

## CHAPTER IV

### OUR FARMERS AND WAGE-EARNERS

THE increasing dependence of middleman and petty manufacturer has already been considered. The same pressure which bears upon these bears also upon farmer and wage-earner. The editorials and the oratory of election years, it is true, supply us with recurring pæans over the independence, the self-reliance and the prosperity of these classes, and such graphic tropes as "the full dinner pail" and "the overflowing barn," become the party shibboleths of political campaigns. Plain facts, however, accord but ill with this exultant strain.

#### I

In most ages the working farmer has been the dupe and prey of the rest of mankind. Now by force and now by cajolery, as social customs and political institutions change, he has been made to produce the food by which the race lives, and the share of his product which he has been permitted to keep for himself has always been pitifully small. Whether Roman slave, Frankish serf, or English villein; whether the so-called "independent" farmer of a free democracy or the *ryot* of a Hindu prince, the

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general rule holds good. Occasionally, by one means or another, he gains some transitory betterment of condition; the Plague of 1349 and the Peasants' Rebellion of 1381 won for his class advantages which were retained during three generations. But in the long run he is the race's martyr. Under a military autocracy his exploitation was inevitable. There is no reason for it now, for the lives and well-being of the rest of mankind are in his hands: were the working farmers organized as the manufacturers and the skilled artisans are organized, and could they lay by for themselves a year's necessities, they could starve the race into submission to their demands. But the thing is not to be; nor, indeed, is any marked change to their advantage likely to happen, for, so far as current tendencies point, the future is to repeat the past.

In our day and in our land both force and cajolery conspire to keep the peasant farmer securely in his traces. He cannot break through the cordon which the trusts and the railroads put about him; and even if he could he would not, since the influences showered upon him are specifically directed to the end of keeping him passive and contented. Our statisticians assure him of his prosperity; our politicians and our moulders of opinion warn him of the pernicious influence of unions like the Farmers' Alliance, and further preach to him the comforting doctrine that by "raising more corn and less politics" he will ultimately work out a blissful salvation. Sometimes he must burn his corn for fuel; often he cannot sell his grain for the cost of production, even though many

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thousands of persons in the great cities may be hungering for it; frequently he cannot afford to send his children to school, and in a steadily increasing number of cases he is forced to abandon his farm and become a tenant or a wanderer. He is puzzled, no doubt, by these things; but they are all carefully and neatly explained to him from the writings and preachments of profound scholars, as "natural" and "inevitable" phenomena. His ethical sense may be somewhat disturbed by the explanations, but he learns that it is useless to protest, and he thereupon acquiesces.

A sort of symposium on the joys of the farmer is to be found in the September number of the *American Review of Reviews*. Mr. Clarence H. Matson writes of improved conditions due to rural free delivery of mails and a few other reforms; Mr. William R. Draper dilates upon the enormous revenues which have flowed to the farmers during the current year, and Professor Henry C. Adams contributes a symphony on the diffusion of agricultural prosperity. A fourth article, by Mr. Cy Warman, furnishes a rather discordant note to the general harmony, since it shows a large and increasing immigration of our prosperous farmers into Canada. Some 20,000 crossed the border last year, according to Mr. Warman, while during the first four months of 1902, 11,480 followed, and indications pointed to a total of 40,000 emigrants for the present year. The official figures of the Canadian Government, since published, partly confirm these estimates. The number of immigrants from the United States for the year ended June 30, 1902,

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was 22,000. The number for the current year will probably be larger, for according to a Montreal press despatch of September 17th: "The immigration from the American to the Canadian Northwest has assumed much greater proportions this year than ever before, and land sales to Americans are daily reported. The latest large sale is by the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company, which has sold 100,000 acres in Saskatchewan to an American syndicate for \$500,000."

"The American farmer," sententiously and truthfully remarks Professor Adams, "does not hoard his cash." He gives no reason for the fact, and the determination must be left to the reader. "The American farmer," he further remarks, "is, as a rule, his own landlord." This statement reveals a very serious misapprehension of the facts. Something more than every third farm in the United States, according to the recent census, is operated by a tenant. Moreover, the proportion of tenants is constantly rising. For the whole country, tenants operated 25.5 per cent of all farms in 1880, 28.4 per cent in 1890, and 35.3 per cent in 1900. Further, the tendency is not confined to particular sections, but is common to the whole country. During the last decade the number of tenant-operated farms increased relatively to the whole number of farms in every State and Territory except Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire. In Maine tenantry decreased seven-tenths of 1 per cent, in New Hampshire five-tenths of 1 per cent, and in Vermont one-tenth of 1 per cent. For the twenty-year period, as was pointed out in Chapter II, the only exceptions to the

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general increase are Arizona, Florida, and New Hampshire.

The recent census, out of its abundant optimism, does not segregate these facts, and makes no general comment other than that tenantry has increased and that salaried management is believed to be "constantly increasing." The bulletin on "Agriculture: The United States" does not even furnish a general classified summary of the data on tenantry. But the separate reports give the statistics, and out of them the following table is compiled:—

### INCREASE OF FARM TENANTRY

STATES AND TERRITORIES	PER CENT OF FARMS OPERATED BY TENANTS		
	1880	1890	1900
1. Alabama . . . . .	46.8	48.6	57.7
2. Arizona . . . . .	13.2	7.9	} a. 8.4 <sup>1</sup> b. 11.9 <sup>2</sup>
3. Arkansas . . . . .	30.9	32.1	45.4
4. California . . . . .	19.8	17.8	23.1
5. Colorado . . . . .	13.0	11.3	22.6
6. Connecticut . . . . .	10.2	11.5	12.9
7. Delaware . . . . .	42.4	46.9	50.3
8. District of Columbia . .	38.2	36.7	43.1
9. Florida . . . . .	30.9	23.6	26.5
10. Georgia . . . . .	44.9	53.5	59.9
11. Idaho . . . . .	4.7	4.6	8.7
12. Illinois . . . . .	21.4	24.0	29.3
13. Indiana . . . . .	23.7	25.4	28.6
14. Iowa . . . . .	23.8	28.1	34.9
15. Kansas . . . . .	16.3	28.2	33.2

<sup>1</sup> Including Indian farms.

