

FUSTIAN CUTTERS.

TO HER MAJESTY'S COMMISSIONERS.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE the honour to lay before you the evidence which I have collected relating to the employment of children and young persons in the trade of fustian cutting.

Although the word fustian is properly used to designate one particular fabric, in the term "fustian cutting" it is generally taken to include all other products of the loom, whether of silk or cotton, such as velvets, velveteens, and "cords," the pile of which is raised by cutting the weft threads of the woven cloth.

The number of persons at present engaged in fustian cutting, so far as it can be ascertained in a trade carried on still to a great extent in private dwellings, and at all times liable to sudden changes in the supply of hands, falls little short of 4,000. The readiness with which this trade, once learnt, can be resumed, and the practice, which is very common in some districts, of setting a child to cut fustian until it be old enough to work as full-timer in a factory,* make this occupation a general refuge for the unemployed mill hands, and cause the business to be one more than usually sensitive of the fluctuations in other fields of labour throughout the neighbourhood in which it is practised.

I learned that many cutters, in despair at the low rate to which their wage had fallen since the beginning of this year, had within the last six months left the trade; on the other hand, wherever cotton mills and fustian cutting shops existed side by side, I found that a number of the mill hands, now thrown out of work through the civil war in North America, had turned, or returned, to "cutting."

The habits also of the cutters, "shifting like martens," to adopt the language of one of them,† one week in this shop, and the next in that, and the third, may be, in none, render it difficult to obtain accurate returns even from the larger shops; the numbers in the smaller ones, and in the private dwellings, I have arrived at by visiting in each district those which were said to be average specimens of size and general condition; obtaining from the occupants various rough estimates of the cutting population in the neighbourhood, and adopting the one most consistent with what I had myself observed as to the proportions of sex and age.

The following table represents with, I believe, sufficient accuracy, the results attained by the course to which I have referred: the numbers for Manchester and Salford being derived from a census taken in last December; ‡ those for Lymm were obtained at my request, during my stay there in July, by the witness Gatley; the district being compact and of easy compass, and the number of male cutters rendering it exceptional; the rest are only approximately correct.

TABLE OF FUSTIAN CUTTERS.

DISTRICT.	Under 13.		Between 13 and 18.		Over 18.		Total.		Grand Total.
	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	
Manchester and Salford - - -	15	14	36	81	552	619	603	714	1,317
Lymm - - - - -	57	47	47	61	266	242	370	350	720
Warrington - - - - -	30	120	35	380	60	225	125	725	850
Royton (including Gravelhole and Pleasant View) - - - - -	50	100	80	200	95	130	225	430	655
Cadishead, Shaw, and outlying districts - - - - -	25	50	45	90	75	110	145	250	395
Total - - - - -	177	331	243	812	1,048	1,326	1,468	2,469	3,937
	508		1,055		2,374		3,937		

The whole trade is supplied with work almost exclusively by the Manchester houses, and is carried on in that town or at places in its neighbourhood within a distance of about 20 miles; Warrington, the furthest, being 21½ miles distant; with the exception of the last-mentioned town, and of Manchester itself, fustian cutting is practised in villages or hamlets, of which Lymm in Cheshire, on the south-west, and Royton, including Gravelhole, between Rochdale and Oldham, on the north-east, are the principal.

In Manchester a great portion of the work is of the heavier class of "cords," and "¾ velveteens," and is performed chiefly by adult labour, and in the dwellings of the operatives; the children who

* See Mr. Meanock's Evidence, p. 173; Sutcliffe, p. 177; Ellidge, *ib.*

† See Mitchell's Evidence, p. 165.

‡ Ainsworth, p. 165.

Fustian Cutters. are there employed, being generally members of one family, and working under and for their own parents or relatives. From the census, to which I have before referred, it appears that out of 1,317 fustian cutters in Manchester and Salford in December 1861, only 29 were under 13, and 117 between that age and 18.

Mr. H. W. Lord.

In other places, and especially in Warrington and the Royton district, the contrary is the case, the number of adults scarcely exceeding, and in Royton itself actually falling short of, the numbers under 13; while those between the ages of 13 and 18 number more than either, and in Royton more than both of the other two classes together.

In every place but Lymm there are more female than male cutters, the proportion even in Manchester being 714 to 603; while in Warrington five-sixths, and in the Royton district two-thirds of all the cutters are female.

The majority of cutters in all places but Manchester work under a master cutter or "undertaker," in shops containing numbers which range from 6 or 8 up to 30 or 40.

In all but the largest concerns cutters of both sexes and of all ages work together indiscriminately.

Mode of work.

Each cutter works at his own frame unassisted by and independently of any other person, except so far as his want of skill or of strength may make it necessary to have help for "beaming up" a fresh length in the frame, or for sharpening and "fettling" the knife used in the work.

The fustian cloth, after it is taken from the loom and before it is sent to the cutter, undergoes a preliminary process called "stiffening;" the object of this is to strengthen the back of the material by means of flour paste, or some such application, so as to afford resistance to the pressure of the cutting knife; this is done rarely, if ever, at the place where the cloth is made, but generally at a separate establishment; the "cutting" also is invariably conducted by persons having no connexion with the manufacturer, and though a cutter will frequently speak of the person who supplies him with his work as the manufacturer, he is in fact the merchant, agent, or warehouseman, who gives the order to the manufacturer in the first instance, receives from him the cloth when woven, parts with it again to be "stiffened" by the "percher and stiffener," and a second time to be cut by the "cutter," receiving it back from him, and sending it to another independent person, the dyer or finisher, for dressing and the subsequent processes which are needed according as the order is for stock, or for immediate sale.

Many attempts have been made, and several patents taken out, to effect the work of the cutter by means of machinery; none have, however, as yet succeeded, nor did I meet with any person connected or conversant with the "cutting" of fustians, who considered the substitution of steam-power for hand labour likely to be so soon brought about, as to form a disturbing element in devising measures to regulate the present state of the trade.

In the production therefore of this article of commerce the cutter stands with machinery before and behind him, the sole but essential hand worker.

The cloth is made in pieces of various lengths; that of cotton velvets and of five-eighth velveteens, which furnish the chief of the work for children and young persons, averages a hundred yards; the breadth of the former is on the average 22 inches, that of the latter 25 inches.

Previously to fixing the piece upon the frame the cutter brushes the cloth over with a lime wash, in order to get rid of the grease in the material, and to make the threads crisp for the knife to cut, as well as to increase the stiffness.

When thoroughly dried the piece is fixed in a frame, of a length averaging 6 ft. 10 in.,* raised about 3 feet from the ground. The frame consists of two rollers, one at each end, to wind up and give off each length as it is cut, connected together by side beams, but having nothing between them upon the upper part of the frame in the nature of a board or table, and thus admitting of the cloth, which is tightened as much as possible, "giving" slightly under the pressure of the knife in cutting.

Physical results.

Each length, when fixed in the frame preparatory to being cut, is carded by a small hand-card, which the cutter uses; this process is the cause of a great quantity of lime-dust and flue in the work shops; and especially where silk is being cut, and several lengths being carded at one time in the same room, the air becomes almost clouded by the dust. When there is any tendency to disease of the lungs, this appears to be injurious, and the prevalence of bronchial complaints among cutters has been attributed, by the medical gentlemen whom I have had the advantage of consulting, to the same cause.

To the evidence of those gentlemen† I must also refer you for very valuable observations upon the deformity of the knee, ancle, shoulder, or spine, as well as upon the generally stunted growth and impeded physical development of the youthful fustian cutter, produced in their judgment, the former entirely, the latter to a considerable extent, by the long irregular hours during which a child is forced, or suffered, to work at a very early age in the mode which I will now describe.

The "cutter's" knife is a steel rod, like a fencing foil, some 2 feet in length, four-sided towards the handle, but tapering to a "temper" or flat blade of the utmost thinness, extremely sharp and flexible for 4 or 5 inches towards the point; this is laid in a metal sheath or guide about 4 inches long, which projects beyond the point, but allows the edge of the knife to rise, for the length of perhaps 1½ inches, to the height of one-eighth of an inch above its sides.

The cutter stands with the frame upon his right hand in advance of the end of the winding up roller, and beginning at the side furthest from him, inserts the point of the guide under the weft, which covers the first warp line; then, holding in his right hand the handle of the knife, he pushes

* 6 ft. 6 in. to 7 ft. 2 in. See H. Moston, p. 170; T. Shepherd, p. 176.

† Dr. Simpson, p. 167, and Mr. Kershaw, p. 175.

it rapidly along the warp to the further roller, severing the weft threads, as they come in contact with the sharp knife edge. Fustian Cutters.

In this action the body is thrown forward with an inclination to the right, and the left shoulder is brought up and round, the weight being at the same time transferred from the right to the left leg on a sideward stride, and the balance maintained by placing the left hand upon the side beam towards the further roller. Mr. H. W. Lord.

This movement, in the case of a young or undersized child, becomes almost a bound, the body being flung across the frame, the right leg tossed into a position nearly parallel with the side beam, and the left arm discharging, as it were, the duty of a supernumerary leg by checking the forward fall, and recovering the upright position by a push back from the top of the bar, on which the hand comes down.

In many such cases the child has to stand upon a board, raised at the end from which the thrust is made, and sometimes at both ends, by one or two bricks, in order to be high enough for him to reach across and along the frame.

The age at which a child is put to "cutting" varies somewhat with the particular locality, and somewhat with the state of the trade from time to time. At Gravelhole many children begin "cutting" at 9 years of age, and some before that. At Lymm, where from a combination of causes I had an especially ample opportunity for obtaining statistics and testing minutely assertions of doubtful accuracy, I ascertained that out of 202 persons under 18 years of age employed in the month of July last at that trade, 78 had commenced cutting before they were 10 years old; 26 of those had begun before 9, 7 were put to it between the ages of 7 and 8. Very young children employed.

