THE STANDARD RATE.

Among Trade Union regulations there is one which stands out as practically universal, namely the insistence on payment according to some definite standard, uniform in its application. Even so rudimentary a form of combination as the 'shop club' requires that all its members shall receive, as a minimum, the rate agreed upon with the foreman for the particular job. The organised local or national Union carries the principle further, and insists on a standard rate of payment for all its members in the town or district. The standard rate, it should be observed, is only a minimum, never a maximum. The Friendly Society of Operative Stonemasons, for instance, agrees with the London Central Master Builders' Association that all its able-bodied members shall receive not less than tenpence per hour. But the society has not the slightest objection to an employer offering a particular stonemason, whose skill or character is valued, any higher rate that he may choose. The Amalgamated Society of Tailors, in conjunction with the Master Tailors' Association of the particular town, settles a 'log' fixing the payment for each kind of garment. But this does not prevent West End master tailors, with the full sanction of the Union, paying some members far above the London log rates. In fact, though there are certain seeming exceptions with which we shall deal separately, we know of no case in which a Trade Union forbids or discourages its members from receiving a higher rate of remuneration, for the work actually performed, than the common standard rate fixed for the whole body.

But although the standard rate is a minimum, not a maximum, the very existence of this minimum tends to produce a greater equality of rates than would otherwise prevail. Employers have often asserted—and, we think, correctly—that the insistence on the payment to all men of at least the stated minimum necessarily tends towards a general uniformity. For though a very exceptional workman may, and in practice often does, receive a higher piece-
work rate or time wage than the Union requires, yet the effect of
the fixing of a minimum rate practically hinders any precise
gradation of each man 'according to merit.' We are aware of
no deductive argument from which this practical result can be
demonstrated to be inevitable, except that formerly based upon
the assumption of the existence of a rigidly determined 'wage
fund.' Theoretically, the workman above the worst recognised
by the employer might be supposed always to be able to obtain
his 'rent of ability,' or equivalent of his superiority, whatever
arrangements the employer might choose to make with the work-
men who were below the average. But in spite of the theory we
do not think that any fair-minded Trade Unionist would deny
that the minimum rate tends in practical business life to become
a uniform rate for all men in the trade who are recognised as
competent workmen. His experience teaches him that the
recognition of a standard rate is only arrived at by a process of
bargaining, in which the organised workmen make some conces-
sion to the employers, in return for the advantages gained. When
the employers forego their right to take full advantage of the
necessities of the individual workmen, they expect in return that
other workmen, who might be able to exact better terms, will
content themselves with the standard rate agreed to by the
representatives of the whole body. The experienced Trade
Unionist, moreover, will remember not only many cases in which
superior workmen contentedly accept the Trade Union rate, but
also numerous instances in which leading men have actually
given up special rates of pay in order to secure for the members
of their Union the recognition of a standard wage. And any
Trade Union official who has had to construct a piecework list,
or to extend such a list from one shop to the whole town, or from
one town to the whole trade, knows that, in order to secure a
standard list of prices, he has had to pare down the rates hitherto
enjoyed by particular workmen, particular shops or even particular
towns. It is exactly this willingness on the part of the more fortu-
nate workman to forego, for the sake of a standard rate, part of
the chance he might have of getting a special rate for himself
alone, that has made Trade Unionism possible.

1 Practical convenience and the growth of large establishments have, no doubt,
much to do with the adoption of uniformity. The little working master, or small
employer, could know personally every workman, and adjust without much diffi-
culty a graduated rate of wages. But the modern employer of labour on a large
scale cannot be bothered with precisely graduated special rates for each of his
thousand 'hands.' It suits him better to adopt some common principle of payment,
simple of application by his clerks and easily comprehended by the workmen.
We see, therefore, that although the Unions prescribe only a minimum rate, this does, in practice, tend to produce an identical rate of payment for the general run of workmen in any particular occupation at a given time and place.\textsuperscript{1} The Trade Unionist insistence on a standard rate has accordingly been the subject of bitter denunciation by capitalists and philosophers as paying 'bad and lazy workmen as highly as those who are skilled and industrious';\textsuperscript{2} setting a premium on idleness and incapacity, 'destructive to the legitimate ambition of industry and merit,' and as being, in short, that 'worst kind of Communism,' the equal remuneration of all men. Even as lately as 1871 it was not impossible for a distinguished economist to pour out the following tirade against the assumed wickedness of the Trade Unions in this respect:—

'Not yet, but in course of time, as economic principles become popularly understood, we shall see Trade Unions purged of their most erroneous and mischievous purpose of seeking uniform rate of wages without regard to difference of skill, knowledge, industry and character. There is no benet of Socialism more fatal in its consequences than this insidious and plausible doctrine—a doctrine which, if acted upon rigidly for any length of time by large classes of men, would stop all progress. Put in plain language it means that there shall not be in the world any such thing as superior talent or attainment; that every art and handicraft shall be reduced to the level of the commonest, most ignorant and most stupid of the persons who belong to it.'\textsuperscript{3}

But such criticisms are beside the mark. A very slight acquaintance with Trade Unionism would have shown these writers that a uniform standard rate in no way implies equality of weekly wages, and has no such object. For good or for evil, the typical British workman is not by any means a Communist, and the Trade Union regulations are, as we shall see, quite free from any theoretic 'yearnings for equal division of unequal earnings.'

The misapprehension arises from a confusion between the rate of payment and the amount actually earned by the workman. What the Trade Union insists on, as a necessary condition of the very existence of collective bargaining, is a standard rate of

\textsuperscript{1} This, indeed, is often admitted by Trade Unionists. A favourite analogy is that of a corn merchant having to sell 1,000 sacks of corn, slightly varying in quality. He does not, in practice, quote a separate rate per bushel for each sack, but sells the whole at a uniform rate. See the article by George Potter, \textit{Contemporary Review}, vol. xvii. 1871, pp. 525-539.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Measures for putting an End to the Abuses of Trade Unions}, by Frederic Hill. London, 1869.

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Presidential Address of William Newmarch at Social Science Congress of 1871 (Transactions of Social Science Association, 1871, p. 117).}
payment for the work actually performed. But this is consistent with the widest possible divergence between the actual weekly incomes of different workmen. Thus we have the significant fact that the standard rate insisted on by the great majority of Trade Unionists is, not any definite sum per hour, but a list of piece-work prices. The extent to which these piecework lists prevail throughout the country is seldom realised. Even those who have heard of the elaborate tonnage rates of the ironworkers, steel-smelters and coalminers, and the complicated cotton lists, which together govern the remuneration of a third of the Trade Union world, often forget the innumerable other trades, in which (as with the tailors, bootmakers, compositors, coopers, basketmakers, brushmakers) lists of prices, signed by employers and employed, and revised from time to time, date from the very beginning of the century.¹ When, as in all these cases, the standard rate takes the form of a schedule of piecework prices, it is clear that there can be no question of equalising the actual earnings of different workmen. One basketmaker or one coalminer may be earning two pounds a week, whilst another, receiving the same standard rate and working the same number of hours, may get less than thirty shillings; and another, putting in only half-time, may have only ten or fifteen shillings for his week's income.

Nor can it be assumed that in the industries in which the Trade Union rate is not based on piecework, but takes the form of a definite standard wage per hour, this necessarily implies equality of remuneration. Even where workmen in such trades put in the same number of hours, their weekly incomes will often be found to differ very materially. Thus, whilst ordinary plumbing, bricklaying and masonry is paid for at uniform rates per hour, directly the job involves any special skill, the employer finds it advantageous to pay a higher rate, and the Trade Union cordially encourages this practice. The superior bricklayer, for instance, is seldom employed at the standard rate, but is always getting jobs at brick-cutting (or 'gauge work'), furnace-building or sewer construction, paid for at rates from ten to fifty per cent. over the standard wage. In other cases, where the employer rigidly adheres to the common rate, the superior workman finds his advantage, if not actually in higher money earnings, in more agreeable conditions of employment. In a large building the

¹ These piecework lists can now be conveniently studied in the admirable selection published by the Labour Department of the Board of Trade as Part II. of the Report on Wages and Hours of Labour, 1894 [C.—7567,—1].
employer will select his best stonemasons to do the carving, an occupation not involving great exertion and consistent with an occasional pipe, whilst the common run of workmen will be setting stones under the foreman's eye. The best carpenters, when not earning extra rates for 'staircasing' or 'handrailing,' will get the fine work which combines variety and lightness, and is done in the workshop, leaving to the rougher hands the laying down of flooring and other heavy mechanical tasks. These distinctions may seem trivial to the professional or business man, who to a large extent controls the conditions under which he works. But no workman fails to appreciate the radical difference in nett advantageousness between two different jobs, one involving exposure to the weather, wear and tear of clothing, monotonous muscular exertion, and incessant supervision, and the other admitting a considerable share of personal liberty, agreeably diversified in character, and affording scope for initiative and address. Though there may be in such cases equality in the number of shillings received at the end of the week, the remuneration for the efforts and sacrifices actually made will have been at very different rates in the two cases.

