

a-day from each of their employees. This is how the matter stands :—There are something like 350,000 railway employees all told, and these are said to work an average day of twelve hours. To work the railways on the eight hours plan would thus require one-third more “hands.” By reducing the dividends somewhat less than $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. as much would be gained as would suffice to pay the present rate of wages—on the average 19s. 3d.—to the necessary number of extra hands, which would be about 116,000. Are the workers (on the railways or elsewhere) to be killed outright by overwork half a lifetime before the age at which the leisured class die so that $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. may be saved to their masters? It will be for the workers themselves to say.

It is clear that public bodies and the railway companies can afford to pay the present rate of wages for an eight hours day. But that is not enough. We must carry our inquiry further, and endeavour to ascertain whether or not capitalists generally are able to do so. We are not likely to evoke general enthusiasm on behalf of this “measure” unless it can be shown to be capable of general application; although it must be confessed that general enthusiasm has been evoked by “measures” of much less importance than even this limited application of the eight hours day.

In attempting to show that the employing class can afford to pay nine or ten hours’ wages for eight hours’ work, I feel that I am in deep and troubled waters, and I can excuse the advocates of an eight hours day for having invariably steered clear of this aspect of the question. For those employers who at present work their employees nine hours a-day to pay the present rate of wages for eight hours’ work would mean an increase of wages to the extent of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and, in the case of those who work their employees ten hours a-day, an increase of 25 per cent. Such an advance would at any time have meant a good deal, but at the present juncture it means a very great deal indeed.

Everywhere we find that profits are on the down grade; now and again we hear of concerns being run at a loss; here and there factories are being shut down; sometimes the trade of a town is virtually paralysed—closed shops and vacant tenements meeting the eye on every hand; whilst rings, corners, syndicates, trusts arise one after another as spasmodic efforts to stem the downward tendency of profits. It seems tolerably clear that all capitalists cannot afford to pay the necessary increase. Yet the burden of labour is so grievous to bear, the woes and wants of the unemployed are so crying, and the existence in our midst of these social outlaws threatens to become so dangerous to