

THE FAMILY PARLIAMENT.

[THE RULES OF DEBATE will be found on page 56. The Editor's duty will be to act as a kind of "Mr. Speaker;" consequently, while preserving due order in the discussion, he will not be held to endorse any opinions that may be expressed on either side, each debater being responsible for his own views.]

SHOULD EARLY CLOSING BE MADE COMPULSORY?

OPENER'S SPEECH.

MR. SPEAKER,

The necessity and advisability of legislative interference with a view to the limitation of shop hours, has become such a burning question of the day, that I suppose, Sir, it is hardly necessary for me to preface my argument and appeal for legislation by setting forth the lamentable evils and hardships entailed upon young men and women in our shops and warehouses, by the long hours of daily labour so customary throughout the length and breadth of the land. To work for fourteen or fifteen hours out of every twenty-four, to stand in the warehouse or behind the counter from early morn till midnight, to have barely time to snatch a meal, much less to read or think, or enjoy innocent recreation—this surely is not living: it is to become a mere money-making machine, but, alas! with none of a machine's capacity for endurance. As Lord Brabazon has said, speaking of young women alone, although his words hold equally true of young men—"Confinement in close rooms and in vitiated air, want of proper exercise, hurried and interrupted meals, often added to badly-cooked food, and unventilated sleeping-rooms, will tell upon all but the strongest constitutions. It is no wonder, then, that they who go in and out among these young women have sad tales to tell of insanity, consumption, bronchial affections, chronic dyspepsia, and other maladies." With but mere verbal alterations Thomas Hood's song of the sempstress might well have been written of the overwrought shopwoman, for with her too it is—

"Work—work—work,
From weary chime to chime!
Sell—sell—sell,
With never a resting-time!
Fetch, and carry, and wait,
With weary aching hand,
Till the heart is sick and the brain benumbed,
But *none* will understand!"

But, Sir, I fear that I am wandering from my argument, more especially since I think I may take it for granted that all now-a-days would wish to curtail the long hours and protracted drudgery of shop-assistants. What I wish to show is, not that the end is to be desired, but that legislation will provide the only sure means to that end—in other words, that early closing should be made compulsory.

Now, of course, I know well that in advancing this proposition I shall be met with a storm of cries about "grandmotherly government," "interference with the liberty of the subject," and so on; but in reply I will

only ask my opponents to consider for one minute the beneficent working of the Factory and Workshop Acts, and to say whether the good resulting from them could have been achieved in any other way. Would moral suasion have prevented young women and children from wearing their lives out by toiling far into the night for hard taskmasters in factories and work-rooms? Most assuredly not! And so, too, is it in the case of shop-assistants, as the facts plainly prove. For many years associations have existed for the express purpose of inculcating the duty and the advantages of early closing; year after year pressure has been brought to bear upon employers of labour and buyers alike, and long hours have been decried from the houses of legislature, from the pulpit, and in the press. And what is the result? Young men who laboured for the good cause have grown old and grey; young women who heard of the movement, and had pleasant visions of evening leisure, and green fields, and running streams, have passed away in the dire conflict to the land where there is no buying and selling; thousands upon thousands have fallen victims to the dread juggernaut—and yet things are little, if any, better than they were; the evil still exists in all its hideous deformity.

People will not be persuaded to give up late shopping; shopkeepers will not give up a chance of making money, or yield in the least to one another in the pursuit of wealth; assistants cannot, or will not, help themselves. The competition between shop and shop is so keen, that even if ninety per cent. of the shopkeepers in a district agree to close early on one day a week only, and the remaining ten per cent. decline, the majority are bound to yield to the minority, and the "old order changeth" not. The words of the Early Closing Association are conclusive enough, since their report says that, after thirty years' work in the metropolis, "there are still in London alone no less than 30,000 shops, employing about 100,000 assistants, who work continually twelve, thirteen, and fourteen hours a day, without any opportunity for relaxation; and the same state of things prevails in other towns." It is abundantly evident then that the old methods are useless, and I submit, Sir, that an Act of Parliament is the only remedy.