We do not wish to obscure the fact that a standard rate on a timework basis does, in practice, result in a nearer approach to uniformity of money earnings, than a standard rate on a piecework basis. Nor is there any doubt that a considerable section of the wage-earning class have a deeply rooted conviction that the conscientious, industrious and slow mechanic ought in equity to receive no less pay than his quicker but equally meritorious neighbour; more especially as the normal earnings of even the quickest mechanic do not amount to more than is demanded for the proper maintenance of his household. It is often assumed that this conviction has produced, in the Trade Union world, a fundamental objection to piecework. Had this been the case, it would have been strange that we should have had to quote, as typical instances of Unions strongly enforcing a standard rate, so many trades in which piecework universally prevails. The annexed table will show that, whilst certain important trades enforce time wages, a large majority of organised trades either insist on or willingly accept piecework remuneration. By an analysis of this table we shall prove that this remarkable divergence of view arises, almost exclusively, from the character of the operations performed. What the Trade Unionists are aiming at, in the one case as in the other, is, as we have explained, uniformity in the rate of remuneration. In some industries this can
### Trade Unions which Insist on Piecework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coalminers (including Miners' Federation, Durham, Northumberland, South Wales, Forest of Dean, and West Bromwich)</td>
<td>322,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland Ironstone Miners</td>
<td>8,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Association of Operative Cottonspinners</td>
<td>18,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Counties' Association of Cottonweavers</td>
<td>88,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Society of Lacemakers, Nottingham</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Society of Tailors (and Scottish ditto)</td>
<td>13,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives</td>
<td>44,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Society of Boot and Shoe Makers</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Iron and Steel Workers</td>
<td>6,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flint Glass Makers' Society</td>
<td>2,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire Glass Bottle Makers</td>
<td>2,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield File Cutters</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Wire Drawers</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Steel Smelters</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Wales Tinplate Workers</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffordshire Hollow Ware Pressers (Potters)</td>
<td>1,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidderminster Carpet Weavers</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosiery Workers' Federation</td>
<td>3,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt Hat Makers</td>
<td>5,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigar Makers</td>
<td>1,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Society of Curriers</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 other Societies</td>
<td>39,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>573,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Trade Unions which Willingly Recognise in Various Departments, Both Piecework and Timework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Society of Boilermakers and Iron-shipbuilders</td>
<td>39,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Shipwrights' Society</td>
<td>13,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Brassworkers' Society</td>
<td>5,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Blacksmiths' Society</td>
<td>2,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailmakers' Federation</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spindle and Flyer Makers, Lancashire</td>
<td>1,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Card and Blowing Room Operatives</td>
<td>22,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typographical Association, London Society of Compositors, Scottish and other Compositors' Unions</td>
<td>31,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookbinders (two societies)</td>
<td>4,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Association of Coopers</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinetmakers (three societies)</td>
<td>7,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six other Unions</td>
<td>6,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>140,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Trade Unions which Insist on Timework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Society of Engineers</td>
<td>78,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly Society of Ironfounders</td>
<td>15,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom Society of Pattermakers</td>
<td>3,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Society of Brassfounders</td>
<td>2,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Society of Carpenters (and two other societies)</td>
<td>59,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly Society of Operative Stonemasons (with Scottish ditto)</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operative Bricklayers' Society (and another society)</td>
<td>26,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Union of Operative Plasterers</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Society of Operative Plumbers</td>
<td>5,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Society of Lithographic Printers</td>
<td>2,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradford Dyers</td>
<td>2,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakers (English, Scottish, and Irish)</td>
<td>5,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom Society of Coachmakers</td>
<td>5,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 other Societies</td>
<td>44,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>290,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
be maintained only by insisting on time wages. In others, covering, as it happens, a far larger number of organised workmen, time wages would produce just the opposite result, and the Trade Unionists accordingly insist, with equal determination, on payment by the piece.\footnote{The printed table is summarised from one including every Trade Union in the United Kingdom which has as many as 1,000 members (omitting those of general labourers and transport workers). Its total of 1,003,000 represents nine-tenths of the Trade Union world (with the same omission), the remaining tenth, which is dispersed in hundreds of tiny Unions, being similarly divided. Of the 111 principal organisations we see that 49, having 57 per cent. of the aggregate membership, actually insist on piecework, whilst 73 out of the 111, having 71 per cent. of the aggregate membership, either insist on piecework, or willingly recognise it. The Unions which fight against piecework number 38, having only 29 per cent. of the aggregate membership.}

The first thing we notice in these tables is that, among the trades in which piecework is either insisted on by the men, or readily accepted by them, we find the largest and the most powerful Trade Unions. The miners and cotton operatives, who would instantly strike against any attempt to introduce time wages, are only paralleled in the strength and extent of their Trade Unions by the boilermakers and iron-shipbuilders who adopt piecework as the basis of the greater part of their wage contracts. And so far is piecework from being objected to by Trade Union officials, that we find, in these trades, that the preponderating part of the Trade Union machinery, including the ablest and most influential officials, has been called into existence for the express purpose of dealing with piecework lists. The district delegates of the boilermakers, the secretaries of the cotton operatives, the investigators of the boot and shoe operatives and the checkweighmen of the coalminers spend their whole lives in arranging remuneration on a piecework basis.

On the other hand, though the time workers are in the minority, we have among them some very strong Unions, such as the stonemasons, the bricklayers and the plumbers, who have always vehemently denounced piecework as the bane of their trades. How can we explain this divergence?

On asking a leading official of the Cottonspinners' Union why he objected to time wages, he replied that, in his opinion, it was only the system of piecework remuneration that had saved his...
trade from the evils of sweating. The work of a cottonspinner, he explained, varies in intensity (and his product in quantity) according to the number of spindles which he has to attend to, and the speed at which the machinery runs, conditions over which the operative has no control. Owing to the introduction of mules bearing an increased number of spindles, and the constant 'speeding up' of the machinery, the amount of work placed upon the operative is steadily, though often imperceptibly, increased.\footnote{\textit{It would be a mistake if we imagined that labour had become easier compared with former times. As far as a comparison can be made, the opposite is the case. A hand-loom weaver can work 13 hours per day; to let a six-loom weaver work 13 hours is a physical impossibility. In place of muscular exertion there is now the minding of the machine, \textit{i.e.}, mental strain. Those who have observed the mule-spinner in Oldham in the midst of the whirling of 2,500 spindles, or the female worker in Burnley environed by four or six shuttles, working at the speed of 200 picks per minute, know what a higher degree of mental application is here demanded.---\textit{The Cotton Trade in England and on the Continent,} by Dr. G. von Schulze-Gaevernitz (London, 1895), pp. 126-7.}} If he were paid by the hour or the day, he would need, in order to maintain the same rate of remuneration for the work done, to discover each day precisely to what degree the machinery was being 'speeded up,' and to be perpetually making demands for an increase in his time wages. Such an arrangement could not fail to result in the employer increasing the work faster than the pay.

Under a system of payment by the amount of yarn spun, the operative automatically gets the benefit of any increase in the number of spindles or rate of speed. An exact uniformity of the rate of remuneration is maintained between man and man, and between mill and mill. If any improvement takes place in the process, by which the operative's labour is reduced, the onus of procuring a change in the rate of pay falls on the employer. The result is, that so effectually is the cottonspinner secured by his piecework lists against being compelled to give more work without more pay, that it has been found desirable deliberately to concede to the employers, by lowering the rates as the number of spindles increases, some share of the resulting advantages, in order that the Trade Union may encourage enterprising mill-owners in the career of improvement. The cottonweavers have a similar experience. The weaver's labour depends upon the character of the cloth to be woven, involving a complicated calculation of the number of 'picks,' \&c. Time wages would leave them practically at the employers' mercy for all but the very easiest work. But by a highly technical and complex list of piecework rates, every element by which the labour is increased
effects an exactly corresponding variation in the remuneration. Only under such a system could any uniformity of rate be secured.

In another great class of cases piecework is preferred by the workmen, with the same object of securing a standard rate, but under entirely different conditions. The coalminers have, in some counties, had a long experience of both time wages and piecework, with the result that, wherever there is a strong Trade Union, piecework is insisted on for all hewers. The explanation is to be found in the circumstances under which the work is done. Employers have found it impossible to supervise, by foremen or managers, the numerous hewers scattered in the recesses of the mine. The only possible alternative to paying the hewers at piecework rates, was to let out the different parts of the mine to working contractors, who engaged hewers by the hour to work alongside them. This was the notorious 'Butty System,' against which the organised hewers have persistently struggled. It was found that, whatever was the customary standard of daily time wages, the 'Butty master,' who set the pace, was always increasing the quantity of work to be done for those wages by himself putting in an unusual intensity of effort. It is obvious that, under this system, the ordinary hewer lost all security of a standard rate. It paid the Butty master to be always 'speeding up,' because he received the product, not of his own extra exertion alone, but of that of all his gang. The only method by which the ordinary hewers could secure identity of rate was to dispense with the Butty masters, and themselves work by the piece.

