

office and the watch-factory—everywhere machinery lessens at least the *necessity* for labour.

Surely all this means that a very substantial reduction in the hours of labour is possible! Competition, machinery, and the greater subdivision of labour have given us cheap goods; the working day *has* been shortened; and amongst the aristocracy of labour wages have been increased. But few people pretend that wages yet bear a decent proportion to the value of the product; and most humane and sensible men are favourable to a further shortening of the working day, if, say they, it could only be done. There does not, however, appear to be any very definite general desire for an eight hours day. That the employing class should oppose a reduction of the hours of labour is perfectly natural. But that the working class should be so indifferent to the condition of a million of their fellow-countrymen, workless and starving, as to evince their present apathy with respect to the most feasible proposal that has been mooted as a means of dealing with the unemployed, only shows how selfishly hard-hearted “the struggle for existence” tends to make us: while, at the same time, the absence of any very general anxiety for additional leisure to themselves shows how little of enlightened self-interest the workers possess.

If you are in employment, and find your spare time hang heavily upon your hands; if you speak of “pastimes,” and have no better use for your evenings than to spend them in dangling about the gallery of a theatre or the bar of a public-house; or if you yawn during holidays, and wish you were back at your work, then I do not wonder that *you* are careless as to whether we are to have an eight hours day or not. But among the working class there is a large and growing minority who want more time for physical and mental recreation than our present industrial system allows. The main attraction which an eight hours day has for them is that it would add another hour or two to their own time on every working day. There are young men possessed with an ever-increasing desire to know more of the contents of the thousands of books that pour from the press every year. They want to read “the fairy tales of science”—to follow in their researches “the wise men seeking out marvels.” They desire to enjoy the glowing fancies of “the poet’s teeming head,” to learn from the historian how society has come to be what it is, to gather from all the best sources some knowledge of what is going on in the world around them both near and remote. They long for additional opportunities of getting to the baths and the gymnasium,