In some of these cases no doubt the work was begun at home, and taken easily at first; but in many more the parents' straitened means or dissolute habits make shop work a necessity, or home work a less preferable alternative. I was informed of one drunken father, who forced his little girl to continue cutting for him, until the spine disease, of the existence of which he had repeated assurances from surgeons and others, absolutely prevented her from standing to her frame.

Such a case is probably an isolated one; but the intemperance and improvidence, which were the sources of it, are vices, among adult fustian cutters at all events, too common and too fatal to admit of any general reliance on home influence and parental solicitude for the protection and instruction of the young, even when the child's earnings do not, as they often do, form a material contribution towards the support of the family.

From my own observations and inquiries in Warrington and Royton I am disposed to think that the children are not there set to cutting at quite so early an age as at Lymm; still in the first mentioned town the greater number are at work by the time they are 10, and many before that; in Royton the average age at beginning will probably be six months under that at Warrington.

It is not, however, the early age at which the children begin to cut, that is so injurious,* but rather the long late hours at such an age in a confined, if not otherwise unhealthy, atmosphere. Fourteen hours a day is in most places the admitted average of the child's work time for the week, broken indeed by meals, but those of uncertain length, and often at uncertain times, depending in many cases upon the amount of resolution which a child, untrained, and with every incentive to idleness in the shape of example about him, can bring to bear upon a task, seldom perhaps excessive in itself, but always wearisome. Long, irregular hours.

Yet the way in which this average is obtained makes the nature of the occupation still more hurtful.

It is a habit, now, as it seems, inveterate among cutters, to make "play days" more or less of the Monday and Tuesday in each week, and to work up the arrears in days of 18 and 20 hours at the week's end; in not a few instances working the whole of the Friday night. The journey hands do this from preference; the master cutters, themselves, in the majority of cases, in no way superior to those whom they employ, except in the possession of a few frames and a grindstone with a shop to place them in, have not the power or the energy to maintain any system of regulations, though one and all declared to me that some restriction upon the hours of work would be the best thing that could befall them: the children, even when apprentices, or otherwise more under the control of their master than journey hands, are often either suffered through the absence of any control, or forced for want of help to sharpen their knives and fix their pieces in their frames, to waste the beginning of the week, and to get two days work into each one at the end.

There are, however, masters, and those for the most part the employers of the largest number of hands, whose arrangements for the children are less objectionable; with such the young ones are set to work in a room apart from the elder ones, under an overlooker, who keeps them up to their work, sharpening and "fettling" their knives, and giving them what other assistance may be needed; this, however, is the case only where the number of juvenile workers is sufficient to make it worth the master's while to assign a room and a man for that object, and even with them 14 hours a day is generally attained and not unfrequently exceeded.

Although in many places the practice of binding by formal indenture of apprenticeship has been to a great extent abandoned, the terms and other conditions of hiring children are practically preserved by an agreement with the parent, in the nature of an apprenticeship, for the child to work for three, four, or five years, at what is called "half earnings;" under which arrangement the master retains one half of the amount, which he receives from the "manufacturer" for the child's work, by way of payment for providing the child with tools, frame, and teaching. After about six months or a year at "cutting" most children of 11 years of age will do as much work in the same time as an adult; but in the case of an adult or other journey hand a proportion varying from 2*d.* to 3*d.* in the Trade easily learned.

* Dr. Simpson's Evidence, p. 168; Mr. Kershaw, p. 176.

Fustian Cutters. shilling will be deducted, as the master's profit, out of the sum realized by the work done, and for the use of shop, tools, &c. ; the value paid for the teaching may, therefore, be considered to be at the least 3d. in the shilling upon all the child's labour during the continuance of any work under the agreement.

Mr. H. W. Lord.

The parents and children, however, seem generally aware that a child working under such an agreement may be taken away with impunity, and frequently avail themselves of that power to remove a child, as soon as he has learned his work, to a shop where he can earn higher, if not the regular, journey wage ; and in several cases of formal indenture I learned that the absence of any covenant by the master to find work or wage to a reasonable amount in any event had been in like manner taken advantage of.*

In Gravelhole and Royton, however, the agreements were seldom for a period of more than 12 months at "half earnings," and some few at 11 years of age were said to be receiving journey wage.

State of education.

The ignorance among cutters of all ages is very great ; even among the master cutters for example, more than one half of the returns to the forms which I sent to be filled up, contained several grievous errors in spelling ; and in every instance in which the master had not filled them up with his own hand, it was, except in two cases, I believe, because he could not write himself.

From an interesting report drawn up last Christmas for the Operative Fustian Cutters' Committee at Lymm, a copy of which I transmit to you herewith, it appears that out of 111 cutters then under 13, 78 were unable to read ; at Warrington it was stated to me that 40 per cent. of those under 13, and 60 per cent. of those between 13 and 18 in that town could not read ; and from a number of instances, in which I found, by testing their assertions, that "reading" was limited at best to spelling monosyllables, I am inclined to consider that per-centage to be below the mark. In Royton and Gravelhole, and also in Manchester and Salford, the accounts I received and the observations which I made, convinced me that the cutters, old and young, were not at all better educated there than at Lymm or Warrington.

The fustian cutting child has little opportunity for schooling of any kind ; day school is never attainable ; even on the Monday and Tuesday, though in effect they "play," as their elders do, but more harmlessly, they have to hang about the shop in an attitude of laborious idleness during most of the daytime ; they might, indeed, go to school in the evening of those days, for in most of the districts where they live and work, (their homes and work-places being seldom far apart) night schools of some kind exist ; but their parents, even if they cared to send them, which few of them do,† seem to have but little authority with them ; (and a child under 13 years of age, in that class of life at least, will scarcely go to school, unless it be sent, at any time ;) while on the remaining days of the week they would be incapable of receiving any useful instruction after their day's work, even if that were not, as it frequently is, protracted beyond the hours even of night schools.

In many night schools, moreover, none are admitted under 14 or 13 ; that is the case at Warrington, in which place, as also at Lymm, the fact of the late working at the week's end is signally illustrated by the experience which has convinced the promoters of the evening classes that no attendance on the last three days of the week can be expected.

State of places of work.

The condition of the places in which the work is carried on, varies considerably ; in Manchester, where, as before noticed, the employment of children, otherwise than in private dwellings, is the exception, the shops are very bad ; low-roofed garrets in back alleys, unwashed, unswept, offensive to sight and smell : and to many of those in the other districts the same description might apply. There are however to be found in each town or village there two or three large and well-built cutting shops of two and sometimes three stories, owned, as might be expected, by some of the leading members of the trade, which serve at least to show that the objectionable state of the older and smaller shops is owing rather to the habits of the occupier than to the nature of the trade, which requires much light, and is decidedly "clean" work.

The practice, when the space is limited, of hanging up the pieces to dry after they have been lime-washed, in the shop where the work is going on, is very objectionable ; the stench arising from some silk velvets so treated in one of the shops I visited was scarcely endurable.

The frames are arranged in parallel lines one after the other up and down the room, so that the light from the windows, which are always in the side walls and of large size, may fall in line with the weft and transversely to the warp thread.

So far as my own observations went, the worst managed and dirtiest shops were those occupied by a class of middle men, who receive from "undertakers," having large connexions with Manchester houses, the overflowings, so to speak, of their shops, and employ the labour not required in, or rejected from, the better regulated places.

Such employment, from its uncertain and precarious nature, tends to foster habits of irregularity. As an instance of this, an extreme one no doubt, Mr. Bancroft, the Relieving Officer of Warrington, mentioned to me a case within his own knowledge, of a man, since dead, who used to employ several under 16 years old ; his habit was systematically to drink hard for three weeks out of money advanced upon the tickets, which are given with and represent the pieces sent to be cut ; paying his own hands from time to time just enough to keep them ready, but never appearing in his shop the whole time ; in the fourth week he would work them on night after night without cessation to finish the month's arrears.

Effects on the operatives.

The combined results of ignorance, irregularity, overwork, and bad example, exaggerated by the dangerous precocity of premature independence, are to be traced in the habits of adults, rather than among the rising generation, in whom that leaven is working. Bold, ignorant girls, slatternly helpless

* See Mr. Wilkinson's Evidence, p. 179.

† See Ellidge, Evid., p. 177, for instance.

women; boys idle and reckless, men improvident and disreputable; that is the substance of the account which even the fustian cutters give of themselves.

So far as my own opportunities of forming a correct judgment of the habits of cutters, as a class, are concerned, I am inclined to think that the natural tendency to make out a strong case has led some of my informants to dwell too much upon instances, too frequent indeed, but yet hardly general; this is particularly noticeable in the matter of the immorality of the girls. I have not found any satisfactory evidence that they are in that respect below the average of the mill hand or other female operative of the lower classes; while a proof of their anxiety to improve themselves, when they become of an age capable of appreciating the value of education, may be seen in the voluntary attendance at the night schools in Warrington of over 170 "cutting" girls between the ages of 13 and 18, out of a total of male and female cutters between those ages which does not exceed 450 for the whole town.

At the same time the conditions, under which the employment of children and young persons is now carried on, are such as call loudly for some restrictions. A trade, in which most of the workers are females, and most of those females girls between the ages of 13 and 16; which most are set to learn at 10 and many at 9 years old; where 14 hours a day is the average time of children's work, 16 and 18 hours are frequent, and 29 hours at a stretch a possible, because an actual* exception; a trade, moreover, which sets upon those who are devoted to it, under such conditions, when very young or weakly, its mark of a knock-knee or a distorted spine, and at the same time withholds from them the education, which might afford to the mind some means of natural exercise to compensate for the loss of that, from which their physical deformity debars them; when such a trade is being contemplated, the only question seems to be as to the nature and extent of the remedy.