We shall find exactly the same preference for piecework wages in other trades among men who work under a sub-contractor, or in subordination to another class of workmen paid by the piece. The strikers, for instance, who work with smiths paid by the piece, were themselves formerly paid time wages. In most parts of the country they have now been successful in obtaining the boon of a piecework rate proportionate to that of the smiths, so that they are secured extra remuneration for any extra spurt put on by the smith. Another large class of workmen in a somewhat similar position have not been so fortunate. The shipyard 'helpers,' who work under the platers (iron-shipbuilders), are paid by the day, whilst the platers receive piecework rates. The first object of any combination of helpers has always been to secure piecework rates, in order that their remuneration might bear some proportion to the rapidity and intensity of work, the
pace being set by the platers. But owing to the strength of the Boilermakers’ Union, to which the platers belong, the helpers have never been able to attain their object. The iron and steel industries afford numerous other instances in which workers paid by the day are in subordination to workers paid by the piece. In all these cases, the subordinate workers desire to be paid by the piece, in order that they may secure a greater uniformity in the rate of payment for the work actually done.

Coming now to the trades in which piecework is most strongly objected to by the operatives, we shall find the argument again turning upon the question of uniformity of the rate of remuneration. The engineers have always protested that the introduction of piecework into their trade almost necessarily implied a reversion to individual bargaining. The work of a skilled mechanic in an engineering shop differs from job to job in such a way as to make, under a piecework system, a new contract necessary for each job. Each man, too, will be employed at an operation differing, if only in slight degree, from those of his fellows. If they are all working by the hour, a collective bargain can easily be made and adhered to. But where each successive job differs from the last, if only in small details, it is impossible to work out in advance any list of prices to which all the men can agree to adhere. The settlement for each job must necessarily be left to be made between the foreman and the workman concerned. Collective bargaining becomes therefore impossible. But this is not all. The uncertainty as to the time and labour which a particular job will involve makes it impossible for the foreman, with the best intentions in the world, to fix the prices of successive jobs so that the workman will obtain the same earnings for the same effort. And when we remember the disadvantage at which, unprotected by collective action, the individual operative necessarily stands in bargaining with the capitalist employer, we shall easily understand how the Amalgamated Society of Engineers should have been led to declare that, under this system of settling a special price for each job, ‘it is well known that piecework is not a bargain, but a price dictated by the employer and lowered at will.’ And the report adds that ‘the system has often been made the instrument of large reductions of wages, which have ended in the deterioration of the conditions of the workmen... If an expert workman by his skill and industry earns more than his neighbour, and much more than his daily wages come to, a reduction is at once made, and made again until eventually the most expert is only able, by
intense application and industry, to earn a bare living, whilst the less skilful is reduced below living prices.'

We could cite from the reports of the great national Unions of the engineers, ironfounders and carpenters innumerable similar protests against piecework in their trades, all based upon the proved impossibility of maintaining a standard rate, if each job has to be separately priced. It is, however, more interesting to watch the same conviction being gradually borne in upon the mind of an exceptionally able employer. In 1876, William Denny, the well-known Clyde shipbuilder, who had put his whole establishment on piecework rates, delivered a remarkable lecture on the advantages of this method of remuneration, alike to the employer and to the workmen, specially commending the intensity of competition which it secured. He was utterly unable to understand why the workmen objected to a system which, in giving an increase of from 25 to 50 per cent. in his wages—and this increase my experience confirms as a rule—puts at once within his power a more comfortable and easy style of living, combined with an opportunity of saving, which, if he is a sober and careful man, will enable him to enjoy a pleasant old age, and even to lay by sufficient money to enable him to refuse on his own account any rate of payment which he deems insufficient.'

Notwithstanding all these allurements, the Trade Unions per-


This process of fixing a piecework rate for all the men, by the speed of an exceptionally expert workman under special pressure, has been more than once unconsciously revealed by employers. Already in 1727, in a manual entitled *The Duty of a Steward to his Lord*, by Edward Laurence, naive directions are given how to achieve this object. 'Also if any new sort of work is to be done, not mentioned in the following particulars, the Steward's best way is to hire a good labourer and to stand by him the whole day to see that he does a good day's work, and then to measure the same, in order to know what it is worth.' The efficacy of piecework, as an expedient for reducing rates was described in a letter to the *Times* in 1852 by Charles Walker and Sons, an engineering firm. 'When work which has been done daywork is put on the piece, the employer usually regulates the piecework price a little under the price of it at daywork, knowing how production is increased by it. But he finds that men do work in quantity far beyond what they have been doing daywork, earning often 10s. per day, when at daywork they had done much less than half the work at 5s. 6d. per day. So much, indeed, is this the case, that manufacturers have made it a private rule that men for their extra work should earn "time and quarter" or "time and third," and have reduced the price accordingly; that is, where 5s. was the man's day pay, the price should be so arranged that ultimately he should earn 6s. 3d. or 6s. 8d. per day. This method we do not quite agree with, and we believe it has made men complain' (*Times*, 9 January, 1852). Thus the employer not only gets the advantage of an increased output upon the same fixed capital, but actually contrives also insidiously to alter, to his own profit, the proportion between the muscular energy expended by the workman and the amount of food which the latter obtains.
sisted in their objection. After ten years' further experience of
the working of piecework, William Denny at last perceived the
real root of the men's protest. In an interesting letter written
in 1886 he describes his own conversion:

'At the time I published my pamphlet *The Worth of Wages*, I was
under the impression piecework rates would regulate themselves as I then
assumed time wages did. A larger experience of piecework has convinced me
that, excepting in cases where rates can be fixed and made a matter of agree­
mee b m en who work in any works and their employers,
price money ss have not a self-regulating power, and are liable, under the
pressure of heavy competition, to be depressed below what I would consider a
proper level. You must understand there is a broad and very real distinction
in piecework between the kind of work which can be priced in regular rates and
that in which contracts are taken by the men for lump jobs of greater or less
extent. In the former kind of piecework it is easily possible for the rates to be
effectively controlled by the joint efforts of the employers and the workpeople,
as it is in the case of time wages. In the latter, owing to there being no
definite standard, it is quite possible that the prices may be raised too high for
competitive efficiency, or depressed to too low a point to recoup the workmen
for the extra exertion and initiative induced by the very nature of piecework.
In such work as that of rivetters, iron fitters, and platers and in much of
carpenters' work standards of price or rates can be arranged or controlled, and
the workers are not likely to endure any arrangement they may consider in­
equitable. They are indeed much more likely by insisting on uniform rates for
a whole district to do injustice to the more intelligent and energetic employers,
who, by introducing new machinery and new processes, are directly influential
in drawing work to their districts. It is evident that if piecework rates are not
reduced so as to make the improvements in machinery and methods introduced
by such employers fully effective in diminishing cost of production, there will
be a tendency on their part to abandon these attempts, with diminished chances
of work for their districts. In the case of such improvements it is possible to
reduce rates without in any way reducing the effective earnings of the work­
people. I may say that in our own experience we have almost invariably found
our workers quite willing to consider these points fairly and intelligently.
Frequently they themselves make such suggestions as materially help us to
reduce cost of production. Such cases of invention and helpfulness on their
part are rewarded directly through our award scheme of which you have
particulars.

In the second kind of piecework, involving contracts which cannot be
arranged by rates and controlled by the whole body of the workers, the prices
are necessarily a matter of settlement between individual workmen and small
groups of workmen and their foreman. Here it depends upon the control
exercised by the heads of the business whether this kind of piecework drifts
into extravagances, or into such reductions of contract prices as either to reduce
them to less than the value of time wages or to so little above time wages that
they do not compensate the men for their extra exertions. We have found
in testing such piecework that the best method is to compare the earnings
made by these pieceworkers in a given period with the time wages which
they would have received for the same period; and it is the duty of one of
our partners to control this section of the work, and he does it almost invariably
to the advantage of the men. Our idea is that the men should be able to
average from 25 to 50 per cent. more wages on such piecework within a given
time than their time wages would amount to. There are occasional and exceptional cases where the results are less or more favourable. Where they are less favourable, we consider them to be not only a loss to the men, but disadvantageous to ourselves; and our reason for this is very clear, as unless the men feel that their exertions produce really better wages, and that increased exertions and better arrangements of work will produce still further increases of wages, there is an end to all stimulus to activity or improvement.

I know an instance in which a well-meaning foreman, desirous of diminishing the cost of the work in his department, reduced his piecework prices to such a point that he not only removed all healthy stimulus to activity from his workmen, but produced among them serious discontent. Our method of piecework analysis and control enabled us to discover and remedy this before serious disaffection had been produced. I know another instance in which a foreman, while avoiding the mistake I have just mentioned, gave out his contracts in such small and scattered portions, and under such conditions as to the way in which the work was to be done and as to the composition of the co-partneries formed by the men, that he not only reduced their earnings to very nearly time rates, but created very serious disaffection among them. He was in the habit of forcing the men to take into their co-partneries personal favourites of his own, who very naturally became burdens upon those co-partneries. As soon as our returns and inquiries revealed to us these facts, we insisted that the contracts entered into with the men should be of a sufficient money amount to enable them to organise themselves and their work efficiently. We removed the defective arrangements above referred to, and laid down the principle that their co-partneries were to be purely voluntary. We were enabled by these means, and without altering a single price, to at once raise their earnings from a level a little above what they could have made on time wages to a very satisfactory percentage of increase and to remove all discontent. These two instances will show you how necessary it is in this kind of piecework that there should be a direct control over those who are carrying it out. When the heads of a business are absentees or indifferent the most effective way in which the workmen can control such piecework would be by taking care that the standard of time wages was always kept perfectly clear and effective, and that regular comparisons per hour on piecework were made. Such comparisons would immediately enable them to arrive at a correct conclusion as to whether the prices paid them were sufficiently profitable.

