards are empowered to make an Order of Suspension by which their obligatory operation will be suspended when it is found that such rates would be unsuitable or premature.

A very important section of the Act is that dealing with the penalties to be inflicted for not paying wages in accordance with the minimum fixed rate. For the first offence a fine not exceeding £20 is imposed, while the Court may order the employer to make good any amount which the worker has been underpaid. A further penalty not exceeding £5 may be enacted for every day on which the offence is continued after the conviction. The onus of proving that he

has not paid less than the minimum rate lies with the employer. In this regard it is important to notice that the employer may not reduce wages below the fixed minimum by fines for damaged work and the infringement of regulations or by deductions made for working materials, etc. Thus is removed a great abuse; concerning which something has been said in a former chapter (pp. 15, 16).

We have seen that the Act provides against evasion of the minimum time rates by the employer. As a further means of security the Act shields the worker against the employers' intermediary—the middleman or the middle-woman. If any

“shopkeeper, dealer, or trader shall by way of trade make an agreement express or implied with any worker in pursuance of which the worker performs any work for which a minimum rate of wages has been fixed under this Act,”

he thereby himself becomes an employer, undertakes an employer's responsibilities, and renders himself liable, in the event of a conviction under the provisions of the law, to all the penalties of an unjust employer. The worker is to be no longer the victim of a vicious truck system. No longer has he to bear the burden of the middleman's commission. The net remuneration of the average worker may in no case descend below the wage appointed by the Trade Board.

The constitution of the Trade Boards is regulated by the Board of Trade. The Boards are composed of equal numbers of members representing employers and workers respectively, together with independent members appointed by the Board of Trade. The representative members may be elected or nominated according to circumstances. Women are eligible as members. Particular care is to be taken that home-workers shall be adequately represented on Boards dealing with trades in which any considerable number of home-workers are employed.

To render the working of the Trade Boards thoroughly efficient, the Act stipulates that District Trade Committees may be established by a Trade Board. The formation of a District Trade Committee is based on lines similar to those

on which the Trade Board is constituted. The District Trade Committee shall include at least one representative from the Trade Board. While the recommendation of minimum time rates and general piece rates for their own area is the essential duty of a District Trade Committee, the Trade Board may, short of a permission to fix a minimum time rate or a general piece rate, delegate to it any power within its own right.

The appointment of officers to investigate cases of complaint and secure the observance of the Act is in the hands of the Board of Trade. This power can be delegated to the Trade Boards where necessary. Any officer so appointed can demand the production of wages sheets and records of payments, of lists of home-workers, their addresses, and the payments made to them. They may visit factories, workshops, and places used for giving out work to home-workers. Should the employer or any person refuse to produce such lists and wages sheets, or hinder the officers in the discharge of their duty, he is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding £5. Should false information be given, or spurious wages sheets be shown up, a penalty of not more than £20 or of imprisonment for not longer than three months, with or without hard labour, may be inflicted.

The supplementary clauses provide that due notice must be given of any matters coming within the sphere of the Act to all persons concerned, that employers and occupiers of factories or workshops must post up notices when required, and give notice of regulations to the workers in any other way that may be determined upon.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRADE BOARDS ACT IN ACCORD WITH CATHOLIC PRINCIPLE

THE Catholic Church recognises her duties as the natural protector of the weak and the oppressed. In season and out of season she has never ceased to urge the duties of justice and Christian brotherhood. With the same steady insistence she has carried out this duty throughout the centuries. In our own day she has spoken loudly and clearly on behalf of the worker.¹

We must remember that the Church brings a knowledge and experience to the consideration of this question which far surpass any to be found elsewhere. She has made valuable propositions which have been acted upon by legislators; Germany, France, Austria, and Switzerland owe much to the plans of social reform laid down by Catholic sociologists, and their legislation has embodied many of these suggestions.

British Parliamentarians, whether wittingly or not, have in the Trade Boards Act provided another example how ethical principles upheld by the Church result unfailingly in bringing social order out of social disorder. The Act is levelled against a system which indirectly affects religious interests. The actual harm which the Church suffers as a result of the iniquitous methods pursued in the sweated industries it is not easy to calculate. Unquestionably they foster and spread slum life wherever they are practised to a large extent. How far the slums are responsible for the woeful leakage in the Church those alone can tell who have an intimate and

¹ See *The Condition of the Working Classes*, by Pope Leo XIII, C.S.G. pamphlet, No. 3 (C.T.S., 1d.), Introduction, p. 3.

personal knowledge of the life of the sweated workers in the crowded tenements of our large towns.

A closer consideration of the conditions and nature of these sweated industries will show to what extent the provisions of the Act are in accordance with the Catholic principles of social justice and brotherhood. This analysis brings out the fact that while a very large number of industries and trades give rise to sweating in a greater or less degree, there is one section comprehending what is known as the parasitic trades where this evil is peculiarly prevalent.

As its name indicates, a parasitic trade is one which does not support itself entirely. It is in some way subsidised from without. This is effected in a number of ways, but in every case it is accompanied with public waste and even more with loss and injustice to the individual.

The methods of subsidising parasitic trades which chiefly concern us here are two—the supplementing of the incomes of the workers from some source outside the trade in which they are employed, and the using up of the vital energy of the workers by forcing them to live and work upon a wage which is insufficient to afford them the means of living in normal health. Of these two the latter is by far the more injurious, whether viewed from the physical or the moral standpoint.

