

HOURS OF LABOR.

From a recent report presented to the house of lords on the laws affecting the hours of adult labor in various continental and other countries, we gather a large amount of information on this deeply interesting question, and we are confirmed in our opinion that the average British workmen are better off all around than those in any continental country. We subjoin a few notes dotted down in the course of the perusal of this paper, thinking they will be read with interest by all those who, like ourselves, are personally interested in problems relating to the hours and conditions of labor. In Austria-Hungary the law limits the duration of work in mines to a shift of twelve hours, ten only of which must be spent in actual labor. For factory hands the limit is eleven hours, exclusive of hours for rest and meals. Sunday rest is to be observed. These provisions may be subject to modifications in certain specified cases of emergency. In Hungary there is no general law affecting the hours of labor, and in some cases consequently they are excessive. A day's work of ten to twelve hours is the normal, but in some industries and localities the working day extends from twelve to fifteen and even eighteen hours. Sunday rest is not prescribed, and the factories working on Sundays and holidays are 25 per cent of the whole.

There is no law in Belgium regulating or limiting the hours of adult labor, and great variations exist in consequence. In the mining districts the average day is twelve hours, but women are often employed thirteen or fourteen hours in loading trucks and similar heavy work. Cabinet makers at Ghent and Brussels often have to work seventeen hours a day. Railway guards are often on duty for fifteen or even nineteen and a half hours at a stretch. Brussels tramway drivers work from fifteen to seventeen hours daily, Bremen from ten to seventeen, and often half day Sundays. Brickmakers sixteen hours in summer. In sugar refineries from twelve to thirteen hours. Eleven hours is considered the average day's labor in the majority of trades in Belgium. There are a number of labor decrees in France, but as they mostly affect particular trades, no brief general statement can be given. But the report states that, as a rule, it may be said that Frenchmen in factories are present at least fourteen hours out of every twenty-four in the shops. And it must be borne in mind that there is no compulsory observance of Sunday, and no day of habitual rest. Neither in Germany, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, nor in Denmark or Russia are there any laws limiting the hours of labor. In Russia it is stated that they vary from six to twenty hours, but in the majority of cases, estimated at 80 per cent., the hours of labor are twelve and under. Manufactories with twelve hours daily labor number 36.8 per cent,

those with eleven hours 20.8 per cent, those with ten hours 18.1 per cent, with eight hours 1.6 per cent, with seven hours 0.4 per cent, and with six hours 0.2 per cent. Night work is pursued in 247 establishments. But the majority open at 5 a.m. and close not later than 9 p.m.

In Saxony there are no laws affecting adult labor, but the normal working day consists of eleven hours, exclusive of meals. In Switzerland the law limits the normal working day to eleven hours, reduced to ten on Saturdays and holidays. There are numerous laws in the United States affecting the hours of labor, subject to various exceptions. We can only summarize a few of these. In New York mechanics work eight hours; in most cities of the State nearly all mechanics and all connected with the building trade work nine hours, except on Saturday, when eight hours is the rule. On the street and elevated railroads and in cities of over 500,000 inhabitants ten hours is the normal day. In New Jersey hours range from fifty-three to sixty hours per week, in Rhode Island ten hours daily, in Maryland an average of ten hours, and the same in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, where there are, however, no legislative enactments. In California eight hours is the day limit by statute, which statute, however, is constantly evaded, so that some trades that are unorganized work twelve or fourteen hours daily.

These examples are selected from a large number given in the report and they take no account of exceptional cases which are recognized by the statutes. They also apply only to adult labor, but there are a large number of statutes regulating women and child labor, which in some countries is very severe. On the whole, the organized trades of this country may congratulate themselves on holding the best position among the European workmen, and second to none in the matter of hours of labor, second only in remuneration to that of the working men in comparatively new countries like the states and our Australian colonies.—*London World*.

THE RAT PLAGUE.

Doleful accounts continue to be published from many parts of the country of the destruction and havoc wrought by rats. The wily rodent has come this time in battalions, but it is hoped he has not come to stay. In England it is the eastern counties which are chiefly suffering, and it is the east coast of Scotland also which has been most largely afflicted. But the plague is spreading; spite of all that man can do, aided by dogs, and armed with steel traps, guns, snaring nets and poison, the rat is marching victoriously onwards, and finds plenty of new worlds to conquer. Crewe, for instance, has been judicially proclaimed as a "rat-haunted place." The Fen district of Lincolnshire is rat-haunted and rat-desolated. Most pitiful accounts

are given of the ruin and disaster brought upon some of the farmers in that region. The omnivorous rodent makes for the various crops in succession. The pot to and man-gold have now been attacked, and the young plants in the field, such as wheat and beans, are seriously eaten away. So far no pied piper has appeared on the scene, but a French chemist has written to the mayor of Lincoln offering to come over and exterminate the vermin. If the chemist will accept payment by results, the despairing farmers of this and other districts should lose no time in opening negotiations. What the Frenchman's method may be of course no one knows; that is his secret, and he jealously guards it. To be successful, however, it will have to be something out of the common. All the old "cures" and traps have been tried in vain. The gamekeeper has gone too far in destroying the rat's natural enemies, and artificial foes have hitherto failed to supply the deficiency. Pasteur undertook to rid Australia of rabbits by scattering disease broadcast among those destructive creatures. Not unlike the French chemist, who is anxious to emulate the fame of the piper of Hamelin, is a disciple of Pasteur, and hopes by poisonously inoculating a few of the rodents, to carry a deadly epidemic into their ranks.—*Liverpool Echo*.

POINTS ON ASTROLOGY.

Astronomy is one of the oldest of sciences. It is certain that the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans and Assyrians were readers of the sky, and the Chinese have records of eclipses dating back thousands of years before our era.

Astrology has been called astronomy's sister, and it is also older than history; but there is a marked difference. Astronomy is true and astrology is false, although the deductions of the latter are drawn from the same source as the former.

Astrology was founded on the vanity of mankind. Astronomy teaches us that this earth is but a speck in the universe, and that we play a very insignificant part in the scheme of creation; but the astrologers took the exactly opposite ground. According to their belief, the earth was the center of the universe, and the universe only existed as an adjunct to man. Hence it followed that the planets exerted an influence over mankind.

This crude belief was gradually enlarged until it became an art, and the astrologer a very important personage. Kings and rich people kept their own astrologers, and other people consulted astrologers at so much a visit, as credulous persons do fortune tellers at the present day.

No doubt there were a great many fraudulent astrologers—fellows who saw in the art an easy way to make a living, but we cannot doubt that the majority of astrologers were firm believers in the so-called science.