There is besides a mixed kind of piecework in which skilled workmen employ labourers at time wages to do the unskilled portion of their work for them. Here, too, some kind of control is required, as instances occasionally occur in which the skilled workmen treat their labourers, either intentionally or unintentionally, with harshness. I have even known an instance in which such piecework contractors reduced their labourers' time wages on the pay day without having given them any previous notice. On the other hand, there are instances in which these labourers behave in an unreasonable and unfair spirit to the skilled workmen who employ them.

In conclusion, I would say that the method of piecework is one which cannot be approved or condemned absolutely, but is dependent upon the spirit and the way in which it is carried out for the verdict which should be passed upon it. It is imperative in such kinds of piecework as by their nature cannot be reduced to regular rates that either the employer should take the responsibility of safeguarding his workmen's interests, or that the workmen themselves should, by such a method as I have suggested, obtain an effective control over them.
'There are besides conditions in which even piecework rates of a general nature may become instruments of very great hardship. I mean instances in which the workers are incapable of effective resistance, and in which employers are either themselves ground down under the force of a competition with which they are unable to cope, or in which, while the employers possess extreme powers of position and capital, they are deficient in any corresponding sense of responsibility to their workpeople. I hope the day is not far distant in which an absentee employer would be looked upon with as much contempt and disapproval as are absentee landlords. If such a healthy public opinion should ever become dominant, it is to be hoped it will be most active in influencing those employers whose works are conducted in great part or wholly upon the piecework method.'

We have, in this able explanation, a frank admission of the whole case of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers against the introduction of piecework into their trade. No Trade Unionist could have expressed more forcibly than Denny has done the impossibility of a uniform rate under a system of individual piecework bargains. It is true that Denny trusted to the personal intervention of an enlightened and benevolent employer to mitigate the evil. But we need not wonder that the workmen have hesitated to admit a system which avowedly involves the complete surrender of their position. Moreover, it is at least doubtful whether the good employer, who protected his workmen against his own foreman's zeal to lower the expense of production, would long survive in competition with his less scrupulous rivals, who drove the sharpest possible bargain with their hands.

It is interesting to observe that the hint thrown out by William Denny, as to the importance of workmen systematically checking all the piecework earnings by the standard time rate, has since been followed up by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. In some cases, piecework is now recognised by the Union, even in highly organised districts, on the understanding that every man in the shop shall draw every week time and a quarter wages, whatever his production has been. If at the end of a job there is a balance due to him, he is allowed to receive it. Now, it is obvious that under this arrangement it is possible to maintain something like a uniform rate. The natural tendency of the foreman to reduce the rates is checked by his knowledge, first, that in no case will it profit him to make the piecework price work out at less than time and a quarter, even for the slowest men in the shop; and secondly, that, unless the piecework prices work out sufficiently above that minimum to furnish a real incentive for extra exertion, the operatives, secure in any

event of time and a quarter wages, would quietly drop back to
time-work speed. Such a method of remuneration cannot, how­
ever, be classed as piecework proper. It is rather a high scale of
time wages, with a bonus on extra output.

The considerations which converted William Denny from his
enthusiasm for competitive piecework apply, not only to the
various departments of the engineering and shipbuilding trades,
but also to the work of carpenters, plumbers, stonemasons and
bricklayers. In all these trades there is so much difference
between job and job that piecework is inconsistent with collective
bargaining. The work of the plumber engaged to lay pipes, of
varying sizes, in all kinds of situations, can obviously be estimated
only by the time employed. The masons, chiselling stones of
varied hardness, different shapes, and more or less free from
troublesome flaws, could not possibly frame a list of piecework
rates which would yield identical wage to identical effort. The
same is true of the multifarious work of the carpenter and joiner.
When we come to the actual erection of houses, in brick or stone,
it may, at first sight, seem as if uniformity was more possible.
But if we watch the line of bricklayers or stonemasons working
side by side at building a wall, or putting up the carcase of a
house, we shall see that it would be impossible precisely to reckon
up the work accomplished by any individual among them. Nor
has this ever been attempted by the most exacting employer.
‘Piecework,’ in putting up walls or houses, has, indeed, been the
subject of long and bitter controversy among the bricklayers.
But piecework in this trade has always meant, not the payment
of each individual workman by the piece, but the letting out of a
sub-contract for the whole job to a ‘piecemaster,’ who gets it
done by bricklayers at time wages. This system of sub-contract,
mistermed ‘piecework’ to the confusion of outsiders, is objected
to for the same reason as the coalminers allege against the
‘Butty system.’ The working sub-contractor forces the pace in
order to gain the advantage, not of his own extra exertion alone,
but also that of his gang. It is, in fact, a fraudulent attempt to
obtain piecework exertion whilst paying only time wages. And
as the system, in the opinion of the experts, almost inevitably
tends to the ‘scamping’ of the work by the sub-contractor or
piecemaster, it has long since been given up by respectable
builders, and is now usually prohibited in architects’ speci­
fications.

In marked contrast with the Trade Unions, such as the Cotton
Operatives’ and Coalminers’ which insist on piecework, and with
those, such as the Bricklayers' and Stonemasons', which insist on
timework, stand those societies which accept with seeming
indifference either method of remuneration. The various Trade
Unions of the compositors, in all parts of the country, have, for
over a century, formally recognised both the 'scale' of piece-
work rates and the 'stab' or time wages. In the numerous
revisions of the collective agreements between employers and
employed, the compositors have constantly striven to maintain a
standard rate. 'Speaking generally,' reports the Revision Sub-
Committee to the London Society of Compositors in 1890, 'our
desire has been to so amend the scale as to place all compositors
as far as possible on an equality, no matter what class of work
they may be engaged upon, or whether employed as piece or stab
hands—allowance, of course, being made for the varying capa-
bilities of those employed.'

Although the work of a compositor includes many different varieties, these, unlike certain engineer-
ing operations, are all capable of fairly precise enumeration in a
'scale' extending to between 30 and 40 pages octavo. Thus,
piecework is in no way inconsistent with collective bargaining,
or the maintenance of a standard rate, and is therefore not
objected to. On the other hand, the compositor is not liable to be
'speeded up,' or driven by machinery, or even by a zealous
foreman, so that there is no reason to object to time wages, if
the employer prefers this system. As a matter of fact most
straightforward setting-up of ordinary book matter and daily

1 Report of Sub-Committee appointed to revise the London Scale of Prices, 1890.

2 The system of payment by the piece was apparently universal in British
printing offices in the eighteenth century. The introduction of 'establishment,'
or time wages, was an innovation of the employers at the beginning of the present
century, consented to by the operatives with some reluctance, and denounced by
some of them as leading to reduction of rates. (See Place MSS. 27799-99/103.)
The acceptance of both systems of remuneration has involved the enactment of
various subsidiary rules to check unfair wages calculated to depress rates. Thus em-
ployers are not allowed to change from one system to another without due notice, as
otherwise the operative would be required to do all difficult composition by the piece,
the 'fat' (or profitable work) being given out at time wages. Elaborate arrange-
ments are made for the fair distribution of 'the fat,' the 'clicker' who hands out
the 'copy' to the different compositors being appointed and frequently paid by the
whole body of workmen. Many disputes have arisen from employers attempting to
withhold 'the fat' from the piecework compositors; or, on the other hand, to use
the pieceworkers to force the pace of the timeworkers. Compositors' Unions there-
fore prefer that the employer should confine himself to one system or the other.

In 1876 a joint committee of the Glasgow master printers and their compositors
decided that the 'clicking system,' or fair sharing of the 'fat,' was equivalent to an
addition to a farthing per 1000, this advance being conceded to the compositors
where that system did not prevail. MS. Minutes of Glasgow Typographical
Society, 12 December, 1876.
newspaper work is done by the piece, whereas corrections and special jobs difficult of calculation are done by 'stab' men.

The other leading instance of an impartial acceptance of both piecework and time wages is offered by the United Society of Boilermakers and Iron-shipbuilders. Here the bulk of the work in building new ships is done by the piece, at rates settled, as we have already mentioned, between the district committee of the Union and the particular firms or the local employers' association. On the other hand, repairing work, which cannot be classified in advance, is done at time wages. Thus the bye-laws for the Mersey district declare that 'piecework of any description is not allowed on repair jobs in either wet or dry docks; and no man shall be in any way compelled to put in any given number of rivets, or tasked as to other work, which he shall do during the day; but in all cases, the principle of a fair day's work for a fair day's pay be faithfully and honourably carried out by every member of this Association.'1 We see the same distinction unconsciously influencing another trade, the tinplate workers, who, less fortunate than the boilermakers, have not succeeded in organising their whole trade into a single society. The General Union of Tinplate Workers, with Liverpool for its headquarters, whose work is mainly connected with shipbuilding, and is so diverse as to render it difficult, if not impossible, to construct any piecework list, insists on time wages. On the other hand the National Amalgamated Tinplate Workers' Union, whose headquarters is Wolverhampton, and which comprises mainly the artificers of sheet metal pots and pans, has a regular list of prices, and prefers to work by the piece. So closely does this difference of policy coincide with difference of work that the Manchester Branch of the General Union (the shipyard society), which finds itself by exception employed in the fashioning of pots and pans, refuses to abide by the principle of time work followed by the port branches, and elects to work by the piece. In both cases the aim is the same, namely the maintenance of a standard rate. But the difference of policy between the two societies, arising, as can be seen, from the difference in their respective tasks, is not clearly understood by either, and is the subject of constant friction between them. And so it happens that (forgetting the example of its own Manchester Branch) the General Union of Tinplate Workers accuses the National Amalgamated Tinplate Workers' Union of betraying the central position of Trade Unionism by

not insisting on time wages. On the other hand the latter society, confident in its piecework lists, sees no reason why it should not establish branches of pieceworkers in the ports, where time work has hitherto prevailed, and where piecework would probably break down all collective bargaining.