The supplementing of the workers' income may come about in various ways. Where it is a question of a family whose members work at various trades and all contribute their earnings to the common stock, we find some members assisting to support others who are employed in less remunerative work. Here the parasitic trade is being helped by better-paid industries, which are thus made to contribute to the nourishment and general support of parasitic workers. Of course, the underpaying of women is found in the parasitic trades in its most acute form. Not only are women so ill-paid that they cannot even keep themselves adequately, but all too frequently they are unable to provide themselves with the bare necessities of life, and so become dependent upon the earnings of relatives, the Poor Law, or voluntary charity organisations. To illustrate the extent to which this form of subsidising exists we may quote an example from Mr. Arthur

Shadwell's "Life in West London."¹ He says that 144 persons applied to the Soho Committee of the Charity Organisation Society in the six months between October and March, 1895-6. Upon inquiry being made these were found to represent upwards of seventy different professions and trades. In all these cases the parasitic trade is enabled to exist by outside assistance, which, if coming from the Poor Law, is a tax upon the community, and if from workers in other trades, is a restraint upon the advancement of those trades, inasmuch as it is using up a part of the wages which should be applied to maintain and increase the energy of their own workers.

The second form of parasitism is, however, by far the more noxious. It is the case of trades in which workers do not draw any portion of their incomes from outside sources, but continue in a state of abject poverty and misery as long as their energy and stamina last and then sink beneath the burden for their places to be taken by others. This is nothing less than subsidising the trade at the expense of the health and lives of the workers. Under this system the health, physique, intelligence, and moral character of the workers deteriorate. The vital energy of the whole community is being slowly but surely drained away. When, to use the words of the Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System, 1890, workers have for a considerable time been reduced to

"earnings barely sufficient to sustain existence; hours of labour such as to make the lives of the workers periods of almost ceaseless toil, hard and unlovely to the last degree; sanitary conditions injurious to the health of the persons employed and dangerous to the public,"

they become unfit for remunerative labour. Such people cannot turn out good work. At the best their efforts are fitful and their output faulty. Moreover, when one member of a family so deteriorates, he infects the others. One family spreads the social disease to its neighbours, and so the evil spreads until whole classes are contaminated. Such is a

¹ P. 76.

brief outline of the parasitic trades, which considerations of space prevent us from detailing more fully.

With Collectivists the argument against sweating too often turns upon a question of national loss. The economic unit is the State; the importance of the individual falls into a lower plane. They advocate the common rule—*i.e.*, the enforcement of a minimum below which no employer of labour may descend—on the grounds that it will induce him to select only the more efficient workers, that the standard of excellence will be raised in productive manufacture, and consequently that the community as a whole will profit. Every individual, however, has a right to a decent livelihood; he has a right to the possession and use of capital; he has a right to private property; he has a right, moreover, to dispose of these things as may seem good to him within the limits placed by justice and charity. Leo XIII points out that the family and not the State is the economic unit. He declares the family to be

“ a society limited indeed in numbers, but no less a true society, anterior to any kind of State or nation, invested with rights and duties of its own, totally independent of the civil community.”¹

These rights and duties must be respected and safeguarded in any scheme of social reform, and in correcting the evil of sweating they must always be kept well in view.

“ The contention, then, that the civil government should at its option intrude into and exercise intimate control over the family and the household is a great and pernicious error. True, if a family finds itself in exceeding distress, utterly deprived of the counsel of friends, and without any prospect of extricating itself, it is right that extreme necessity be met by public aid, since each family is a part of the commonwealth. In like manner, if within the precincts of the household there occur grave disturbance of mutual rights, public authority should intervene to force each party to yield to the other its proper due; for this is not to deprive the citizens of their rights, but justly and properly to safeguard them. But the rulers of the State must go no farther; here Nature bids them stop.”²

Herein lies the vital difference between the Catholic and

¹ “The Condition of the Working Classes,” p. 8.

² “The Condition of the Working Classes,” p. 10.

the Socialist point of view. The Catholic bases his conception of the State on the existence of God and the purpose of man's being, which purpose he is to attain in his individual capacity by the exercise of his free will.

As man is responsible for his own salvation, he must be left free to work it out himself. Let it be granted that he is a social being and must of necessity live in communion with his fellow-man. But his duties to the community at large concern the temporal order alone, and must be subjected to the higher obligations of his eternal destiny. Even his family life, to which he has an inalienable right, is only a means to the end for which he is made. And the State is a further means necessitated by his nature and destined to aid in his fuller development, and to give a proper scope to his moral and intellectual faculties.

The Socialist, on the other hand, bases his idea of the State, not on God but on material things. He may protest that his tenets have nothing to do with religion and should be kept apart. The fact remains that he is attempting to reconstruct society without reference to God, and such an attempt cannot fail to bring him into conflict with the higher purpose for which, as the Catholic Church holds, society has been created. So far from being the means to an end, the State is regarded as the end itself, and the most that the Socialist will admit is that families, Churches, etc., may be of service to the State, but always in a subordinate capacity.

Hence the primary concern of the State is with itself, not with the individual. —

In the socialistic creed the individual is a mere cell in the organism whose only value is to contribute to the welfare of the whole. Sweating is an injury to the community at large, therefore it must be put an end to. Not a word of the injustice done to the individual by cramping his development, deteriorating his moral fibre, and violating his right to a decent livelihood. Not a word of the loss of his personal dignity. Not a thought of the true end for which he has been created. Such is the standpoint from which the Socialist views the social evils of the present time.

The Catholic Church, which, as we have already shown, is

possessed of knowledge drawn from all ages and under all conditions, is treated as a negligible quantity. Socialism is the one cure for all.

Yet, as we have seen, the individual is prior to the State. Man was made first, then man, to satisfy the needs of his nature, united into the family. Subsequent to and dependent upon the growth of family life arose man's need to seek unity with his fellows. He was led to form a wider society in order to secure, not only protection but assistance also where his own capabilities were insufficient. This wider society is the State. Its functions are twofold—to protect and to assist—but it must never be allowed to absorb man and deprive him of his birthright.

The State is a means to protect man's rights and individual freedom of action when these rights are threatened or impeded. The State is exercising this function when it legislates to protect the worker from the oppression of the employer. When the State introduces such a measure as the Trade Boards Act it is fulfilling this function. For this reason Catholics welcome such a measure inasmuch as it indicates a tendency to return to Catholic principles.