Upon the benefit and upon the success, which would attend the limitation of the labour of young persons, engaged in fustian cutting, to the hours of full time sanctioned by the Factory Act, the opinion of employers and employed, and of all other persons interested in the matter, is unanimous; and it is all but universally admitted that the irregularity which prevails is self chosen, and proceeds in no material degree from the requirements of those from whom the work is obtained. In order, however, to satisfy myself that this was so, I put myself into communication with two Manchester houses, that have very large dealings with the fustian cutters, Messrs. H. Samson and Leppoe, and Messrs. N. P. and K. Nathan, and learnt from them that the usual practise is to keep up a large stock of goods of that class, quite irrespective of the orders from time to time received from their customers; such goods after they have passed through the various stages of the manufacture up to that of "dressing," are stored in the warehouse awaiting any orders that arrive, and, as such arrive, are sent to the dyer and finisher for completion.

With regard to the nature of the regulations applicable to children under 13 years of age the difference in opinion is considerable.

In the trade, for very obvious reasons, there is a strong feeling in favour of limiting the age at which a child shall be put to cutting to 11 or 12 years, and allowing it then to work at a full time; this opinion is shared in by many benevolent persons among the clergy and gentry, who are more or less familiar with the circumstances of the case.

To such a course there appeared a twofold objection; one, that a parent would be deprived altogether of any help from his child's earnings in this particular trade, during several years beyond the period, at which the principle of recognizing a parent's right to derive some profit from his child's labour has been allowed by the legislature to operate within due restrictions in other employments.

The second is that there is in such a scheme no means whatever of insuring education. The law which governs the employment of half-timers in mills, the "gem of the Factory Acts," as it was well called by Mr. Kershaw,† makes the education of the child the condition under which the advantage accrues to the parent from his child's labour.

The mental benefit, the fairness, and the generally acknowledged success of this plan, which I need not here dwell upon, led me to make particular inquiries of various medical gentlemen, who were perfectly familiar with the nature of the process of fustian cutting and its effect on the children engaged in it.

Their opinions upon this point not only went so far as to sanction the employment of a child in cutting fustian at so early an age as between 8 and 9, provided that the child worked "half-timers" hours, or 6½ hours with a break for one meal, and during that period was under proper supervision; but they considered such "half-time" work up to 13, even in a physical point of view, preferable to no work up to 11, and full time from that age.‡

Inasmuch as half-timers in mills are worked ordinarily in relays, I have endeavoured to ascertain from various master cutters whether such a system would be applicable to their trade.

Upon this question also some difference exists, but the balance of opinion is in favour of such a system working well. Mr. Meanock, of Gravelhole, who employs by far the greatest number of children in the trade, having 75 under 13, speaks very confidently on this point;§ and as it is to his charge that the great increase of juvenile labour is laid, (the number of children being said to have doubled in the last 20 years)|| his opinion is less open to the imputation of being prompted by a desire to drive the children out of the trade, and so increase the wages of the adults.

The trade is now, and for some months has remained, in a very depressed condition. A piece a week is considered good average work; there are about 45 lengths in a piece, nine lengths is a full day's work, which being done for four days, and the remaining nine lengths divided into five and four

Fustian Cutters;
Mr. H. W. Lord.

Legislation
necessary.
Provisions of
the Factory
Act applicable.

Earnings.

* See Evidence of Davies, p. 171.

† See Dr. Simpson's Evidence, p. 168.

‡ Rowles' Evidence, p. 164; Broadhurst, p. 181.

§ Evidence, p. 176.

|| See Evidence, p. 173.

Fustian Cutters. lengths for the slack or "play" days, (a regular distribution, which is spoken of, but seldom practised) gives the 45 lengths at the week's end.

Mr. H. W. Lord.

The rate of payment by the "manufacturers," according to Mr. Clayton, of Lymm,* whose evidence on this point coincides with information received by me from various sources, at present is, for—

Velvets -	-	-	-	from 6s. to 8s. the piece.
$\frac{3}{4}$ -Velveteens	-	-	-	„ 8s. to 10s. „
$\frac{3}{4}$ -Velveteens	-	-	-	„ 9s. to 10s. „

The highest price since 1858 for work of that class, I learn from the same source, to have been paid so lately as Christmas last, when,—

Velvets were	-	-	-	from 11s. to 13s. per piece.
$\frac{3}{4}$ -Velveteen	-	-	-	„ 10s. to 14s. „
$\frac{3}{4}$ -Velveteens	-	-	-	„ 11s. to 15s. „

The first two sorts are cut by children, the last sometimes by the older ones, those of 16 and more, but generally by adults, who also have other "heavier class" work such as "cords," for which the pay is somewhat higher: "silks" and "patents" are also adults' work in most places; for them the pay is higher, but the supply is scanty.

Deducting therefrom the master's 3d. in the shilling, there is left a little over 7s. as adult's average earning per week at the present time, and this is subject to small deductions for holes made in cutting, the cost of candles when needed, and other matters.

The child at half earnings, getting through its piece a week also, as it generally does, will at the lowest earn nearly 3s. and may earn 4s. 6d. or even 5s.

A half-timer in a mill will get 2s. 6d. a week as a rule for "piecing" or "doffing." The extent therefore to which this unregulated employment of children in "cutting" must affect the market for labour, both in that trade and in adjacent mills, is very great; and the general habit, to which I have elsewhere referred, of setting a child to cut till 13, and then sending it as full-timer to a mill, besides putting the mill owner to a disadvantage by compelling him to lose the cheaper labour of the half-timer, and to forego the benefit of having a supply of trained hands growing into full-timers under his control, neutralizes, in that district, the salutary provisions for the education of the younger factory hands, and leaves those of them, who are over 13, as dependent as ever upon night schools, and their own sense of ignorance, for the attainment of the very rudiments of education.

I remain, &c.

HENRY W. LORD,
Assistant Commissioner.

1, Tanfield Court, Temple,
September 29, 1862.

Half-timers would earn nearly 3s. per week.

Additional reasons why Factory Act should be applied.

Manchester.

No. 1.

MANCHESTER.

Peter Rowles, fustian cutter.—I am a journey hand, and the writer of those letters to the Secretary of your Commission about the state of children employed in fustian cutting in these parts. Lymm, Warrington, and Royton near Oldham, are the chief places, where juvenile labour is used. There are a good many children also working in outlying districts, such as Gravelhole by Royton, and Cadishead on the south of Chatmoss, and some at Gatley near Cheadle, also at Heywood between Bury and Rochdale.

One of these two men who have come with me to meet you to-night is Thomas Gattley of Lymm, the other is Matthew Mitchell of Manchester, for whom I work. We three represent the journeymen of Manchester and Lymm, and we will refer you to a man at Warrington, who will give you every information about the trade there.

We have been considering the matter ever since last summer, and have got some useful statistics which you shall have.

It is the long irregular hours of work for very young children that makes us want to be regulated by law. The work itself it not bad for the health, except so far as the youth of the children makes them liable to get deformed by the strain, that comes of the way in which they have to do their work, before they are well grown. You must see that to understand it; we cannot explain it properly. Many get humpbacked and knock-kneed in consequence.

The number of children employed in our trade has greatly increased in the last 20 years, more than double certainly.

They are often apprenticed as young as seven and eight years old; but few are bound properly; some for two years, some for four, and some only for one year; and they will be working an average

of 12 or 14 hours a day; in some shops perhaps once a-week they will have to work 24 hours at a stretch. That will be towards the end of the week, for the master cutters,—“undertakers” is the trade name for them,—are supplied with all their work from the manufacturers† of the fustian, and have to bring it back all cut to them on the Saturday; that is the usual course. Some I have known begin at 4 a.m. after having had to work from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. on the day before.

All are paid by the piece, but some children won't get more than 2s. or 2s. 6d. for a long time; but as the work only requires dexterity, and not any strength to speak of, at 13 they will be up to earning adults wages; but they will only get half paid, the master will deduct the other half for himself for the value of teaching, repair of tools, and use of shop and frame.

The children work longer than adults because they are in the power of the employer, and he, when he wants to get an order finished, will make them work on, though the adults wo'nt.

There is no specially busy season with us. The masters may say that they have orders for immediate completion from the manufacturers, and must work overtime to finish them, but that need not be. The manufacturers, many of them, are not at all aware of the way in which their work is done; one that Mitchell was speaking to the other day, didn't even know that children were employed at all.

Many employers are ready to help us and to give all facilities for investigation they can; but a good many are quite the reverse, and will conceal as much as possible; ‡ those that have only a few frames will be the worst. That is one of our great difficulties; the trade being so “domesticated” in cottages with three or four children, some of them working under

* Evidence, p. 170.

† I found very little cause for this suspicion.—H. W. L.

‡ The merchants, that is to say.—H. W. L.

their parents there ; still there are many places where 30 and 40, and in some even 200 frames and more are being worked.

There is one person to each frame, sometimes an adult, and sometimes a child ; they all work together in one room, both sexes and all ages, quite as many females as males : where there are a number of children, there will be an overlooker who keeps them up to work with a good rope end.*

There is no such thing as regular hours in the trade, and there's no education. One don't like to make them go even to Sunday school, after they've been hard at work in the week like that ; they are too tired and want rest : as for night school they have no chance of getting there, and if they did they would be too fatigued from over exertion for their minds to take in what they were taught.

In Royton and places where there are factories near, the children often are put to fustian cutting till they are 13, and then go off to work as full timers in a mill ; so that then there will be a continual supply of fresh children coming in young without having ever been to school, and so never taught anything.

No. 2. *Mathew Mitchell*, master cutter.—I have 8 frames, but no one under 18 works at them ; my shop is at 14 Southern Street, Liverpool Road, Manchester. What Rowles has just told you is quite correct. There are very few children employed in Salford or Manchester at cutting ; none I should say, but those who happen to be working with their parents.

