**AIHE Urban Economy Documents—June 22, 2012**

***from* PLATFORM OF THE EIGHT~ HOUR ASSOCIATION *May* 2, 1886**

The Eight-Hour Association asks for a reduction of all daily toil from ten hours to eight, for the reason that such reduction of time will give opportunity for two more men to work for every eight now employed. In other words, the work now performed by eight men will require ten men to achieve the same result. This will be twenty more men employed for every eighty, thus giving immediate, and for some years, constant labor to all who are willing and able to work.

That every one shall have steady employment at good wages, working eight hours daily, it is necessary that all agree and unite in this movement. In order for each workman to prosper it is essential that all other workmen prosper; because all people sup- port each other by exchanging each others' production and ser- vices. Therefore everybody who has commodities or services for sale is interested in having everybody else have a sufficient income from his own earnings to make a mutual exchange. United action in this effort means not only strength but prosperity for all.

The advocates of eight hours for a day's labor advise all workers to take for this number of hours an eight-hour price, allowing the law of supply and demand to regulate wages in the future. We fully believe that while merchants, manufacturers and all employers will be benefited, the wages for laborers will soon be higher than ever heretofore, for the following reasons: A reduction of one- fifth of laboring time for all that work will make a reduction of one- fifth of all kinds of products in the near future, which will make proportionate scarcity. With scarcity will come advance in prices for every commodity, giving merchants and manufacturers a fair profit, and wage-workers an advance in wages. Ere long, all being employed, the production will be as great as now, but, all earning wages, the consumption and demand will be greater than now, so that prices and wages will still continue better than at present.

Eight hours, instead of ten, means a gain of two hours each day-more than one day each *week-seventy-eight days a year!-a* time sufficient to enable every unlettered person to learn to read and write; time in which every foreigner can learn to speak the English language and familiarize himself With his political duty as an American citizen. The extra time thus gained in the year will afford every workingman not only a sufficient recreation, but opportunity to attend the State and county fairs, the National Exposition, and make a visit to the childhood home, with time to spare for a journey to Europe.

This appeal is in the interest of capital as well as labor. The plain facts are that the strikes, lock-outs, business failures, general business depression throughout the world, overflowing prisons and poor-houses, are the result of the producing power of the country being far in excess of the practical ability to consume. We make, raise and produce more than we can readily eat, wear, or dispose of. This results, first, in a falling of prices; then a lowering of wages, succeeded by strikes and resistance of wage-workers, and a final discharge of workmen into idleness. Then, as men are unable to buy, there is a great underconsumption, goods piling up on one side, while great want and destitution exist on the other. To remedy this, productive power, temporarily, must be lessened. To do this by destroying machinery is barbarous. **It** is Wiser far to accomplish this result, and benefit all mankind, by lessening the hours in which machines and men labor in the work of production. ...

The advantage of eight hours to the laboring classes will be (lst) employment; (2d) steady employment; (3d) better wages; (4th) relief from anxiety that comes from idleness and poverty; (5th) an opportunity to lay aside the means for the purchase of a home; (6th) opportunity to see and get acquainted with the family by day-light; (7th) more time for intellectual improvement; (8th) a chance for outdoor recreation on the secular day, without being compelled to take Sunday for that purpose; (9th) the ability to obtain respectable dress and make a good appearance, whereby encouragement is given to attend church and social gatherings, resulting in intellectual, moral and spiritual improvement. ...

To fully lay this matter before the people, through literature, discussion, lecture, sermon and study, *we recommend Saturday, April* 24, 1886, *as a general holiday for the laboring classes, preparatory to inaugurating the Eight-Hour Movement seven days afterwards, on the first day of May:*

In this effort we fervently invoke the aid of the press, the clergy, legislators, teachers, employers, and all persons in authority. Give us employment for the idle masses who are struggling for bread; give us a chance to send pauper and criminal back to shop, and field, and factory, where they may get an honest living; give us back again health and bloom for the the sunken-eyed, starving sewing-woman; give us homes for working-people, and a chance to earn them; give us an honest opportunity for every human being to possess the reasonable comforts of life-GIVE US EIGHT HOURS!

*When Chicago federal judge Peter Grosscup issued an injunction against the American Railway Union during the Pullman Strike of* 1894 *and then urged President Grover Cleveland to send federal troops against the workers, Samuel Gompers, founder and long-time president of the American Federation of Labor, sent him a strong letter defending the right of laborers to organize against efforts to "deskill" their jobs and to take away their control of the workplace.*

American Federationist *I (September* 1894): 150-58.



*Samuel Gompers*

You say that as you stated in your charge to the Grand Jury, you believe in labor organizations within such lawful and reasonable limits as will make them a service to the laboring man, and not a menace to the lawful institutions of the country.

I have had the pleasure of reading your charge to the Grand Jury, and have only partially been able to discover how far you believe in labor organizations. You would certainly have no objection officially or personally to workingmen organizing, and in their meetings discuss perhaps "the origin of man," benignly smiling upon each other, and declaring that all existing things are right, going to their wretched homes to find some freedom in sleep from gnawing hunger. You would have them extol the virtues of monopolists and wreckers of the people's welfare. You would not have them consider seriously the fact that more than two millions of their fellows are unemployed, and though willing and able, cannot find the opportunity to work, in order that they may sustain them- selves, their wives and their children. You would not have them consider seriously the fact that Pullman who has grown so rich from the toil of his workingmen, that he can riot in luxury, while he heartlessly turns these very workmen out of their tenements into the streets and leave to the tender mercies of corporate greed. Nor would you have them ponder upon the hundreds of other Pull- mans of different names.

