**INVESTIGATION OF LABOR CONDITIONS, 1845**   
Massachusetts *House Document,*no. 50, March, l845.   
The Special Committee to which was referred sundry questions relating to the labor in the mills, have considered the same and submit the following Report:

The Committee visited the Lowell and the Middlesex mills. . . . Not only is the interior of the mills kept in the best order, but great regard has been paid by many of the agents to the arrangement of the enclosed grounds. Grass plats have been laid out, trees have been planted, and fine varieties of flowers in their season, are cultivated within. the factory grounds. In short, everything in and about the mills, and the boarding houses appeared, to have for its end, health and comfort. The same remark would apply to the city generally. . . .

During our short stay in Lowell, we gathered many facts, which we deem of sufficient importance to state in this report, and first, in relation to the Hours of Labor.   
  
From Mr. Clark, the agent of the Merrimack Corporation, we obtained the following table of the time which the mills run during the year.   
Begin work. From 1st May to 31st August, at 5 o'clock. From 1st September to 30th April, as soon as they can see.   
Breakfast. From 1st November to 28th February, before going to work. From 1st March to 31st of March, at 7 1/2 o'clock. From 1st April to 19th September, at seven o'clock. From 20th September to 31st October, at 7 1/2 o'clock. Return in half an hour.   
Dinner. Through the year at 12 1/2 o'clock. From 1st May to 3ist August, return in 45 minutes. From 1st September to 30th April, return in 30 minutes.   
Quit work. From 1st May to 31st August, at 7 o'clock. From ist September to 19th September, at dark. From 20th September to 19th March, at 7 1/2 o'clock. From 20th March to 30th April, at dark.   
  
There are four days in the year which are observed as holidays, and on which the mills are never put in motion. These are Fast Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. These make one day more than is usually devoted to pastime in any other place in New England. The following table shows the average hours of work per day, throughout the year, in the Lowell Mills:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | HOURS | MIN |  | HOURS | M |
| January | 11 | 24 | July | 12 | 45 |  |
| February | 12 |  | August | 12 | 45 |  |
| March [11] | 11 | 52 | September | 12 | 23 |  |
| April | 13 | 31 | October | 12 | 10 |  |
| May | 12 | 45 | November | 11 | 56 |  |
| June | 12 | 45 | December | 11 | 24 |  |

In Great Britain, the hours of labor per week are limited by act of Parliament to 69, or 11 1/2 hours per day, but the general regulation in all the factories is 9 hours on Saturday and 12 hours on each of the other five working days. It is also enacted that there shall be six holidays in the course of the year.   
  
It is hardly possible to draw a comparison between the operations in Great Britain and those in Lowell. The one is a manufacturing population, in the strict sense of the word, the other is not. There, the whole family go into the mills as soon as they have sufficient bodily strength to earn a penny. They never come out until they die. Very little attention is paid to their moral or physical culture, and, as has been proved by facts ascertained by commissioners appointed by Parliament, few can read or write, and, unless they have attended Sabbath schools, few obtain any knowledge of the Bible or of the Christian religion.   
  
In Lowell, but very few (in some mills none at all) enter into the factories under the age of fifteen. None under that age can be admitted, unless they bring a certificate from the school teacher, that he or she has attended school at least three months during the preceding twelve. Nine-tenths of the factory population in Lowell come from the country. They are farmers' daughters. Many of them come over a hundred miles to enter the mills. Their education has been attended to in the district schools, which are dotted like diamonds over every square mile of New England. Their moral and religious characters have been formed by pious parents, under the paternal roof. Their bodies have been developed, and their constitutions made strong by pure air, wholesome food, and youthful exercise.   
  
After an absence of a few years, having laid by a few hundred dollars, they depart for their homes, get married, settle down in life, and become the heads of families. Such, we believe, in truth, to be a correct statement of the Lowell operatives, and the hours of labor.   
  