The irregularity of journey work in these places proceeds from a cause that does not affect the country cutters so generally. All the cutting is for the Manchester houses ; and they send out their regular work, which can be done at any time, into the country, but when any order is wanted quickly, they come to us who are close at hand.

Children do not cut here because there are many other things they can do ; in Lymm and such places it's that or nothing very often,

Last Christmas we took a census of the cutters in Manchester and Salford, it is in these 4 books ; you can take them if you like ; all their names, ages, and abodes are there.†

No. 3. *William Ainsworth*, 21, Clowes Street, Salford, fustian cutter.—I have 20 persons at work for me at cutting ; only 2 under 13, one boy and one girl ; and 3 girls between 13 and 18. We employ far more women than men ; I have only two male adults, but 13 females ; their labour is cheaper, and they can do the work as well. They stand at one end of this frame, on which the cloth to be cut is stretched, put the guide in underneath the weft threads, and push the knife lightly along the way of the warp, resting the handle on the cloth, and throwing the body forwards with a spring from the right leg on to the left, at full stride, putting at the same time the left hand on the side of the frame so that they may lean over to reach the full length, and recover themselves. That's it, sir.

Many that are put to it young, get their knees turned in and their shoulders out—the left side up, that is ; there are none in my place now so deformed, but I have had some, and seen many.

There is a deal of ignorance among us. I myself was bound for 7 years and had no time for school, and now I could not put three letters together, no, not if hanging depended on it. Of the 20 I have here, only 5 can read, and that came to them by a sort of accident, one was in a factory as half timer, one didn't begin working till he was 9, and had a brother who taught him ; that girl was at school when very young, and then kept her father's house after her mother died, and went to Sunday school ; another was taught by her parents, who were respectable people.

The irregularity of the hours is as bad as anything, and it is not necessary, it is merely a bad habit : the

manufacturers don't care, so long as they have their pieces brought back at the proper time ; the undertakers don't care, so long as they can take it back, and get paid, and deduct their profit ; and the cutters like to idle away the first two days of the week, and work as long as they can to finish at the end. With many of them Thursday is the first full work day in the week ; only a few days since one said to me he shouldn't think it was Friday, if he didn't work all night.

He of course was working for a house that had their work brought in of a Saturday ; some houses have no fixed day for bringing in, but the pieces are brought in as they are ordered, when they are wanted on a Monday, I have known the work go on all Sunday.

I wouldn't stand it ; for I found one set coming in some hours after another, and one lot wanting to work half the night, and another to begin before the morning ; and I had to be about and look after them all ; so that made my day a big one, and now I let none stay after 8 p.m. or come before 6 a.m. 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. are my hours, and they have two hours for meals if they choose. I don't think there is a better regulated place than mine in the trade, though many are bigger ; and I get my work done just as well as before ; yet even as it is, you come here on a Monday, and you won't find 6 of them here.

They never stick to one place ; the generality of them go shifting about like martens, now for this master and now for that ; those that are now grown, are unsteady and ignorant because they have never been trained at all, and those that are young still, will grow up unsteady and ignorant too, if they are left to themselves.

I employ more than most in Salford ; I should say there are about 250 frames there, and few have more than 7 or 8, and seldom more than a child or two. The children you'll find at Royton and such places ; there men, who have never been in the trade themselves, get a room and frames, and put children to them under an overlooker, and get all they can out of them.

No. 4. *Richard Pover*, fustian cutter.—I have been a cutter for 41 years, so I think I should know something about it. I have 4 frames at home, one worked by myself, one by my wife, and two by each of her children by a former husband. It's generally in the family like that, here in Salford and Manchester ; there are seldom more than 7 or 8 frames together here in one place ; it's in the country places where you have from 50 to 200 frames all under one "undertaker," and it's there too that there are the most children. Mr. Ainsworth's, where you have just been, is about the biggest place in the town ; there will be about 20 frames there ; then there is George Mitcham's, that you have come from now, his is next biggest, and those two are a fair specimen of all the Salford ones, at least they are the best of them, the most regular and respectable. There is one man in Garden Street, who perhaps has more frames than Mitcham, but all but two or three there are adults ; that is a very irregular place. I have known of the children being there till 11 at night ; now to-day is Friday, they will be working on there from 6 this morning till to-morrow morning right off.

When I began it was a very good trade, but the prices have been dropping ever since ; still I managed to put by some money at one time and started a little beer shop down here, so I soon lost it all and came back to cutting ; there's no putting by money in it now. We used to get 4d. a yard at cutting velvets, and now we get under a penny, and for the three-quarter eight-shaft cord it used to be 2d. a yard, now we cut 66 yards for 3s. That has come chiefly from their employing so many more children at a low wage. While they are learners they get paid by the week, 1s. and 1s. 6d., and they keep them down to that as long as they can, but it doesn't take long, only a few months, for a child to be equal to an adult for our work, unless they are very young and small. 2s. 6d. a week is a deal for a child to earn at cutting ; they often have to be put on a stand or have a board raised with a brick or two at one end so as to lift them up, that they may reach to the further side of

Fustian Cutters.

Manchester.

Mr. H. W. Lord.

* This statement is not supported by any evidence of ill treatment as a practice ; it may be literally correct in particular cases, but such are exceptional.—H. W. L.

† From these I have compiled the tables at p. 159.—H. W. L.

Fustian Cutters,
Manchester.
Mr. H. W. Lord.

the frame. We always begin to cut the weft threads at the side furthest from us; the width of the pieces upon the frame will vary; the average of velvet is about 22 inches, and that of $\frac{3}{8}$ velveteens about 25 inches; the whole piece of either sort will run about 100 yards long, and the length of each portion at one time on the frame is a little over 2 yards, about 6 feet 8 inches; they are longer in the country: the child will have to make about 35,000 cuts for each piece of either sort, for, though the width is more, the velveteen is coarser.

They won't do much over a piece a week; one velvet piece of 95 yards length will take 54 hours; the pay for that now is 8s., that is what the manufacturer pays the undertaker; then the undertaker has to deduct 1s. 4d. from that for his profit, the use of shop and tools, and such things, that is not much to earn in the week; and only two houses in Manchester are paying as much as 8s. now. It has got worse than ever since last Christmas; they pay more for cords.

Lymm.

No. 4 bis.

Thomas Gattley, fustian cutter.—I work for Mrs. Holt of Lymm; have been 19 years in the trade; the journeymen there have deputed me to wait on you with Rowles and represent them. I agree with all he has told you about the employment of children in our trade. There is a very great degree of ignorance among them; at Lymm 111 last December were employed under 13 years of age; of them 78 were unable to read; this we ascertained by inquiring personally. And yet many of the parents of those children are earning their 24s. a week regularly in other trades, but won't care for giving them a proper education and preserving their health and their morals.

As to that last they are very demoralized, not only from want of being taught, but from the mixing of the sexes at all ages. I speak from my own experience, I am sure it is very bad. Many of the girls are mothers before they are wives; many are not married at all, though they have children, and those that do marry, don't know how to keep house at all, or bring up a family.

I am afraid that, even if we got brought under the Factory Acts, there would be plenty of ways to evade them. Those who now employ large numbers of children in one building, would send the work out to be done in the houses of the workmen, where, perhaps, only one or two besides the family would be employed, and no system of inspection could reach them. Or take the case, which is not unusual, for the employer to be the owner of a whole row of cottages tenanted by his journeymen, instead of 50 frames in one shed he has four in each of a dozen cottages, how could he be reached?

I will give you some illustrations of the ignorance we are in; why, there's myself, I can read indeed, but I can only write my name, and nothing else: I have picked up a few instances since I spoke first to you; there's one boy at Cheetham's, 11 years old, he began at 8 years and 9 months, and can't read or write; there is another the same age at Holt's, who began at 9 years and 2 months, he can't read or write; so a boy aged 14 at one of the Mostons. I found several who had been put to cutting at between 7 and 8; it isn't to be wondered at that they could not read. If you ask as you go about, you will find it so everywhere, but some have been "put up" to answer you.

I think cutting by hand will have to go on some time yet; machines have been tried, but none have succeeded. We do our work by the feel; some sorts of work are too much for the young ones, cords and that sort, they do velvets and narrow velveteens.

The younger children are chiefly employed in cutting velvets, which are narrow, running from 18 to 20 inches; they are about 20 inches, but shrink in stiffening; or $\frac{3}{8}$ velveteen, which are about 26 inches wide; the bigger ones will cut $\frac{3}{4}$ velveteen, that is 30 inches wide. The men cut "cords" and the wider

The pieces run a few yards longer than they are marked, and stretch in "beaming up" or fixing on the frame.

The men in the country places come in and underbid the town workers, they will take it for any price, and get it out of the children. When the children were bound for a term, the master used to take half their earnings; that is not so now.* Some pay the children so much a week; that they have to pay, whether there is work to be done or not, so when they have got to pay them, they will rather overwork them, than put other hands on to help.† What the undertaker deducts is generally in towns 2d. in the shilling from males, and 2½d. from females; in the country it is 3d. from each.

The cutters are all very ignorant, generally speaking, particularly the younger ones, for they have been trained to it so young, that they have never been able to go to school. As for immorality, there is more of it with us than in any trade I know of.

LYMM.

or $\frac{3}{4}$ velveteens, "doubles," and "patents," which the young ones can't possibly reach over. The strain in reaching is what injures them when they are so young; that and knocking the side of their knees against the end of the roller; their knee just reaches up to that when they are raised upon the board they have to stand on.

A piece of $\frac{3}{8}$ velveteen will be from 96 to 109 yards long, and a piece a week will be a good week's work at 12 hours a day; the pay for that now to us would be 6s. 8d.; before last February we were getting 10s. 10d. for the same amount; our wage had fallen as low as it is now in '58, then we journeymen combined to raise it, but that has fallen away now. There is not more work in the broader pieces, that is, not more races to cut, for the material is coarser, so the races are further apart; it is rather heavier work, perhaps, but a piece of one will take much about the same time as a piece of the other; the narrow velvets, which are finer, will have, perhaps, 900 races in a width, the wider and coarser ones not over 750.

