every man of spirit would consider himself as the establisher of his own fortune. Is it credible, then, that in such an event, so many millions of natives would submit to be governed by a few thousand Europeans, to whom they could feel no natural attachment, or obligation of allegiance?

Upon the whole, I am fully persuaded that the first step to be taken is that of rendering our own religion respectable in the eyes of our Indian subjects, by an establishment of greater splendour and dignity, and especially by a better choice and more vigilant inspection of the regular clergy; and that Government should studiously avoid inserting itself in the conversion of the natives, since it is impossible that they should not connect in their minds the zeal of proselyting, exerted by those in power, with a plan of coercion and intolerance. If placing in the hands of the Hindus translations of the Scriptures into the languages of the country, will not induce them to make unfavourable comparisons between our lives and our doctrines, and consequently expose us to contempt, no objection can be made to such a dissemination of the principles of true religion. To its silent operation the cause of Christianity should be left, and who will not rejoice in its success?

Questions

1. What does Valentia see as the positive and negative points of British society in Calcutta? What tensions are evident within it?
2. Why is Valentia so worried about half-caste children? How does he contrast them with the other inhabitants of Calcutta?
3. Why does Valentia think that Christian missionary work in India is likely to be futile? Why does he think it could be dangerous?

Testimony for the Factory Act (1833)

Debates in England around factory working conditions highlighted growing tensions about whether a modern government should regulate economic relations to serve human needs. The centrality of textile production, especially cotton fabric, to the British economy meant that industry (along with mining) received a great deal of scrutiny. Starting in 1802, Parliament passed various factory acts—reforms aimed at improving the health and safety of workers. (Such acts still regulate the workplace today.)

The implementation of factory production required a major change in schedules from seasonal, agrarian work cycles and introduced new concepts of work discipline. The reforming impulse behind the early factory acts did not challenge this discipline; it just sought to reduce the number of hours that workers were subjected to it.

The following passage provides three perspectives on factory labor considered in the proceedings leading up to the 1833 act—the medical examiners, a worker, and a mill owner. A central question was the desirability of a ten-hour work day. The final act stipulated that children fourteen to eighteen years old could not work longer than twelve hours without a lunch break, children nine to thirteen years old could not work longer than eight hours without a break, and children under age nine could not work in the textile industry.

Testimony of the Commission of Medical Examiners

The account of the physical condition of the manufacturing population in the large towns in the North-eastern District of England is less favourable. It is of this district that the Commissioners state, "We have found undoubted instances of children five years old sent to work thirteen hours a day; and frequently of children nine, ten, and eleven consigned to labour for fourteen and fifteen hours." The

---

Citation: *Second Report by Factories Inquiry Commission* (London: House of Commons, 1833), pp. 5, 26–28.

effects ascertained by the Commissioners in many cases are, "deformity," and in still more "stunted growth, relaxed muscles, and slender conformation:" "twisting of the ends of the long bones, relaxation of the ligaments of the knees, ankles, and the like." "The representation that these effects are so common and universal as to enable some persons invariably to distinguish factory children from other children is, I have no hesitation in saying, an exaggerated and unfaithful picture of their general condition; at the same time it must be said, that the individual instances in which some one or other of those effects of severe labour are discernible are rather frequent than rare." * * * "Upon the whole, there remains no doubt upon my mind, that under the system pursued in many of the factories, the children of the labouring classes stand in need of, and ought to have, legislative protection against the conspiracy insensibly formed between their masters and parents, to tax them to a degree of toil beyond their strength."

"In conclusion, I think it has been clearly proved that children have been worked a most unreasonable and cruel length of time daily, and that even adults have been expected to do a certain quantity of labour which scarcely any human being is able to endure. I am of opinion no child under fourteen years of age should work in a factory of any description for more than eight hours a day. From fourteen upwards I would recommend that no individual should, under any circumstances, work more than twelve hours a day; although if practicable, as a physician, I would prefer the limitation of ten hours, for all persons who earn their bread by their industry."

* * *

Testimony of John Wright

How long have you been employed in a silk-mill?—More than thirty years.

Did you enter it as a child?—Yes, betwixt five and six.

How many hours a day did you work then?—The same thirty years ago as now.

What are those hours?—Eleven hours per day and two over-hours: over-hours are working after six in the evening till eight.