<sup>2</sup> Excluding Indian farms.

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STATES AND TERRITORIES	PER CENT OF FARMS OPERATED BY TENANTS		
	1880	1890	1900
16. Kentucky . . . . .	26.4	24.9	32.8
17. Louisiana . . . . .	35.2	44.4	58.0
18. Maine . . . . .	4.3	5.4	4.7
19. Maryland . . . . .	31.0	31.0	33.6
20. Massachusetts . . . . .	8.2	9.3	9.6
21. Michigan . . . . .	10.0	14.0	15.9
22. Minnesota . . . . .	9.2	12.9	17.3
23. Mississippi . . . . .	43.8	52.8	62.4
24. Missouri . . . . .	27.3	26.8	30.5
25. Montana . . . . .	5.3	4.8	9.2
26. Nebraska . . . . .	18.0	24.7	36.9
27. Nevada . . . . .	9.7	7.5	11.4
28. New Hampshire . . . . .	8.1	8.0	7.5
29. New Jersey . . . . .	24.6	27.2	36.9
30. New Mexico . . . . .	8.1	4.5	9.4
31. New York . . . . .	16.5	20.2	23.9
32. North Carolina . . . . .	33.5	34.1	41.4
33. North Dakota . . . . .	3.9 <sup>1</sup>	6.9	8.5
34. Ohio . . . . .	19.3	22.9	27.5
35. Oklahoma . . . . .		0.7	21.0
36. Oregon . . . . .	14.1	12.5	17.8
37. Pennsylvania . . . . .	21.2	23.3	26.0
38. Rhode Island . . . . .	19.9	18.7	20.1
39. South Carolina . . . . .	50.3	55.3	61.0
40. South Dakota . . . . .	3.9 <sup>1</sup>	13.2	21.8
41. Tennessee . . . . .	34.5	30.8	40.5
42. Texas . . . . .	37.6	41.9	49.7
43. Utah . . . . .	4.6	5.2	8.8
44. Vermont . . . . .	13.4	14.6	14.5
45. Virginia . . . . .	29.5	26.9	30.7
46. Washington . . . . .	7.2	8.5	14.4
47. West Virginia . . . . .	19.1	17.8	21.8
48. Wisconsin . . . . .	9.1	11.4	13.5
49. Wyoming . . . . .	2.8	4.2	7.6

<sup>1</sup> Dakota Territory.

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There were 2,026,286 tenants in 1900, an increase in twenty years of 97.7 per cent. There were 3,713,371 owners, part owners, "owners and tenants," and managers, an increase in twenty years of 24.4 per cent. During the twenty-year period owners in Washington increased less than fivefold, tenants tenfold. Utah shows a doubling of the number of owners, and a quadrupling of the number of tenants. South Dakota, compared with Dakota Territory in 1880, reveals an increase of owners of two and one-half times; of tenants, eighteen times. There are 28,669 fewer owners in New York State than in 1880, and 14,331 more tenants. Ownership has declined and tenantry advanced, both absolutely and relatively, in New Jersey. The great farming State of Illinois has 15,044 fewer owners and 23,454 more tenants than in 1880, and even the young Territory of Oklahoma, wherein one might expect to find evidences of increased ownership, reveals, for the ten-year period, a two-hundred-fold increase of tenantry and only a sixfold increase of ownership.

From the foregoing table it will be seen that while during the previous decade relative tenantry declined slightly in several States, the tide has since turned. Though the Southern States generally show the greatest proportion of tenants, the greatest percentage of increase is revealed in the Border, Northern, and Western States. Tenants operate 62.4 per cent of all the farms of Mississippi, 61 per cent of those of South Carolina. But while the former is a growth since 1880 from 43.8 per cent, and the latter from 50.3 per cent, Oklahoma (the

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comparison in this single instance is with 1890) increased the percentage of its tenant-operated farms from seven-tenths of 1 per cent to 21 per cent. Washington doubled its percentage, Montana and Utah very nearly so. Nearly one-third of the farms of New Jersey are tenant farms, and more than one-third of those of Kansas and Nebraska. Each of these three States doubled its relative percentage of tenant farmers for the twenty-year period. Even in New York the proportion has grown since 1880 from 16.5 to 23.9 per cent. As marked as is the showing, the whole situation is not revealed by the figures, for the term "owners" in the reports includes "farms operated by individuals who own a part of the land and rent the remainder from others," and "farms operated under the joint direction and by the united labor of two or more individuals, one owning the farm or a part of it, and the other or others owning no part but receiving for supervision or labor a share of the products."

This remarkable growth of tenantry would be considered, in any other than our own complacent days, as an alarming, even an appalling fact. So blithely and for so long a time have the changes been rung upon the alleged fact of independent ownership that everybody, including professors of political economy, assumes its truth. But even when its baselessness is clearly shown we shall hear little of an alarmist nature from our publicists and teachers. Rather it may be expected that their pronouncements will change with the changing times, and that we shall soon hear reiterated congratulations on the development



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of tenantry. Is not the humble tenant's security greater, are not his troubles less? Need he worry over taxes, foreclosures, and the like? Not at all; and besides—not the least of considerations to our paternalistic moulders of opinion—there is much reason for satisfaction in the fact that, having no land to mortgage, he will not be led into wildly prodigal habits of life by a too ready recourse to the money-lender.