Just this week many of the hands will be away haying; that will only be the grown ones; they can get 2s. a day in the neighbourhood at that, which is better pay than any we can earn at cutting.

The children who "cut" in Lymm are generally hired under an agreement to work for 4 years at half earnings; very few are regularly bound, since the magistrates have held the masters bound to supply work.

It is a common habit here for the master to set the children so many lengths to do, four perhaps, before dinner, and keep them till they have done it; they get some time for the meal, but it is often not half an hour. I don't know that what they do set is too much for them to do in the time, if they chose. They are not ill-treated generally speaking; many are more or less inluced from being put young to cutting, and working long hours without being properly looked after, but allowed to stand carelessly.

Most cutters "play" on the Monday; still our supply of work comes in very irregularly; that is not always the fault of those that send us the pieces to cut; often they can't get them from the maker, and having to complete an order by a certain day they have to push us to make up for that previous delay, though we may have had nothing to do for a day or two before.

The Rev. William MacIver.—I am the rector of Lymm, have been here 17 years. I am greatly interested in the condition of the children employed in cutting fustian; there are more of my parishioners employed in that than in any other trade. The population is chiefly agricultural, it numbers 3,800, and more

* This is an error, the practice is still general.—H. W. L.

† The witness does not mean a hiring at a weekly wage, but an arrangement of the kind mentioned by Mr. Wilkinson of Warrington, p. 179, for the master to pay a sum in any event, work or no work, so that the contract may not be void for want of mutuality.—H. W. L.

than 500* out of those are fustian cutters, so that it may be considered the special trade of the place.

It is a bad trade in many ways, as now conducted, but chiefly in the ill effects resulting to the children from the early age at which they commence, the long hours of their work, the irregularity of employment, and the indiscriminate mixture of ages and sexes. The consequences are lamentable ignorance and immorality, frequently stunted and deformed figures, and a generally inferior physical condition.

No fustian cutter's boy ever stops in my weekly schools after 11 years of age, and out of 130 infants and girls who attend them not half-a-dozen are over 12; a good proportion go to Sunday school, and more I believe to the Dissenting Sunday school.†

As soon a girl is beginning to learn anything at our school, she is taken off to cut and scarcely ever returns, or if she does, she has generally lost all the modest maidenly ways she had, and should have. The girls will not unfrequently, when they are pressed either through lowness of wage or abundance of work, be working on till one o'clock on Saturday morning, and then have to go home alone. It is not like a factory, where they all leave together, and are a mutual protection from temptation; but in this trade they keep dropping out of the shops at irregular times in the evening, careless and fatigued with long toil in a confined atmosphere; their minds are speedily corrupted by the language they hear about them when the master is away, even if he does not allow it in his presence; and it has too often happened, when the master is intemperate, that he has not been into his shop for a week together. The masters have tried to enforce fixed hours, but the workers have been too strong for them; they will be irregular, and take their Monday and their Tuesday too for play days whenever the pay is good enough. Times are very bad with them now, an adult cutter is not earning more than 6s. a week, and has not been since May, when the wages were as high as 10s. for the same amount of work, but there was less work; not that work is slack now, for the manufacturers seem as yet to be taking advantage of the depressed state of wages to get a stock of fustians cut. Many of the discharged factory hands in other places turn to cutting, and that has lowered the prices.

A large number of children still are bound apprentices, usually for five years; the earnings of the apprentice are generally divided between the parent and the master, the former supplying food and clothing, and the master deducting half for the use of shop and tools, and for the teaching.

The magistrates have generally held here when an apprentice has been brought up for seeking other employment, that the master is bound to find work, and if he do not, the apprentice may take other temporary employment, if he can find it.

During the first 3 years for which I held this incumbency, 1846-7-8, the bastard children numbered 10 per cent. of the births, but of late it has very much decreased; for I have made it my business to check it in every possible way. In the last 3 years, 1859-60-61, out of 273 baptisms but 7 have been of illegitimate children; 5, however, of those have been cases in which the mothers, and it is believed the fathers too, have been fustian cutters, so that they, being in numbers not $\frac{1}{4}$ th of our population, are as a class in that respect far behind the rest of my parishioners.

The premature independence, which the children contract from beginning early to work by the piece, in a trade where all work is irregular, is productive of great harm. A child will be apprenticed by 11 years of age, or more frequently 10, for 5 years or less; before 16 the term will be out, and the child earning journey-wages. The parents say they cannot manage them, they lay down the knife when they please, and for as

long as they please. I have known young girls leave home and go into lodgings in defiance of their parents, if any attempt is made to control them; one girl of 18, about 4 years ago, I asked, if she would like to go into service, "Na, I should na' like a mistress over me," she answered. I do not recollect what she was earning at cutting. Indeed, they are quite unfit for domestic servants or for any domestic duties; the houses of the fustian cutters are very visibly inferior to those of the agricultural labourer in the same parish, and that is so not only when trade is depressed but at a time when perhaps the father and mother and two or three children are all earning a fair wage at cutting, making 30s. a week and more, while the labourer gets his 13s. for his own work, and nothing from his wife or children.

We have a Penny Savings' Bank, but it is seldom that a cutter puts money in it; we have an Institute and Reading Room, the weekly subscription to which is a penny, but no cutters' pence ever come there as a rule; now, it is true, they have none to spare, but in prosperous times the alehouse has them all.

It will be difficult, I suppose, for any legislation to reach the cottage, but some restriction on the age, at which they may be bound apprentice, is positively necessary, and with a penalty for any violation. Most parents, unless they are very bad indeed, will not themselves drive their children, who are too young, for very long hours at excessive work in their own dwellings, though they do not seem to care what is the necessary consequence of working in the shop of another. This advantage, at all events, there is in cottage work, that there is not that contamination of indecent language and coarse behaviour.

The cottage work, on the other hand, may be more unhealthy and prejudicial, as there is no change of air and scene in that case, as in going from home to shop and back. I am not prepared to say that this is so, but even if it be, I think it is the less evil of the two.

Henry Simpson, Esq., M.D. Lond.—I am a general practitioner of medicine and reside at Lymm; the working population there consists of but two classes, the agricultural labourer, and the fustian cutter: the latter class is decidedly inferior physically speaking to the former; the badness of the food and wretchedness of the general condition of the cutters, owing in the majority of cases to their own ignorance and improvidence both in dress and dwellings, are probably the cause of that very marked difference that exists at the present time; and the depressed state of their trade is of course the origin of that condition: this would already be, probably, affecting the growth and development of the children; but, independently of any temporary cause, the combination of long working hours at an early age, a close atmosphere in the shops, and a so to speak one sided occupation, has a bad effect in several ways; many are pale looking and diminutive. I have not noticed that defect of functional development at puberty, which you informed me has been observed at Royton: if however more than two-thirds of the cutters there are females, it may be that the mixing of the sexes here at such an age, the insufficient supervision over their conduct, and the low obscene conversation which is I am told carried on frequently without restraint in the presence of the young people of both sexes, have the effect of counteracting such a tendency by stimulating the sexual propensities; at all events the proportion which the number of illegitimate births among the cutters bears to the total in the parish, as the registrar of births states, points to the natural consequence of such a mixture under the conditions of irregular hours and absence of supervision, being 9 out of 12 last year in 129 births, which characterize many of the cutting shops in Lymm.

The defect of figure is very conspicuous and prevalent; the distortion inwards of the right knee is most so; that would arise from the careless way a child, unchecked, would have of standing at its work at an age, when a child's bones will take almost any shape that they are bent to for a considerable time continuously;

Fustian Cutters.

Lymm.

Mr. H. W. Lord.

No. 6.

* The exact number is 720.—H. W. L.

† The Inspector of Schools notices in his last report of Lymm National School for girls, that not more than 10 or 12 of the scholars are over 10 years of age and that they are generally backward.

Fustian Cutters.
Lymm.
Mr. H. W. Lord.

the internal lateral ligaments of the joint also are constantly on the stretch, and yield considerably. Both causes combine to produce the deformity.

The high shoulder, which is another common deformity among cutters, if it were of an aggravated form, would be accompanied by distortion of the spine; it is produced not by excessive muscular exertion, but by the yielding of the figure to the weight of the body resting too heavily on one arm, so that the blacksmith's arm is not a parallel case: I have not had any such cases specially brought under my professional observation; some years ago I had a case of diseased hip joint. It would not perhaps be fair to attribute such cases entirely to the occupation, but where any tendency to such disease existed, it would be eminently calculated to develop it.

I have frequently to treat fustian cutters for bronchial affections; the lime dust and flue amidst which they work, and in many cases the very damp state of the workshops, are certainly the sources to which the prevalence of such disorders among them is referable. Bronchitis does I think prevail more among cutters than among the labouring class here. I am not speaking from any statistics, but merely giving you the effect of my impression at the moment; at the same time I cannot point to any particular disease beyond the in-growing of the right knee, and the high shoulder with some spinal curvature, and say "this is an especial result of cutting fustian;" and I see no reason why a child of even 8 years of age should not work at fustian cutting for 6 hours a day, a reasonable time, that is, with a break for breakfast or tea, as the case may be, having 3 hours for school, and some time for recreation besides; that would be much better than the present state of things, and I think even in a physical point of view more beneficial for the child, than not beginning to cut until 11, and then working the full time; but when the additional advantage of compulsory schooling is considered, it becomes much more preferable.