It will be well here to review the situation, and see what position the Church holds in regard to other existing theories. The Church, then, conceives man as an individual, and is primarily concerned with his spiritual development and the higher good of his soul. But it would be a grave mistake to suppose that she takes no interest in anything else—that is, in those things which are not immediately concerned with his spiritual welfare. The Abbé Léon Garriguet in his "Social Value of the Gospel" expresses this admirably. He says:—

"Having come to perfect man, He [Christ] took the *whole* man and placed him in the setting assigned to him by Providence. Consequently, He took him with his body, his social destiny, his numerous wants, his duties of every kind, and in his necessary relations. The kingdom of heaven did not cause Him to lose sight completely of the kingdom of earth, as some have unjustly reproached Him for doing. He had a care for this kingdom here below, for He knew, better than any one, that it is the road by which we must travel to reach the kingdom above." ¹

¹ (C.T.S., 2s. 6d.) P. 29.

Man is a social animal, and, as has been pointed out, is driven by the exigencies of his nature to live in community with his fellows. The Catholic theory therefore avoids two extremes. First, it avoids the extreme of the Individualist. According to this theory, put forward by the old school of liberal economists, the individual was absolutely free to do what he liked with his own. The capitalist was at liberty to use his capital as he would. His workers might make the best bargain they could with him, but there was no power to compel him to give them adequate remuneration for their labour. All limitations to the use of property were removed, for it was not acknowledged that the rich man only holds his riches in trust, that his use of them cannot be arbitrary, that ownership implies certain duties and obligations imposed by the law of God, which cannot be evaded. This school regarded man as severely isolated, and free to pursue his own course unchecked. Consequently it held that the State could never interfere in the question of wage-giving. Its functions were purely negative, confined, as far as the individual was concerned, to securing the fulfilment of contracts and preventing any interference with liberty of action.

A classical example of the practical working of this theory is afforded by the conditions of life and labour among the working classes in England during the first half of the nineteenth century. The actual following out of the theory that all industrial relations were of the nature of buying and selling in the open market resulted in one of the darkest pages of our national history. Workers were scandalously underpaid, and were forced to accept the starvation wages offered to them since the supply of labour greatly exceeded the demand. They were mercilessly overworked. They were, moreover, subjected to fraudulent confiscation of wages under the pretext of fines imposed for numerous real or imaginary offences. Further, under what was known as the Truck system, they were obliged to accept part payment in orders on tradesmen. These tradesmen, who were in collusion with the masters, supplied inferior goods worth considerably less than the nominal money values of the orders. There was no security for permanent employment. In

a time of depression hundreds were dismissed and left without occupation or means of support for a shorter or longer period. Another great evil of this system was the abominable cruelty with which children were treated. This, and the worst of all, immorality, which was rampant in mines and factories alike, being characteristic rather than exceptional, produced a great reaction.

The backward swing of the pendulum resulted in the opposite extreme, which is equally opposed to Catholic principles—the doctrine of the omnipotence of the State. This has been described sufficiently in an earlier portion of this chapter dealing with the parasitic theory. It is sufficient to point out that the Church avoids the mistake of those who, like some prominent Socialists, overlook the individual altogether and merge him in the State. One fatal result of this extreme is that it cannot ensure those qualities of self-sacrifice, generosity, and conscientious performance of duty which all admit to be necessary. It is even more vitally false in that it entirely neglects the absolute necessity of building up the State on Christian principles. Self-sacrifice is demanded of the individual because he has duties to his neighbour. You will never get a man to pay a living wage by arguing that to pay less is to injure the State and starve the nation. Nor is it sufficient to point out that sweating results in physical and moral decadence. Man must be taught to regard his fellow-men in the light of Christian principles.

The view of the Catholic Church on this point is sound and sensible. It is based on the necessity of individual justice. In the practical working out of this view the State takes her proper place. Her natural function is to enforce the observance of that justice. The employer should be taught that to reduce wages below a minimum living level is unjust, that the laws of retributive justice bind him to a personal redress of a personal wrong. Argue with him as you might argue with a neglectful parent who starves and ill-treats his children. When the Christian principles of duty and justice are not sufficient, such a one is coerced by the State. Even so must the State interfere where necessary to force the

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employer to do what is right in cases where the religious motive is of no avail.

It is precisely on this ground that Catholics give a cordial welcome to the Trade Boards Act. It is a direct application of Christian principles to the regulating of the labour question. Religion alone has not sufficed to solve the problem, nor can legislation do so unaided.

“Most certainly it will not be permanently and adequately solved *without* religion—that is, without the aid of religious agencies and a larger infusion of the religious spirit into the minds and hearts of men; but neither will religion suffice in the absence of a detailed application of moral principles to the relations of employer and employee.”¹

The full result of action upon these lines will not be felt at once. A gradual improvement, increasing and widening as the true principles of Christian ethics come to be applied, will ensue. Already in the colonies a vast improvement is noted as the result of a fixed minimum wage in certain sweated industries. The same is true in regard to England. The effect of the Trade Boards Act in this country is already being felt. Much depends upon the method of its application, but the principles upon which it is based are sound. Thus the fixed minimum rates (whether time rates or piece rates) will have the effect of steadying wages. They will put a stop to excessive under-cutting. It will be impossible for two firms in the same district to vary so greatly in their scale of wages as in the past. Miss MacArthur, in her evidence before the Home Work Committee, pointed out that in the same street in Whitechapel firms could be found whose employees do practically the same work, but in the one are paid double the rate of wages given in the other. It will also be no longer possible for a firm suddenly to reduce wages by 30 or 50 per cent. On the contrary, the effect will be to raise gradually the rate of pay by levelling up the wages given by the worst employers. This is done with as little loss and inconvenience as possible, thanks to the provision of Local Boards for different areas and separate rates for different branches of

¹ Ryan, “A Living Wage,” p. 329.

work. Thus the injustice consequent upon the imposition of a general fixed rate without trial and consideration of the circumstances is avoided, and the change is brought about gradually.