Now it may not be generally known that a short Bill, entitled the Shop Hours Regulation Act, was actually introduced in the House of Lords by Earl Stanhope in the Session of 1882, but after considerable criticism was withdrawn by its sponsor, who, however, promised to bring in a better and more com-

plete measure on a future occasion. By the second clause of this Act it was proposed to enact that, "on and after the first day of January, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-three, it shall not be lawful for any shop or warehouse for the sale of textile fabrics and articles of wearing apparel, where women and young persons are employed, to be open for more than ten hours in each day." It is at once apparent that this Bill proposed to deal with but a small section of the class affected by the length of shop hours. Women and children alone were to be protected, and these only in shops for the sale of textile fabrics and wearing apparel. Not a word was said about young men, who suffer almost as severely as young women, nor was it proposed to deal at all with some of the worst offenders among shop-keepers, such as publicans, restaurant-keepers, grocers, and dealers in provisions. It has been argued that legislation for women and young persons exclusively would seriously affect them in their endeavours to obtain employment; but this is very doubtful, since in the class of shops mentioned in the Act, female assistants are almost a necessity; and moreover the Factory and Workshop Acts may be pointed to as proving that by their operation women and children have not been debarred from obtaining employment. However, this is certain, that any Act which is to do real good must grasp the whole subject resolutely and fearlessly. The arguments against a full and complete Act are weak and flimsy in the extreme, but I will not anticipate my opponent by mentioning them merely to refute them. This I am confident I shall be able to do, if you allow me to reply on the whole question. At this stage I am content, Sir, to leave my case to the judgment of the Family Parliament, feeling sure that if the thousands of fellow-members will but speak their minds with no uncertain voice, the hands of such men as Earl Stanhope and Lord Brabazon will be materially strengthened, and another step will have been taken towards that perfect legislation which can alone remove a dark blot from the trade of our country.

OPPONENT'S SPEECH.

MR. SPEAKER,

The Opener of this debate has done well in taking it for granted that all kindly and right-thinking people would be glad to see a curtailment of our protracted shop hours, and I, Sir, will yield to no one in the earnest wish to bring about such a result. At the same time I cannot help differing in my opinion as to the means to be adopted to arrive at the desired end, and I feel very strongly that legislation with a view to the reduction of shop hours is not only impracticable, but even if possible would only tend in the long run to retard the triumph of the cause we all have so much at heart.

Now, Sir, the present is anything but a subject for heated controversy, but feeling as I do, I think that I ought to state very briefly why I differ from the Opener of the debate, even while I have the deepest sympathy for those whose cause he pleads:

First, then, as it seems to me, it is practically impossible for any legislation to be sufficiently far-reaching to be equitable. The most that any Act of Parliament could attempt to do would be to limit the hours during which shops of all kinds might be open, in the case of those shops *in which the proprietor employs others to assist him*. Thus, at the very best, the Act would never reach the small shops in which the shop-keeper alone served his customers, for legislation which prevented a man from willingly working himself to death would be regarded as intolerable. But with such a shop Act in force all the small shops would at once derive an immense advantage over their neighbours, and would have an unfair monopoly of certain hours for buying and selling. The outcry about such a state of things would soon be too strong for any Government to refuse to hear, and the obnoxious Act would be repealed.

Of course it may be argued that if all the more important shops were closed, this would be the prelude to a system of early shopping on the part of the purchasing public, and that the first advantage enjoyed by small shops would not be lasting. It must, however, be remembered that either from habit or from necessity the working classes of the country are late buyers, and it would be difficult to make them otherwise. And beyond this, the general body of purchasers are essentially selfish, and while *any* shops were open, would continue to buy what the need or fancy of the hour demanded. If people generally could only be induced to make their purchases early, the shops would not be kept open, and legislation would be unnecessary.

It is a noteworthy fact that so keen a lawyer as Lord Cairns has expressed himself as altogether distrustful of law as a remedial agency, and that in his opinion any Act would be worse than ineffective, and it must be remembered that even in the case of factories Parliament has not yet attempted to restrict *men's* hours of labour. To sum up the matter, then, it seems that a Bill dealing with women and children alone would undoubtedly be injurious to their chances of obtaining labour; a Bill affecting those shops only in which assistants are employed would be unjust to the main body of shop-keepers, and would offer a premium to the lowest class of retailers; while a Bill ordering the closing of *all* shops at stated hours would for a multitude of reasons be intolerable to the community at large.

But if legislation be impracticable, what is to be done? This, Sir. Let an enthusiastic support be accorded to the societies which have laboured so long and so well for the good cause; let an urgent endeavour be made to arouse shop-assistants themselves from their wondrous indifference and lethargy, and let them take heart of grace when they see how the Trades Unions have by organisation been able to limit the hours of labour; let the facts of the case be brought clearly under the notice of every employer, that he may recognise his duty, and at the same time perceive the positive advantages to himself of shorter hours; and last, but

not least, let renewed efforts be made, by speeches, by pamphlets, by the newspaper press, to touch the conscience of the purchasing public, and arouse them from their present selfish attitude. What is needed is that public opinion should be formed; and so far only as it tends in this direction can the introduction of Acts in the Houses of Parliament be expected to do any good.

