Second Series. Vol. II.
Part IV. Chap. II.

Dyeing and Cleaning

Interiors

Dyers and cleaners. § 31.

Regularity.

Mr W. Eastman -

There is a certain amount of irregularity owing to slackness or pressure of business. The slackest times about mid winter & midsummer.

Spring is the very busy time cleaning curtains & furniture chintzes for the summer.

In the Autumn a good deal of dyeing as well as cleaning of theatrical clothes.

Steady hands are never discharged, but sometimes others are taken on during great pressure of business. Special care has to be taken in regard to character for honesty of the employées, as so many articles of some value pass thro' their hands and are not missed until the time comes for them to appear ready for packing & returning to their owners ~~some days~~. And any article stolen cd not be at all easily traced as it passes thro' such a variety of hands.

The cleaning & dyeing depart. are quite separate.

Piece work.

Irregularity.

No competition with Foreign workmen.

Wages are mostly paid by the piece. but a minimum is generally fixed. and any work done ~~beyo~~ over & above that is paid extra, while if there is less done owing to slackness the difference is not deducted. This is a system that suits the employés very well.

Taking the trade all round. about 8 months wd be worked full time & over time & 4 months ½ & ¾ time.

Mr E. cd not say what became of hands that are irregularly employed. There is a residuum in this trade as in every other of the worst workmen. the idle, the unsteady & these were the kind who only find work in time of pressure. Some of the women might go into the laundry business. at other times. others of the men became porters. carmen & kabmen. tram conductors etc.

There ~~was~~ is no competition between British & foreign workmen. But a large number of Scotchmen ~~found~~ their way into the trade

Dry cleaning or French cleaning.

trade owing to the large dye works at Perth, which had at one time threatened to extinguish the London industry altogether. The latter was however now looking up & there could be no doubt that it was Perth that was beginning to feel the edge of London competition at present.

The wet cleaning ~~process~~ is performed by putting the articles to be cleaned thro' a sort of churning process in water & specially prepared soap. Blankets are then pressed out under rollers & left for some time in water prepared with acids. & finally dried, pressed & ironed as in an ordinary laundry. In the case of more delicate goods such stains as require it are taken out by hand.

But the more interesting process is that of dry or French cleaning, by spirits, sometimes by benzine, sometimes by naphtha. The latter is used at the P. works. The stuff to be cleaned is first soaked in a vat of the spirit & then

then placed in a revolving, perforated cylinder – the machine is I believe called a Hydro – which turns at terrific speed. (the one at Mr Dewitree's makes 800 revolutions to the minute.) The spirit is thus thrown out of the cylinder by centrifugal force & the fabric comes out after about 40 minutes or so practically dry & clean. It has then to be hung up in a hot room for about 48 hrs. in order to get rid of the rest of the spirit & the smell of naphtha, which is rather sickening – In the room where the revolving cylinder works, any one unaccustomed to the spirit is liable to become suddenly intoxicated as the odour of it has a very sudden effect upon the brain. The sensation is rather like that of having laughing gas applied, yet a workman who is accustomed to it will stand over it for some considerable time without feeling any ill effects. There are intervals between the times when the hydros are revolving, when a man can recover himself. After being shot out of the cylinder

cyanide ~~from which~~ the spirit is again run into tanks & collected - a refined article - the oftener it is refined the better it becomes. but a considerable quantity is lost on each process.

The only objection to this process is that it is not without danger, since the naphtha spirit is liable to spontaneous combustion under certain conditions & owing to certain causes; which have not yet been fully determined & which cannot therefore be altogether avoided. Great care must in consequence be taken in regard to the building in which the process is worked. so that there should be absolutely nothing inflammable in the place. An L.C.C. inspector visits the building monthly. The men employed in this branch of the business are paid a regular wage all the year round whether there is work for them to do or not.

There are no unions in the ~~[illegible]~~ degreasing trade & the men have always worked in perfect amity with the heads of the firm.

There

There is a Friendly Benefit Society belonging to the Firm.

Giving Sick Benefits of

5/- per week for premium of 2d per week.
10/- " " " " " 1d " "
15/- " " " " " 6d " "

These Benefits may last in full 8 weeks & in half 8 weeks more. but ~~more~~ no member is allowed to receive more than the above as sick pay within one year.

Drink is very much on the decrease. Not 1 p.c. often names could be said to be really intemperate in this respect. & about 50 p.c. of women are teetotalers & a fair percentage of men also - about 10 p.c I think he said.

The factory was roomy, comfortable. well aired & not over hot in any part of it. The worst ventilated part was his & his own room.

The time was rather slack & they were working short time in some of the depts but the factory has been fair busier during

Manager - Mr Henry Knee.

Different branches -

during the past two years than ever before.
For further particulars see - Forms filled in & returned by Factories.

Messrs Lyon & Coos. Cleaners & Dyers.
Hackney Wick.

There are 7 different branches of skilled men in this business.