You know, or ought to know, that the introduction of machinery is turning into idleness thousands, faster than new industries are founded, and yet, machinery certainly should not be either destroyed or hampered in its full development. The laborer is a man, he is made warm by the same sun and made cold-yes, colder-by the same winter as you are. He has a heart and brain, and feels and knows the human and paternal instinct for those depending upon him as keenly as do you.

What shall the workers do? Sit idly by and see the vast resources of nature and the human mind be utilized and monopolized for the benefit of the comparative few? No. The laborers must learn to think and act, and soon, too, that only by the power of organization, and common concert of action, can either their manhood be maintained, their rights to life (work to sustain it) be recognized, and liberty and rights secured.

Since you say that you favor labor organizations within certain limits, will you kindly give to thousands of your anxious fellow citizens what you believe the workers could and should do in their organizations to solve this great problem? Not what they should not do. You have told us that.

I am not one of those who regards the entire past as a failure. I recognize the progress made and the improved conditions of which nearly the entire civilized world are the beneficiaries. I ask you to explain, however, that if the wealth of the whole world is, as you say, "pre-eminently and beneficially the nation's wealth," how is it that thousands of able-bodied, willing, earnest men and women are suffering the pangs of hunger? We may boast of our wealth and civilization, but to the hungry man and woman and child our progress is a hollow mockery, our civilization a sham, and our "national wealth" a chimera.

You recognize that the industrial forces set in motion by steam and electricity have materially changed the structure of our civilization. You also admit that a system has grown up where the accumulations of the individual have passed from his control into that of representative combinations and trusts, and that the tendency in this direction is on the increase. How, then, can you consistently criticize the workingmen for recognizing that as individuals they can have no influence in deciding what the wages, hours of toil and conditions of employment shall be?

You evidently have observed the growth of corporate wealth and influence. You recognize that wealth, in order to become more highly productive, is concentrated into fewer hands, and con- trolled by representatives and directors, and yet you sing the old siren song that the workingman should depend entirely upon his own "individual effort."

The school of *laissez faire,* of which you seem to be a pronounced advocate, has produced great men in advocating the theory of each for himself, and his Satanic Majesty taking the hindermost, but the most pronounced advocates of your school of thought in economics have, when practically put to the test, been compelled to admit that combination and organization of the toiling masses are essential both to prevent the deterioration and to secure an improvement in the condition of the wage earners.

If, as you say, the success of commercial society depends upon the full play of competition, why do not you and your confreres turn your attention and direct the shafts of your attacks against the trusts and corporations, business wreckers and manipulators in the food products-the necessities of the people? Why garland your thoughts in beautiful phrase when speaking of these modem vampires, and steep your pen in gall when writing of the laborers' efforts to secure some of the advantages accruing from the concentrated thought and genius of the ages? ...

One becomes enraptured in reading the beauty of your description of modem progress. Could you have had in mind the miners of Spring Valley or Pennsylvania, or the clothing workers of the sweat shops of New York or Chicago when you grandiloquently dilate, “Who is not rich today when compared with his ancestors of a century ago? The steamboat and the railroad bring to his break- fast table the coffees of Java and Brazil, the fruits from Florida and California, and the steaks from the plains. The loom arrays him in garments and the factories furnish him with a dwelling that the richest contemporaries of his grandfather would have envied. With health and industry he is a prince."

Probably you have not read within the past year of babies dying of starvation at their mothers' breasts. More than likely the thousands of men lying upon the bare stones night after night in the City Hall of Chicago last winter escaped your notice. You may not have heard of the cry for bread that was sounded through this land of plenty by thousands of honest men and women. But should these and many other painful incidents have passed you by unnoticed, I am fearful that you may learn of them with keener thoughts with the coming sleets and blasts of winter.

You say that "labor cannot afford to attack capital." Let me remind you that labor has no quarrel with capital, as such. It is merely the possessors of capital who refuse to accord to labor the recognition, the right, the justice which is the laborers' due, with whom we contend.

See what is implied by your contemptuous reference to the laborer when you ask, "Will the conqueror destroy his trophy?" Who ever heard of a conqueror marching unitedly with his *trophy,* as you would have them? But if by your comparison you mean that the conqueror is the corporation, the trust, the capitalist class, and ask then whether they would destroy their *trophy,* I would have you ask the widows and orphans of the thousands of men killed annually through the avarice of railroad corporations refusing to avail themselves of modem appliances in coupling and other improvements on their railroads.

Inquire from the thousands of women and children whose husbands or fathers were suffocated or crushed in the mines through the rapacious greed of stockholders clamoring for more dividends. Investigate the sweating dens of the large cities. Go to the mills, factories, through the country. Visit the modem tenement houses or hovels in which thousands of workers are compelled to eke out an existence. Ask these whether the conqueror (monopoly) cares whether his trophy (the laborers) is destroyed or preserved. Ascertain from employers whether the laborer is not regarded the same as a machine, thrown out as soon as all the work possible has been squeezed out of him.

Are you aware that all the legislation ever secured for the ventilation or safety of mines, factory or workshop is the result of the efforts of organized labor? Do you know that the trade unions were the shield for the seven-year-old children from being the conqueror's trophy until they become somewhat older? And that the reformatory laws now on the statute books, protecting or defending the trophies of both sexes, young and old, from the fond care of the conquerors, were wrested from Congresses, legislatures and parliaments despite the Pullmans, the Jeffries, the Ricks, the Tafts, the Williams, the Woods, or the Grosscups.