This instance indicates how unconscious particular Trade Unions may be of the principles upon which their empirical action has really been based. The same unconsciousness sometimes leads to a persistence in whichever method of remuneration has been customary, long after the circumstances have changed. Thus the cabinetmakers, among whom collective bargaining in any elaborate form has practically disappeared, might possibly have maintained their organisation if they had, like the bricklayers and stonemasons, insisted on reverting to time wages. At the beginning of this century, the cabinetmakers had elaborate lists of prices, collectively agreed to between employers and employed; and we have ample evidence of the efficiency with which the contemporary cabinetmakers' Unions conducted their collective bargaining. In consequence of the great changes in and multiplication of patterns, and the alteration of processes, the lists have long since been obsolete, and no one has yet found it possible to classify the innumerable jobs now involved in the manufacture of furniture. 'Estimate work,' 'lump work,' and other forms of the individual bargain accordingly prevail. So strong, however, has been the tradition and custom of piecework in the trade that none of the various Unions which have from time to time arisen during the last half century have been able to stand out for time wages. Collective action accordingly now seldom rises higher than the 'shop bargain,' and even this frequently breaks down.

Another instance of a customary adherence to a traditional method of remuneration is to be found in the ironfounders' and engineers' rigid refusal to recognise piecework even on those jobs which involve the constant repetition of precisely the same operation. We have already explained why the bulk of the work in an engineering shop cannot be done at piecework rates consistently with collective bargaining. But with the enormous expansion of the trade, and the application of machinery to particular processes, a considerable section of engineers and 'machine moulders' have long found themselves turning out a constant succession of identical articles for which it would be quite practicable to frame a uniform piecework list which would allow of collective bargaining. So strong, however, was the traditional feeling of the mechanics against piecework (meaning 'estimate
work’ and individual bargaining) that the Amalgamated Society of Engineers positively refused, down to 1892, to allow any employer to introduce any piecework whatsoever, with the consequence that establishment after establishment became closed to the Union. At last, at their quinquennial ‘Parliament’ in 1892, the engineers decided to permit the formation of piecework lists, in the cases in which they were practicable, and appointed salaried officers to carry out this new form of collective bargaining. The Friendly Society of Ironfounders still refuses to take this step, with the result that the automatic machine process of casting has fallen to a separate class of workmen, who are not eligible for membership to this old-established Union.

We are now in a position to come to some general conclusion as to the attitude which Trade Unions take up with regard to piecework and time work. It is not true that Trade Unions object to piecework as such; in fact, a majority of Trade Unionists either willingly accept, or else positively insist on, that system of remuneration. Nor is it true that employers universally prefer piecework. The members of the great race of sub-contractors in all industries are always trying to employ time workers, in order to obtain for themselves the fullest possible advantage of their own driving power. In the same way, employers whose machinery is rapidly improving complain of the inequity of the piecework system, as being apt to deprive them of part of the advantage of an increase in the speed of working. What the capitalist seeks is to get more work for the old pay. Sometimes this can be achieved best by piecework, sometimes by time work. Workmen, on the other hand, strive to obtain more pay for the same number of working hours. For the moment, at any rate, the individual operative can most easily secure this by piecework. But not even for the sake of getting more pay for the same number of hours’ work will the experienced workman revert to the individual bargain, with all its dangers. Accordingly the Trade Unions accept piecework only when it is consistent with collective bargaining, that is, when a standard list of prices can be arrived at between the employers on the one hand, and the representatives of the whole body of workmen on the other. As a matter of fact this is practicable, so far as concerns anything above mere unskilled labouring, in a majority of the organised industries, in which, therefore, piecework prevails by consent of both masters and men. It is, indeed, impossible to decide whether Trade Unionism has, on the whole, favoured or discouraged the substitution of piecework for time wages. On the
one hand, every increase in Trade Union organisation, and especially every extension of the class of salaried Trade Union officials, has made more possible the arrangement of definite piecework lists. This process is now extending from trade to trade. The very establishment of these lists has, on the other hand, lessened the employers' desire to introduce piecework, whilst to any method of remuneration involving individual bargaining, such as 'estimate' or 'lump' work, the Trade Unions have shown implacable hostility.

And just as the fundamental idea of the standard rate has enabled us to understand the Trade Union attitude towards piecework, so, too, we shall find it throwing light upon various minor regulations of particular Trade Unions. Various Unions of operatives working at time wages have from time to time attempted to secure a real, as distinguished from a nominal identity in the rate of remuneration, by fixing, not merely the minimum money wage, but also the maximum amount of work to be done for that wage. Some of these rules have obtained notoriety as classic instances of the folly and perversity of Trade Unions. The fifth bye-law of the Bradford Lodge of the Labourers' Union of 1867 was quoted before the Trade Union Commission as follows:—

'You are strictly cautioned not to outstep good rules by doing double the work you are required, and causing others to do the same, in order to gain a smile from the master.'

And the following rule of the Leeds Lodge of the Bricklayers' Labourers' Union was at the same time given:—

'Any brother in the Union professing to carry any more than the common number, which is eight bricks, shall be fined one shilling, to be paid within one month, or remain out of the benefit until such fine be paid.'

Nor were such rules entirely confined to unskilled labourers. The Manchester Bricklayers' Association were stated, in 1869, to have a rule providing that

'Any man found running or working beyond a regular speed shall be fined 2s. 6d. for the first offence, 5s. for the second, 10s. for the third, and if still persisting, shall be dealt with as the Committee think proper.'

The Friendly Society of Operative Stonemasons adopted, in 1865, the following rule:—

1 Evidence of Mr. A. Mault, Secretary of the Manchester Builders' Association. Q. 3120. 2 Q. 3122. 3 Thornton, pp. 350-1.
In localities where that most obnoxious and destructive system generally known as "chasing" is persisted in, lodges should use every effort to put it down. Not to take less time than that taken by an average mason in the execution of the first portion of each description of work is the practice that should be adopted among us as much as possible; and where it is plainly visible that any member or other individual is striving to overwork or "chase" his fellow-workmen, thereby acting in a manner calculated to lead to the discharge of members or a reduction of their wages, the party so acting shall be summoned before the lodge, and if the charge be satisfactorily proved a fine shall be inflicted. 1

These and similar regulations, widely advertised by the Trade Union Commission of 1867-9, met with universal condemnation. It does not seem to have been perceived that, however bad were their secondary results, they were, in their inception, a necessary protection of any standard rate upon a time-work basis. It is a necessary incident of the collective bargain that one man should not underbid another; and this underbidding can as easily take place by the offer of more work for the same hour's wage, as by the offer of the normal amount of work for a lower hourly wage. By underbidding in the hourly rate, this would be lowered for all. It follows equally that by underbidding in point of the intensity of effort, this would, in the same way, soon be raised for all. But the workmen's bye-laws were designed also to meet a more insidious attack. Many pushing foremen, in building contracts, intent on getting the utmost work out of their men, were accustomed to bribe particular workmen with beer, or by the promise of a slightly increased rate of pay, to work at exceptional speed, with the object of 'pulling on' all the other workmen to the same speed. These 'bell horses,' as they were termed by the workmen, were, in fact, used to increase the intensity of the work beyond the normal standard tacitly implied in the collective bargain, much in the same way as the pieceworking Butty master forced the speed of the time-working coal hewer. The practice was, in fact, a method of obtaining extra work from the whole gang, whilst paying only one or two men in the gang for the extra exertion involved. When done without the men's knowledge, the practice amounted to a fraudulent evasion of the bargain.

Such practices on the part of employers and their foremen would quickly have rendered a standard rate and collective bargaining impossible, and it was not unnatural that the workmen should have adopted regulations in their own defence.

1 Rule 11, in Laws of the Friendly Society of Operative Stonemasons. (Bolton, 1867: pp. 86. 32mo.)
The coalhewers and the strikers, exposed, as we have seen, to being similarly 'driven,' met the attack by insisting on themselves receiving piecework rates. The cottonspinners and cotton weavers protected themselves against the constant 'speeding up' of the machinery by elaborating their piecework lists. The builder's labourer whose fetch and carry work could hardly be paid by the piece could find no other expedient than fixing by collective agreement the maximum task as well as the minimum wage.

But if the use of 'bell horses' is a fraud on the men, the regulations devised to check this practice may easily work out so as to be a fraud on the employer. He has, in effect, contracted for his labour at an all-round rate, on the assumption that he receives a normal average of work. In the group of workmen there will, of course, be some of average speed, together with a few quicker men, and a few slower. Any regulations which tend to restrict the quick workers necessarily lower the average of the whole, upon which the collective bargain has by implication been based.