Considering the growth of tenantry, the increasing migration to Canada, the flocking of rural residents into the cities, and the frequent outright abandonment of farms in several sections of the country, the unsophisticated onlooker may naturally wonder at the tales of agricultural prosperity which from time to time appear in public print. Mr. Draper, in the article previously mentioned, speculates somewhat ingeniously over the financial returns due the farmer for his crop for the present year. The figures are certainly imposing when looked at as totals. The wheat crop will sum up 700,500,000 bushels, and each bushel will sell for 60 cents, making the net value \$580,100,000—a rather curious result, by the way, not obtainable by any of the ordinary processes of mathematics. The corn crop is to bring \$776,985,300, and the remaining crops follow, with large values attached.

But reduced to individual earnings, values of farm products (according to the census, products other than those fed to live stock) reveal a rather meagre diffusion of prosperity. Of the 5,739,657 farms in the United States, 1,319,856 are listed in the census

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as hay and grain farms, for the reason that hay and grain comprise 40 per cent of their total products. The average size of these hay and grain farms is 159.3 acres, and the average value of this product per acre in 1899 was \$4.77. The number of miscellaneous farms is 1,059,416, with an average acreage of 106.8, and a product value of \$4.12. Live-stock farms number 1,564,714, with an average acreage of 226.9 and a product value of \$3.47. Thus the average productive yield of 70 per cent of all the farms and 80 per cent of all the farm land in the nation ranges from \$3.47 to \$4.77 per acre. Flowers and plants, it may be noted for comparison, yield the comfortable return of \$431.83 per acre; but their effect on the general census is but slight, since the average product value of all farms is but \$4.47 per acre. But let no one suppose that all this munificent sum goes to the farmer. He pays 43 cents per acre for labor and nearly 7 cents per acre for fertilizers. The net income is thus \$3.97 per acre.

The size of farms is increasing, though actual agriculture is probably confined to smaller holdings. The average was 136.5 acres in 1890; it is now 146.6 acres. The tendency varies in different parts of the country. Nebraska increases her average from 190.1 acres in 1890 to 246.1 acres in 1900. Kansas shows almost identical figures, while the New England States show little change, and the Southern States generally show reduced averages. The relation of size of farm to kind of tenure is, however, the main point, and here one discovers matter for reflection. Farms operated by cash tenants have 102.7 acres apiece, by owners

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134.1, by managers 1514.3. The growth of manorial estates is dimly revealed in these figures, and there is no need to doubt the census bulletin's reserved admission that farms operated by managers are believed to be constantly increasing.

The subject of the changing status of the farmer—a change which involves his ultimate reduction to a sixteenth-century level—is too large to receive adequate treatment in these pages. By all considerations it deserves the space of a generous volume. For present purposes there remains to be said that even where apparent ownership is retained by the working farmer, effective ownership is determined in other quarters. He is the joint tenant of the farm implement trusts, of the new harvester trust, of the produce trusts which fix the value of his products, of the railroad trusts which fix the rate of transportation to the market, and in the arid West of the water trusts. Thus, even though he boasts the possession of a title-deed to his land, the holding is in reality of the nature of a fief, held at the mercy of several superiors; and the tithes which he pays, though less formally levied and exacted than were the *redevances* of the mediæval peasant, are as many and will-nigh as burdensome. And he must pay or go; for there is no remission from his superiors, as in olden days, on account of drouth, floods, locusts, or murrain.

## II

With the decline of the petty trades, the growth of the combinations, and the concentration in fewer

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hands of the machinery of production, the subordination of the wage-earner becomes more certain and more fixed. If ever he were a free agent, — in the sense and to the degree that any one in human society can be free, — the day is passed. Through agencies constantly augmenting and extending, he is “cabin’d, cribb’d, confin’d, bound in,” to a narrowing circle of possible efforts. Divorced from the land and from the tools of production, he can live only by accepting such wages and conditions as are offered him; and the terms are always such that the kernel of his product goes to some other man, while the husks and the tares remain his own portion. The patronizing orators of Labor Day and of campaign times sometimes delight to symbolize him as a sturdy Gulliver, though it needs little reflection to see that it is the Gulliver of Brobdingnag, and not that of Lilliput, that more correctly figures his present status. The mass of current tendencies tends to fix him as a dependent — a unit of a lower order in a series of gradations running up to the Big Men. “The corporation,” writes Mr. Richmond,<sup>1</sup> “holds of the State, and its officers hold of the corporation, and their retainers,

<sup>1</sup> Since the publication of the *Independent* article the author's attention has been called to an address entitled “The New Feudalism,” delivered by Mr. Benjamin A. Richmond, of Cumberland, Md., before the Maryland Bar Association in July, 1898. The author had never seen or heard of this address. It is written from a legal standpoint, and both the matter and the treatment are widely different from the matter and manner of the *Independent* article. But whatever the differences, the same general idea is to be found in both papers, and it is only just that acknowledgment should be made of Mr. Richmond's priority.

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managers, and servants all hold the tenure of their employment from their superiors in office, from the highest to the lowest." But whether corporation, or partnership, or individual, employs the laborer's services, his status is practically the same. Trade-unions and other labor societies tend to modify that dependence; and occasionally social legislation, when it runs the fierce gantlet of the courts, exerts a further modification. But it is coming to be recognized that there is a limit, perhaps now nearly attained, beyond which the labor societies can exert no influence; and as for social legislation, as will be shown farther along, it has certainly reached its culmination.

[ To the natural causes making for the laborer's subordination have been added in recent years certain conscious and deliberate forces. ] There is a collective pressure brought to bear upon his wages; there is a collective antagonism maintained against his unions; there is a growing movement in the direction of holding him for the term of his profitable service to the company or corporation by which he is employed, and there is a judicial tendency to pretend still to regard him, despite his changing status, as an economically free agent, able to do what he wills, and to protect himself from all injustice.