By what right, sir, do you assume that the labor organizations do not conduct their affairs within lawful limits, or that they are a menace to the lawful institutions of the country? Is it because some thoughtless or overzealous member at a time of great excitement and smarting under a wrong may violate under a law or commit an improper act? Would you apply the same rule to the churches, the other moral agencies and organizations that you do to the organizations of labor? If you did, the greatest moral force of life today, the trade unions, would certainly stand out the clearest, brightest and purest. Because a certain class (for which you and a number of your colleagues on the bench seem to be the special pleaders) have a monopoly in their lines of trade, I submit that this is no good reason for their claim to have a monopoly on true patriotism or respect for the lawful institutions of the country. ...

Year by year man's liberties are trampled under foot at the bid- ding of corporations and trusts, rights are invaded and law perverted. In all ages wherever a tyrant has shown himself he has always found some willing judge to clothe that tyranny in the robes of legality, and modem capitalism has proven no exception to the rule.

You may not know that the labor movement as represented by the trades unions, stands for right, for justice, for liberty. You may not imagine that the issuance of an injunction depriving men of a legal as well as a natural right to protect themselves, their wives and little ones, must fail of its purpose. Repression or oppression never yet succeeded in crushing the truth or redressing a wrong.

In conclusion let me assure you that labor will organize and more compactly than ever and uponpractical lines, and despite relentless antagonism, achieve for humanity a nobler manhood, a more beautifulwomanhood anda happier childhood.

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**McClure's Magazine Vol. III. June, 1894 No. 1.  
Homestead and its Perilous Trades- Impressions of a Visit  
By Hamlin Garland**

A COLD, thin October rain was falling as I took the little ferry-boat and crossed the Monongahela River to see Homestead and its iron-mills. The town, infamously historic already, sprawled over the irregular hillside, circled by the cold gray river. On the flats close to the water's edge there severe masses of great sheds, out of which grim smoke-stacks rose with a desolate effect, like the black stumps of a burned forest of great trees. Above them dense clouds of sticky smoke rolled heavily away.

Higher up the tenement-houses stood in dingy rows, alternating with vacant lots. Higher still stood some Queen Anne cottages, toward which slender sidewalks climbed like goat paths.

The streets of the town were horrible; the buildings were poor; the sidewalks were sunken, swaying, and full of holes, and the crossings were sharp-edged stones set like rocks in a river bed. Everywhere the yellow mud of the street lay kneaded into a sticky mass, through which groups of pale, lean men slouched in faded garments, grimy with the soot and grease of the mills.

 The town was as squalid and unlovely as could well be imagined, and the people were mainly of the discouraged and sullen type to be found everywhere where labor passes into the brutalizing stage of severity. It had the disorganized and incoherent effect of a town- which has feeble public spirit. Big industries at differing eras have produced squads of squalid tenement-houses far from the central portion of the town, each plant bringing its gangs of foreign laborers in raw masses to camp down like an army around its shops.

Such towns are sown thickly over the hill-lands of Pennsylvania, but this was my first descent into one of them. They are American only in the sense in which they represent the American idea of business.

The Carnegie mills stood down near the river at some distance from the ferry landing, and thither I took my way through the sticky yellow mud and the gray falling rain. I had secured for my guide a young man whose life had been passed in Homestead and who was quite familiar with the mills and workmen. I do not think he over-stated the hardships of theworkmen, whose duties he thoroughly understood. He spoke frankly and without undue prejudice of the management and the work.

 We entered the yard through the fence which was aggrandized into a stockade during the riots of a year ago. We were in the yard of the " finished beams." On every side lay thousands of tons of iron. There came toward us a group of men pushing a cart laden with girders for building. They were lean men, pale and grimy. The rain was falling upon them. They wore a look of stoical indifference, though one or two of the younger fellows were scuffling as they pushed behind the car.Farther on was heard the crashing thunder of falling iron plates, the hoarse coughing of great engines, and the hissing of steam. Suddenly through the gloom I caught sight of the mighty up-soaring of saffron and sapphire flame, which marked the draught of the furnace of the Bessemer steel plant far down toward the water. It was a magnificent contrast to the dusky purple of the great smoky roofs below.The great building which we entered first was a beam mill, "one of the finest in the world," my guide said. It was an immense shed, open at the sides, and filled with a mixed and intricate mass of huge machinery. On every side tumultuous action seemed to make every inch of ground dangerous. Savage little engines went rattling about among piles of great beams. Dimly on my left were huge engines, moving with thunderous pounding.

"Come to the starting point", said my guide. I followed him timidly farup toward the other end, my eyes fixed on the beautiful glow of a redhot bloom of metal saving high in the air. It lighted the interior with a glorious light.

 I was looking at this beautiful light whey my guide pulled me suddenly behind some shelter. The furious scream of a saw broke forth, the monstrous exaggeration of a circular wood-saw—a saw that melted its way through a beam of solid iron with deafening outcry, producing a gigantic glowing wheel of spattering sparks of golden fire. While it lasted all else was hid from sight.

"That's the saw which cuts the beams of iron into lengths as ordered," my guide said, and we hurried past.

Everywhere in this pandemoniac shed was the thunder of reversing engines, the crash of falling iron, the rumbling growl of rollers, the howl of horrible saws, the deafening hiss of escaping steam, the wild vague shouts of workmen.

"Here are the ingots of steel, just as they come from the Bessemer converting mill," said my guide, pointing toward the mouth of the shed where some huge hunks of iron lay. " And there are the 'soaking pits,' or upright furnaces, where they are heated for rolling. They are perpendicular furnaces, or pits, you see."

