

## CHAPTER XVIII--WAGES

When I learned that in Lesser London there were 1,292,737 people who received twenty-one shillings or less a week per family, I became interested as to how the wages could best be spent in order to maintain the physical efficiency of such families. Families of six, seven, eight or ten being beyond consideration, I have based the following table upon a family of five--a father, mother, and three children; while I have made twenty-one shillings equivalent to \$5.25, though actually, twenty-one shillings are equivalent to about \$5.11.

Rent	\$1.50	or 6/0
Bread	1.00	" 4/0
Meat	0.87.5	" 3/6
Vegetables	0.62.5	" 2/6
Coals	0.25	" 1/0
Tea	0.18	" 0/9
Oil	0.16	" 0/8
Sugar	0.18	" 0/9
Milk	0.12	" 0/6
Soap	0.08	" 0/4
Butter	0.20	" 0/10
Firewood	0.08	" 0/4
Total	\$5.25	21/2

An analysis of one item alone will show how little room there is for waste. Bread, \$1: for a family of five, for seven days, one dollar's worth of bread will give each a daily ration of 2.8 cents; and if they eat three meals a day, each may consume per meal 9.5 mills' worth of bread, a little less than one halfpennyworth. Now bread is the heaviest item. They will get less of meat per mouth each meal, and still less of vegetables; while the smaller items become too microscopic for consideration. On the other hand, these food articles are all bought at small retail, the most expensive and wasteful method of purchasing.

While the table given above will permit no extravagance, no overloading of stomachs, it will be noticed that there is no surplus. The whole guinea is spent for food and rent. There is no pocket-money left over. Does the man buy a glass of beer, the family must eat that much less; and in so far as it eats less, just that far will it impair its physical efficiency. The members of this family cannot ride in busses or trams, cannot write letters, take outings, go to a "tu'penny gaff" for cheap vaudeville, join social or benefit clubs, nor can they buy sweetmeats, tobacco, books, or newspapers.

And further, should one child (and there are three) require a pair of shoes, the family must strike meat for a week from its bill of fare. And since there are five pairs of feet requiring shoes, and five heads requiring hats, and five bodies requiring clothes, and since there are laws regulating indecency, the family must constantly impair its physical efficiency in order to keep warm and out of jail. For notice, when rent,

coals, oil, soap, and firewood are extracted from the weekly income, there remains a daily allowance for food of 4.5d. to each person; and that 4.5d. cannot be lessened by buying clothes without impairing the physical efficiency.

All of which is hard enough. But the thing happens; the husband and father breaks his leg or his neck. No 4.5d. a day per mouth for food is coming in; no halfpennyworth of bread per meal; and, at the end of the week, no six shillings for rent. So out they must go, to the streets or the workhouse, or to a miserable den, somewhere, in which the mother will desperately endeavour to hold the family together on the ten shillings she may possibly be able to earn.

While in London there are 1,292,737 people who receive twenty-one shillings or less a week per family, it must be remembered that we have investigated a family of five living on a twenty-one shilling basis.

There are larger families, there are many families that live on less than twenty-one shillings, and there is much irregular employment. The question naturally arises, How do they live? The answer is that they do not live. They do not know what life is. They drag out a subterbestial existence until mercifully released by death.

Before descending to the fouler depths, let the case of the telephone girls be cited. Here are clean, fresh English maids, for whom a higher standard of living than that of the beasts is absolutely necessary.

Otherwise they cannot remain clean, fresh English maids. On entering the

service, a telephone girl receives a weekly wage of eleven shillings. If she be quick and clever, she may, at the end of five years, attain a minimum wage of one pound. Recently a table of such a girl's weekly expenditure was furnished to Lord Londonderry. Here it is:-

	s.	d.
Rent, fire, and light	7	6
Board at home	3	6
Board at the office	4	6
Street car fare	1	6
Laundry	1	0
Total	18	0

This leaves nothing for clothes, recreation, or sickness. And yet many of the girls are receiving, not eighteen shillings, but eleven shillings, twelve shillings, and fourteen shillings per week. They must have clothes and recreation, and--

Man to Man so oft unjust,  
Is always so to Woman.