### III

The assurance of vassal fidelity is a prime need of a feudal order. The fidelity need not be personal, as in the old days; instead, the altered ceremony of "homage" may take in whole regiments by a single

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rite. Recent acts of the great employers make strongly for creating inducements for this fidelity. In spite of instances of conduct like that of the coal magnates of Pennsylvania, there is a growing tendency to unite for life-long service the careers of the more faithful workers with the corporations by whom they are employed. "Model workshops," and even "model villages," are unquestionably increasing in numbers. Their character is almost pure paternalism — "enlightened absolutism," Professor Ely calls it. Rarely have the workers themselves the slightest word to say as to their construction or conduct. What is thought to be good for them, what is thought will win their devotion, is given them. Whether at Pullman, Ill., at Dayton or Cleveland, Ohio, or at Pelzer, S.C., the general spirit manifested is the same. The perfervid chapter on "American Liberality to Workmen," which Mr. Nicholas Paine Gilman gives us in his volume, "A Dividend to Labor," contains dozens of instances wherein employers have indulged their benevolence by the gift of flower-pots, wash-basins, and other cultural paraphernalia to their employees. Mr. Victor H. Olmsted, in the *Bulletin* of the Department of Labor for November, 1900, gives another, though somewhat duplicated, list; and the Rev. Josiah Strong's monthly journal, *Social Service*, furnishes a current record of such benevolences. The providences of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company alone make a remarkable showing. This corporation has even a "sociological department," and it is at present building a \$10,000 mission at Bessemer, near Pueblo. The

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plan of the mission, we read, is to have a refuge, with all modern improvements, for "floaters," or the unemployed. These wayfarers may make a temporary living by working in an attached woodyard. In all its camps in Colorado this company has established kindergartens, libraries, and, in remote places, grade schools for the children of its employees. Its hospital at the Pueblo works is said to be the best equipped in the West. "It is the announced purpose of this corporation," we read, "to solve the social problem."

Model workshops and the distribution of relief are but a small part of the tendency. The giving of old-age pensions, particularly by railroad companies, has recently taken on the dimensions of a national movement. The pension system is not a conspicuously expensive one, for the numbers of workmen who live long enough to avail themselves of its benefits are but scant. The sums paid out for pensions by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Relief Department in eighteen years average \$31,185.85 yearly — about the salary of a first vice-president — and the employees themselves have borne a considerable part of the expense. A total of 697 pensions has been granted during this time, but 365 of the beneficiaries have considerably died, and thus reduced the expenses.

The pension system as it obtains among railroads is more or less an outgrowth of the relief association begun by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company on May 1, 1880. Prototypes can possibly be found, but this instance is the first of any consequence. The State of Maryland revoked the charter of the

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association in 1888. This was an embarrassing interruption, but by no means a fatal one, for the society was immediately reorganized as a department of the company. The plan was to pay accident, sick, and death benefits and old-age pensions, the company contributing \$33,500 yearly, and the employees paying monthly dues based on their wages. Section 100 of the regulations for 1889 declares that "the fund for the payment of pensions will be derived wholly from the contributions of the company," a change from the earlier method in the direction of pure paternalism. The usual age for pensioning is sixty-five years, and the president and directors determine the roll.

The Pennsylvania Railroad Voluntary Relief Department was begun in 1886. In a number of respects it followed the details of the earlier association. As to pensions, however, it put the matter forward by arranging for the gradual growth of a superannuation fund out of the department's surplus. There were six companies, according to Mr. William Franklin Willoughby's "Workingmen's Insurance," that before 1898 had created regular insurance departments. These were the Baltimore and Ohio, the Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania west of Pittsburg, the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy, the Philadelphia and Reading, and the Plant System. Though in two or three instances the plans have been altered, all these companies founded their pension systems on employees' contributions.

The Pennsylvania's fund reached the figure set for it January 1, 1900, and the pension system was



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proclaimed. On the first day of 1901 the Chicago and Northwestern put in operation a gratuitous pension system, appropriating \$200,000 for the purpose. The beneficiaries, all of whom must have been thirty years with the company, were divided into two classes: first, those seventy years old, who were to be retired and pensioned at once; and second, those from sixty-five to sixty-nine years inclusive, who were to be retired and pensioned at the discretion of the pension board. The rate fixed is one per cent per year of service of the average monthly pay for the preceding ten years. An employee whose average wages were \$55 per month, and who had been with the company for thirty years, would thus receive \$16.50 a month.

The Illinois Central proclaimed its pension system July 1, 1901. On March 1, 1902, the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western took the same course, appropriating \$50,000. The terms are somewhat more liberal, in that only twenty-five years' service is required, and that some employees may be retired between the ages of sixty and sixty-five. The Metropolitan Street Railway Company followed on March 6th, and the Philadelphia and Reading Company on May 21. The details, while varying somewhat, are in the main alike for all of these companies.

Though the experiment is a comparatively frugal one, there is no doubt that it brings compensatory returns; for it serves to keep quiescent and faithful large bodies of men, and perhaps to loosen the bonds of the labor-union. It holds in servicemen above thirty-five or forty-five years of age, for they know the diffi-

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culty of securing work elsewhere; and it feeds them with a more or less illusory hope of an ultimate pension. Indeed, the motive of inducing a closer dependence of the laborer upon the employer is more or less frankly confessed. "Under it" (the pension system), reads the Lackawanna's advertisement to the public, "the road and its employees are to be more closely knit by substantial ties." The president of the Metropolitan Street Railway Company, however, sounds a more altruistic and benevolent note. "My object in establishing this department," he is quoted as saying, "is to preserve the future welfare of aged and infirm employees and to recognize efficient and loyal service."