Again, by showing regard for the individual the action of the State will raise the lower classes of workers, not only in the industrial but also in the social scale. They will learn to claim the protection which the State affords, and to organise themselves for the better production of their rights. Self-respect will be regained. This is an important factor, not only in the development of the individual but also in the making of good citizens. This purpose is still further advanced by the regulation providing that the workers shall be adequately represented on the various Boards. They will learn to take an intelligent interest in the improvement of their trade, and acquire a wider outlook upon life. The duty of assisting their neighbour and considering his well-being will be quickly learnt. It is here that the need of inculcating Christian principles becomes so necessary, for, as we have said, State action apart from Christian principles can never secure a lasting reform.

The operation of the Trade Boards will teach the workers in the sweated industries to think. It will arouse them from the dull lethargy induced by a life of hopeless, grinding toil, and by showing the way, induce them to seek to better their own condition. They will be induced to strive after higher ideals. Then, when they find that there is something to live for, their work will improve and consequently the trades in which they are occupied will become more prosperous. This in its turn will bring an increase of wages, leading to a bettering of all the conditions of life.

A great feature of the Act, and one that will go far to bring home to the unprincipled employer the fact that he can no longer grind down his workers and rob them of the just reward of their labour, is the clause which provides penalties for its infringement and obliges restitution. This goes to the very root of the evil. The Christian principle of restitution is here exemplified, and the individual rights of the workers are vindicated. Nothing will affect these unjust

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employers so much as the fear of losing their ill-gotten gains.

From what is here said it must not be supposed that the Trade Boards Act is held to solve the wage difficulty. It falls far short of satisfying even the demand for a living wage. But it provides a minimum below which wages may not fall, and in practice it will come about that many employers will find it to their advantage to give wages considerably above the minimum rate. This they will be enabled to do on account of the improvement in trade brought about by the higher standard of work.

The Act is a first step in the right direction. It is an earnest of better things to come, a move towards the true and only settlement of the wages question, for it is based on the Christian principles of individual rights, personal dignity, and justice.

CHAPTER V

OPERATION AND CO-OPERATION

OPERATION OF THE TRADE BOARDS ACT

THE four years since the passing of the Trade Boards Act have witnessed a phenomenal growth in the recognition of the principle of the living wage throughout England. If English industrial methods are still predominantly individualistic, and the actual attitude of capitalists towards the wage-earner shows little relaxation in its vigour, most masters of labour have at least a real sympathy with the workers' plea for a fair wage. To uproot a system of three centuries' growth cannot be accomplished in as many years, nor perhaps in as many decades. Still the change of mentality in regard of the wage question is one of the reassuring signs of the times.

Apparently, it is in the British Houses of Parliament where the most significant and rapid conversion of conviction respecting the claims of the worker have been exhibited. However the various parties representing the people may differ as to the ways by which a more equitable distribution of wealth is to be found, *e.g.*, the Socialists by the Nationalisation of the means of production, or the Unionists by Tariff Reform, there exists no section in either House which refuses to recognise the workers' right to an adequate subsistence. The industrial turmoil of the past few years has no doubt been partly instrumental in inspiring the country's legislators with a sense of the proper function of government, *viz.* : a special care for the weak and oppressed. Yet it would be a grave mistake to attribute the change of view wholly to the

pressure of strikes. The Trade Boards Act has done its silent work slowly, but in reality far more effectually than the revolt of labour. To start with, the Act was avowedly experimental. Similar legislation had succeeded well in the new colonies, New Zealand, New South Wales and Victoria, but would it be a success at home, in an old country, with business ideals ratified by centuries, with social relations between class and class gradually but firmly established as a coral reef, with trades covering the whole face of the land yet so divergent in local conditions? The last four years have fully vindicated the legislative venture. What part of its experimental stage remains is now like a visible but indefinable object on the distant horizon. The Trade Boards Act is to-day an acknowledged asset among our social legislation, just as the Income Tax is regarded as an essential item in our national finance. The simplicity of its machinery, which has rendered it so readily adjustable to the various trades, and, far more, the solid justice upon which it is based, have ensured its acceptance. In the four originally scheduled trades, viz. : ready-made and wholesale bespoke-tailoring, paper-box making, the finishing processes of machine-made lace, and chain-making, sweating employers and sweated employees have discovered a device by which the latter have been able to rid themselves of the most acute pangs of continued privation, while the former have begun to witness with gratitude the practical obliteration of the stigma which branded their industries. The capitalists in the above-named trades have been compelled to own that sweating is not an essential condition of their industries, and that a minimum living wage is not inconsistent with a fair dividend, and the operatives have been in each instance materially assisted, the increase of wages in one case being sufficient to alter the entire tone of their existence. Thus have legislators been persuaded that the English law embodies a measure replete with promise for the mitigation of an evil, which, in so far as healthy men and women are more valuable to national security than the swollen returns of booming trade, has through generations worked untold havoc upon a multitude of the nations' citizens. When the President of the

Board of Trade proclaimed recently¹ that by Provisional Order the fruit-preserving, sugar confectionery, shirt-making, and linen embroidery, sheet-steel and hollow-iron ware industries were to be added to the schedule of the Act, Parliament received the announcement with unfeigned enthusiasm.

The actual increase of wages for the sweated labourer and the stimulus due to its success applied to those entrusted with government responsibilities, may represent the more immediate effects but they do not constitute the chief blessings of the Acts' operation. As we have already stated the important factor in the problem is the mental outlook of employers upon the rights of their operatives, and it is precisely in the fact that the Trade Boards Act has brought the principle of justice in fair wages with such striking emphasis before the minds of capitalists that we believe its best merits to be revealed. If business is still conducted according to the old tenets of competition, the blame of it is rightly attached to combined labour almost as much as to capitalism, for, during the protracted industrial turmoil of the past two years, the aggressive and indefensible tactics of certain large and wealthy unions have engendered and fostered distrust among employers, even if their methods themselves did not amount to an unreserved approval of the competitive system. Still the salutary influence of the Trade Boards Act is not to be minimised because of the forces which tend to retard or counteract it; their presence does but accentuate it, for, despite all adverse influences, public opinion on the question of the living wage has, during the brief period of the operation of the Act, run in its favour. It requires but a moment's reflection to perceive that capitalism in England, since the days when the possession of wealth became accounted the first source of human happiness, has never been provided with a more telling object-lesson.² The chain-making and lace-finishing industries are local, but the box-trade and wholesale tailoring are spread far and wide over the country. These four trades represent the results of the more degraded form of unchristian capitalism. During the past four years, the hardest type of capitalist has not only been taught that

¹ March 13, 1913.