And, Sir, in reply to the Opener of this debate, who maintains that these old methods have been tried and found wanting, I assert that they have not. Much good has already been done, although it is, alas! too true that much more remains to be accomplished. But year by year changes have been brought about. The Saturday half-holiday is becoming more general throughout the country, and although shop-assistants can scarcely hope to obtain this boon, in many towns employers have commenced to close at four or five o'clock on some other day in the week. In many districts all the shops have arrived at a mutual understanding to close at seven, eight, or nine o'clock on certain days, and keeping open till midnight is becoming more and more a thing of the past. Public feeling is being aroused, as the very movements in favour of legislation show, and good must result. It is in no spirit of boasting that the Early Closing Association asserts that, previous to the existence of the society, "the destructive and fatal effects of immoderately prolonged labour upon the bodily and mental constitution were practically known only to the victims of the system which enforced it." And well indeed may the association claim that "working for the whole metropolis, and giving advice and assistance to applicants in all parts of the kingdom, it

has, within a quarter of a century, brought about an enormous change in the condition of many thousands of shop-assistants, while supported by less than a tenth part of those whom it has benefited. "Thanks be to God, Sir, we live in an age of progress towards better and nobler things, and the hearts of men are open as they never were open before to the cries of the sufferers in life's battle. Half-hearted legislation is useless; whole-hearted public feeling is what is required, and when the heart of the nation is once aroused, then, and then only, can any true lasting change be brought about in our shop hours; then, and then only, can our shop-assistants enjoy their lives as other human beings.

[RULES OF DEBATE.—*The course of debate is as follows:—Two principal speakers holding opposite views on the question discussed are selected by the Editor. Readers of the MAGAZINE are then invited to express their own views on the subject, to the Editor, who will at his discretion select some of the most suitable and concise of these communications, or portions of them, for publication in a subsequent Part of the MAGAZINE. The Opener of the Debate is to have the right of reply.*]

TO OUR READERS.—The Editor will be happy to receive the opinions of any Readers on the above Question, on either side, with a view to the publication of the most suitable and concise communications in the February Part. Letters should be addressed "The Editor of CASSELL'S MAGAZINE, La Belle Sauvage Yard, London, E.C.," and in the top left-hand corner of the envelope should be written, "Family Parliament." The speech should be headed with the title of the Debate, and an indication of the side taken by the Reader. All communications on the present Question must reach the Editor not later than December 11.

An Honorarium of £1 1s. will be accorded (subject to the discretion of the Editor) to the best speech on either side of the Question; no speech to exceed 50 lines (500 words).

GARDENING IN DECEMBER.



ONCE again we find ourselves in the sunset month of the year, and more particularly those of us who find themselves among that large and ever-extending suburban population are proportionately fond of talking about the dark days of December. And it is undeniable that we, who are compelled for eleven months out of the twelve to limit our daily travels within that wonderful "ten miles radius" from St. Paul's, do find the days darker than our apple-cheeked country cousins, who bake their own bread and cure their own bacon. A great living statesman was very recently telling us that although for hard upon half a century he had for a large portion of the year resided in London, yet he felt that he really knew comparatively nothing of it, and that he was sure no one was able

to form any idea of what is now meant by that very comprehensive word "London." And the object of all this for our purpose—our horticultural purpose, we mean—is simply this: while we shall still have something to say about the garden in general, we shall have a good deal to say about the management of suburban gardens in particular; and the bare mention of the dark days of December naturally brings up at once to the front that terrible giant with which we are all striving to do battle, and whose shadow so adds to our darkness that we are more than ever envious of these country cousins—we mean Giant Fog. Now, it at once occurs to us that the best protection against all these atmospheric changes and disturbances, whether in London or the country, is a small greenhouse or pit; and now that the ravages and inconveniences occasioned by London fogs seem to be alarmingly extending themselves, and affecting not only the animal but the vegetable world, there seems to be an additional inducement for the erection, according to our means and capabilities, of some such protection. The interest and recreation which it

SHOULD EARLY CLOSING BE MADE COMPULSORY?

(Debate resumed.)

JAMES F. MILLAR (Liverpool):—Mr. Speaker,—The proposal to close shops by legislation seems to me the only feasible method of righting a great wrong, nor are there such inherent difficulties in the way as to preclude the passing of a satisfactory enactment. It is true that combined action on the part of employers would obviate the necessity for State interference; but, Sir, experience has shown that the attainment of such a combination is chimerical in the highest degree. Whilst the great bulk of employers are right-minded in this matter, and are willing to concede earlier hours, there is a contemptible minority which, influenced by greed of gain, refuses to implement agreements for closing to which it has become a party. The men composing this minority are men whose god is money, wealth their creed, and honest poverty their hell—men who seek to increase their gains by dishonestly entrapping their trade opponents into earlier closing, that they may pick up the crumbs of traffic which may fall in their way when others are closed. All legislation of a restrictive character is levelled at a minority such as this. The majority of the nation does not require the intervention of the Legislature otherwise than to protect it against the encroachments of the minority.