Despite such benevolent professions there are grave grounds for scepticism regarding the tangible benefit of the system to the employees. If Hope lingers with them, it must be because, as Mr. William Watson sings, "airiest cheer suffices for her food." For both the ascertained results of an eighteen years' operation of the system, and a moment's glance at conditions surrounding the new applications of it, point to a most rigorous limitation of its benefits. In the first place, there is a growing disinclination to employ in any industry men past forty-five years of age. The new regulations of the Philadelphia and Reading reduce even this limit ten years, prohibiting the taking on of employees past thirty-five years of age, except by the approval of the board of directors of the company, although in special cases where unusual qualifications are desired the age limit may be waived. So general is this attitude of employers that the Chi-

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Chicago Federation of Labor was recently moved to the passing of a resolution proposing that "every unemployed man forty-five years of age who cannot show what the charity authorities call 'visible means of support' shall be mercifully shot in a lawful and orderly manner." Moreover, the chances of a railroad employee reaching the age of sixty-five or seventy years are about equal to the chances of winning a large sum at policy. Discharges are frequent and arbitrary, and usually there is no appeal. Aside from this, the casualties are enormous. Of the 191,198 railroad workers classed as trainmen employed throughout the country in 1900, 1396 (or one in every 138) were killed, and 17,571 (or one in every 10.8) injured. The corrected figures for 1901 (given to the public in August of the present year) show about the same percentages. Of the 209,043 trainmen, 1537 (or one in every 136) were killed, and 16,715 (or one in every 12.5) were injured. Thanks to the new safety appliances, casualties caused by coupling and uncoupling cars declined by 84 killed and 2461 injured; but in other classes of accidents the percentages brought the averages to near the previous figures. At best, the chances of maiming or death constantly increase with every one of the twenty-five or thirty years' service required for the earning of a pension. In the Metropolitan (now Interurban) Street Railway service, where accidents are few but discharges many, the benevolent instincts of the president will prove difficult of realization. This official admitted that discharges had at one time reached an average of 300 a month. An employee informed the author that he

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knew of but two or three men in the entire service whom the published terms entitled to pensions, while another employee conceded a possible dozen.

### IV

The new Feudalism evidently requires a tempering—let us say, a conservative adjustment—of the wage-scale. Those whom the gods dower with plenty may for the present give freely of their store, while those who feel the parsimony of Providence must withhold. The recent increase of 10 per cent in wages given by the steel corporation, and the refusal of the anthracite magnates to increase the average, according to the Pennsylvania Bureau of Mines, of 79½ cents a day which their operatives now receive, are but examples of the contrasts which may be expected during the transition period. The collective feudal policy will avoid both extremes. It will pay something better than that which breeds discontent, something less than that which breeds luxury and pride. It will provide not exactly what the workers desire, but what is good for them.

Already the more or less collective pressure upon the wage-scale shows its effects. Hon. Carroll D. Wright's 250 wage-quotations for 25 selected occupations (*Bulletin* of the Department of Labor, September, 1898) reveal for the years 1895-98 a steady decline from the wages paid in the panic years, 1893-94, to about the same wages as were paid in 1882. The figures in the *Bulletin* for September, 1900, pertain to 148 establishments, representing 26

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industries and 192 occupations. They show a slight increase for 1899 and another for 1900. This slight increase, however, is resolved into a marked decrease by the rise in the price of commodities necessary for the average life. From July, 1897, to July, 1901, according to the careful index-figures published in *Dun's Review*, the price of commodities advanced 27 per cent; and from July 1 to December 1, of the latter year, an almost steady advance was recorded. Comparing January 1, 1896, with January 1, 1902, the *Wall Street Journal* finds an increase of 36 per cent.

The wage-quotations used by Col. Wright in his table of 1898 are from the larger cities, and pertain to trades the workmen in which are organized. Here, if anywhere, one would expect evidences of increased wages. Generally, however, the figures for 1897-98 show a parity with the figures for 1881-82. Compositors, for instance, received \$2.81½ daily in 1898, \$2.81 in 1882. Carpenters received \$2.52¾ in 1898, \$2.55 in 1882. Often the figures for the latter year show a considerable decline; but the averages are maintained through the advances gained by those affluent mechanics, the plumbers; by the stone-cutters, and by the better-paid wage-earners of the railroads,—conductors, engineers, and firemen. With the increase of railroad traffic the hours of labor have been extended; and the increase of wages follows, at least for the engineers and firemen, as a consequence of longer hours. As for the common laborer, he is being left behind in the race. His wages were less in 1898 than in 1882 in six of the

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ten cites quoted, and in four of them there was no change.

All wage-statistics are questionable, and particularly the more generalized wage-statements which proceed from Washington, during the fall months of election years. A look into the figures themselves is usually fatal to the optimism voiced in the generalizations. From other sources the conflict of figures is puzzling and irritating. It may be shown by selections from these that wages are rising, that they are falling, or that they are stationary. There is always a disparity between the figures of the State bureaus, the National bureau, and the census, and usually it is a disparity that cannot be harmonized.

The national census figures ought to be, as most persons will declare, a sufficiently correct guide. According to the last census, the number of wage-earners in manufacturing pursuits has increased in ten years 25.2 per cent, wages have increased 23.2 per cent. Despite the acknowledged increase in the country's wealth, wages, if the census is correct, have declined. It is officially explained, however, that these figures are not to be taken too literally. The schedules for 1890 included among wage-earners, "overseers, foremen, and certain superintendents (not general superintendents or managers), while the census of 1900 separates from the wage-earning class such salaried employees, as general superintendents, clerks, and salesmen." "It is possible and probable," says each of the reports on manufactures, "that this change in the form of the question has resulted in eliminating from the wage-earners, as reported by

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the present census, many high-salaried employees included in that group for the census of 1890."