 We moved toward the mouths of the pits, where a group of men stood with long shovels and bars in their hands. They were touched with orange light, which rose out of the pits. The pits looked like wells or cisterns of white-hot metal. The men signalled a boy, and the huge covers, which hung on wheels, were moved to allow them to peer in at the metal. They threw up their elbows before their eyes, to shield their faces from the heat, while they studied the ingots within.

 " It takes grit to stand there in July and August," said my guide. "Don't it, Joe?" he said to one of the men whom he knew. The man nodded, but was too busy to do more.

" I'd as soon go to hell at once," I replied. He laughed.

" But that isn't all. Those pits have to have their bottoms made after every ' heat,' and they can't wait for 'em to cool. The men stand by and work over them when it's hot enough to burn your boot-soles. Still ' it beats the old horizontal furnace."

A huge crane swung round anddipped into one of the pits and rose again, bringing one of the ingots, which was heated to proper point for rolling. Its glow made the eye recoil, and threw into steel-blue relief the gray outside rain. It was about six feet long and twenty inches square.

 The crane swung round and laid it upon a roadway of steel travellers that carried it up to the waiting jaws of the rollers. High up above it stood the chief " roller," with his hand upon a lever, and as the glowing mass ambled forward, his eyes gauged it, and his hand controlled it.

 Like a bar of soap through a wringer it went, and as it passed it lowered and lengthened, exploding at the end into flaming scales of fire.

 " The power of two thousand five hundred horses is in that engine," said my guide. "The actual squeezing power exerted is of course several thousand tons."

 Back the bar came with the same jar and tumult, a little longer and a little thinner; back and forth, until it grew into a long band of pink and rose purple. A swift and dangerous dragon that engine, whose touch was deadly. Thence the bar passed to the monstrous saw whose ear-splitting howl rose at intervals as it cut the beams into fixed lengths. From this the pieces passed into a low flat oven flaming fiercely; there to be kept hot while waiting their turn in the next process.

 They passed finally to the " finishing rollers," where they took the completed forth of building beams. A vast carrier which moved sidewise with rumbling roar conveyed them across the intervening space. A man rode this carrier like a mahout his elephant, occupying a-small platform high on the pyramidal mass of machinery.

 Up at the pits again I stood to watch the "heaters" at their task. The crane and the travellers handled these huge pieces of iron deftly and surely, and moulded them into shape, as a girl might handle a cake of dough. Machinery has certainly come in here to lessen the horrors of the iron-worker's life, to diminish the number of deaths by exploding metal or by the leap of curling or breaking beams.

I watched the men as they stirred the deeps beneath. I could not help admiring the swift and splendid action of their bodies. They had the silence and certainty one admires in the tiger's action. I dared not move for fear of flying metal, the swift swing of a crane, or the sudden lurch of a great carrier. The men could not look out for me. They worked with a sort of desperate attention and alertness.

 " That looks like hard work," I said to one of them to whom my companion introduced me. He was breathing hard from his work.

 " Hard ! I guess it's hard. I lost forty pounds the first three months I came into this business. It sweats the life out of a man. I often drink two buckets of water during twelve hours; the sweat drips through my sleeves, and runs down my legs and fills my shoes. "

 " But that isn't the worst of it," said my guide; " it's a dog's life. Now, those men work twelve hours, and sleep and eat out ten more. You can see a man don't have much time for anything else. You can't see your friends, or do anything but work. That's why I got out of it. I used to come home so exhausted, staggering like a man with a ' jag.' It ain't any place for a sick man—is it, Joe ? "

 Joe was a tall young fellow, evidently an assistant at the furnace. He smiled. " It's all the work I want, and I'm no chicken—feel that arm."

 I felt his arm., It was like a billet of steel. His abdomen was like a sheet of boiler iron. The hair was singed from his hands and arms by the heat of the furnace.

 " The tools I handle weigh one hundred and fifty pounds, and four o'clock in August they weigh about a ton."

 "When do you eat ? "

 " I have a bucket of 'grub '; I eat when I can. We have no let-up for eating. This job I'm on now isn't so bad as it might be, for we're running easy; but when we're running full, it's all I can stand."

 One of the men made a motion, and the ponderous cover moved a little to one side, and the bottom-makers ran long bars down into the pit and worked desperately, manipulating the ganister which lined the sides. The vivid light seemed to edge them with flame.

 "Yes, sir; that is a terrible job in summer," repeated my companion. " When the whole mill is hot, and you're panting for breath, it takes nerve to walk up to that soaking pit or a furnace door."

 " Oh, well, when you get ready to go home, your carriage comes for you, I suppose," I said to Joe.

He looked at me with a look that was not humorous. " I pattered down here in the mud, and crawled through a hole in the fence. That's the way I'll crawl home to-morrow morning at six. That's the way we all do."

 He turned suddenly and pointed at a pale, stoop-shouldered man in grimy clothes. " There's one of the best-paid men in the mill. See any kid gloves on him ? He'd look gay in a carriage at six o'clock in the morning, wouldn't he ? "

 I watched the man as he climbed to his perch on the great carrier that handled the beams, passing them from the rough roller to the finishing roller. As he took his place a transformation took place in him. He became alert, watchful, and deft. He was a man heavily marked by labor.

 We went on into the boiler-plate mills, still noisier, still more grandiose in effect. The rosy slabs of iron were taken from the white-hot furnaces by a crane (on which a man sat and swung, moving with it, guiding it) quite as in the beam mill. They were dropped upon a similar set of travellers; but as they passed through the rollers a man flung a shovelful of salt upon them, and each slab gave off a terrific exploding roar, like a hundred guns sounding together. As they passed to and fro, they grew thinner in form and richer in tone. The water which sprayed them ran about, fled and returned in dark spatters, like flocks of frightened spiders. The sheet warped and twisted, and shot forward with a menacing action which made me shiver.