This practice of 'levelling down' the quantity of labour is seen at its worst when it is used as a weapon not of defence but of aggression. It is one thing to prohibit individual workmen from allowing themselves to be used as a means of exacting unpaid extra labour from their fellows. It would be quite another matter if Trade Unions, unable to raise the sum of their wages, advocated to all their members an insidious diminution of their energy without notice to the employer. This might be as much a fraudulent alteration of the implied bargain as the practice of the Butty master. We know of one case of this nature, the so-called 'go canny' policy, adopted for a short time by the National Union of Dock Labourers in Liverpool. The employers had steadfastly refused to increase the remuneration for their low-paid work, and the men found themselves powerless to obtain what they considered a living wage. In desperation they adopted the expedient of not putting any energy into their work. In this somewhat remarkable case the labourers alleged that they were only following the practice of the commercial man.

'There is no ground for doubting,' observed the report of their executive committee, 'that the real relation of the employer to the workman is simply this—to secure the largest amount of the best work for the smallest wages; and, undesirable as this relation may be to the workman, there is no escape from it except to adopt the situation and apply it to the common sense commercial
rule which provides a commodity in accordance with the price. . . . The employer insists upon fixing the amount he will give for an hour's labour without the slightest consideration for the labourer; there is surely, therefore, nothing wrong in the labourer, on the other hand, fixing the amount and the quality of the labour he will give in an hour for the price fixed by the employer. If the employers of labour or purchasers of goods refuse to pay for the genuine article, they must be content with shoddy and veneer. This is their own orthodox doctrine which they urge us to study. ¹

From the old standpoint of a purely competitive individualism, it is not easy to deny the men's right to sell an adulterated form of labour if they think it to their advantage to do so. If, as in the instance cited, the men openly proclaim their intention, there is no question of fraud; and they may, from this point of view, fairly claim to be acting like an exceptionally honest trader who, whilst selling shoddy goods, does not pretend that they are anything else. The employers may retaliate by dismissal. The men may, in return, persuade their successors to adopt the same method. The quarrel becomes a 'struggle for existence,' in which the 'fittest' in these arts of war may survive.

We have, however, come to believe that in such internecine struggles, the interests of the community as a whole almost inevitably suffer. In spite of the protests of John Bright, successive Parliaments have prohibited the adulteration of commodities. But adulteration of labour is infinitely more injurious to the community. We have, in fact, in this case a striking illustration of the utter fallacy of the statement that 'labour is a commodity, an article saleable and purchaseable,' which could not logically be treated 'as anything else.' ² We cannot separate the quantity or quality of the day's work from its effect upon the health and character of the human being who is rendering it. The sub-contractor's practice of 'driving,' the constant pressure upon a man to work always at the very top of his speed, will quickly break down the health of the worker, and impoverish the nation by producing premature old age. On the other hand, systematic loitering will destroy the character and efficiency of even the most resolute worker. In adulterating the product, you adulterate the man. To the unskilled labourers of a great city,

¹ Report of Executive of the National Union of Dock Labourers in Great Britain and Ireland, 1891 (Glasgow, 1891). The men quoted the following sentence from Jevons' Primer of Political Economy. 'The employer, generally speaking, is right in getting work done at the lowest possible cost; and if there is a supply of labour forthcoming at lower rates of wages, it would not be wise in him to pay higher rates.'

already demoralised by irregularity of employment and reduced below the average in capacity for persistent work, the doctrine of 'go canny' may easily bring about the final ruin of personal character. It was an instinctive appreciation of this truth which led the responsible Trade Union officials unhesitatingly to denounce the new departure of the Liverpool dock labourers.¹ It remains, so far as we know, a unique instance in Trade Union annals.

When we turn from time workers to pieceworkers, we find the subsidiary regulations called into being to defend the standard rate wholly free from any objectionable character, beyond a certain inevitable complexity. The first series of these is concerned with accuracy of measurement. Employers have always claimed the right of making, by their agents or themselves, all the calculations involved in preparing their pay sheets, and they have expected the operatives implicitly to accept their figures. Against this contention the Trade Unions have persistently and successfully struggled. In all the cases in which the operative is unable easily to check the computation, it is obvious that such an arrangement left the standard rate entirely at the master's mercy.

¹ In weighing how was the collier to obtain justice? He was at the bottom of the pit, and could not see the master's nominee at the top—and so again there arose the cry of being cheated in weight. For years this was a bone of contention; and in revising the Inspections (Mines Regulation) Act of 1860, delegates of the men prevailed upon the government to insert a clause, ordering that coal should be duly weighed by a just steelyard at the pit's mouth, and that the men might, at their own cost, appoint a checkweighman who should not further interfere with the working but to see and take an account of the men's work. Opposition to this clause was strongly offered by the delegates of the employers . . . the masters did not want a weighing clause at all . . . A compromise was submitted to. The weighing clause was incorporated with another clause—the 29th—with a rider added to it by the employers, viz., that the checkweighman should be selected from persons employed at that colliery."²

Without casting any special imputation on coalowners, it may be said that the miners' suspicions have been so far borne out by evidence that Parliament has progressively strengthened the clause thus adopted in 1860. As the law now stands, a simple

¹ It is only fair to Trade Union officials to say that the two enthusiasts who, in despair of otherwise benefiting the unfortunate labourers, initiated this policy, did not belong to the ranks of the workmen—a fact which the reader of their able and ingenious argument will already have perceived. They were shortly afterwards formally excluded, as middle-class men, from the Trade Union Congress at Glasgow in 1892.

majority of the miners in any one pit can decide to have a check-
weighman elected by the pit, and paid by a compulsory stoppage
from the earnings of every pieceworker employed, including even
those who voted against the proposal. Any person who is or has
been a miner may be elected to the post, whether the employer
likes it or not, and the law courts insist that he shall be allowed
free access to the weighing machines, and given every facility for
checking the weights.

A further step in the same direction has been taken at the
instance of the powerful Unions of cotton operatives. What the
coalminers have obtained is the right to have the employers' cal-
culations checked by the men's official. The textile operatives
have obtained, not only the publication in advance by the
employer of the exact particulars on which he will calculate the
piecework earnings, but have also secured the appointment of a
government officer specially charged with seeing that these par-
ticulars are correctly stated.¹ The 'particulars clause,' adopted for
cotton weavers in the Factory Act of the Conservative Govern-
ment of 1891, and extended to all textile workers by the amending
Act of the Liberal Government of 1895, will, in all probability, be
applied, within a few years, to all piecework trades in which the
computation of earnings lends itself to mistake or fraud.² By
this clause the employer is required to state in writing, before
the job is begun, all the particulars (including the rate of
payment) required for the precise computation of the operatives'
earnings.

But there are other ways of defrauding the pieceworker
besides inaccurate calculations. The weight of coal hewn by
each miner may be accurately measured at the pit's mouth, but
if he is sent to work in a distant or difficult seam, the standard
tonnage rate may be very far from securing identical pay for
identical effort. The cottonspinner finds his list of prices a
delusion if his mules have to be frequently stopped to repair
breakages caused by the bad quality of the raw cotton. And
even those who are aware of the coalminers' 'county basis,' and
of the elaborate 'cotton lists,' seldom realise how technical and

¹ It is much to the credit of the North-East Lancashire Operative Weavers'
Association, and to the fair-mindedness of the leading employers, that the veteran
official of the weavers' Union, who had for a generation fought the men's battles,
was, by common consent, marked out as the fittest person to hold this important
new office. Mr. T. Birtwistle has fully justified his appointment, and has given
universal satisfaction to all parties.

² The Factory Act of 1895 empowers the Home Secretary to apply this clause, by
mere administrative order, to any piecework trade.
how minute are the adjustments which are necessary to attain this end, or how manifold and incessant are the complaints requiring attention. The best way of bringing the facts home to the general reader will, we think, be to give a few extracts from actual proceedings. Thus, the Joint Committee of the Northumberland Coalowners and Miners settled, in a single day, the following as well as many other cases:

**Burradon.**—Agreement confirmed. Yard Seam, East side, until end of current quarter, 1s. 7½d. per ton; afterwards 1s. 6½d. per ton.

**Cramlington, Amelia Pit.**—Agreement confirmed: (a) Yankee Jack system shall be abolished whenever the owners find it convenient to do so, and upon abolition the hewing price in the Low Main and Yard Seams shall be advanced nine per cent. In the case of the Main Coal Seam the unscreened hewing prices shall be sixty-three per cent. of the present round coal hewing prices, and upon such abolition they shall be advanced nine per cent.

**Walker.**—Agreement confirmed. Beaumont and Brockwell Seams. Long wall or broken hewing price shall be paid when forty yards from commencement of long wall, i.e., forty yards from fast wall side.

**New Backwork.**—Men request payment for lamps when required to use them in the whole. To be paid extra 1d. per ton in bord and pillar whole workings, in accordance with county arrangement, when required to use lamps.

**Seaton Burn.**—Owners desire hewing price for long wall in Bowers' coal in Low Main Seam to be fixed. That standard prices now being paid be reduced 3d. per ton.

Even more diversified are the adjustments of the cotton operatives. Here are some extracts from the diary of the secretary of the Bolton spinners:

**January 5th, 1892.**—Mr. Pennington, of the Hindley Twist Company, called here this morning. He agreed to weekly pays, and to discontinue the system of one spinner to two pairs of mules. I am to go through the mills on Monday next, and if spinning is not satisfactory, will be made so; and we are to see in what way the mules can be speeded up so as to give better wages. Work is to be resumed on Thursday morning.