Possibly and probably. But aside from the fact that the elimination of the comparatively few overseers and foremen, with their somewhat higher salaries, could make but slight influence on averages in the tremendous total of 5,321,087 wage-earners, with \$2,330,275,021 of wages, there is another point or two to consider. According to Part I (page 14 *et seq.*) of the Report of Manufacturing Industries for the census of 1890, it appears that wages underwent a considerable inflation in that record. The questions asked in 1880, it would appear, resulted in reporting more wage-earners than there really were. The questions for 1890, it is declared, produced the real number. It is further stated that "the questions for 1890 also tended to obtain a large amount of wages as compared with 1880." It would seem so, indeed, even to a neophyte in the ingenious art of figuring; for while the wage-increase of the decade 1870-80 could show but 22.2 per cent, that for the following decade revealed the astonishing figure of a fraction less than 100 per cent. When, therefore, one seeks to compare the averages of 1890 with those of 1900 he may not unreasonably infer that the elimination of overseers and foremen in the later census is no more than a set-off to the ample generosity given to the wage-figures in the earlier census. There is no telling for a certainty, but it is not unlikely that the present census figures give a result approximately near the truth.

It is not an extravagant hope that some day we

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shall have two successive censuses carried out on identical schedules, so that comparisons may be accurately made between two decades. As it is, we must take what the powers give us, and be thankful. We must take it on trust, moreover, for there is no going behind the returns; and any captious questioning of the figures can be met only in the spirit with which Telemachus answered the fair Helen's inquiry if he were a true son of Ulysses, It is a matter of faith — there is no proof.

In the faith, then, that there is reasonable accuracy in the reports, and a reasonable basis of comparison with previous reports, it is interesting to note what is revealed. First in point of interest is the relation of the value of the manufactured product to the amount of wages paid. A comparison will show whether labor is receiving an increasing or decreasing share of the wealth created. The census totals under the former heading are confessedly crude, since "a constant duplication of products appears, . . . owing to the fact that the finished products of many manufacturing establishments become the materials of other establishments, in which they are further utilized and again included in the value of products." The new census has therefore made a separate classification of materials purchased in a partially manufactured form. Nevertheless, the gross total, including products from both raw materials and partly manufactured products, is reached by the same means as were employed in previous censuses, and is therefore comparable with the gross totals of previous decades. Whatever the duplications, they are similar to those of preceding reports.



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There are nineteen States wherein the average number of wage-earners in manufacturing pursuits constitutes more than 6 per cent of the population. Rhode Island heads the list with 22.5 per cent. It is followed by Connecticut with 19.5; Massachusetts, 17.7; New Hampshire, 17.1; New Jersey, 12.8; Delaware, 12; New York, 11.7; Pennsylvania, 11.6; Maine, 10.8; Maryland, 9.1; Vermont, 8.6; Ohio, 8.3; Illinois, 8.2; Florida, 7; Wisconsin, 6.9; Michigan, 6.7; Washington, 6.6; Indiana, 6.2; California, 6.1.

In each of these States the value of the manufactured product has increased, Florida leading with a gain of 109.6 per cent; Washington following with 107.8 per cent; New Jersey with 72.5; Indiana, 66.7; Vermont, 50.4; Wisconsin, 45.2, and so on, Massachusetts showing the slightest increase, 16.6 per cent. The value of the manufactured product is of course affected by the two items, cost of material and miscellaneous expenses, though in turn these are almost invariably reflected to some extent in the increase or decrease of the value of the product. When his material and his expenses increase, the manufacturer, if he can, puts up the price of his product. It would be wholly impossible to find a ratio, for the figures show an astonishing variety. In Massachusetts, for instance, — that classic State for the observation and study of industrial phenomena, the State wherein statistics are gathered with some approach to accuracy, — the increase of miscellaneous expenses is put at 16.1 per cent; of cost of material, at 16.8 per cent; of value of product, 16.6 per cent. But against this reasonable showing New York confesses to an increase of 81.8

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per cent in miscellaneous expenses, with an increased product of but 27.1 per cent. Miscellaneous expenses increased 131 per cent in New Jersey, while the product increased but 72.5 per cent, and Pennsylvania and Indiana follow hard in the tracks of the two former States. Perhaps a key to the mystery is furnished in the enormous increase of miscellaneous expenses in certain industries which require favorable legislation. Gas, for instance, which is generally considered the rightful prey of certain kinds of aldermen and legislators, shows a payment of \$8,635,399 for "advertising, interest, insurance, repairs, and other sundry expenses," an increase of 74.8 per cent against an increase in the value of the product of but 32.9 per cent.

In each of these nineteen factory States the value of the product increased. In all but one it increased more than 25 per cent, in two more than 100 per cent. But in ten of these States total wages have declined, and in three of the remainder the gain is insignificant. Wages of men workers have declined in eleven of these States, with a fractional gain in two States. Florida, which shows the greatest percentage of increase in the number of wage-earners, shows the greatest relative loss in wages. Maine, which gives the smallest percentage of increase in number of wage-earners, gives the largest relative percentage of increase in wages. The four States having the greatest absolute number of wage-earners all show decreases of wages. New York, with 849,092 workers, shows a wage-loss of 2.2 per cent; Pennsylvania, with 733,834 workers, a loss of 2 per cent; Massachusetts,

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with 497,448, a fractional loss; and Illinois, with 395,110, 5 per cent.

The specific industries for the whole nation show similar results. Relative wages have increased in refining petroleum, in manufacturing ice and salt, and in a few other industries. But they have decreased in the great majority of the industries so far reported. There is a wage-loss in the making of bicycles, leather gloves and mittens, watches, watch-cases, buttons, gas, oleomargarine, boots and shoes, paper and pulp, coke, needles and pins, cigars and cigarettes, pocket-books, trunks and valises, leather belting and hose, in canning and preserving fruits and vegetables, in the tanning and finishing of leather, the slaughtering and packing of meat, the smelting of zinc, ship-building, car-building, the weaving of flax, hemp, and jute, and cotton products, the brewing of malt liquors, and newspaper publishing. All along the monotonous rows of figures the same lesson is generally revealed, — the productivity of the laborer increases, the value of the product increases, the wages, except in occasional instances, decline or remain stationary.