The only objections urged against legislation are the inconvenience which the lower classes would suffer from earlier closing, and that restrictive law is an interference with the liberty of the subject. That the lower classes do shop late I admit, but such late shopping arises not from necessity but from habit. When the lower classes had themselves late hours of labour there was some justification for their late shopping; but now that the short-time movement has reached every grade of the community save the shop-keepers, it is unjust that shop-keeping should longer be permitted to suffer from what is at the best but the thoughtlessness of the people. Is it right, Sir, that men, women, and young persons should suffer the pangs of exhaustion and disease, and be hurried to an early tomb, because of the indolence and carelessness of their more favoured fellow-citizens? To prevent the ravages of small-pox, we insist on compulsory vaccination; to reduce the danger of pestilence, we order the isolation of the infected; and shall we permit social murder to stalk in our midst because, forsooth, late shoppers persist in a bad habit?

That legislation to regulate the hours of labour in shops is an interference with the liberty of the subject is undeniable; but, Sir, it is an interference with the liberty to do wrong, and for this very purpose it was that law was instituted. I ask, Sir, if there is a single law in our Statute Book which does not interfere with the liberty of the subject. I know of none. Magna Charta itself, the palladium of our political rights, became so because it forbade oppression and injustice. In our journey through life law steps in at every point to direct our way. Law demands to know when we are born and who and what our parents are. It will not permit our marriage until informed of our intention to wed, nor afford us the rites of sepulture until made acquainted with the fact of our death. It punishes us if we kindle our fires without seeing that our chimneys have been cleaned; it supervises the meat with which we satisfy our hunger, and the drink with which we quench our thirst; it controls our conduct in the streets and at our homes; and surely, therefore, we do not ask too much when we require that it shall regulate our hours of employment so as to conserve health and energy, and supply fitting leisure for study and recreation to those who must become the progenitors of the future generation. Factory legislation uplifted the operatives from physical and social degeneracy; therefore we are warranted in concluding that legislation for shop-keepers and their assistants will be productive of similar good results.

J. A. STACEY (Secretary of the Early Closing Association):—Mr. Speaker,—The gentleman who has introduced this motion is entitled to our warmest thanks for the clear

and temperate manner in which he has placed the question before us. While recognising this commendable feature of his speech, I fail, however, to gather from his statement that the cause so many of us have at heart would be benefited by recourse to the powers of law. I notice that many persons who share the opinions of the honourable gentleman, like himself, avoid stating the direction in which legislation should apply to the closing of shops. It is true that a bill emanating from Liverpool found its way into the hands of Earl Stanhope, and by that noble lord was brought under the notice of his fellow-peers; but it can hardly be pretended that this was a serious attempt to deal with the question. The attention attracted to it may be measured by the fact of the bill being withdrawn after a debate of thirty-five minutes.

What does legislation for shop-assistants, if it is to confer upon them any real benefit, mean? It means nothing less than a universal compulsory cessation of shop labour at a given hour. It will not do to say the shop shall be closed; *work behind the shutters must cease*. An extension of the Factory Acts will no more put an end to late closing than it will abolish intemperance. There are few shop-keepers in London who are absolutely dependent on female labour. In a factory such labour is indispensable to profit; in a shop, so great is the surplus of male labour just over the statutory age, that it can be had as cheaply and utilised as profitably as female labour. No hard and fast law which included even adult male labour, supposing it could be carried, would put an end to late closing. It would add vastly to the number of tradesmen who do not employ labour. Already in the late-closing districts these tradesmen form a very large percentage, and compete almost on equal terms with the employer of labour. It would be difficult to conceive that an Act limiting the hours in certain trades would effect its purpose. In these days of complex trading, who is to define where one trade ends and another begins? Any Act, to have a chance of life, must have a considerable support amongst shop-keepers. Their voting power vastly outweighs that of factory owners. The only proposal at present favoured by those of them who tolerate the idea of legislation is in favour of putting all shops, irrespective of trade and labour, on the same footing. Let the Opener of this debate reflect on what this means, and then tell us if he thinks a British Parliament will pass such a measure. The proposed extension of the Factory Acts has been condemned by the Royal Commission of 1876. The proposal last mentioned has been spoken of by a high authority as not likely to be introduced "till the curfew and its obligations are reinstated."