**January 6th.**—Went to Peake's Place Mill (Messrs. Trustram's), Halliwell, and arranged that the men on the three pairs of mules spinning coarse counts shall receive 2s. 6d. a week extra, until certain alterations and repairs to the mules have been made.

**January 7th.**—Accompanied by Mr. Percival (the secretary of the employers' association), I went to Mr. Robert Briercliffe's Mill, Moses Gate. They have no less rims in stock, so it was agreed that the prices per 100 lbs. for spinning in No. 1 Mill shall be increased 6d. for one month during which the work is to be made satisfactory. The firm have likewise conceded the request of their men and will adopt payment by indicator. The notice to leave work is consequently withdrawn.

**January 8th.**—Complaints are to hand from Messrs. McConnell and Co's

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1 Proceedings of Joint Committee on 14 Nov. 1891. (Northumberland Miners' Minutes, 1891.)
Sedgwick Mill, Manchester, of bobbins breaking; being short of doffing tins; and of the men on six pairs of mules being unable to earn the basis wages.

January 12th.—From our own men at Waterloo Mill, Bolton, comes a complaint of the rooms being too cold, and also irregular running of the engine.

January 19.—Have tested the counts at Melrose Mill, and found the average 2½ hanks wrong. The men are to leave work at breakfast time tomorrow if counts are not put right.

April 7th, 1893.—Mr. Percival and myself, at the request of Messrs. James Marsden and Sons, went through their No. 4 Mill to look at the spinning on the counts complained of on Tuesday. We found it below the usual standard at this firm, and Mr. Joseph Marsden undertook to see to its rectification.

April 10th.—Want of window blinds is the complaint from our own men at the Parkside Mill, Golborne.

April 18th.—Our members at Messrs. Robert Haworth, Ltd., Castle Mill, Hindley, complain of the overbearing conduct of their overlooker. On investigation, found that they were more to blame than the overlooker.

May 9th.—The drosophore humidifier at Robin Hood, No. 2 Mill, is so detrimental to the health of the men that I am to request the firm not to use it further.

June 12th.—Mr. Percival, Mr. Robin and myself went to Howebridge Mills to test counts in No. 2 Mill. We found them fully one hank finer than are paid for. The firm promise to put them right but that is not sufficient for us, as they will be wrong again before the week end. We suggested they should adopt payment by indicator, and the firm subsequently agreed to try a few pairs.1

We see the same determination to obtain identical payment for identical effort in the Trade Union regulations enforcing specific additions for extra exertion or inconvenience. Hence the ‘Working Rules,’ drawn up in almost every town by the master builders and the several sections of building operatives, include, besides the standard rate for the normal hours and ordinary work, determinate charges for ‘walking time’ beyond a certain distance, and ‘lodging money’ when sent away from home.2 In trades in which men provide their own steel tools, ‘grinding money’ is a usual extra.3 When any class of work involves special unpleasantness or injury to clothing, ‘black money’ or ‘dirty money’ is sometimes stipulated for. Thus, the boilermakers and engineers receive extra rates for jobs connected with oil-carrying vessels. ‘Men working inside the ballast tanks or between the deep floors under the engine beds,

1 These diaries are printed in the Annual Reports of the Bolton Operative Cottonspinners’ Provincial Association.

2 See, for instance, the Local Code of Rules for the Guidance of Masons, signed by the Central Association of Master Builders of London and the Friendly Society of Operative Stonemasons, 23 June, 1892.

3 ‘Patternmakers, millwrights and machine joiners on dismissal must receive two hours notice, so as to grind their tools, or be paid two hours in lieu thereof.’ London Bye-laws of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, April, 1891.
after the vessel has been regularly employed at sea, to receive one quarter day, or 2 hours extra for each full day or night, as compensation for the very dirty work." The foregoing are all instances of 'extras' charged by Trade Unions of timeworkers. But we find a similar list put forward by Trade Unions on a piecework basis. The National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives prescribes, in minute and technical detail, for a long list of extra pieces of work, to be specially paid for. And a large part of the length and complication of the well-known 'scale' of the compositors is due to their insistence on explicitly defined extra rates from every kind of composition involving more labour than 'common matter.' It is impossible to convey any adequate idea of the number and variety of the 'extras' thus formally agreed to between employers and employed:—'bottom notes,' 'side notes,' 'under runners,' 'small chases,' 'large pages,' 'pamphlets,' 'catalogues,' 'undisplayed broadsheets,' 'table work,' 'column work,' 'parallel matter,' 'split fractions,' 'superiors,' 'inferiors,' 'slip matter,' 'interlinear matter,' 'prefatory matter,' 'indices,' 'appendices,' and what not. Finally, as if to discourage vain learning, Hebrew, Arabic and Syriac, together with 'pedigrees' are 'to be paid double the price of common matter.'

We do not think that, after so long and detailed an examination of the standard rate, we need weary the reader by any lengthy exposition of the Trade Union regulations prohibiting arbitrary fines and deductions, or any form of 'truck.' It may seem unreasonable for the workmen to object to the employer's system of maintaining discipline in the factory. But if that system takes the form of imposition of fines for minor offences, and, as is usually the case, the employer puts the fines into his own pocket, it is clear that the average amount of the fines per week is, in effect, an exactly proportionate reduction of the standard rate. An employer using this method of enforcing the necessary discipline finds himself buying his labour cheaper than his competitors, by an amount varying precisely in proportion to the frequency and severity of the penalties which he himself imposes. The same arbitrary character attaches to the once

1 Rule VI. of *Bye-laws for the Mersey District*, United Society of Boilermakers. 1889.

2 *The London Scale of Prices for Compositors' Work*. 1891.

3 A system of fines may be less objectionable if the money goes to the operatives' sick club, or some other fund for their common benefit. But sick clubs or superannuation funds connected with particular establishments, especially if membership is compulsory, are objectionable from the Trade Union point of view on other grounds, notably that of diminishing the operative's independence.
universal system of making the operatives pay for minor breakages, or for incidental requirements of their work. ‘In the good old times of low wages, irregular work, and poor living,’ ironically writes an official of the cottonspinners, ‘operatives used to have to pay for broken bobbins, gas, new brushes, find their own oil-cans, renew parts of their machines that got broken, and no end of other nice little things that made a fair hole in their wages.’ Against all these practices the cottonspinners have long since made good their protest. The cotton weavers, of whom a large majority are women, are still occasionally imposed upon, and the rules of their Unions accordingly still include a peremptory injunction against submitting to any such deductions. ‘Never pay, or agree to pay,’ say, for instance, the Preston rules, ‘for any shuttles, forks, brushes, or any piece of machinery, matter or thing belonging to the master, or used in his business in any way whatever, except what you may have by sheer negligence wilfully or maliciously broken or destroyed; and if they stop it from your wages, bring the case before the Committee at their next meeting.’ But it is not only such arbitrary charges as fines and deductions, which necessarily vary from mill to mill,

1 Cotton Factory Times, 22nd July, 1892.
2 Rules of the Preston and District Power Loom Weavers’ Association (Preston, 1891), p. 20.

In piecework trades, the employer seeks to escape paying for any but perfect articles, and usually claims the right to reject, without appeal, any that he chooses. This has led to a whole series of conflicts in different industries. The Trade Unionist contention has been (1) that the operative should not be made to suffer for failures due to the imperfection of material, or defects in the process; (2) that in any case if the employer refuses to pay anything for the work on the ground of its imperfection, he should not retain the article for his own profit, but destroy it; and (3) that there should be some means of appeal against the employer’s arbitrary judgment in his own cause. Thus the potters have fought a long battle for the last sixty years against the condition termed ‘good from oven,’ by which the workman was only paid for such articles as came out perfect from the firing oven. As he has no power to select material, and no control over the firing of the oven, this condition throws upon him not only the cost of his own negligence, but also that due to imperfection of raw material, defects of fixed plant, and carelessness of foremen or other operatives. It is a further aggravation that the employer arbitrarily decides which articles should be rejected as imperfect, and was formerly even free to retain and sell those which he had thus escaped paying for. After the great strike of 1866 the Staffordshire potters succeeded in remedying the latter grievance. It was agreed that articles rejected as imperfect should be broken up, a great temptation being thus removed from unscrupulous employers. But ‘good from oven’ still remains the basis of payment, the Trade Union demand of ‘good from hand’ being still resisted by the employers.