² See *The Work of the Trade Boards*, by J. J. Mallon.

his employee has an inborn right to live, and therefore, in the circumstances, an inborn right to a living wage, but the pressure of rigorous though just legal penalties has also enforced upon him a yet more practical fact—that it is within his competence to pay a minimum living wage. The Trade Boards Act is a declaration of war against the basic injustice of sweated wages, and its implements, such as fines and imprisonments, are weapons powerful to persuade. Nor has the employer in the sweated industries alone learned the lesson. The operation of the Trade Boards Act has been followed by the eager eyes of employers over the whole extent of England. The administration of the Boards reaching from north to south and from east to west has been akin to a national schooling in the fairness of the elemental right of the labourer to the means of subsistence in accord with his needs as a human being. In one word, the Trade Boards Act, more than all other means together, is to be accredited with the restoration of that foundation of material well-being, proper to the poor no less than to the rich, which the Trade Guilds maintained in Catholic days, and without which the truest wealth of the nation, the life-blood of the masses, is suffered to run to waste. The benefit accruing to the sweated worker from the operation of the Act, notable as it is, is, we repeat, its lesser triumph; its most remarkable victory lies in the deep impress made upon the mind of employers of the principle of a living wage.

In describing the history of the Trade Boards Act it is not only just but essential at the outset to call the attention of the reader to that voluntary agency, the "National Anti-Sweating League," to whose praise stands the entire success of the movement for the securing of a legal minimum wage. We make no secret of our intention to solicit the sympathy and support of the reader on behalf of this excellent organisation. We have no hesitation in asserting that of philanthropic societies it will be difficult to name another in England of greater capability, of more determined resolve, of higher objective, of more successful accomplishment. Now that the Trade Boards Act is seen to be practical beyond all expectation, politicians are eager to lay hold of it for

political profit. Truth to tell, however, the Trade Boards Act had neither been brought into being nor continued to be but for the "National Anti-Sweating League." With a comparatively slender financial resource—the subscriptions and donations of the past year amount to only £638 17s. 9d., the League by dint of the careful control of funds has accomplished in the sphere of philanthropic work a record of achievement. The meagreness of monetary aid has been overcome by the untiring energy and high capability of the Executive Committee and officers of the League.

The first two years of the League's existence were devoted to a calm scientific investigation of the exact conditions of sweating in various industries and to an earnest propaganda against the continuance of such conditions. The League, representing every phase of thought, religious and political, displayed a determination as strong as its methods were thorough. The Trade Boards Act was the immediate outcome of its agitation. The late Sir Charles Dilke had prepared the way for the definite policy of the League, and to the time of his death his wide experience and unexampled knowledge were ever at its command. His "Wages Boards Bill" became in fact the basis of the Trade Boards Act. Propaganda and investigation and the consequent passing of suitable legislation were, however, comparatively easy tasks. To obtain the Trade Boards Act was one thing; quite a different matter was its administration. The four scheduled trades comprised between two and three hundred thousands of sweated workers. At Cradley Heath there were more than two thousand chain-makers: the lace finishers of Nottingham numbered between seven to ten thousand: in the boxmaking industry some thirty thousand were employed: the wholesale tailoring trade embraced workers little short of two hundred thousand, of whom women stood to men in proportion of two to one. For the most part, the workers were unorganised, and the poorness of their pay, and still more the poorness of their spirit, due to a lifelong struggle, rendered the idea of organisation extremely unpalatable to them. When the League by means of leaflets and of lectures in simple explanation of the purport

of the Trade Boards Act, and in some instances of house to house canvass,¹ had at length won the workers to amalgamate their forces—labour in which the League was fortunate enough to find ready co-operation from such existing societies as the “Women’s Trade Union League,” the “Clothiers’ Operatives Union,” and the “Amalgamated Society of Printers’ Warehousemen and Cutters,”—the selection of workers to sit upon the Boards formed another difficulty great enough to make the Act abortive. The fifth annual report of the “National Anti-Sweating League” depicts a critical situation which in the course of the administration of the Act has not infrequently occurred.

“On the Paper-Box Board are nineteen workers, of whom thirteen are women. Of the nineteen, sixteen were entirely inexperienced, either in discussion or negotiation. Opposed to them are eighteen employers, mature heads of businesses and skilled bargainers, with, as a nineteenth employers’ representative, the legal adviser of the Strong-Box Makers’ Federation, in which the bulk of manufacturers in the trade are now enrolled. The same inequality exists in each of the nine District Committees established by this Board and charged under the Act with most important functions in the fixing and administration of the minimum rates. It is clear that, unaided, the workers, whose duty it is to submit data of many kinds, discuss rates and finally assist to put the decision into legal shape, would be overborne by their wealthy organised and experienced adversaries. The Executive Committee has therefore provided the different groups of workers with meeting places in and out of London and permitted the Secretary of the League to be a Workers’ representative on this and on other Boards and on their District Committees and to devote much of his time and the resources of the National Anti-Sweating League to the service of the workers’ interests.”²

Among minor incidents to check the smooth workings of the Trade Boards Act may be mentioned the attempted

¹ Among the Lace-workers at Nottingham no means of organisation were ready to hand. There were “not even the beginnings of organisation, and the Anti-Sweating League in that trade had, unassisted, to plough virgin soil.” The task of establishing a Trade Union among such will be readily appreciated when it stated that the lace-finishers were “some of the poorest women in these islands” and therefore the most apathetic. Fourth Annual Report “National Anti-Sweating League,” pp. 7-8.