1. French or dry cleaning - Foreman. 35/-
women fr: 10/- to 15/- or 16/- & men & youths from that to 28/-
2. Wet. cleaning - Foreman 30/- others 25/-
no female labour.
3. Dyeing. Foreman £2. others 30/-
4. Curtain cleaning. Foreman 28/- others 22/-
5. Silk finishing. Foremen 30/- men 20/- to 25/-
& women 12/- to 15/-.
6. General finishing. all women 15/- to £1-1.
7. Glazing. Foreman 35/- others 25/- or 26/-
hrs. nominal fr: 7 to 7. but generally shut at 6. with two hrs for meals for women

Irregularity.

Condition of trade

Methods of training

& 1¾ for men. women get extra ½ hr. for tea at 4 o'clock.

Winter is the slack season - & then a good many women leave the factory and a certain number find work at the India rubber factory which is busy during the winter

About 60 per cent have regular work. but the irregularity affects female labour very much more than men. the latter are hardly ever sent away except for unsteady behaviour.

Those who are on the irregular list hardly get more than 4 to 6 months work in the factory. The number of men irregularly employed do not reach more than 20 pc.. The year 1891 was far better than at present. very slack at the present moment. only working 5 days a week.

Apprentices as a rule turn out badly. they do not seem to have any larger sufficient honesty or long sightedness to make good use of the opportunities of training put at their disposal.

But

Competition between English & Foreign labour

But there is little doubt that the efficiency of English labour is decreasing on account of the want of a proper method of training. They had a German as general manager who had thoroughly mastered all the branches required. This caused some trouble at first with the men. But they were unable to suit themselves at all with an Englishman & the men have settled down to it now. Men are picked up from anywhere to be taught the business. at the fancy of the foreman or master. Apprentices used to be bound to the trade. They paid no premium but were paid 5/- a week for the first year, rising 1/- a week each year until their term was over.

It would take 5 years to obtain a good thorough knowledge of the cleaning or the dyeing branches.

There is very little competition between English & foreign workmen. The only danger at present being that the best

best places ~~may~~ such as Foreman's. leading hands etc. may be given to Germans whose better education & more thorough technical knowledge makes them opticnes more efficient in controlling a whole department. The head foreman at this firm is a German: this caused some disturbance at first among the men but they have now grown accustomed to him.

There need, however, be no competition at all between English & Germans if the former had a better training.

As regards the French dry cleaning process there is however considerable competition, as the French workmen are neater in dealing with small & dainty articles which are put thro' this process.

Perth is the great competitor with London. but the manufacturers there are now beginning to feel London competition, more than Londoners do Perth.

The

Analine dyes fr: Germany.

Proportion of female labour.

The greater portion of the analine dyes used come from ~~Both~~ Germany.
The London firms do not produce either such good dyes or so cheap. Good dyes are, however, produced at Huddersfield. for the Yorkshire & Lancashire
The proportion of women working is about 70 p.c.
Mr Knee took me over the works. The processes do not differ materially from Mr Eastmans.
Articles coming in to the shop are sorted in the first room & arranged according to their various requirements viz. dry cleaning. wet cleaning. hard cleaning. or dyeing. This requires considerable knowledge & skill & it is here that a certain familiarity with each branch is necessary. They are then noted down & labelled with a number & sent off to their respective departments. After finally passing thro. the finishing dept. (& be carefully examined before leaving) thro' which every article has to go, they

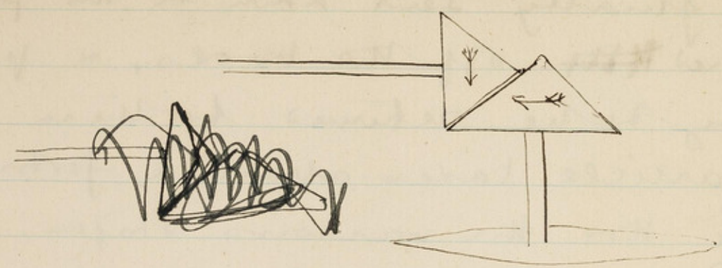
are

are finally sent down to the packers where they are ticked off the books, & packed ready to be returned to their owners. An article takes about a fortnight in going thro the various stages.

The workshops were neither so airy nor so pleasant as Mr Eastman's. One of the lower rooms not being lighted at all except thro' the door. The drying room ~~at~~ too in which a good many girls were at work ironing, & passing stuff under machine-rollers for drying was kept at a very high temperature, about 90° the manager said, & the pale faces of the girls showed that told on their health.

This firm uses Benzine for dry-cleaning instead of naphtha spirit. The smell is less disagreeable & clinging - but it is more inflammable.

~~One of~~ their "hydros" i.e. revolving cylinders for driving out the spirit from the stuff - by centrifugal force. ~~revolve~~ made



Wages for men

Regularity.

Condition of Trade.

Methods of training.

500 revolutions a minute & had to be driven by friction instead of cog-wheels as the latter could not have withstood the wear & tear for any length of time.

Mr J. Daintree. Dyer & cleaner.
Southwark Park Rd. S.E.