 Everywhere in this enormous building were pits like the mouth of hell, and fierce ovens giving off a glare of heat, and burning wood and iron, giving off horrible stenches of gases. Thunder upon thunder, clang upon clang, glare upon glare ! Torches flamed far up in the dark spaces above. Engines moved to and fro, and steam sissed and threatened.

 Everywhere were grimy men with sallow and lean faces. The work was of the inhuman sort that hardens and coarsens.

 " How long do you work ?" I asked of a young man who stood at the furnace near me.

 " Twelve hours," he replied. " The night set go on at six at night and come off at six in the morning. I go on at six and off at six."

 " For how much pay ? "

 " Two dollars and a quarter.

" How much do those men get shovelling there in the rain ?"

"One dollar and forty cents." (A cut has since taken place.)

"What proportion of the men get that pay ? "

" Two-thirds of the whole plant, nearly two thousand. There are thirty-five hundred men in the mills. They get all prices, of course, from a dollar and forty cents up to thetonnage men, who get five and ten dollars per daywhen the mills run smooth. "

" I suppose not many men make ten dollars per day."

" Well, hardly." He smiled.

 "And it is twelve hours' work without stop ? "

 " You bet ! And then again you see we only get this pay part of the time. The mills are liable to be shut downpart of the year. They shut down part of the night sometimes, and of course we're docked.

 The helper wheeled in a load of sand and gravel before the furnace door. He signalled a boy, the heavy iron door rose, the "heater" seized one of the long shovels, the helper lifted it with his own shovel and placed it in the mouth of the furnace and swiftly heaped it with sand. The "heater " ran the shovel in and turned it over on a thin place in the lining, and smoothed the sand out with desperate haste. The helper lifted the now red-hot shovel to the next door. The cover rose, and the process repeated. In each oven the beams reposed like potatoes in an oven.

 By the time the helper lead a moment to spare he was wet with sweat. As he stood near me I noticed his grimy and sooty shirt, which lay close to his lean chest.

"One of the worst features about this thing is the sudden change of temperature. Now, that man's reeking with sweat, and this cold wind blowing upon him," I said to my guide. " It's alwaystoohotortoo cold."

 I was shivering with the chill, and it seemed to be almost certain sickness to stand thus exposed to the wind which swept through.

 We passed on into the older mills where cruder methods are still in use. Man seems closer to the hot iron here. Everywhere dim figures with grappling hooks worked silently and desperately guiding, measuring, controlling, moving masses of white-hot metal. High up the superintending foremen, by whistle or shout, arrested the movement of the machinery and the gnome-like figures beneath.

 Here were made the steel rails for street railways. The process was the same in essence. Each crude mass of metal was heated in oven-like furnaces tended by dim figures of bare-armed men, thence drawn by cranes and swung upon a roadway and thrust into the rollers. Then it ran back andforth, back and forth, lengthening into a swift and terrible serpent of red. One that I saw had split at the end, and its resemblance to a serpent was startling as it shot toward us in sinuous thrust.

 Upon such toil rests the splendor of American civilization.

 The converting mill was the most gorgeous and dangerous of all. Here the crude product is turned into steel by the Bessemer process. It also was a huge shed-like building open on two sides. In the centre stood supports for two immense pear-shaped pots, which swung on pivots ten or twelve feet from the floor. Over each pot was a huge chimney. Out of each pot roared alternately a ferocious geyser of saffron and sapphire flame, streaked with deeper yellow. From it a light streamed—a light that flung violet shadows everywhere and made the gray outside rain a beautiful blue.

A fountain of sparks arose, gorgeous as ten thousand rockets, and fell with a beautiful curve, like the petals of some enormous flower. Overhead the beams were glowing orange in a base of purple. The men were yellow where the light struck them, violet in shadow. Wild shouts resounded amid the rumbling of an overhead train, and the squeal of a swift little engine, darting in and out laden with the completed castings. The pot began to burn with a whiter flame. Its fluttering, humming roar silenced all else.

Underneath the other pot men were shovelling away slag in the rain of falling sparks. They worked with desperate haste. To their wrists dangled disks of leather to protect their hands from heat. It was impossible to see what manner of men they were. They resembled human beings only in form.

A shout was heard, and a tall crane swung a gigantic ladle under the converting vessel, which then mysteriously up-ended, exploding like a cannon a prodigious discharge of star-like pieces of white-hot slag. The " blowers " on their high platform across the shed sheltered themselves behind a wall.

 I drew back into the rain. "They call this the death-trap," shouted my companion, smiling at my timid action.

 Down came the vessel, until out of it streamed the smooth flow of terribly beautiful molten metal. As it ran nearly empty and the ladle swung away, the dripping slag fell to the ground exploding, leaping viciously, and the scene became gorgeous beyond belief, with orange and red and green flame.

 Into this steam and smoke and shower of sparks the workmen leapt, and were dimly seen preparing for another blast, prying off crusted slag, spraying the ladle, and guiding the cranes. Meanwhile, high up above them in the tumult, an engine backed up with a load of crude molten iron, discharged into the converter, and the soaring saffron and orange and sapphire flames began again.