A particularly aggravated form of the same grievance is resisted by the Friendly Society of Ironfounders, whose members are all paid by time. Notwithstanding this, and the fact that they neither choose the raw material nor direct the process, attempts are from time to time made by employers to make deductions for castings which turn out badly.
that are fundamentally inconsistent with the collective settlement of a standard rate. Even such uniform regular and definite payments as the 'loom rent' of the hand-working weaver of cotton, silk, or carpets, the frame rent of the hosiery worker, and the trough or wheel rent of the Sheffield cutler, have been found, by long and painful experience to be equally destructive of any definite standard of earnings. This arises from their being continuous and calculated by time, whilst the operative's work is irregular and paid for by the piece. In all these cases, rent of the machine is exacted by the employer whether the operative is given work or not. Thus, as the frame-work knitters allege, when they paid rent for their frames, the employers were tempted to spin out the work over much longer periods than was necessary, doling it out in very small portions in order to keep them paying rent as long as possible. And the Macclesfield silk weavers complain that they are kept always half employed, the giver-out of work finding his advantage in getting it done on as many separate looms as possible, from each of which a full weekly rent is derived. It is easy to see how such a system may open a way for personal tyranny and exaction. It is more to our immediate purpose to notice how incompatible it is with collective bargaining and a standard rate. If the employer can give out work in unequal quantities to different operatives, but deduct from each an equal sum at the end of the week, no fixed piecework list will secure identical pay for identical work. If A is given thirty pieces to weave, and B only fifteen, both may be paid at the same rate of a shilling per piece, and both may pay the same loom rent of five shillings per week. Yet at the end of the week the net price for weaving one piece will have been to A tenpence and to B eightpence. Thus the rate of payment for identical work will vary from operative to operative, from week to week, and even from firm to firm, according to the way in which, at the uncontrolled discretion of the employers, the work is distributed.1 A similar objection applies, it will be seen, to the whole system of

1 Many minor payments similar in principle to loom-rent exist in various industries. Where the operatives are unorganised, and especially if they are women or girls, employers are apt to attempt to charge them for some part of the manufacturing process, or for incidental stores or material. This is sometimes done to avoid the cost and trouble of proper supervision to prevent waste and breakages. In other cases it arises as an incident of a growing specialisation of function. Thus, cotton weavers used to oil their own looms, but the employers found that it was better done by a professional oiler, who was thereupon employed. Any attempt to deduct even a penny per week per pair of looms to pay his wages is peremptorily stopped by the weavers' Union. Similar developments of specialisation in cotton-spinning might be cited—the uprise of the 'strap-piecer,' and the 'bobbin-carrier'
'truck,' or the compulsory purchase by the operatives of commodities or materials supplied by the employers.\(^1\) This is resisted by the Unions on the larger ground that it amounts to an insidious enslavement of the wage-earner and his family. But it is also inconsistent with any uniformity in the net rate at which employers obtain their labour, and with definite standard of real income of the wage-earner under such a system, notwithstanding a nominal uniformity of rate, both labour cost and real wages will vary according to the extent of the truck business in each firm, the economy and ability with which this subsidiary storekeeping is managed, and the profit or ‘loading’ which each employer chooses to exact, the latter amounting in effect to a fraud upon the workman.\(^2\)

We see, therefore, that the adoption of a standard rate—that is, of payment for labour according to some definite standard, uniform in its application—is not by any means so simple a matter as would at first sight appear. Whether we accept payment by the hour or payment by the piece, so great are the complications of modern industry, and so ingenious are the devices for evasion, that a long series of subsidiary regulations is for instance. But no deduction for their wages is permitted by the cottonspinners' Unions (Cotton Factory Times, 10th June, 1892). Women woollen weavers are, however, still made to pay the ‘tuner’ of their looms, his work of ‘setting’ the warp and weft being done by the male weavers for themselves.

1 The Miners’ Conference in 1863 made this a special subject of complaint. ‘The truck system still prevails in Scotland and Wales, despite of both equity and law. That no man should be forced, as a condition of work, to spend his money on necessaries for the benefit of his employer is both law and reason. In Scotland . . . . the men are paid only by the fortnight, the month, or longer; and in the interim, tickets for food or clothing are furnished, by which, at certain shops, articles are furnished at an enormous overcharge above a fair market average of cost. In some cases the poor collier rarely sees current coin, all being forestalled betwixt the term of pay and work. . . . . . Allied to this, in Staffordshire and elsewhere, the butties and doggies, or middlemen, still continue to influence and compel the colliers to spend part of their wages in drink, as a condition of employment. In other cases, in Yorkshire, candles and powder must be purchased of the steward, or some other man, at exorbitant prices above the market rate of profit.’


These practices have now been stopped by the miners’ Unions in all well-organised districts. Similar grievances are, however, still complained of in some other trades, where the operatives are powerless to insist on the Truck Acts being obeyed in spirit as well as in the letter.

2 4 Wherever the workmen are paid in goods, or are compelled to purchase at the master’s shop, the evils are very great; much injustice is done to the men, and much misery results from it. Whatever may have been the intentions of the master in such a case, the real effect is to deceive the workman as to the amount he receives in exchange for his labour. On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures, by Charles Babbage (London, 1832), p. 255.
found necessary to defend the main position. The whole argument for this series of subsidiary regulations rests, it is clear, upon the principal contention. It seems therefore worth while to rehearse the Trade Unionist's argument. We have seen that it is a fundamental article of the Trade Union faith that it is impossible, in a system of competitive industry, to prevent the degradation of the standard of life, unless the conditions of labour are settled, not by individual bargaining, but by some common rule. But, without the uniform application of some common standard, collective settlement of these conditions, whether by bargain, arbitration, or law, is plainly impossible. 1 Where employer is competing with employer, each will claim that, if he must forego the chances of individual bargaining, he should at any rate be made to pay no more for his labour than his rivals. With this contention the Trade Unionist heartily agrees, and thus we get admitted, as the basis of the common rule, the principle of identical pay for identical effort, or, as it is usually termed, the standard rate. This, as we have seen, is the very opposite to equality of wages. How accurately this principle of identical pay for identical effort can be applied to the varying capacities of different workmen, or to the varying difficulties of particular tasks, whether it can be most precisely carried into effect by payment by time or payment by the piece, depends upon the character of the process and the intelligence and integrity of the parties. But it is obviously futile to settle, by collective regulation of any kind, a standard rate of identical pay for identical effort, if an unscrupulous employer is free to evade this by demanding extra work or additional wear and tear; by deducting anything from the wage agreed upon; or by obtaining, at the cost of his workmen, by any transaction with them, any other monetary advantage whatever. In short, if the fundamental object of Trade Unionism, the enforcement of a common rule, has any justification at all, the principle of the standard rate must be conceded, and if a standard rate is admitted, the sub-

1 The dependence of combination among workmen upon the existence of a standard rate was well expressed, from the employer's point of view, by Alexander Galloway, the well-known engineer, and friend to Francis Place. 'I have always found that in those employments where the wages were uniform ... there have always been combinations among those men. Now in all those trades where the men have made their own individual engagements, we never see anything like combinations. ... That which has struck most effectively at the root of all combinations among workmen is to pay every man according to his merit, and to allow him to make his own agreement with his employer.' Evidence in First Report of Committee on Artisans and Machinery, 1824, p. 57.
sidiary regulations which we have described follow as a matter of course.¹

¹ One of the unsettled problems connected with the standard rate is, on what principle and to what extent it should, in the same industry, vary from town to town. The employers in the out-of-the-way districts are apt to contend that the workman must put up with a low rate, because of the inferiority of their machinery and their heavy charges for freight, and other local disadvantages. But there seems no reason why the workman should lower his standard of life, and forego his claim to identical pay for identical effort, merely because the capitalist chooses to carry on his business amid unprofitable surroundings. Whether Trade Unionists should go in for equality of nominal wages (a uniform national standard rate) or, making allowance for difference in the cost of living, claim only equality of real wages (involving varying local rates), has never been settled in principle. There are obvious practical difficulties in carrying out the latter idea, as it is impossible to measure with any precision differences in the cost of living in different districts. Accordingly we find most of the ‘county’ Unions, especially those of the cotton operatives and coalminers, aiming at a uniform county rate, irrespective of local circumstances. Similarly, the strong old Union of hand-papermakers, working entirely in a few small provincial towns, easily maintains a uniform rate for the whole industry. But directly the cost of living becomes appreciably different, even the strongest Unions admit variations in local rates. The Journeymen Hatters’ Fair Trade Union of Great Britain and Ireland, the old-established society of silk hat makers, has a uniform price list, but allows its London branch to add 10 per cent. to the general rates. When we come to the larger and more widely distributed Unions, we see the widest possible divergence. Thus the 603 branches of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters in Great Britain and Ireland recognise no fewer than fifteen or twenty rates, varying from 5d. per hour in Truro to 10d. per hour in London. Here, as in many other cases, we may well doubt whether even equality of real wages has been attained. Not only has there been no attempt by any large Union to secure a national uniform rate, but there is a tendency for officers and executive committees to be apathetic with regard to the process of ‘levelling up,’ which would be necessary to obtain equality of real wages. The result is that Trade Unionism cannot be said yet to have progressed beyond the securing of a local standard rate. This leaves the workmen exposed to the constant attempts of employers to ‘level down’ the rates in the better-paid districts, in order, as they assert, to meet the competition of the lower-paid districts. Our own idea is that the assumed differences in the cost of living, taking one thing with another, resolve themselves practically into differences in the rent of a workman’s dwelling. The expedient of the hatters seems, therefore, the most practical thing to aim at. There would be many advantages in the enforcement of a uniform standard rate in all districts of an industry, treating all provincial towns and urban districts on an equality, but adding a percentage for the exceptional high rents payable in London, and, if necessary, deducting a percentage in respect of the very low rents in a purely agricultural district, in the cases in which, as in the building trades, the industry comprises both town and country. These percentages could be calculated on easily ascertained and undisputed facts.