² Fifth Annual Report, pp. 4 and 5.

evasion on the part of unscrupulous employers of rates fixed by the Chainmaking Board and the deduction from the prescribed rates by a middlewoman employed in the Lace Trade.¹ To suffer abuses of this nature would have resulted in the almost immediate frustration of the end for which the Trade Boards Act was designed. It would not only have meant that, like many another enactment of Parliament, this new law was not to be taken seriously, but just as De Quincey discovered fine art in murder, so the unscrupulous employers in the sweated industries in their endeavour to escape from the legal findings of the Boards would have reduced the art of dishonesty in business, already fine enough, to still more exquisite refinement. The Secretary of the Anti-Sweating League, foreseeing the consequences of the neglect of such attempts to nullify the determination of the Boards, spared no pains in either instance to assist the workers to protect themselves.

"To begin with (at Cradley Heath) evasion was attempted, but the appetite for it died out when an offender was mulcted in penalties exceeding £30. It has not revived;" while "the conviction (of the Nottingham middlewoman) has had a salutary effect in the district." The Trade Boards Act has not been rendered void, and that it is the powerful machinery of justice it is now recognised to be, rests to the credit of Mr. J. J. Mallon and to that voluntary association, the Anti-Sweating League, which he represents.

We now come to state explicitly the change wrought through the operation of the Trade Boards Act in the wages of the employees engaged in the four trades upon the Schedule.

"All women chain-makers, and most of the men, who work out

¹ "In Nottingham, as in Cradley Heath, there has been a prosecution for evasion, the nature of which illustrates the extreme difficulty that administration in this area has to surmount. A middlewoman paid the minimum rates prescribed but intimated to her workers that their voluntary return of 2d. in the shilling, presumably as a token of esteem, would afford her great pleasure. To facilitate this return she placed a bowl in a conspicuous position when the workers came for their wages and secured it without difficulty" (Sixth Annual Report, pp. 5 and 6).

of the larger workshops, have been, in the past, very badly paid, the women earning wages of 6s. or 7s. a week for full time and the men 12s. to £1. In this trade, after a brief but vigorous resistance on the part of some of the employers, a time rate of 2½*d.* an hour was fixed for women and rates of 5*d.* to 7*d.* for men. These sums yielding, for a full week's work, 11s. 3*d.* in the one case and from 22s. 6*d.* to 31s. 6*d.* in the other. At Cradley Heath, however, it is the piece rate that is important, and on piece, workers of ordinary capacity will have no difficulty in exceeding the sums stated. But the main value of the piece list is as a help to administration. The chain-makers, with a copy of the piece list on their walls, are aware of the legal price for each thickness of chain, and are in a position to check evasion.

"In Cradley therefore the success of the experiment is assured. The workers are getting rates that, in the cheapest qualities of chain, give them increases of from 50 per cent. to 100 per cent. : and they are now applying for an enhancement of the rate."

In the Lace Finishing Trade a minimum time rate of 2¾*d.* per hour, amounting to 11s. 11*d.* per week, has been fixed and is now paid. Interpreted in piece rates the substantial improvement in wages "is indicated by the transference to the workers of the list on which previously the best houses in the trade paid the middlewoman." Moreover the earnings of the workers are no longer subject to deduction. Middlewomen formerly held the lace operatives at their mercy, claiming no less than from twenty to thirty per cent. of their meagre payment. The employers have now to meet the expenses of the employment of middlewomen. The tendency among employers, commendable on account of the removal of possible abuses, is to dispense with the services of the middlewomen. In addition to the advantages already mentioned, the Trade Board in this industry has removed another grave grievance of the workers by practically enforcing the disuse of the two-fold drawthread, the constant breaking of which used so to increase labour as to make "two and three hours of toil worth but a penny." "Since the appearance of the new proposals the orders given to manufacturers stipulate that threefold threads and these only shall be supplied."

The employers in the Paper-Box Trade at the commencement of the operation of the Trade Boards Act maintained

an attitude of obstruction. Eighteen months passed before the District Committees in this widely dispersed industry were set up and a rate of 3*d.* per hour was determined upon. The new basis of payment has not been long enough in existence to permit any exact statement regarding wage improvements. There is, however, every reasonable hope that the Act will prove of benefit to the box-makers as to the lace-finishers, for "after their initial hostility the Employers' Federation has decided to assist actively in the enforcement of the minimum rate and of the other Trade Board conditions, and their representatives are at present working amicably with those of the workers to secure satisfactory administration."¹ Still "figures furnished by employers on the Board, and said to cover 9,000 women, show that there are three grades of women operatives in the trade indicated by payments of about 15*s.*, 11*d.* 6*d.* and 8*s.* 6*d.* a week. The minimum now to be 13*s.*"² "Under former conditions too, the supply of glue cost the home worker in busy times as much as 1*s.* 6*d.*; this and the cost of similar accessories now under the Trade Boards Act fall to the employer of the first four Trades scheduled."

If Box-making is the most decentralised industry, the Wholesale Tailoring is the largest and most complicated. By regulations of the Board of Trade, the operation of the Act was narrowed down to the workers employed in the making of male garments.

"Even so limited, the trade consists of several branches, carried on under widely different conditions. The home worker engaged in finishing the worst kind of shop tailoring, the Jewish workshop with its teams of sub-divisional workers turning out work little inferior to the entirely hand-made article, the great factory equipped with the latest, and most costly machinery and producing thousands of 'ready-mades': these conditions represent grades of industry very hard to deal with under a single Board."³

¹ Fifth and Sixth Annual Report, "National Anti-Sweating League."

² Paper read at the Poor Law Conference by Mr. J. J. Mallon, "The Work of the Trade Boards."

³ Fifth Annual Report, pp. 8, 9.