"Yes, the men call this the death-trap," repeated my guide, as we stood in the edge of the building; " they wipe a man out here every little while."" In what way does death come ? " I asked." Oh, all kinds of ways. Sometimes a chain breaks, and a ladle tips over, and the iron explodes—like that." He pointed at the newly emptied retort, out of which the drippings fell into the water which lay beneath like pools of green gold. As it fell, each drop exploded in a dull report." Sometimes the slag falls on the workmen from that roadway up there. Of course, if everything is working all smooth and a man watches out, why, all right ! But you take it after they've been on duty twelve hours without sleep, and running like hell, everybody tired and loggy, and it's a different story."My guide went on:"You take it back in the beam mill —you saw how the men have to scatter when the carriers or the cranes move— well, sometimes they don't get out of the way; the men who should give warning don't do it quick enough.""What do those men get who are shovelling slag up there?"" Fourteen cents an hour. If they worked eight hours, like a carpenter,they'd get one dollar and twelve cents."

 " So a man works in peril of his life for fourteen cents an hour," I remarked.

 " That's what he does. It ain't theonly business he does it in, though."

 " No," put in a young villager, who was lookingon like ourselves. " A man'll do most anything to live."

 " Just as everywhere, the man who does the hardest work gets the poorest pay'" I said, remembering Shelley's discovery.

 We moved away, back toward the great plate mill. The lifting crane fascinated me. A man perched upon it like a monkey on the limb of a tree; and the creature raised, swung, lowered, shot out, opened its monstrous beak, seized the slab of iron, retreated, lifted, swung and dropped it upon the carriers. It was like a living thing, some strange creature unabashed by heat or heavy weights. To get in its way meant death. To guide it for twelve hours without accident exhausts a workman like running an engine on an express-train.

We stood to watch the making of rails. And as the rosy serpent grew slenderer and swifter it seemed to take on life. It curved lightly, unaccountably, and shot with menacing mouth past groups of workmen.

" Sometimes they break," said my guide, " and then they sweep things." And his words pictured the swing of a red-hot scythe.

 " The wonder to me is, you don't all die of exposure and the changes of heat and cold."

 My guide looked serious. " You don't notice any old men here." He swept his hand about the building. " It shortens life, just like mining; there is no question about that. That, of course, doesn't enter into the usual statement. But the long hours, the strain, and the sudden changes of temperature use a man up. He quits before he gets fifty. I can see lots of fellows here who are failing. They'll lay down in a few years. I went all over that, and I finally came to the decision that I'd peddle groceries rather than kill myself at this business."

As night fell the scene became still more grandiose and frightful. I hardly dared move without direction. The rosy ingots, looking like stumps of trees reduced to coals of living fire, rose from their pits of flame and dropped upon the tables, and galloped head on against the rollers, sending off flakes of rosy scale. As they went through, the giant engine thundered fin, reversing with a sound like a nearby cannon; and everywhere the jarring clang of great beams fell upon the ear. Wherever the saw was set at work, great wheels of fire rose out of the obscure murk of lower shadow.

 " I'm glad I don't have to work here for a living," said the young man of Else village, who stood near me looking on

" Oh, this is nothing," said my guide. " You should see it when they're running full in summer. Then it gets *hot* here. Then you should see 'em when they reline the furnaces and converting vessels. Imagine getting into that Bessemer pot in July, hot enough to pop corn; when you had to work like the devil and then jump out to breathe. "

 " I wouldn't do it," said the young villager; " I'd break into jail first." He had an outside job. He could afford to talk that way.

 " Oh, no, you wouldn't; you'd do it. We all submit to such things, out of habit, I guess. There are lots of other jobs as bad. A man could stand work like this six hours a day. That's all a man ought to do at such work. They could do it, too; they wouldn't make so much, but the hands would live longer."

" They probably don't care whether the hands live or die," I said, "provided they do every ounce they can while they do live."

 " I guess that's right," said the other young fellow with a wink. " Mill-owners don't run their mills for the benefit of the men."

 "'While capital wastes, labor starves,'" I ventured to quote.

 " That's the idea; we can't hurt Carnegie by six months' starving. It's *our* ribs that'll show through our shirts."

A roar as of a hundred lions a thunder as of cannons, flames that made the electric light look like a twinkling blue star, jarring clang of falling iron, burst of spluttering flakes of fire, scream of terrible saws, shifting of mighty trucks with hiss of steam! This was the scene upon which I looked back; this tumult I was leaving. I saw men prodding in the deep soaking pits where the ingots glowed in white-hot chambers. I saw other men in the hot yellow glare from the furnaces. I saw men measuring the serpentine rosy beams. I saw them send the saw flying into them. I saw boys perched high in cages, their shrill voices sounding wild animal-like in the midst of the uproar: a place into which men went like men going into war for the sake of wives and children, urged on by necessity, blinded and dulled by custom and habit; an inhuman place to spend four-fifths of one's waking hours. I crawled dismally back to my boarding-place, in the deep darkness, the chill, and the falling rain. The farther I got from those thundering beams and screaming saws, the deeper I drew my breath. Oh, the peace and sweetness of the dim hills across the river !

I ate breakfast the next morning with two of the men 1 had seen the evening before. There was little of grace or leisurely courtesy in their actions. Their hearts were good, but their manners were those of ceaseless toilers.

 " The worst part of the whole business is this," said one of them, as I was about saying good-by. " It brutalizes a man. You can't help it. You start in to be a man, but you become more and more a machine, and pleasures are few and far between. It's like any severe labor. It drags you down mentally and morally, just as it does physically. I wouldn't mind it so much if it weren't for the long hours. Many a trade would be all right if the hours could be shortened. Twelve hours is too long."