The Opener has greatly underrated the reforms effected by the voluntary system, as represented by the Early Closing Association. By the Association's efforts, as recently stated in the *Times*, forty to fifty per cent. of shop-assistants are well off in regard to their hours of labour.

Further speeches, supporting Opener's view that Early Closing should be made Compulsory, received from—George B. Burgin, A. W. Saturley, No. 2, Walter Haddon, Arthur C. Langham, E. Oppenheim, E. J. Green, F. W. Brewer, E. T. Beard, J. Taylor, N. H. Boyns, A. H. Smith, A. E. G., James Whyte, S. Porte, A Subscriber, R. N., A. H. Franklin, William Simpson, F. Dolman, A. Dullman, E. Penny, K., "Mr. Wylie," F. S., J. C., O. Jones, F. T. Hoskins, J. S. Devine, W. Speakman, A. W. Ayers, R. B. Guider, S. H. Davies, A. Lemay, M. S. Parkinson, R. Bransby, and others.

Further speeches, supporting Opponent's argument that Early Closing should not be made Compulsory, received from—A. A. A., T. Burdett, Arthur Denton, Robert Arundel, M. M. Campbell, H. E., Benedict, George Holmes, W. King, H. A. Highley, J. S. Clarke, J. H. E., John M'Ewan, Post Tenebras Lux, M. R., and others.

The Honorarium of One Guinea is divided between Charles H. Boyce, 96, Stocks Road, Southwark Park, London, S.E., and John Carson, College House, Southgate, N., whose speeches will be given in a future number.

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* placed before a name denotes a speaker who has won distinction in the present or in a former debate.

SHOULD EARLY CLOSING BE MADE COMPULSORY?

(Debate resumed.)

F. R.:—As the Opponent grants that early closing is necessary, I will only attempt to advocate its being made compulsory. The British Lion sets up his back at the idea of *compulsion*, though for his good; but finally he sees its benefit. We oblige the "whining schoolboy" to go to school, though "like snail, unwillingly," and we oblige him to work there. The publican is compelled to shut his house, and the dress-maker and manufacturer to release their employés, at a fixed hour. If legislature be right in these cases, why not in others? The difficulty lies with the purchasers. They would naturally object at first to shops being shut early; but they would find that buying, like other business, must be done at the right time. Banks and offices are closed early, and people arrange accordingly. Moral suasion may make the good do this with regard to shop-keeping, but it cannot and will not affect the thoughtless and selfish, for whom a law may fairly be made.

HENRY RICH:—Mr. Speaker,—I commend the fable of King Log and King Stork to the consideration of all those who look upon Acts of Parliament as a remedy for all evils.

"Grandmotherly legislation" ("I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word"), to be thoroughly understood, should be studied in the original—in the Acts (Factory and all such), as they might be if the final outcome were not the result of a Parliamentary struggle between the friends of compulsion and those of freedom of contract. Many persons would pause, if they thus examined the matter, before urging a course of action which, unchecked, intrinsically tends to tyranny. Compulsion may do good for a time, and to a class; in the long run it must do harm, and to all, because it assumes as a governing principle that one person has the right to dictate to another, not as a member of the community, but as an individual, what he or she shall or shall not do. The outcome is despotism.

ANNIE M. BRUNSDON:—Sir,—Legislation has invaded the mine, the factory, and the work-room, why then should it not cross the threshold of the shop? No one who considers the statement that "many shop-assistants are employed for fourteen and fifteen hours a day" can deny that a change is needed. Public opinion, without legislation, was not sufficient to prevent undue toil in other industries; nor will it be likely to release shop-assistants from the bondage of unreasonably long business hours. In almost every neighbourhood there will be some anxious and obstinate employers who will refuse to curtail the hours of trade, and will thus prevent their fellow-shopkeepers from granting a boon they would otherwise confer. Our legislators will certainly need wisdom in framing any Early Closing Act, lest they should only transfer hardships from one class to another. But, surely, Government has accomplished far more difficult tasks than this in the past, and why should we not trust it now?

CHARLES WEBB:—Mr. Speaker,—It is generally acknowledged that he who speaks from experience is the proper person to speak. Having endured for a number of years the disadvantages of late hours in business, during which time I looked forward to the blessings of early closing, I am of opinion that early closing is greatly wanted, although I sometimes think that

nothing short of legislation will produce it. And there are great reasons why young men and women in business require early closing—for mental, moral, and physical reasons; and, if we go further than this, we shall see the necessity great enough to demand it. Firstly, then, young men and women demand that their employers receive a little less than their whole daily existence, to enable them to cultivate themselves. The limited education which is crammed into young people from about their tenth year to their thirteenth or fourteenth is not sufficient to make them sensible men and women of the world. Their faculties are ever open to receive new things, and something new of some kind or other must be imbibed. They go to business too early in life to understand fully what they have learnt at school, and before long find they have forgotten that little and cultivated a dislike to further study.