The regular hours are from six in the morning to six in the evening, and two others are two over-hours: about fifty years ago they began working over-hours.

* * *

Why, then, are those employed in them said to be in such a wretched condition?—In the first place, the great number of hands congregated together, in some rooms forty, in some fifty, in some sixty, and I have known some as many as 100, which must be injurious to both health and growing. In the second place, the privy is in the factory, which frequently emits an unwholesome smell; and it would be worth while to notice in the future erection of mills, that there be betwixt the privy door and the factory wall a kind of a lobby of cage-work. 3dly, The tediousness and the everlasting sameness in the first process preys much on the spirits, and makes the hands spiritless. 4thly, the extravagant number of hours a child is compelled to labour and confinement, which for one week is seventy-six hours. * * * 5thly, About six months in the year we are obliged to use either gas, candles, or lamps, for the longest portion of that time, nearly six hours a day, being obliged to work amid the smoke and soot of the same; and also a large portion of oil and grease is used in the mills.

What are the effects of the present system of labour?—From my earliest recollections, I have found the effects to be awfully detrimental to the well-being of the operative; I have observed frequently children carried to factories, unable to walk, and that entirely owing to excessive labour and confinement. The degradation of the work-people baffles all description: frequently have two of my sisters been obliged to be assisted to the factory and home again, until by-and-by they could go no longer, being totally crippled in their legs. And in the next place, I remember some ten or twelve years ago working in one of the largest firms in Macclesfield, (Messrs. Baker and Pearson,) with about twenty-five men, where they were scarce one half fit for His Majesty's service. Those that are straight in their limbs are stunted in their growth; much inferior to their fathers in point of strength. 3dly, Through excessive labour and confinement there is often a total loss of appetite; a kind of langour steals over the whole

frame—enters to the very core—saps the foundation of the best constitution—and lays our strength prostrate in the dust. In the 4th place, by protracted labour there is an alarming increase of cripples in various parts of this town, which has come under my own observation and knowledge.

* * *

Are all these cripples made in the silk factories?—Yes, they are, I believe.

* * *

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM HARTER

What effect would it have on your manufacture to reduce the hours of labour to ten?—It would instantly much reduce the value of my mill and machinery, and consequently of far prejudice my manufacture.

How so?—They are calculated to produce a certain quantity of work in a given time. Every machine is valuable in proportion to the quantity of work which it will turn off in a given time. It is impossible that the machinery could produce as much work in ten hours as in twelve. If the tending of the machines were a laborious occupation, the difference in the quantity of work might not always be in exact proportion to the difference of working time; but in my mill, and silk-mills in general, the work requires the least imaginable labour; therefore it is perfectly impossible that the machines could produce as much work in ten hours as in twelve. The produce would vary in about the same ratio as the working time.

Questions

1. The medical examiners directly linked child labor to poor physical health. What conditions did they cite as particularly harmful, and what remedy did they propose?
2. John Wright did not directly challenge the length of the workday. What complaints about workplace conditions did he raise? Would a reduction in work hours have improved the consequences of those conditions? Why or why not?
3. How did William Harter justify a twelve-hour workday? What can you infer about the government's sympathies from the provisions of the 1833 act?

Commissioner Lin Zexu, Letter to Queen Victoria (1839)

In 1839, Lin Zexu (1785–1850) was named by the Daoguang emperor—the sixth emperor to rule over Qing China—to put an end to the opium trade. Opium had long been used in China, but that use increased dramatically when Dutch and British traders imported large quantities to pay for tea, silk, porcelain, and other items in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By the early nineteenth century, addiction had become a major social problem. Lin confiscated more than 2.5 million pounds of opium without compensation and penned the following letter to Queen Victoria. The British objected to the seizure and inflicted a decisive military defeat on China in the First Opium War (1839–1842). The emperor dismissed Commissioner Lin and sent him into exile.

It is only our high and mighty emperor, who alike supports and cherishes those of the Inner Land, and those from beyond the seas—who looks upon all mankind with equal benevolence—who, if a source of profit exists anywhere, diffuses it over the whole world—who, if the tree of evil takes root anywhere, plucks it up for the benefit of all nations;—who, in a word, hath implanted in his breast that heart (by which beneficent nature herself) governs the heavens and the earth!

* * *

CITATION: *Chinese Repository*, Vol. 8 (February 1840), pp. 497–503.