Again I boarded the little ferry and crossed the Monongahela on my way to the East. Out of those grim chimneys the belching smoke rose, defiling the cool, sweet air. Through this greenish-purple cloud the sun, red and large, glowed like an ingot of steel rising from a pit, filling the smoke with flushes of beautiful orange and rose amid the blue. The river was azure and burning gold, and the sunthrew the most glorious shadows behind the smoke. Beyond lay the serene hills, a deeper purple.Under the glory of gold and purple I heard the grinding howl of the iron-saws, and the throbbing, ferocious roar of the furnaces. The ferry-boat left a wake of blue that shone like the neck of a dove; and over the hills swept a fresh, moist wind. In the midst of God's bright morning, beside the beautiful river, the town and its industries lay like a cancer on the breast of a human body.

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**In order to experience first hand the working conditions of young women in department stores, Anne Marion MacLean, an investigator with the National Consumer's League, posed as a clerk for a week in each of two Chicago department stores, which she described as not those of the best reputation. She published her impressions in an article for the *American Journal of Sociology*, IV (May 1899): 724-30.**

**From TWO WEEKS IN DEPARTMENT STORES**

***Anne Marion MacLean***

This, then, was the place from which I started out to work on the appointed Monday morning. The hurried breakfast, the rush out into the street thronged with a lunch-carrying humanity hastening to the down-town district, and the cars packed with pale- faced, sleepy-eyed men and women, made the working world seem very real. Hurrying workers filled the heart of the city; no one else was astir. I reached my destination promptly at eight, the time of opening. Then I had to stand in line at the manager's office awaiting my more definite appointment, which was received in due time. But the manager had changed his mind about wages, and said he would give me two dollars a week plus 5 percent commission on sales, instead of the regular salary he had mentioned in our former interview. I was then given a number, and by "424" I was known during my stay there. I was sent to the toy department, where I found sixty-seven others who were to be my companions in toil. The place was a dazzling array of all kinds of toys, from a monkey beating a drum to a doll that said "mamma," and a horse whose motor force was to be a small boy. Our business was first to dust and condense the stock, and then to stand ready for customers. We all served in the double capacity of floorwalkers and clerks, and our business was to see that no one escaped without making a purchase. The confusion can be readily imagined. As soon as the elevators emptied themselves on the floor, there was one mad rush of clerks with a quickly spoken, "What would you like, madam?" or, "Something in toys, sir?" And the responses to these questions were indicative of the characters of the people making them. The majority were rude, some amused, and a few alarmed at the urgency of the clerks. One young boy, on being assailed by half a dozen at once, threw up his hands in horror, and said: "For God's sake, let me get out of here!" and fled down the stairs, not even waiting for the elevator. The cause of such watchful activity on the part of so many employes was the 5 percent commission which was to eke out the two or three dollars a week salary. Those who were experienced received the latter sum. And the extra nickels earned meant so much to many of them. Most of the girls in that department lived at home or with relatives, but in many cases the necessity for money was most urgent.

One of the difficult things at first was keeping track of the prices, for they were frequently changed during the day, and the penalty for selling under price was immediate discharge, while selling above price met with no disapproval.

Every morning there were special sales. Sometimes articles that had sold for one dollar would be, reduced to ninety-eight cents, with much blowing of trumpets, while, again; twenty-five cent articles would be offered at a bargain for *forty cents* "today only." But we soon learned what things were to be "leaders" from day to day, and the manager's brief instructions each morning were sufficient to keep us posted on the bargains. The charms of the bargain counter vanish when one has been behind the scenes and learned something of its history: The humor of it seemed to impress the clerks, for often knowing winks would be exchanged when some unwary customer was being victimized.

Oh, the weariness of that first morning! The hours seemed days. "Can I possibly stand up all day?" was the thought uppermost in my mind, for I soon learned from my companions that abusive language was the share of the one who was found sitting down. Later in the week I found this to be true. One of the girls who was well- nigh exhausted sat a moment on a little table that was for sale- there was not a seat of any kind in the room, and the only way one could get a moment's rest was to sit on the children's furniture that was for sale on one part of the floor. The manager came along and found the poor girl resting. The only sympathy he manifested was to call out in rough tones: "Get up out of that, you lazy huzzy, I don't pay you to sit around all day!" Under such circumstances it is small wonder that the stolen rests were few. By night the men as well as the women were limping wearily across the floor, and many sales were made under positive physical agony.

How well I remember my first service there! The people were slow in coming that morning; in fact, they were every morning. We scarcely ever had any business worth mentioning till eleven o'clock, and the greatest rush came about six. From ha1f-past twelve to two was a busy time also. People seemed determined to shop when we ought to be getting our meals. My first two customers were of a type that abounds. First an angular woman with a business-like expression came to me and in peremptory tones demanded that I show her building blocks. They were dutifully shown, but proved unsatisfactory; Then dolls' buggies, boys' sleds, laundry sets, and skates were examined in slow succession, and I was catechized in a thoroughly pedagogical manner regarding the prices and merits of the same. When the last skate had been critically examined, she fixed a patronizing gaze upon me and said: "I do not intend to buy today; I merely wished to examine your goods." "Was she a revenue officer?" was the first thought that came to my mind. Oh, no! in the language of the shop, she was only a "rubber-neck." I afterward estimated the distance walked with her, and found it to be about one-twelfth of a mile, and still I had not a sale on my book. She took half an hour of my time.