The important point of the purchasing power of the dollar in 1890 as compared with 1900 needs also to be considered. According to the exhaustive compilation of wholesale prices published in the *Bulletin* of the Department of Labor for March, 1902, the dollar would purchase in 1890 a greater quantity of beef, bacon, ham, corn meal, beans, cheese, eggs, pepper, American salt, Formosa tea, hard and soft coal, petroleum, earthenware, furniture, and glass-

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ware than in 1900. In the latter year it would purchase more butter, Rio coffee, dried fruits (except currants), rice, sugar, onions, potatoes, mutton, and fish. Wheat flour cheapened, but the price of bread remained the same. A comparison of the two lists on the basis of relative quantities consumed in the average family will show the dollar to have had considerably less purchasing power in 1900 than in 1890, though the exact percentage is hardly computable.

### V

The new Feudalism involves not only the moderating of the present rates of pay for men workers, but an increase in the quantity of defenceless labor — the labor of women and children. Census Bulletin No. 150 gives the increase in the number of men working in manufacturing pursuits at 23.9 per cent; of women, at 28.4 per cent; of children, at 39.5 per cent. The wages of women have slightly increased; that is, the increase in total wages is 30.8 per cent against an increase in numbers of wage-earners of 28.4 per cent. The figures are better for the children; their wages are stated to have increased 54.4 per cent. There are ample reasons why this should be so. Popular agitation in behalf of the little ones may be guessed to have had some effect in the betterment of their pay; and a still greater effect has been wrought by their vastly increasing productivity. The perfecting of the instruments of production has been carried to such a degree that many a machine may be operated by a nursling; and it is well-nigh inevitable that

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some part of this increased productivity should be compensated for by increased pay of the operatives.

The number of women in factory work in the United States is 1,031,747, nearly one-fifth of the total. There are 230,199 in New York, 143,109 in Massachusetts, 126,093 in Pennsylvania, 58,978 in Illinois, 53,711 in Ohio. Eighteen of the nineteen factory States show an increase, Maine being the exception; and in thirteen of these States the percentage of gain is considerably in excess of that of men workers. Washington leads with a gain of 151.8 per cent; Michigan and Illinois show gains of 79 per cent each; Vermont, of 63.1; Indiana, 56.4; California, 46.8; Pennsylvania, 44.9; New Jersey, 39.3. In States outside the factory list still greater increases are shown. The figures for South Carolina are 158.3 per cent; for North Carolina, 151.2; West Virginia, 130.2; Alabama, 109.1; Georgia, 82.2.

In specific industries the gains are sometimes enormous. There are no women reported for coke-making, and the number employed in making agricultural implements has declined 25.7 per cent. Car-building, too, shows a decline. But in refining petroleum the 60 women wage-earners represent a gain of 3200 per cent, and in bicycle and tricycle making the 517 women represent a gain of 3346.7 per cent. An increase of 2600 per cent is shown for distilled liquors, although men workers decreased 23.8 per cent. A decrease of men workers and an increase of women workers are also shown for clay products, flouring and grist-mill products, chewing and smoking tobacco and snuff, starch, cheese, butter,

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and condensed milk, watches, and watch-cases. The percentage of increase is in excess of that of men workers in oleomargarine, pocket-books, trunks and valises, tanned, curried, and finished leather, and needles and pins. There are six and one-half times as many women as men in collar and cuff making, and more than twice as many in the leather glove and mitten industry; in the latter, moreover, the percentage of increase for women is double that for men. There are 37,762 women making cigars and cigarettes, a gain of 56 per cent, against a gain of but 4.6 per cent for men. Malt liquors show an increase of 101.6 per cent of women workers against an increase of 30.2 per cent of men workers. Women have also increased in number in the cotton goods, flax, hemp, and jute, rubber boot and shoe, glass-making, slaughtering, and meat-packing, and boot and shoe industries, and in newspaper publishing.

## VI

There are 168,624 children employed in manufactures throughout the country, a gain of 39.5 per cent. Child labor has increased in twelve of the factory States, remained practically stationary in two (Michigan and New Hampshire), and decreased in five States. The reasons for a decrease, where it is observed, are not hard to find; in certain industries child labor has been demonstrated to be unprofitable. But wherever it has been found profitable it seems to have been increasingly utilized. The increase in Wisconsin is 193.5 per cent; in Washington, 103.8;

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in Illinois, 92; in New Jersey, 51.4; in Pennsylvania, 47.8; and in Massachusetts, 44.9. In States outside of the foregoing list the same tendency is shown. South Carolina increased its child laborers by 270.7 per cent; Alabama, by 143.8; North Carolina, 119.2; Georgia, 81.

Children number 17.5 per cent of all the factory wage-earners of South Carolina, and 14.6 per cent of all those of North Carolina. In five other Southern States (including Maryland) the percentages range from 4.3 to 7.6, while among Northern States Rhode Island children form 5.2 per cent of the factory wage-earners, and Pennsylvania and Wisconsin children 4.5 and 4 per cent, respectively. If Pennsylvania is comparatively low in percentage, it is because of the great mass of its adult workers; for in absolute numbers of child workers it heads the list of commonwealths. No less than 33,135 children are employed in its factories, a figure which puts to shame the puny showing of New York, with 13,199, and of Massachusetts, with 12,556.