* JOHN A. COMPTON:—I will with your permission, Sir, say a few words in support of the Opener of this debate; but, instead of travelling over the ground which he has done, and to which he has left so little to be added, I should like to the best of my ability to meet some of the points raised on the opposite side of the question. And here may I be allowed to compliment the honourable gentleman on the evident sincerity with which he expounds his views on the question, and which may perhaps win him more supporters than will the arguments he has adduced.

I ask, why should any legislation be limited in the way suggested by my honourable friend to the case of shops in which the proprietor employs others to assist him? Why should one class of traders be permitted to expose their wares for sale at a time when others in the same trade and street are compelled to close? The honourable gentleman may well say that "the outcry about such a state of things would soon be too strong to refuse to hear," and I, for one, fail to see where would be the intolerance of preventing a man who employs no assistance but his own from keeping open his shop to a late hour, when his neighbour is obliged to close at an hour fixed by statute.

Such an argument, if it applies at all, might well have been used, and perhaps was, before the present Licensing Acts came into operation, with regard to public-houses; but who would venture to say that it is unjust to compel a publican, who himself serves his customers without assistance, to close at the same hour as the one who employs a dozen barmaids? Surely, therefore, the injustice would be all in the contrary direction.

A. CHRIMES:—It is with extreme pleasure that I endorse, and that most emphatically, the statements of both the Opener and Opponent, in so far as saying "that all kindly and right-thinking people would be glad to see a curtailment of our protracted shop hours." It must indeed be a person whose mind is the reverse of being right that, after visiting one or two of the numerous establishments keeping late hours, and there seeing the weary forms, haggard faces, and sallow complexions of the employés, can still say that the movement is absurd, unnecessary, or fanatical. But, Sir, allow me to say that this is not the time for Parliamentary aid to be called into the arena of this grand and noble enterprise. I maintain that legislation at this time would spoil—nay, more, would in all probability

ruin—all past progress, and considerably, if not completely, retard all future work. It is most improbable—in fact, the chances lie in the proverbial proportion of ten to one—that if a measure or bill so constructed and devised as to cover all the multitudinous forms and aspects of this scheme was laid before the House, I say, Sir, that the chances are ten to one that it would be “thrown out,” and that nothing of any good would result from the trial. Then, indeed, the “early closing” agitators would have just cause to lose all hope of ultimate success or triumph. No use now going to the masters and explaining the wickedness of keeping people at work for so long; no good telling them that, as things now stand, they are a blot on the English character; no good, I repeat, bringing forth sound arguments to show the inhumanity, the uncharitableness, or the direct opposition to all laws of kindness and love. No, “your efforts would be for ever vain and impotent.” All our arguments would be crushed by the employer uttering, in indignant and scornful accents, “That if we thought they (the shop-keepers) were going to be driven into ‘early closing,’ he sincerely hoped we should live long enough to see our foolery and folly,” and the matter would become, as my friend the Opener has it, only in a different sense, “such a burning question of the day,” that it would be more than the assistant’s place was worth for him or her to do otherwise than echo the ideas of their respective master or mistress. No, Sir, it is not legislation that is required in this movement, but more enthusiasm, more eloquent and fiery speakers, more energetic societies, and last but not least, more thrusting of the matter before the general public by means of that mighty power for good or evil, the press. These are the powers that are required, and surely some gentleman of influence will be found to come forward and start the desired revival.

L. K. :—Sir,—If State interference be justifiable at all, if we admit the principle of the law rescuing the weak from the oppression of the strong under any circumstances, surely it should be under these. Think what thousands of delicate girls must suffer who stand daily behind the counter for twelve long weary hours, and this not simply for a few days or weeks, but month after month, and year after year. Fortunate, indeed, is she who does not pay to outraged nature the penalty of a ruined constitution and a shortened life. Remember, theirs is not an occupation which so absorbs the mental powers as to render them insensible to fatigue. One can imagine the artist so engrossed in his painting, the musician in his music, and the author in his writing, as to forget the flight of time. But gifted indeed with vivid imagination and intense sympathy must the draper’s assistant be who can so lose herself in the petty wants of each capricious customer as to forget her weariness and the injustice inflicted upon her by a professedly justice-loving people. She stands between two powerful and pitiless foes—viz., the greed of the employer and the selfishness of the customer. What mockery to tell her to appeal to “public opinion”—to the opinion, forsooth, of the authors of her wrongs!