Moreover "wages vary so greatly from place to place, and employer to employer that it seemed impossible to set any rate that would be applicable to all its areas and operatives." Of course the Central Board has had the invaluable assistance of District Committees. Great as were the energies displayed by the Anti-Sweating League in facilitating administration of the Act in the other three trades, its labour and sacrifice have been chiefly evidenced in the wholesale bespoke tailoring industry. The tailoring trade formed the crucial test of the Trade Boards Act. With local centralised industries the establishment and working of wage boards were a comparatively easy matter. Vexations such as evasions, untoward circumstances like the continuous slump in business at Nottingham, there have been, and are to face, but watchfulness and firmness have mended the one as patience will mend the other. In regard of the Tailoring trade, however, the difficulty in applying the Act arises not from any incidental contingency but from the size and complexity of the trade itself. The difficulty was supreme. Had the Act failed to meet the circumstances of this vast and varied industry, it would have been deemed a mere experiment, a futile measure. On its successful operation in this Trade depended the extension of the Schedule to other sweated trades. When the Tailoring Board had been established only six months, the fifth Annual Report of the Anti-Sweating League states "the work thus shortly summarised has needed much thought, much inquiry, many meetings and interminable railway travelling. If at the end of another nine months the result of it all should be seen to be the considerable increase of wages of hundreds of thousands of workers, the Committee feel that the opinion of members of the League will be that a very great work has been carried through at a relatively small cost." ¹

"In the case of this trade the figures of an inquiry carried out by the Board of Trade in 1906 enable us to form an opinion as to the comparative value of the new minimum rate. According to the inquiry in question female persons over eighteen years of age in the trade were being paid as follows :—

¹ P. 9. The ultimate results of this noble endeavour is succinctly described in the report adopted Oct. 3rd, 1912.

In receipt of less than 8s. a week . . .	10 per cent.
" " " 10s. " . .	24 per cent.
" " " 15s. " . .	70 per cent.

The new rate yielding 14s. 1d. per week should substantially therefore improve the lowest wages in the Trade." ¹

Thus far we have dealt with the wages of adults. Among the most notable results of the operation of the Trade Boards Act, however, are the protection and regulation of youthful labour. "The worst feature of certain kind of factory employment has been the extent to which they depend upon and exploit the labour of young boys and girls. In the Paper-Box Trade especially, such exploitation has been common, and children, at nominal wages or at no wages at all, have been used for routine work which makes no appeal to their intelligence. When they have demanded some payment proportionate to their years, they have been very often dismissed." ² To counteract this abuse, the Boards have now insisted that all young workers shall be provided with a learner's certificate issued by the Boards, or failing this, the employer engaging them shall remunerate their labour at the adult rate. The certificate stipulates that the learners shall be granted opportunities to acquire practical knowledge of "at least two processes of the trade," and that their numbers shall not be out of proportion to the adult hands.

The general result of the operation of the Trade Boards Act must accordingly be allowed, even by the most critical, to be exceedingly satisfactory. Complete success has been attained at Cradley Heath, where "the women seem different beings from the inert and sunken people who attended meetings in pre-board times." The lace-workers too might have had a similar happy experience, had not their trade through the last four years suffered such ill-fortune. The rates of payment in the larger industries are yet somewhat disappointing, and in the tailoring trade have justly caused dissatisfaction. Even here, however, when the general minimum piece list supplements the existing time rate the source of complaint and unrest will disappear. Yet in

¹ Sixth Annual Report, pp. 7 and 8.

² Sixth Annual Report, pp. 8 and 10.

estimating of the efficiency of the Trade Boards Act it is necessary to remember what the Act has been devised to accomplish.

“The sweated worker” (writes Mr. J. J. Mallon) “is one who has been knocked down in the industrial struggle. A legal minimum wage is an attempt to pick him up and to keep him standing. It need not be a high rate. It is enough, if it puts solid earth beneath the Trade Union in the Trade and lays a foundation in which the Union may build a proper superstructure. This does not mean that a minimum rate should remain unaltered. The rate will itself release forces making for its progressive increase.”

This much has already been accomplished on behalf of all the originally scheduled trades and the truest guarantee of the genuineness of the benefits wrought by the Act is that, as mentioned above, its operation through the past four years have given ample justification for its extension to four additional sweated industries.

CO-OPERATION

Following the description of the evil of sweating, the proof of the fundamental right of the living wage, the discussion of the principle underlying the Trade Boards Act and the relation of its actual administration, the urgency and practicability and nobleness of the cause will naturally lead the reader to inquire whether he in his private and perhaps humble capacity may be of service in furthering the beneficial object held out to him. We accordingly venture to offer a few suggestions concerning co-operation to his earnest consideration.

Evidently the first step towards a solution of the sweating problem is to bring the correct teaching of Catholic ethics before the public mind. Thinking men outside the Church are more and more realising the truth that there can be no practical solution to this question apart from the intervention of religion. A very cursory observation of the temper of the times suffices to show that the most prominent characteristic is a worship of the material. Our civilisation has gradually been degraded to a counterfeit. Happiness

is sought entirely in that which is barren of beatitude. The working classes are affected with this mundane spirit equally with the rich. The sweated labourer and many others underpaid, whose wages and sometimes position will hardly allow them to come within the protection of the Trade Boards Act, demand more than mere sympathy : they have a claim to the aid of their fellow citizens. Yet while we proclaim rights and duties, it is incumbent upon us to look to the end we desire to reach. Merely to increase wages will not finish the trouble, but only put another complexion upon it. Improve wages and the materialistic capitalist will augment prices, while the materialistic worker will sharpen his weapon of the strike. The wages of the underpaid must be advanced to meet the reasonable necessities of life, but if this elementary justice be insisted upon, it is likewise to be noted that even greater emphasis should be placed upon the truth that the lives of rich and poor alike cannot prosper upon the artificial pampering which our spurious civilisation has cultivated into a national vice. Natural ethics, true scientific economy and the weight of public opinion may together persuade the employer to a fairer consideration of his employee, but the ultimate and abiding remedy will not be applied until, along with the permeation of the tenets of justice, the teaching of sincere fraternity, inspired by the faith of Christ, is spread and held throughout the land. The Cross is as much needed to-day as in the days of the effete civilisation of Rome. If the sweating problem has brought into relief one practical truth more than another, it is that the condition of society in England presents an opportunity for Catholics, both clergy and laity, which in procuring the emancipation of the slaves of industry is also propitious for the bringing of thousands of non-believers, lords of capital and their servile employees, back to "the captivity of Christ." Materialism is speedily ousting the national religion, and with its demise religious bigotry is dying. To save society and to weld the nation in peace, the few rich and the many poor in England may be won to recognise the beneficial influence of Holy Church, and through the right ordering of the material under her guid-

ance, her social value may lead the way to their perception of her spiritual worth.