Employes. 40 women. & 30 men & boys.
Foreman 50/- ordinary hands fr. 21/- to 30/- paid for all bank holidays provided they turn up at the proper time next day.
Work very regular. very few hands are ever discharged.

1891. was a good year. 1892 not quite so good. This year still uncertain but probably pretty good.
There are no apprentices any longer in the trade. This Mr D. thinks is probably

greatly to be deplored in spite of the trouble often given by apprentices, who refused to take trouble over their work, or to learn conscientiously. The extinction of ~~some~~ a systematic method of training meant the extinction of efficient workmen.

The business is taught as in the other firms I saw, simply by picking up the most intelligent man about the place & setting him to work at some particular section of a branch, which he mastered in a more or less short time, & then both he & the employer seem to rest content that he should go on at that & that section only as he, understanding it thoroughly is able to work more quickly, or to do as much work as possible with as little labour as possible.

The dyeing department which requires most skill, & is most highly paid, would require 5 years to become thoroughly

master

Drink.

Works. dry cleaning.

master of it.
A great improvement in this respect is noticeable within the last 10 or 15 years. This Firm, like most other factories, has become very much more strict in regard to allowing drink on the premises - a certain amount of beer is allowed in for ~~dinner~~ luncheon: but not at any other time.
Here also Benzine was used instead of naphtha - as the more inflammable - Mr D. said it combines with oxygen at 130 - whereas naphtha only does so at about 200 - the smell is not so powerful & unpleasant, & it has not the same disagreeably intoxicating effect.
The hydros have an air-tight lid closed down upon them while in motion to prevent the oxygen of the outer air combining with the benzene gaz within. But nevertheless accidents occasionally occur.
The ~~rooms~~ rooms were large & airy & there was no stifflingly hot room as at

Leeds

German Analine dyes.

Lush & Cooks. The work does not appear to be in any sense hard.

The German analine dyes are both cheaper & better than those manufactured in London. To such an extent are they imported at present that Messrs Brooks & Simpsons the largest London Firm of manufacturers has ceased for some time to pay any dividends and are, Mr D. believes, on the verge of bankruptcy.

Mr D., like, Mr Eastman, complained a good deal of the unfairness of the restrictions placed upon their women by the ~~Employers Liability~~ Factory acts. viz that women might only work 48 times a year overtime - & then for 2 hrs. - while leaving laundries free to work all the overtime they want. This is unfair to the cleaners for the laundries then often are able to carry out jobs which would naturally fall to the former. But if they might be allowed to work 96 hrs over time in the year - of 1 hour at a time they would

would not feel so aggrieved. They never did work ~~than~~ women hands. 2 hrs overtime at one time & therefore the regulation in that respect was in a great measure useless to them.

Jany: 15 - 1894.

Hours.

Saw Mr Eastman again.

Rest houses work 53 hours. General trade hours. 56.
Men. 6 to 6. — 1½ - for breakfast & dinner
Women 8 to 8 — 1½. for dinner & tea.

Dyers are reckoned as skilled men. It takes a man from 4 to 5 years to become a skilled workman. The dyers are nearly all Scotchmen.
Cleaners are divided into two branches.
1. Fancy cleaners. who do the work requiring the greatest care. dealing with the best lace curtains etc. & are the highest skilled. They are the more intelligent among the ordinary cleaners who have risen to the higher position.
2 Ordinary cleaners. also to a certain extent skilled men.-
They start as boys about 16 & 17 - but pay no premium - receiving at the first start a nominal wage. A cleaner works

hours

know something of dyeing as well, & most of them therefore spend some time in that dept. The cleaners are nearly all London born men.

The best "white goods" blankets, linen, curtains etc - are sent to cleaners, where they are more carefully handled than among laundry people. A certain number of large drapes do dyeing work, but not a quarter of the names mentioned in the directory as any dyeing or cleaning themselves. They simply take in goods & forward them to the firms.

It is not in any way an unhealthy trade.

<u>Finishing Dept</u>. is composed of women to the extent of about $\frac{3}{4}$ of its numbers. After goods are dyed & cleaned, they come up to the finishing dept. to be ironed, out & passed thro' calenders to give them back their original glossy appearance.

The number of persons employed in London in

D

in this industry went down considerably between 1871 & 1891. but is now again on the increase. as regards dyeing & cleaning as these branches are beginning to compete successfully with Scotland

The introduction of machinery in two departments connected with dyeing & cleaning has however taken work away from a large number of persons. the first of these is carpet beating. upon which a great deal of casual labour was employed in spring & autumn. the firm advertises that it can by machinery beat 450,000 sq^r yards of carpet in a week. & another 250,000.– this alone means employing 100 men instead of about 1000.

The second displacement of labour has taken place in the women's cleaning department by the introduction of the French system of "dry cleaning" by naphtha or benzol – all curtains, silk flounces etc. had formerly to be taken to pieces by women, before being cleaned. & this reason. now however this

this is entirely unnecessary. a Mr Eastman estimates that fr. 250 to 300 women have been thrown out of employment in consequence.