In certain industries children form more than one-fourth of all the operatives for a particular locality. In the making of cotton goods in Alabama 29.2 per cent of the workers are children, and in South Carolina 26.8 per cent. The figures for this industry in North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, and Maryland are nearly identical. In Pennsylvania, for the making of jute goods the figures are 26.2, and for silk and silk goods, 20.2. Slightly more than one-fourth of the hosiery and knit-goods workers of Georgia are children and slightly less than one-fourth of the to-

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bacco workers (chewing, smoking, and snuff) of North Carolina. Massachusetts, with its factory law, can make but the humble showing of 6.4 per cent of children in its cotton-goods factories, and Rhode Island but 10.3 per cent. Glass-making is an industry which has made a most literal adaptation of Jesus' invitation to little children; though, if the words of reputable eye-witnesses are to be accepted, it is not exactly a heaven into which they are welcomed. Of the operatives in Pennsylvania glass works, children number 14 per cent, and of those in New Jersey glass works, 15.7 per cent.

In the cotton-goods industry there are 39,866 children, a gain of 70.1 per cent. It is interesting to learn that there are 1003 children employed in ship-building, and that this number is a gain of 476.4 per cent over 1890. There are 4521 in boot and shoe making, an increase of 85 per cent. There are 2259 in flax, hemp, and jute weaving, nearly twice as many as ten years ago. There are 316 in turpentine and rosin making, a gain of 236.2 per cent. The number has decreased for some reason in the making of clay products, as has also the number of men workers, women having now a growing preference in the potteries. There are also fewer children in petroleum refining, but in button-making an increase of 321.6 per cent, in leather-glove making of 185.7 per cent, and in slaughtering and meat-packing of 138.1 per cent is shown. Watch-making shows a gain of 30 per cent, bicycle-making of 780 per cent. Children have been found comparatively unadaptable in the liquor industry. Only 643 are employed in brewing



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and 18 in distilling. For all that, these figures represent an increase—in the former case of 24.6 per cent, in the latter of 200 per cent.

Children, according to the census, are persons below the age of sixteen. Testimony outside of the census reports shows the extreme youth of many of these operatives. Investigations among the glass works of southern New Jersey reveal a number of cases of child workers of eight, nine, and ten years of age. Mr. J. W. Sullivan, a careful and accurate observer, who visited this district in July of the present year, confirms these statements. Miss Jane Addams, of Hull House, found a child of five working at night in a South Carolina mill. Mrs. Irene Ashby-Macfadyen, who has carefully studied conditions in the Southern mills, gives many instances of extremely young children working incredibly long hours. Professor George Clinton Edwards, in the *New York Evening Post* for August 13th, gives other instances relating to the mills of Dallas, Tex. In a later communication to the same journal he quotes the statement of a mill superintendent to the effect that of sixty boys and seventy-six girls employed, "there are two in their tenth year, nine in their eleventh year, thirteen in their twelfth year, and seventeen in their fourteenth year." "This list, from the pay-roll," writes Professor Edwards, "does not include the little children, who, with the mills' knowledge, worked at the mills' work, who earned the mills' pay in the 10 or 20 per cent increase received by the relatives they assisted at piece work, and who were, therefore, in fact, the mills' employees." La-

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bor Commissioner Lacey, of North Carolina, reports 7605 children under fourteen in 261 mills. A correspondent of the Cincinnati *Post* estimated 400 of the 1000 children employed in five mills in Columbia, S.C., to be under twelve years of age. Testimony by mill officials before a Southern legislature acknowledged in one instance 30 per cent of child workers under twelve years in a spinning room, and in another 25 per cent.

The census reports bear amiable testimony to the providence of the mill-owners. "Many of the mills," says the South Carolina report, "have reading rooms and libraries for their employees, and nearly all contribute regularly to the support of the local schools." "In the absence of legislation regulating child labor," says the Georgia report, "all the cotton manufacturers in the State have signed an agreement to exclude from the mills children under ten years of age, and those under twelve who cannot show a certificate of four months' attendance at school." In the North Carolina report we find, "In the absence of legislation nearly all the mill-owners have agreed to discontinue the employment of children under twelve years of age." A correspondent of the New York *World* found a like benevolence among the glass employers in southern New Jersey. "I need the boys," said one, "all I can do is to treat the boys as well as I can." The mill-owners, one and all, demand that the State keep its hands off, and trust to their own benevolence for remedies. So far, in the South, despite a three years' agitation, the matter is still left entirely in their control.

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Criticism of the mill-owners has been made to the effect that despite their benevolent professions, the children are poorly paid and that they remain uneducated. Some of them work long hours for 10 cents a day, others for  $12\frac{1}{2}$ , 15, and 18 cents. A newspaper correspondent tells of a certain spinning room in a Southern mill wherein the average daily pay for all children is  $23\frac{8}{10}$  cents. "I know of babies," writes Mrs. Macfadyen, "working for 5 and 6 cents a day." The schooling which a child working seventy-two hours a week can get may be roughly guessed at. Mrs. Macfadyen found 567 children under twelve years working in eight mills. Only 122 of these children could read or write. In a school in a mill-town of between 6000 and 8000 persons, the same investigator found an enrolment of 90 pupils divided into two classes. A visit to one of these classes disclosed 22 children, only 12 of whom were mill-workers' children, and 10 had worked in the mills from one to three years.

Criticisms based on these data are, however, generally held to be sentimental and irrelevant. Glassblowing or textile-weaving, like anthracite mining, is, in the sententious phrase of President George F. Baer, of the Philadelphia and Reading Railway Company, "a business, and not a religious, sentimental, or academic proposition." It is conducted for the making of money, and not for the spiritual or hygienic welfare of the operatives. It would be well, say the employers, if things could be better. But for the present they are making all the contribution to that end that they feel can conveniently be made. Moreover, they contend—and they are supported generally

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by the local ministers, who have in charge the spiritual affairs of the populace; by the local editors, lawyers, and solid men of "business" — it is better that children should work in the mills and factories than "run about the streets." As for education, the contributing employers point to the schools, as though to say, "Here are the opportunities; why do you not take advantage of them?" It is quite enough to provide a balky horse with water, without being morally obliged to make him drink.