“ In enterprise of this kind, with which the interests of the Church and of Christians are so closely bound up, it is clear that the priesthood ought to be throughout concerned and that it may assist in many ways by its learning, its prudence and its charity. More than once, after speaking with some of the clergy, we have thought it right to declare the advantages in these days of going amongst the people and speaking to them in a wholesome way.”¹

If the late Sovereign Pontiff was insistent upon the obligations of the Clergy, he likewise urged upon the laity their indispensable duty. According as they are possessed of “rank and wealth and superior culture,”

“ We would have them consider for themselves that they are not free to choose whether they will take up the cause of the poor or not : it is a matter of simple duty.”²

Besides the general view of a suffering society it is necessary for the Catholic to take a restricted and personal aspect of the ills of sweating : how far does sweating affect his co-religionists ?

“ Destitution is reducing thousands of our fellow-Catholics to a condition of which the loss of faith is the natural sequence. If it is hard for the rich to enter heaven, it is no less hard for the destitute to do so. The former are apt to be immersed in life's superfluities, the latter are absorbed by the fierce struggle to earn a bare living. Degraded poverty is not a favourable condition for the living of a christian life : such poverty is not the poverty commended by Christ.”³

A day by day experience reveals the spiritual havoc which ever attends the misery of the slums in our large centres, and the wider the experience the more clear is the perception how far beyond the capabilities of the average Catholic lies the fulfilment of his duty to his God, to his Church and to his soul, so long as he remains immersed amid the worry and hopelessness of the present conditions of life. Excellent as are our noble organisations, such as the Ladies of Charity, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Third Order of St.

¹ The Pope and the People : The Great Encyclicals of Leo XIII. C.T.S., p. 281.

² *Ibid.* pp. 278-279.

³ *Catholic Social Year Book* for 1910, p. 17.

Francis, they have not the means of attacking the evil at its source and can only palliate its worst results. Despite her forces of Charity, the Church is unable by herself to destroy these abuses. Pauperism, palpably due in a large measure to sweating, is one of those social ills in which Pope Leo, while upholding that all striving would be vain without her, owned the Church to be powerless to move without reinforcement from other influences.¹ At length the Trade Boards Act places the prescription in her hands, in truth it is her own prescription, unwittingly written by the State. When propaganda is backed up so strongly by the practical working of the Trade Boards Act, Catholics may be expected on the grounds of both public welfare and personal consideration for their own brethren to place themselves in the van against the spirit of individualism, which has held its cruel despotic sway too long to the detriment of true national development and religious progress. The C.S.G. has within the last two years organised its excellent Study Scheme with its Study Circles, its detailed syllabuses to guide and simplify, and its certificates and diplomas to encourage and reward, social study. If Catholics are to play their full part it is evident that they must first be learners, and in this fundamental question of the living wage, before propagating principles it is especially essential, not only that they should be firmly grasped, but that their methods of application should be fully understood. In advocating the C.S.G. Study Scheme we would have the reader persuaded that it is possible for him to accomplish as much in the cultivating of right thinking on this matter among the smaller circle of his personal friends and chance acquaintances as for the public lecturer with his wider but less open-minded audience. The Catholic platform is the platform of human life: we need teachers in every capacity, public and private, and there is room for every one, leisured and busy, who realises his duty and desires to perform it.

A special word may be addressed to the Catholic Trade Unionist. Better than any among us he knows the meaning of sweating and underpayment, of attendant suffering, of the

¹ "The Pope and the People," p. 11.

need of and the way to organisation. May we not look to the National Conference of Catholic Trade Unionists to make the cause of the sweated its own? ¹

There are other non-legislative remedies against sweating, to one of which attention is called in an interesting and suggestive article entitled "The Consumers' Opportunity" in the *Month* (March 1911), by J. Elliot Ross, Ph. D., which depicts the aims, methods, and successful working of an American organisation called the "Consumers' League." ² It was started in the States in 1891, with this very simple rule of action, viz., that its members agree not to purchase "sweated goods" — i.e., articles in the preparation of which for the market the producers suffer any injustice in the shape of insufficient wage, over-work, bad housing, etc. This, of course, necessitates a knowledge of the conditions of work in various trades. "White Lists" of satisfactory employers are prepared with whom the members can safely deal. This organisation, highly successful in the place of its origin, has since spread into France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Belgium, and Spain. We believe its principle has been adopted in this country by the Christian Social Union, but to what extent it has proved operative we are not prepared to state. Obviously, where at all practicable, the principle is one which should determine the action of all good Christians; for to purchase goods the cheapness of which is known to be the result of sweating clearly is to participate in the injustice. We consider the matter well worth the attention of that widespread organisation, the Catholic Women's League, for it is generally with the women that the control of domestic expenditure lies.

Our last practical suggestion is one of appeal for support of the "National Anti-Sweating League." The record of the past six years declares this society to be all we have claimed for it and more, and no further expression of commendation

¹ "Practical Social Reform," C.S.G. pamphlet No. 19, pp. 14-28. (C.T.S., *id.*)

² Mr. Ross has since developed his proposition into a very readable and stimulating book—"Consumers and Wage Earners": Devin Adair Co., New York, \$1.00 n.

is needed. However modest the donation in its support, it will be gratefully acknowledged. ¹

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