The next customer who fell to my lot was a man of vinegary mein who wanted a boy's sled at a cost of one dollar and a half. Now, we had none at that particular price, but we had them at one dollar and thirty-five, and one dollar and sixty-five cents, either of which I thought would suit him. But I was mistaken, for he turned upon me a look of utter scorn, and then proceeded to denounce me for advertising things we did not have in stock. I meekly suggested that I was not responsible for the advertisements which appeared in the morning papers, but he was not at all mollified, and left in high dudgeon. I felt rather blue, but the comforting voice of a little cash girl said: "Don't yer mind him, he's only a cheap skate." Thus reassured I started out on another venture. This time it was a small boy who wanted to buy, and the bright-faced little fellow did me good. He had eighty cents, he said, and he wanted presents for the baby, and Tom, and Freda, and cousin Jack, and several others. I suggested one thing after another, till finally he had spent his money; so I made out my first check and looked at it with pride.

The boy was happy, and so was I. I looked admiringly at the eighty cents set down on my index sheet. It meant that I had earned four cents. After that the sales came frequently. They were all small, of course, and amounted to only $14.98 for the day. But this was more than I sold any succeeding day: It has often been noticed that new clerks do better at first than they do later. With me, freshness and interest in the novelty helped to banish weariness and invite sales.

My first day ended at half-past six. Through some oversight, a supper ticket was not given to me, and so I was allowed to go home. I went wearily to the cloak-room and more wearily to my boarding place. When I arrived there, I could only throw myself upon my little white cot in the dormitory and wildly wonder if it would be all right for a working girl to cry.

The days in the store were much the same, with their endless fatigue. At times the rush would be great; then again we would have nothing to do but stand around and talk. Thus we became surprisingly well acquainted in a short time. We talked about our wages and compared index sheets on every possible occasion. Some sold very little and at the end of the week had no more than three dollars. The mental anguish of some of the girls when they saw at night how small their sales had been is impossible to describe. One may elect to become a worker, and endure the hard- ships of the toil, and live the life of the laborer, and receive the same starvation wages, but he can never experience the abject wretchedness of not knowing where to turn when the last dollar is gone. Three dollars a week to a girl alone in the city means starvation or shame.

The fourth day of the week was one I remember well. There had been special sales the day before, and everyone was more tired than usual; consequently those in charge were more than usually harsh and discourteous. One girl was ill. She should not have left home, but she feared losing her place if she remained away. She found after an hour or two that she could not work, so she asked permission to go home. The answer given was that she need not return if she left then. The floorwalker, who had a spark of humanity in his breast, told her that she could go to the toilet-room to lie down; if she would come out to her place once in a while to show that she was there. That poor girl spent the day on the rough, dirty floor, with a cash girl's apron for a pillow. At intervals she dragged herself out to her place in the department, only to crawl back more wretched than before. We wondered sometimes why there was no large chair or couch provided for an emergency case of that kind. There were comforts in the customers' waiting-rooms, but discharge was the fate of the employee who dared go in there.

A shop girl might die on the bare, hard floor, while easy chairs and couches in another room were unoccupied. Surely it would not be unreasonable to require that suitable rest rooms be provided for the employees. We had to endure so many unnecessary hardships.

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**Theodore Dreiser captures the attraction of department stores held for young women in this excerpt from his 1900 novel *Sister Carrie*.**

At that time the department store was in its earliest form of successful operation, and there were not many. The first three in the United States, established about 1884, were in Chicago. Carrie was familiar with the names of several through the advertisements in the "Daily News," and now proceeded to seek them. She dared to hope that this new line [of department store work] would offer her something. Some time she spent in wandering up and down, thinking to encounter the buildings by chance, so readily is the mind, bent upon prosecuting a hard but needful errand, eased by that se1f-deception which the semblance of search, without the reality, gives. At last she inquired of a police officer, and was directed to proceed "Two blocks up," where she would find "The Fair."

The nature of these vast retail combinations, should they ever permanently disappear, will form an interesting chapter in the commercial history of our nation. Such a flowering out of a modest trade principle the world had never witnessed up to that time. They were along the line of the most effective retail organisation, with hundreds of stores coordinated into one and laid out upon the most imposing and economic basis. They were handsome, bustling, successful affairs, with a host of clerks and a swarm of patrons. Carrie passed along the busy aisles, much affected by the remarkable displays of trinkets, dress goods, stationery, and jewe1ry. Each separate counter was a show place of dazzling interest and attraction. She could not help feeling the claim of each trinket and valuable upon her personally, and yet she did not stop. There was nothing there which she could not have used-nothing which she did not long to own. The dainty slippers and stockings, the delicately frilled skirts and petticoats, the laces, ribbons, hair- combs, purses, all touched her with individual desire, and she felt keenly the fact that not any of these things were in the range of her purchase. She was a work-seeker, an outcast without employment, one whom the average employee could tell at a glance was poor and in need of a situation.

It must not be thought that anyone could have mistaken her for a nervous, sensitive, high-strung nature, cast unduly upon a cold, calculating, and unpoetic world. Such certainly she was not. But women are peculiarly sensitive to their adornment.

Not only did Carrie feel the drag of desire for all which was new and pleasing in apparel for women, but she noticed too, with a touch at the heart, the fine ladies who elbowed and ignored her, brushing past in utter disregard of her presence, themselves eagerly enlisted in the materials which the store contained. Carrie was not familiar with the appearance of her more fortunate sisters of the city. Neither had she before known the nature and appearance of the shop girls with whom she now compared poorly. They were pretty in the main, some even handsome, with an air of independence and indifference which added, in the case of the more favoured, a certain piquancy; Their clothes were neat, in many instances fine, and wherever she encountered the eye of one it was only to recognize in it a keen analysis of her own position-her individual shortcomings of dress and that shadow of manner which she thought must hang about her and make clear to all who , and what she was. A flame of envy lighted in her heart. She realized in a dim way how much the city held-wealth, fashion, ease-every adornment for women, and she longed for dress and beauty with a whole heart.