So many causes are at work in producing the present condition of the trade, that it is difficult to give to each its proper value; much of their frequent distress is due to the too generally prevalent habits of intemperance among them. This of course has various causes; their employment is monotonous, and they crave for the excitement of drinking; most of their houses are dirty and uncomfortable, their children dirty and ill brought up, and their food badly cooked and served up in a slovenly and dirty manner.

All this is in a great measure due to the almost total ignorance of household management in which the women are reared; at 8 or 9 years of age they are put to cutting for the whole of the day, and grow up without any proper knowledge of the simplest cooking or the plainest sewing; for instance, a lady lately gave half a pound of arrowroot to a woman who was quite as well brought up as the average; when, instead of using it in the ordinary way, she made the whole of it into something she called a pudding.

The children are in most cases put out to nurse in order that the mother may go on with her work.

Dirt, discomfort, and consequent ill-temper combine to drive the husband to the beerhouse, where many spend a large portion of their earnings; a drunken husband is often the cause of drinking in the wife, then of course all sorts of evil follow; the children are badly clothed and badly fed; pale dirty little wretches with the painful look of premature old age.

It often happens that wretched living accompanies great extravagance, and that they are badly fed on what would provide good and sufficient food for a large family, if properly expended. I have been told that it is a common custom for them to have feasts on a Saturday night, when they have hot meat suppers with beer, &c., and eat like gluttons, even if they have to pinch for it afterwards.

To this state of things there are no doubt exceptions, and I have known families decently and respectably brought up as cutters entirely. My experience is however of course limited to the neighbourhood in which I reside; of the habits of the cutters and of the condition

of the children in the trade without that district I cannot speak, within it the state of the young is so especially connected with the mode of life of those, who are at once their parents and their fellow workpeople, that any inquiry into the one involves at least some consideration of the other.

[Dr. Bennett of Lymm, with whom I had several interviews on this subject, gave me very similar information, and generally coincided with the opinions expressed to me by Dr. Simpson.]

Mrs. Ardem.—I am mistress of the night school for girls at Lymm (there is none for the boys in the summer months); they are almost all of them cutters; we admit none but those who are so employed in the day as to be unable to go to the other schools. It has been going on for about three years. We have 94 names on the books, but 60 is the highest attendance we have ever had; that was in winter; it has been as low as 7; the average in summer is about 18, and 30 for the whole year. No charge is made at present, but we are going to make some small charge, they will like that better, if they can afford it at all.

The elder girls do not come in the summer generally; they are afraid of being seen, they get laughed at in the shops for going, so they tell me. The age varies from 9 to 20, a very few are above 20. We do not admit any who have had bastard children.

We have the school two nights a week, Monday and Wednesday, from seven to nine. We can't get them to attend later than Wednesday; they are always working longer at the end of the week, finishing the week's work, for most of the cutters will make a play-day of Monday and of Tuesday too, often.

They sew and cut out one week and do reading, writing, and arithmetic the others; they like writing the best. Their work is mostly sold to themselves at cost price.

I was mistress of the National School here for 8½ years, and was in the village as a girl, so I know a good deal about cutters. The girls are generally very bold and very ignorant. It is a bad thing their being in the shops with the men and boys; at all events where there is not a good master or foreman; they hear very bad language there, and learn very improper things.

Besides they are very early out of their indentures, and get independent of every body; the mothers are not masters of their children, and let them do as they like so long as they bring money home. They don't look like children, they are often deformed in the shoulders and in the legs and chest as well, and generally stunted; it is unhealthy work.

The young ones work a very long time in the day at it very often. I have heard them at one shop near here as early as half-past four in the morning lately. I am sure they were children, for they have no grown ones there. They are always "agate" there till daylight ends at this time of the year, and often till 10 p.m. in winter. I can't say for certain that they are apprentices who stay so late. I am not generally about so late myself as to see them.

Miss Charnley.—I have been mistress of the National School for girls at Lymm for 2½ years. This is the only day school for girls in the place. There are 70 girls in the room now, four only are over 12 years of age; some of them are cutters' children, the eldest cutter's child here is between 9 and 10, and she is the only one so old; there are 15 others, they are between six and nine. Most are taken away and set to cutting before they are nine years old, and they never return,—never in prosperous times at least; just lately one or two have come back, but I never knew it happen before. I can always tell a cutting girl, their manners are so much worse, coarser and bolder, and they are less manageable.

They often are deformed through being put so young to cutting. We had one girl here 12 years old whose ankle was turned in from the way of standing at cutting for a long time when she was very young.

No. 7.

No. 8.

263

No. 9. *S. Carter*.—I am the relieving officer here at Lymm. The cutters are a bad lot, careless, intemperate, and improvident; the girls are ruined by it, they are made as hard as flints by the liberty they have. I have seen the boys and girls pulling one another about, when they used the same privy, in a shameful way.

No. 10. *Drinkwater*.—My children cut over the way there. The eldest girl is 17; she is out of her time; she is working hard now doing a piece and a half a week, and has to work 80 hours to do it. Last week she was agate for four days from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. That boy is an apprentice at the same shop, he generally gets there at 6 a.m. and comes back at 8 p.m.; he begins earlier at times, not often; when he does it is to finish the week's work; the day's work set him is not too much for him to do in the time, but if he gets behindhand at the beginning of the week he must fetch it up at the end.

No. 11. *Mrs. Holt*.—There are 52 persons in my cutting shops at Lymm, 7 boys and 4 girls under 13; the two youngest are 8 years and 10 months; one boy and 6 girls between that and 18; 20 males and 14 females over 18.

All the work is by the piece, so that everything both as to hours and meals is optional; the children generally work under their parents in my shops, but it is so nowhere else in Lymm; none have been apprenticed to me since the death of my husband. We consider the hours to be from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with half an hour for breakfast, the same for tea, and an hour for dinner. I do not, however, exercise any direct supervision or control myself, and they may come earlier and stay later if they please; in winter we generally close at 8 p.m., and they can begin at 6 a.m.; some do. The young ones get journey wage from me for their work, 9d. in the 1s. on what the manufacturer pays me; in fact it is just as if they were not in a shop at all, for their father or mother or an elder brother or sister teach them the trade and look after them, getting their tools and frames ready, and I provide the frames and tools and the pieces to cut; so there is no system of half earnings up to a certain age or time, and no need of any overlooker.

The women do very little of their washing and sewing themselves; but if they have to cut, they haven't much time for other things, whether they can do them or not. I don't think limiting the hours of labour would be of any good; stopping young children being put to cutting would; for as they can do the work of journey hands, and their labour is cheaper, those who chiefly employ them, can underbid the employers of grown hands in taking work from the manufacturer; and unless something were done to prevent people working in their own houses, factory regulations would only drive them from the regular shops to do as they liked at home.

No. 12. *Mrs. Harrison*, fustian cutter.—I cut for Mrs. Holt; we are better off under her than at most places, for as she has capital she has no need to draw her money at the end of each week from the manufacturers to pay herself and us, and therefore is not forced to press us to finish so much in each week that she may take it in and get paid for it, as they have to do in the small shops. Many undertakers say "there's so much to get done in the week; you must do it or you won't get paid;" and then if you get behindhand, you're obliged to work late and early to get it up; that's the same with young and old.

It is the breadth of the piece that gives the round shoulder; the right shoulder is the one—that of the hand that holds the knife; it soon grows out if they are put young to it. The rollers used to be lower, and knock the side of the knee; so they do still if the child is so small that he has to be raised to work. My daughter Jane there is 12, she began to cut at 9½ years old, but she had 2 years school before; she can read;* she doesn't often do over 12 hours a day.

* Tolerably well.—H. W. L.

Noah Proffit, cutter.—Am 19; was 10 when I began; my brother Jim is 11; he has been a year at cutting; he comes at 7 a.m. and goes at 8 p.m., generally; we have from 12 to 1 for dinner, and half an hour at four for tea. At Mrs. Holt's, where we are allowed to work in families, the father or mother bring their children, and they all work at frames in the same room near one another; in other places the young ones will be all apprenticed and put in a room together with an overlooker, and, may be, other grown journeymen and women.

I think the mixing of the girls and boys is bad; here they all use the same privy; but it's much better where the families keep together, both for the work and for the morals.

Elizabeth Skellon, cutter.—I began cutting at 12; that was 20 years ago. I don't get to work early; a mother with a family can't; but the husband generally comes at 6 in the morning and works till 9 at night, and 19 children out of 20 come to work with their fathers. In the small shops they have the long Thursday and Friday; we don't here. The taking Monday and Tuesday for play is not general, but many are ready enough to give cutters a bad name; they don't have to work late towards the end of the week because they are idle in the beginning; they have to work late and long to earn anything, and it's little enough they do earn after all.

My girl goes to Sunday school; she began to cut at 8½ years old; after working all day they're not fit for school. It's a sin, that a man can't get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work; if a man could earn what he ought to earn, the children needn't come to cut.

Mary Walker, cutter.—Am 21; began at 10; often have to work from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.; the little ones have too; they come so young that they are too weak to stand long, and get out of shape. They get very tired.

There's not much dust made at cutting, but before we cut, we card each length, and that makes a dust, partly the stuff that comes off and partly the lime; I don't suppose that's very good for us, but I don't know that we are liable to any particular disorder of chest or lungs. We often have colds, but that comes of the drafts where they will have the windows open.

[I have retained this piece of evidence to illustrate the almost invincible objection to fresh air which I found among the work-people, and in Lymm, a country place, especially; in small rooms, during warm weather, with enough of dust arising from the work to be unpleasant, though probably not seriously prejudicial to their general health; with windows on both sides of the workshops capable of being opened, and with a number of frames that scarcely left room to pass between them, not one shop in six had a window open, and generally the trap-door, the ordinary means of entrance to the "garrets" or upper floor where most of the work is carried on, was kept close also.]

Thomas Lewis, cutter.—I cut now for Mrs. Holt at Lymm. I was cutting soon after I was 9; they begin earlier now. There's Henry my son; he began at 8½. Why, the grown men and women among us can't read. There's not a proper scholar among all the cutters.