JAMES PARKER :—Mr. Speaker,—As one of a firm who give employment to a number of assistants, male and female, I desire to say that I cannot agree with that part of the Opponent’s speech which says that an Act of Parliament can only attempt to limit the hours of business in shops in which the proprietor employs others to assist him. It would be a monstrous injustice in country places to compel a person to close at a stated time, whilst his neighbours who do not employ any one may keep open as late as they please and catch those customers—and in an agricultural neighbourhood there are many—who cannot (because they are employed till six o’clock in the evening, and then frequently have several miles to walk) get to town till the principal shops would be closed according to the measure proposed by Lord Stanhope. Take a case :—A, in a small way of business, has a lad or young woman to assist him; B, in only a trifle smaller, has no one; A would be compelled to close to the infinite advantage of B. Nothing short of a far-reaching and sweeping measure can be carried without inflicting a serious injustice on some class of traders. Whilst one shop is allowed

to keep open others are tempted to follow, and nothing but the strong arm of the law can, I fear, bring about the desired end; but the wants of country places must be met in a different way to those of large towns. Again, Sir, to attempt to limit the hours of employment for young women only would be the means of throwing numbers out of situations, as the Opener is quite in error in assuming that female assistants are a necessity. Undoubtedly they are in show-rooms, but where one is thus employed ten earn their living in departments which could as well be filled by young men if any serious hindrance were in the way. The Workshop and Factory Act does not bear on the case. Women and children are a necessity in most factories, but in shops the case is different. If a measure is carried, let it be for the benefit of both sexes, otherwise it would be prudent to do the best with those agencies which have already done much to shorten the hours of business.

* CHARLES H. BOYCE :—I should like, Sir, to ask the indulgence of the House for a few moments while I offer a few remarks upon the question before us. It seems to me, Sir, that both the Opener of this debate and Opponent are rather wide of the mark. If I understand aright, the principle of the matter in hand is mainly to get shorter hours for shop-assistants, and in order to bring that about it has been suggested by the Opener to close, by Act of Parliament, all places of business at a specified hour. Now, Sir, in my humble opinion it should be put in a different form: that instead of making it compulsory for shops to close at a certain hour, let it be an offence against the law to keep at work any servant, male or female, other than a domestic, after a certain hour. This, Sir, I think, would meet the case without compelling a man to close his shop by law if he preferred to keep it open. For if a shop-keeper likes to keep open his shop, and himself wait on customers, no one but himself need complain.

If such were the case, Opponent’s argument is at once met where he says “that an Act of Parliament which compelled only those who were employers of labour to close, would give an ‘immense advantage’ to small shops where the proprietor did all the work himself.” Further, Sir, I venture to say that even were an Act passed compelling shops of every description to close at a certain hour, it would not have the desired effect, as there would be a very large number of shop-keepers who would keep their employés at work after shutters were up, which would be far more injurious to health than the present state of things.

The desired result might be obtained, Sir, by allowing those shops who liked to keep open longer than the rest to do so by licence. We should then see something like the following over their doors—“Licensed to keep open after eight.” Shop-assistants would then have it in their own hands, as they by combination might refuse to engage themselves to “licensed” shops.

Referring for a moment to the bill which Lord Stanhope proposed to pass, I certainly think that that part of it which proposes “that it shall not be lawful for any shop or warehouse for the sale of textile fabrics and articles of wearing apparel, where women and young persons are employed, to be open for more than ten hours in each day,” is defective, and might be improved with advantage, for the noble Earl does not say at what hour business is to commence. Perhaps he is not aware that all shops do not open at the same hour. By the method he proposed a shop that opened at seven would have to shut at five, and one that opened at ten would shut at eight. It is quite clear then, Sir, that his proposal would not work well, for to find out whether a man had broken the law it would be necessary in individual cases to prove at what hour he opened his establishment.

The debate on this subject will be concluded in our next, when the second of the Prize Speeches will be published.

* To this speech was awarded the divided Honorarium of One Guinea.

THE FAMILY PARLIAMENT.

[THE RULES OF DEBATE will be found on page 312. The Editor's duty will be to act as "Mr. Speaker;" consequently, while preserving due order in the discussion, he will not be held to endorse any opinions that may be expressed on either side, each debater being responsible for his own views.]

SHOULD EARLY CLOSING BE MADE COMPULSORY?

(Debate concluded.)