At the Trades Union Congress now being held in London, the Gasworkers' Union moved that instructions be given the Parliamentary Committee to introduce a Bill to prohibit the employment of children under fifteen years of age. Mr. Shackleton, Member of Parliament and a representative of the Northern Counties Weavers, opposed the resolution on behalf of the

textile workers, who, he said, could not dispense with the earnings of their children and live on the scale of wages which obtained. The representatives of 514,000 workers voted against the resolution, while the representatives of 535,000 workers voted in favour of it. When 514,000 workers oppose a resolution prohibiting child-labour under fifteen, it is evident that a less-than-living wage is being paid to an immense number of the adult workers of the country.

I have spoken with women in Whitechapel who receive right along less than one shilling for a twelve-hour day in the coat-making sweat shops; and with women trousers finishers who receive an average princely and weekly wage of three to four shillings.

A case recently cropped up of men, in the employ of a wealthy business house, receiving their board and six shillings per week for six working days of sixteen hours each. The sandwich men get fourteenpence per day and find themselves. The average weekly earnings of the hawkers and costermongers are not more than ten to twelve shillings. The average of all common labourers, outside the dockers, is less than sixteen shillings per week, while the dockers average from eight to nine shillings. These figures are taken from a royal commission report and are authentic.

Conceive of an old woman, broken and dying, supporting herself and four children, and paying three shillings per week rent, by making match boxes at 2.25d. per gross. Twelve dozen boxes for 2.25d., and, in addition, finding her own paste and thread! She never knew a day off, either for

sickness, rest, or recreation. Each day and every day, Sundays as well, she toiled fourteen hours. Her day's stint was seven gross, for which she received 1s. 3.75d. In the week of ninety-eight hours' work, she made 7066 match boxes, and earned 4s. 10.25d., less per paste and thread.

Last year, Mr. Thomas Holmes, a police-court missionary of note, after writing about the condition of the women workers, received the following letter, dated April 18, 1901:-

Sir,--Pardon the liberty I am taking, but, having read what you said about poor women working fourteen hours a day for ten shillings per week, I beg to state my case. I am a tie-maker, who, after working all the week, cannot earn more than five shillings, and I have a poor afflicted husband to keep who hasn't earned a penny for more than ten years.

Imagine a woman, capable of writing such a clear, sensible, grammatical letter, supporting her husband and self on five shillings per week! Mr. Holmes visited her. He had to squeeze to get into the room. There lay her sick husband; there she worked all day long; there she cooked, ate, washed, and slept; and there her husband and she performed all the functions of living and dying. There was no space for the missionary to sit down, save on the bed, which was partially covered with ties and silk. The sick man's lungs were in the last stages of decay. He coughed and expectorated constantly, the woman ceasing from her work to assist him in his paroxysms. The silken fluff from the ties was not good for

his sickness; nor was his sickness good for the ties, and the handlers and wearers of the ties yet to come.

Another case Mr. Holmes visited was that of a young girl, twelve years of age, charged in the police court with stealing food. He found her the deputy mother of a boy of nine, a crippled boy of seven, and a younger child. Her mother was a widow and a blouse-maker. She paid five shillings a week rent. Here are the last items in her housekeeping account: Tea. 0.5d.; sugar, 0.5d.; bread, 0.25d.; margarine, 1d.; oil, 1.5d.; and firewood, 1d. Good housewives of the soft and tender folk, imagine yourselves marketing and keeping house on such a scale, setting a table for five, and keeping an eye on your deputy mother of twelve to see that she did not steal food for her little brothers and sisters, the while you stitched, stitched, stitched at a nightmare line of blouses, which stretched away into the gloom and down to the pauper's coffin a-yawn for you.