George Lewis, cutter.—I am 12; began 2 years since. Thomas Lewis is my father. I generally come to work at 7, sometimes half past 6, sometimes 8, and stay till 7 or in winter till 8. About a year ago I got up at 3 a.m. and came to work and went on till 8 p.m., that was on a Friday. I haven't done so since; I have begun as early as 5 a.m. three or four

Fustian Cutters.
Lymm.
Mr. H. W. Lord.

No. 13.

No. 14.

No. 15.

No. 16.

No. 17.

Fustian Cutters.

times, and gone on till 7 or 8 p.m. I go to the Baptist Sunday School.

Lymm.

Mr. H. W. Lord.

No. 18.

Henry Moston, master cutter.—I have 28 frames in work; there are six children here under 13 years of age, 4 of whom are girls; between 13 and 18 there are eight males and two females; and 12 adults, seven males and five females; 10 are apprenticed; I take none under 10 years old as apprentices. Our usual hours are 10½ for work, and 1 and a half for meals; there is no regular time for beginning or leaving off, say 8 to 8; but it's all their own fault; if they chose to work steadily, there need be no night work. The men will be irregular, some drink a fortnight together; I have none that do, for I send them off if they drink; but they don't care, they are sure of being employed by some one else. It was the irregularity of the men that forced us to get children to cut; and they are nearly as bad, only we can have more control over them. They very soon get masterful and independent, and their parents can't control them if they would. What I give them to do is nine lengths in the day; ask them yourself whether they can't always get through that if they like; if they stop after, or come before, the usual hours it is because they have not done their nine lengths a day when the end of the week comes. I pay as the piece is finished, whenever that may be.

I see no objection to regulating juvenile labour, it would be good for all; they could do in half a day nearly as much as they used to do in a whole day; I don't like money got at night, and as for their age, why, a man is a brute who takes children so young as 7 or 8 for such work.

The work used to be harder for them; for the lengths were 7 ft. 2 in., but now they are 6 ft. 6 inches, and of course the further they had to reach forward the greater the effort to recover themselves.

Ours is too much a ready money trade; that is, there is no capital required; it is among the smaller ones, who are obliged to draw for each piece as it is cut, in order to pay themselves and their cutters, that most irregularity and longest hours prevail.

A number of the young women go wrong, as might be expected; in a small place like this every body is known; so when I say I won't ever employ a young woman who is unsteady, I don't mean that there is any arrangement among the masters to give characters among themselves, for there is nothing of the kind; mine are steady, and keep so; it is often the master's fault, if the workers are worse than they should be.

The trade is very low now; before this American war we were getting 11s. a piece for what we are now getting only 7s.

I was born a cutter, began at 9, and have been 35 years at it; I was the eldest child of six, and my father only earned 13s. a-week; things were twice as dear as they are now, that's why I went so young; but he brought us all up on that, and owed no one anything when he died; but he was a sober man.

No. 19.

Henry Dandy, cutter.—I cut for Henry Moston, sometimes come at 7, generally at 8, nearly always leave at 8. Am 11 years old, began 1 year since; used to go to school; could do my day's work in nine hours if I chose, and have an hour for dinner out of that.

No. 20.

Mary Dixon, cutter.—Am 13; began three years since, can't read; could do my day's work in seven hours if I liked; generally come at 9, and stay till 7 or 8; stop after 8 about once a fortnight; last Monday week was the last time, then I stopped till 8½. I hadn't come till 9½ that morning.

No. 21.

Elizabeth Forrest, cutter.—Am 10½ years; began at 9½ years old; generally come at 8 or 8½ a.m. and stay till 8 p.m.; my work I could do in seven hours working hard; we have half an hour both for dinner and for tea. I haven't been to dinner yet, though it is half past one; I haven't done my four lengths.

No. 22.

John Leigh, cutter.—Am 12; have been at cutting two years; come at 8 and stay till 7 or sometimes 8;

don't think I could do my day's work in much under eight hours.

No. 23.

John Johnson, master cutter.—Have been 29 years at it; began at 10; have eight frames; two are under 13, and five between 13 and 18; two are females, my own daughter one is; she began at 9 years old, and had but little schooling. I have to come at 5½ or 6 a.m., and stay till 8 p.m., because I can't make them all come at one time. We have children to work, because they are less irregular than grown persons, who won't work more than three or four days in the week; for one good journey hand there are 20 bad ones.

In Lymm I should say there is always one shop or another agate all Friday night; every shop is at one time or another except Henry Moston's. But that couldn't be, if the time was fixed by law, and they knew it must be observed.

Some time ago the masters agreed together that all the shops should open at 6 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. with a fine of 5s. for each time it was broken through; but before long several were fined, but would not pay, so it all fell through.

Trade is very bad, last week we were a'most clemmed to death but for charity.

I am _____'s overlooker; we have five under 13, three between that and 18, and seven over 18, out of them four are the master and his wife and two children. We often work all Friday night through, or at the least till 2 on Saturday morning, children and all; they do nothing in the beginning of the week, that's how it is.

No. 24.

James Clayton, master cutter.—I have been 40 years in the business, and it's worse than ever; the earnings less and the men more irregular.

Trade is very bad now; the "undertaker" or master is getting from the manufacturer, from whom he has his work, for velvets 6s. 8s.; ¾ velveteens 8s. 10s.; ¾ velveteens 9s. 10s. a piece; he will deduct 2½d. or 3d. in the 1s. from those sums for his own profit and "rent" of shop, tools, &c., and pay the rest over to the journey hand.

The highest prices we have had since '58 have been, for velvets 11s. to 13s.; ¾ velveteens, 10s. to 14s.; ¾ velveteens 11s. to 15s., and that was paid as late as January of this year.

As to the pay it isn't the manufacturers who reduce the pay, it's the cutters themselves by underbidding one another, particularly those who have large shops with a great supply of cheap juvenile labour; you'll find over 3,000 at Gravelhole and that way, chiefly children.*

I have 25 persons at work, two boys and three girls under 13; five boys and three girls between 13 and 18; eight men, and four women; five are apprentices, the youngest just 10. We usually work 15 hours a day; they have meal times out of that, but no fixed amount of time, above an hour for dinner and half an hour for tea. The children seldom work at a stretch more than 14 hours in the day; some will come at 5 a.m., some at 6, and so on; so that I don't get out of the shop till 10½ for three nights a week, and on Saturday mornings you might find even here at my place young ones working till 2 a.m. sometimes, only last Saturday they did, aye and till 3 and 4 a.m. now and then; it is all laziness; they won't work when they might.

During the time we had those regulations of our own for opening at 6 a.m. and closing at 8 p.m. there was more work and better work done, and every one looked the better for it. If you can stop the irregular long hours, it's all we want. We seldom have special orders to cut a piece by a fixed time.

William Moston, master cutter.—I have 11 frames at work; 5 of the cutters in my employ are under 13, one of those is a girl; the youngest is 9 years and 5 months

No. 25

* The actual number is at most one-third of that stated; and that of the children under 13 about 250.—H. W. L.

old; three are between 13 and 18, and three adults; two of the latter are females; 5 are apprentices, I take no apprentice under 10. It would be a good thing for all, if no child was allowed to work under 11 years old; perhaps that would be hard on parents, but there would be a difficulty in working in relays; the same that begins a piece ought to finish it, else some lengths of the piece would be done differently to others, and you could not trust to any one part being a sample of the rest. When we put two hands on to the same piece, they begin at opposite ends and work up to the middle; so there is only one line of variation where they meet.

A piece a week is what they are expected to do; pieces vary in length and breadth, but the time for any piece that a child cuts will be about the same for all. 10 hours work in the day is all I want; and if they would come to work regularly from 6 to 6 I should be satisfied. I open the shop every day at 6 a.m., and have to stop often as late as 10 p.m., for I stop as long as any one is at work; and those that don't come till late will work late. It is worse for master than for men these late hours, and the children are as bad almost as the grown ones. I don't let the apprentices stop after 8½ p.m., unless there is a special order to be finished by a fixed time; the work I set them for the day can be done in less than 10 hours without working hard, but they are sometimes disposed to work and sometimes not. They very seldom do more than the week's work; when they do, I pay them journeyman's wage; the rule for apprentice's wage is for the master to keep half the sum paid him by the manufacturer, and to let the apprentice, or rather his parents, have the other half, then the master furnishes shop, frame, tools, and light, beside learning the trade, and the parents find board and lodging.

I have seen children grown up round shouldered and knock-kneed; it comes of careless ways of standing; that is, unless they are very young; a good overlooker would prevent that in all other cases. I never allow any bad language to be used in the shop, but I believe many do.

No. 26. *Samuel Jackson*, cutter.—I am going 10, began under 8; can read a bit. Work under William Moston; generally work from 7 a.m. till 7½ p.m. About 3 weeks since I began at 4½ a.m.; that was of a Saturday to finish off; had worked regular time the night before, perhaps a bit later, may be till 8½ p.m., not later than that. Have meal times, not always at the same time exactly, but much about.

No. 27. *Samuel Butterworth*.—This is my mother's shop. I am overlooker, she pays me wage for that and for cutting. There are 16 frames here; 1 cutter is under 13, and 9 under 18; only one is an apprentice, the rest all do journey work; they come at 7 or 8 a.m. and stop till 8½ or 9 p.m., but they are not regular at that; some days they all finish at 6 or 7, and others not till 9 or 10; the same cutters, I mean, and the same work; they have 1½ hours for meals, which they take much about the same time; it is in their own hands what they take, and when they take it.