  
The population of Lowell, in May, 1840, was 7,341 males and 13,740 females; total, 20,981. The population in May, 1844, was 9,432 males, 15,637 females; total, 25,163; increase of population in four years, 4,182. Notwithstanding this increase of population, the number of deaths has decreased. The petitioners thought that the statements made by our city physician, as to the number of deaths, were delusive, inasmuch as many of the females when taken sick in Lowell do not stay there, but return to their homes in the country and die. Dr. Kimball thought that the number who return home when seized with sickness was small. Mr. Cooper, whose testimony we have given, and who is a gentleman of great experience, says that he has known but one girl who, during the last eight years, went home from Lowell and died. We have no doubt, however, that many of the operatives do leave Lowell and return to their homes when their health is feeble, but the proportion is not large. Certainly it has created no alarm, for the sisters and acquaintances of those who have gone home return to Lowell to supply the vacancies which their absence had created.   
  
In the year 1841, Mr. French, the agent of the Boott Mills, adopted a mode of ascertaining from the females employed in that mill the effect which factory labor had upon their health. The questions which he put were: "What is your age?" "How long have you worked in a cotton mill?" "Is your health as good as before?"   
  
These questions were addressed to every female in "No. 2, Boott Mill." The committee have the names of the females interrogated, and the .answers which they returned, and the result is as follows: 

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| WHERE  EMPLOYED | *WHOLE No.  OF GIRLS* | AVERAGE | AGE\* |  | *AVERAGE  EMPLOY"D* | *TIME\*  IN MILL* |  | EFFECT | UPON | HEALTH |
|  |  | y. | d. |  | y. | d. |  | Imp'd | As good | Not as good |
| Carding room | 20 | 23 | 30 |  | 5 | 25 |  | 3 | 12 | 5 |
| Spinning room | 47 | 28 | 38 |  | 4 | 10 |  | 14 | 29 | 4 |
| Dressing room | 25 | 26 | 60 |  | 7 | 25 |  | 2 | 16 | 7 |
| Weaving room . | 111 | 22 | 98 |  | 3 | 84 |  | 10 | 62 | 39 |
| Whole No. . | 203 | 22 | 85 |  | 4 | 29 |  | 29 | 119 | 55 |

Following this report former mill girls testified.

The first who testified was Eliza R. Hemmingway. She had worked 2 years and 9 months in the Lowell Factories; 2 years in the Middlesex, and 9 months in the Hamilton Corporations. Her employment is weaving-works by the piece. She attends one loom. Her wages average from $16 to $23 a month exclusive of board. She complained of the hours for labor being too many, and the time for meals too limited. In the summer season, the work is commenced at 5 o'clock, a.m., and continued till 7 o'clock, p.m., with half an hour for breakfast and three quarters of an hour for dinner. During eight months of the year, but half an hour is allowed for dinner. The air in the room she considered not to be wholesome. There were 293 small lamps and 61 large lamps lighted in the room in which she worked, when evening work is required. These lamps are also lighted sometimes in the morning. About 130 females, 11 men, and 12 children (between the ages of 11 and 14) work in the room with her. She thought the children enjoyed about as good health as children generally do. The children work but 9 months out of 12. The other 3 months they must attend school. Thinks that there is no day when there are less than six of the females out of the mill from sickness. Has known as many as thirty. She, herself, is out quite often, on account of sickness. There was more sickness in the Summer than in the Winter months; though in the Summer, lamps are not lighted. She thought there was a general desire among the females to work but ten hours, regardless of pay. Most of the girls are from the country, who work in the Lowell Mills. The average time which they remain there is about three years. She knew one girl who had worked there 14 years. Her health was poor when she left. Miss Hemmingway said her health was better where she now worked, than it was when she worked on the Hamilton Corporation. She knew of one girl who last winter went into the mill at half past 4 o'clock, a.m., and worked till half past 7 o'clock, p.m. She did so to make more money. She earned from $25 to $30 per month. There is always a large number of girls at the gate wishing to get in before the bell rings. One fourth part of the females go into the mill before they are obliged to. They do this to make more wages. A large number come to Lowell to make money to aid their parents who are poor. The moral character of the operatives is good. There was only one American female in the room with her who could not write her name.