TRADER:—As one of the so-described selfish, money-making traders, who does not close until nine o'clock, and eleven on Saturdays, but who himself thinks that he works harder by far to support and educate his family, and pay his way, than any assistant ever works, allow me to give a few reasons against compulsory closing. To be just it must close every shop, omitting none, at say eight, and on Saturdays at ten. If all shops are not included the Act will never work, for it would be unjust to compel the thousands of small struggling traders who keep a lad or junior assistant to close, and to leave his neighbour who did not to keep his shop open; for I maintain that shops are only kept open late because of the thousands who cannot well do their shopping at an early hour. In many districts there will be twice as many people in the streets from seven until nine that there is at any other hour of the day, and no Act of Parliament will make the child go to sleep earlier or give the hard-worked woman leisure in the day time. I hear a growl about ten o'clock on Saturdays; but since the artisans, &c., have had their Saturday half-holiday, it has more and more become a fact that they with their wives make that time an opportunity for shopping.

The small trader is almost always overlooked by those arguing for earlier closing, and they do not care about going into the question of why, if the large aristocratic draper can close, the small trader doing business with a lower class finds it more difficult. It is a fact that many small traders and young beginners take more money of an evening than all the rest of the day, because evening is the leisure time for the million, so much so that an Act not allowing shops to open until nine a.m., and close at nine p.m., would, after all, be more convenient to the public and the trader, and so shorten the hours of attendance or work: I cannot say, as our exaggerating platform friends say, "toil," for there is, after all, little hard work for assistants generally; as a rule, a good deal of time is spent very leisurely.

That I, as a trader, and all assistants would like more leisure I freely admit; but my thirty years' experience tells me there is little actual over-work, and that, instead of thousands sent to premature graves, the health of traders' assistants is as good as that of classes of the community who have more leisure. Doctors may meet with cases of consumption and bronchial affections, &c., but do they never meet with such cases amongst those who have even nothing to do?

That compulsory closing will be very objectionable there can be no doubt, and those who are assistants now will, when they start in business for themselves, be brought to see those difficulties, and will find it help to drive the trade to the large houses. To attempt thus to legislate reminds me of old times, and the failure of curfew and the sumptuary laws.

* JOHN CARSON:—There can only be one opinion regarding the evils of the present long-hour system of doing business in shops. Both the Opener and his Opponent recognise them; they differ only in the methods to be adopted to bring about a change; the one thinking that it should be left to public opinion, agitation and combination amongst the employés, the other that legislation should step in and at once compel the change. "If people generally," the Opponent says, "could only be induced to make their purchases early, the shops would not be kept open, and legislation would be unnecessary." But customs, however bad, are difficult to break from. All see the evils, but at the same time *individuals* think that, as others are sure to go late, their doing so also cannot make much difference, and so the evils are perpetuated. Experience has fully proved that people will not do their shopping early while the shops are open for them to do it later. Therefore, this is a fit subject for legislation. The converse holds that if the shops are closed early, as the purchases of clothing and the necessities of life must be made, they *must* be made early. The hardship of being obliged to buy in reasonable hours would only touch the few, whilst the benefit would be experienced alike by masters and assistants. The time now occupied by them in supervision would be their own, and there would be a saving in light and other etceteras to the masters; the assistants would be more contented, and have opportunities for improvement which are now practically denied them, no matter what their thirst after knowledge. When a man or woman is employed in a certain trade, he must conform to its customs and rules or else leave it. To this extent the individual is *not* a "free agent," so it is idle to talk of "freedom of contract" being interfered with. When society and custom imposes, gradually but surely, hardships upon any portion of the community who cannot rid themselves of these fetters, the law should put things right when by doing so it is not infringing the rights of others to any material extent.

It is not a cry of over-work, but rather one of over-time. For many hours of the day there is comparatively little to do when the assistants would be glad to be kept busy. Towards evening the bulk of the customers come in, because they know they *can* procrastinate. If the large shops employing assistants were closed, the smaller shopmen who stand in their own shops would not seriously interfere with the trade of the former, as the customers frequenting the one are seldom seen in the other. Once let people feel (and this can only be done by Act of Parliament) that their shopping must be done in good time, and public approval can be safely allowed in a matter of this kind to follow.

* To this speech was awarded the divided Honorarium.

END OF THE DEBATE ON EARLY CLOSING.

IS IT WISE TO PROMOTE EMIGRATION?

OPENER'S SPEECH.

MR. SPEAKER,

I am fully aware, Sir, that in seeking to demonstrate the "un-wisdom" of promoting emigration, I am doing a very bold thing, since I set myself in

opposition, not only to the majority of my countrymen, but also to the principal political economists of past and present times. Nevertheless, so strongly do I feel that the tide of emigration—encouraged and assisted at every turn—is flowing too often to the