We give them 9 lengths to cut on the 4 middle days of the week, 7 on Monday, and 6 on Saturday; 49 lengths of 2 yards and a few inches will make an average length of a piece, or about 100 yards. But it's no good dividing the work, they won't work at the beginning, and will do 14 and 15 hours a day at the end of the week; their parents can't or won't help it; they grumble at the end of the week, but won't make them come at the beginning. It is very jading work, and they are very tired after a big day's work. Many are crippled for life. If some bill doesn't pass, all will suffer.

No. 28. *Samuel Appleton*, master cutter.—I have 9 frames at work; 2 under 13, and 7 between 13 and 18, cut for me; there are 2 women over 18. I have 2 apprentices, they both were 9 years old when they were bound.

Where I used to work, very indecent language was

often used; there were so many girls and boys and grown persons there altogether, and the master didn't look after us much, but left us to ourselves so long as the work was got through. I would not have any girls come, and cut here, who had been working for any time in a big shop. I wouldn't, for the harm it would do to my own children.

I don't see why relays should not answer; the sort of cutting of one child doesn't vary so much from that of another, as to make a great difference.

George Davies, master cutter.—I have no apprentices. 2 of my journey hands are 14 years old and one 17; one of my own children began as early as 8 years old. We work from 6 or 7 a.m. to 8 or 9 p.m.; till 11 p.m., perhaps, once a fortnight; in winter the whole of us, all the trade, are later, scarce a shop is locked up before 10.

We are not always safe with the tools, they will break, the long thin knife particularly, and it may be 3 or 4 hours before we get agate again, and that lost time has to be made up. Nine lengths will take about 10 hours to cut, taking one length with another, and counting all the stoppages, from the knife having to be sharpened or breaking, and the "beaming up," and carding of each length before cutting.

There is more overwork than you will ever find out. I saw a boy of 11 years old, the very last week, who had been agate from 5 a.m. on Friday till 10 a.m. on Saturday morning. A child will follow the example of the grown ones about him, and if they play and are irregular, he does so too.

It is at night that the harm of the big shops comes, the master goes off and leave his journey hands, and then there is all sorts of talk. Only women should work at it. It is not men's work at all, if they could get anything else.

The evil is the working as they choose, the very children do almost as they like.

Benjamin Moston, master cutter.—None of my 8 apprentices began under 9; but 9 is too young; it is quite a shame the early age at which they are put to it, it ruins a child.

I close at 8 p.m.; it is the master's fault if they are irregular; they come at 6 a.m., often not much before 7; from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. they will do nine lengths of velvet, with about 800 races or cuts in each breadth, or 13 lengths of the doubled velveteen, that is, with 620 races on each side of the centre selvage.

Many shops are more irregular than we. I have seen that one across the field illuminated in the middle of the night.

We masters agreed to form rules that no shop should open before 6 a.m. or remain open after 8 p.m.; while they were in force there was more work done by the hands, and it was better work. For every body in the trade restrictions on the hours of work would be very valuable.

James Cheetham, master cutter.—6 a.m. to 8 p.m., those are the regular hours for apprentices, they seldom work over that. In the shop above mine work is going on from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., but I can't say that the children are agate all that time, I don't think they are.

It is very bad to put them so young to work; but the knocked-knees and round shoulders come from neglect of the overlookers. I was very near getting so, and should have been, if our overlooker hadn't licked me to make me stand properly.

I don't like that garret work, where the girls and boys and men and women are altogether. I wouldn't have a girl of mine in one of those big shops.

Elijah Collins.—I have 4 apprentices, none under 12; they work from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., we work more on Friday. Last Friday we began before 6 a.m. and worked till 11 p.m., and began at 4 a.m. the next morning. They have each of them worked once all night through in the last 2 years.

James Johnson, master cutter.—I used to work as a journey hand 18 months ago; we generally worked

Fustian Cutters.

Lymm.

Mr. H. W. Lord.

No. 29.

No. 30.

No. 31.

No. 32.

No. 33.

Fustian Cutters. all through Friday night; the little ones did too sometimes. The regular work set to an apprentice is 9 lengths a day, and that they can get through in 8 hours if they work without stopping; they are able to do that as soon as they have been six months at it. It is often difficult to make the children work steadily, for their parents won't allow them to be corrected.

Lymm.

Mr. H. W. Lord.

I have 4 apprentices; one is bound for 3 years, the rest for 4. There are places where they are bound for one year only; the parents won't have them bound so long as they used to be.

No. 34.

Mrs. Bond.—I am a cutter, and so are my girls, there are two of them. Mrs. Holt gives us out what she can't get done in her shops. My husband cuts too. We have 4 frames at home. I wouldn't let my girls work in a shop along with the men and boys; no girl can do it, and remain a good girl. I never cut in a shop myself, but we all know enough about it; there is no chance for a girl with the late hours, and the bad language and that. Last year we were for 17 weeks, and had only 5 pieces to cut.

No. 35.

James Woodhead, master cutter.—I have 30 frames now working; none of my cutters are under 13; 8 are between that age and 18, 4 of each sex. My apprentices don't do more than 10 hours work a day, and have their hour and a half or 2 hours for meals; there

are only two of them. I don't think relays would answer, the difference of the cut of two hands shows when the cloth comes to be dyed; it would be better to limit them at once to 6 hours a day, till they are 13, and let the piece stand in the frame for them to go on one day, where they left off the day before, and no boy should be put to it before 11, and no girl before 12.

It is unhealthy work; the dust is bad at times, not so much from the cutting as the carding before cutting. See the dust that woman is making; it is partly the flue of the cloth, and partly the lime which we put on to stiffen the thread, and get rid of the greuse which would turn the knife. Mine is more airy than most shops, and we are not so afraid of open windows.

I really don't think that the masters in Lymm ever work their apprentices longer than from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. That is long enough for you, is it not? Perhaps you may find here and there extreme cases happening occasionally, and more in smaller places out of the village; and I don't think they are in the habit of making the apprentices do in extra time what the journey hands won't do. The fact is that the journey hands do do, what they have to do in the week, but do it at all times and any time. My shop is much as the others; we are mostly all alike.

CADISHEAD, &c.

Cadishead, &c.

No. 36.

George Astall, of Cadishead.—I have 10 frames here, but I have a good deal done in the neighbouring cottages, where a family will work together; all mine but 3 are females, none under 13, 4 between 13 and 18, they are all girls. Five of the 10 are worked by my own family or relations; my son, who is married, acts as overlooker, and keeps them tolerably regular; they will come at 7 or 8 a.m. and stay till about 9 p.m.; they don't generally get through more than 10 lengths in 13 or 14 hours, including the hour and a half or two hours for meals; that is enough for me; we never work later than 10 p.m., nor begin earlier than 6 or 7 a.m., even on the finishing days, but we stop the money till the work is done, so they do it in the time. Long hours spoil the work of grown ones, as well as of young ones; the children will fall asleep over it. I have had some as young as 10 at it, but I think none in this neighbourhood begin so early as 8 or 9 years old; where they do begin so young it is through the parents, with 3 or 4 children perhaps, putting them to it at home. It is a bad thing having the young girls and lads hanging about late together, in some places a deal of harm has come of that. These that work for me can read; there is a night school of the Wesleyans here once a week, but there is not much learning among us as a class.

Mr. Jones.—I have been for 9 years master of the National School here at Irlam, it is a mixed school for boys and girls; 10 out of 38 boys and 7 out of 30 girls are children of fustian cutters; they are generally fair scholars for the time they are at school, but as a rule they always are taken away before they are 10 years old, and set to cutting; the girls are very irregular in their attendance before that age, for they have to help their mothers in the house, while they, the mothers, are cutting; when they are once taken away, they don't come back. I don't think that the homes of fustian cutters in this district are inferior to those of the agricultural labourers, rather the reverse. Irregular they are, piece-workers will always be so while they can; but the "play" on Monday is often no fault of theirs, for they often can't get started till late

in the day; the pieces won't have come from the warehouses in Manchester, or at all events will not have reached the hands of the smaller cutters; then they have to "lime" the whole piece and wait for it to dry before they begin to cut, for it is not often cut wet.

[This statement of Mr. Jones, relative to the delay on Monday, was not confirmed to any great extent by persons in the trade.*]

William Owen.—I should think there are about 300 fustian cutters in this district, Cadishead, including Hollinsgreen and Irlam; of those 100 would be under 13 and another 100 between 13 and 11. There are no apprentices in the district; more females than males work at cutting here. The business is just the same it was 50 years ago, there is certainly no change for the better.

No. 37.

It is naturally irregular, becoming brisk and slack suddenly, and the cutters make it more so by never working regularly when they can. The Saturday and Monday are always made away with here. In fact it cannot be more irregular than it is. The masters, generally, are opposed to irregularity, but have no authority.

The cutters are the most ignorant of people to be found, many don't know the days of the month, nor the changes of the moon. Many in country places begin before they are 9 years old, and never go to any school; the young ones will have to work, in some cases, from 4 a.m. on the Friday night on into Saturday morning. They will scarcely do 9 lengths a day, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., not the younger children; and the work is such that they are fit for no other trade that requires hard manual labour afterwards, for in 5 or 6 years their hands get too delicate; here, for instance, they can't work in the fields, which is the only other employment to be got.

I have about 30 frames; 3 of my cutters are under 13, and 6 between that and 18. We generally work from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., sometimes till 10 p.m. on a Friday.

Gravelhole.

No. 38.

Nathan Meanock.—I believe I am the largest direct employer of any in the trade of fustian cutting. I have four shops immediately under my own control, and give out work for about 100 other persons in cottages. Wilkinson and Newton in Warrington will probably give out more, but have fewer in their own shops,

GRAVELHOLE, NEAR OLDHAM, AUGUST 1862.

The total number of hands in my shops is 218, and of them 128 are females; female labour is as good for cutting as male, and cheaper. I have 56 under 13, 21 boys and 35 girls, and 71 between 13 and 18; 31 of them are males.

* See Barton's evidence, p. 178.