

# SCIENCE

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## IS THE EIGHT-HOUR WORKING-DAY RATIONAL?<sup>1</sup>

MAY I say at once that it is not my intention to consider the political aspects of the eight-hour problem? There should not be political aspects in a topic that is so preeminently a problem of science. Furthermore, considered as a problem of science, the eight-hour day is rarely viewed in its proper light. In the voluminous literature that has been published concerning it economic and social considerations have been too often paramount. Yet in an adequate analysis of it the real basis of the whole matter is physiological—the eight-hour problem is primarily a problem of physiology; if the physiological effects of any kind of labor are bad, the conditions of such labor ought to be changed. This is fundamental, and should precede any consideration of the economic and social effects of a change of conditions. This basic fact is continually overlooked.

The eight-hour day is the result of an evolution, beginning in human aspiration and fostered largely by humanitarian motives. That baser considerations, the desire to earn wages at the minimum cost of personal effort, impel many advocates of the eight-hour principle, can not be denied, but this need not blind us to the fact that there are higher grounds on which the problem can legitimately be discussed.

In the evolution of the eight-hour day England, of all countries, presents the most interesting history. Diligent search has failed to reveal the origin of the tra-

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<sup>1</sup> Read before the Section on Industrial Hygiene of the American Public Health Association, Cincinnati, October 25, 1916.