

CHAPTER XIV.

MAKESHIFTS FOR JUSTICE.

Dr. Tolman's lecture, delivered in the Light Guard armory in Detroit in 1901, was an interesting exhibit of the fads of some of the large employers of the world. As I listened to what this and that employer had done for the welfare of those under them, the thought of slave times in the south, before the civil war put a stop to the legal ownership of human chattels, continually recurred to me. The lecturer placed his plea for better industrial conditions on the prosaic ground of dollars and cents. It would pay, he insisted, to take thought as to the comfort of employes. The profit was in the larger amount of work they would do for the same amount of pay. Contented "hands" were a safer investment than disgruntled ones, and if wages-workers were convinced that their employers were really concerned as to their material welfare, they would pitch in and turn out more work, and also be careful as to the quality.

That is the way the slave owners argued as to their slaves. They denied that they misused their chattels, but argued that they took the best care of the black people under their charge, because to do otherwise would be to abuse their own property. It was proved time and again that the slaves were well fed, well housed, never overworked, attended by doctors when sick, clothed in garments suitable to the climate, and in every way looked after even to the extent of providing religious consolation, so that when they died they could go straight to heaven. To be sure, education was tabooed, for the very good reason that it might induce some to aspire to a larger life than that

of the brute. Yet this was simply a precautionary measure, to forestall attempts to break their bonds.

The fact is that while improvements in factory surroundings are good in themselves, it is an error to hold that the industrial problem can be solved in this way. Were all manufacturers as thoughtful for the comfort of their employes as are the Lever brothers of Port Sunlight, Eng., for example, there would still be a great chasm between the house of want and the house of have. There is a fundamental error somewhere in the present scheme of civilization. We produce wealth marvelously. We distribute it badly. The tall smokestacks of our factories may belch forth black smoke telling of activity and the rush of enterprise, but there comes a time when the factory doors are closed, and the skilled and unskilled alike walk forth looking at the smokeless chimney. And the cry of "overproduction" is heard, while children go barefooted, men and women are shelterless and hungry, and the land continues to yield abundant harvests.

To put one's finger on the exact spot where industrial conditions need to be reorganized is the difficulty. The blame is not with the employer as an employer. He is paying the going rate for his workers, and would willingly run his factory night and day could he market his products. The fault is not with the workers as workers. As a rule they are content to toil for just sufficient to keep body and soul together in the manner customary in their class. They expect neither the luxuries of the rich nor the comforts of the well-to-do. Their wants are few indeed compared to the things to be enjoyed, and were they reasonably well supplied with even the necessaries of life, there would not be a dangerously discontented man or woman in the civilized world.

To my mind the remedy for industrial ills does not lie in the direction of greater forethought on the part of employers for the comforts of those they employ. Under present conditions this most certainly is a good

thing, as far as it goes, and in a measure is an advantage to those workers who enjoy them. I would even encourage employers to do these very things from the view-point of money well spent. But I insist that the masses must be educated to understand that these things are not the end of the matter. What is self-evident to me, as well to all who have studied the problem, is that monopoly is at the bottom of all our labor troubles. Society has favored some at the expense of the others. And the very ones who are suffering are content that it should be so. They know nothing better.

The danger is that society will be satisfied with these ameliorations. Now that the merchant is by law compelled to supply his clerk a stool to sit down on occasionally, and separate lavatories for the sexes—and be it said to the eternal shame of many that neither of these necessities to good health and morals were supplied until the law made it a punishable offense to do otherwise—the average clerk may conclude that there is nothing better to be obtained, and that the perfection of social conditions has been reached. Even if the worker in a factory has been supplied with a clean room to eat his or her dinner, and a place to wash after the day's work is over, and a blower to dispose of the unhealthy dust, and an extra window or two which lets in a sufficient quantity of light to see what he is doing, or to get a breath of fresh air in the summer; or a library has been placed at the disposal of muscle-fagged workers where they can recreate and so be better prepared to keep up the strain of the daily task, and do more and better work, the real wealth producers are foolish indeed if they do not still strive to solve the mysteries of a great commercial world where the invention of labor-saving machinery has failed to shorten the hours of labor, and where a seemingly overabundance of good things necessitates the shutting down of factories and the closing of mines so that consumption may once more keep pace with production.

Yet the explanation is obvious. Monopoly is the one word that explains it all. But this very simplicity is the greatest bar to its acceptance as an explanation. As it was 1,900 years ago, when the Hebrew nation was looking for a deliverer from the oppression of the Romans, the Jews did not know their deliverer when he came. "What!" they cried, "can you expect us to believe that a carpenter's son is to be our deliverer? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" It was asking too much to expect a savior from any such humble source. So they crucified the only perfect man the nation had ever raised. Somewhat similar is the refusal of the people to accept the overthrow of monopoly as the true solution of the inequalities of material and social progress seen today. The remedy is too simple. They want something more complicated and harder to understand. Just to remove obstacles to the free exercise of men's gifts, and allow competition to regulate the equitable distribution of wealth, is too easy.

Why do young nations, in a new country, advance so rapidly in civilization, in the diffusion of wealth, and in the general prosperity of the masses? Simply because in a new country there is more liberty than monopoly; a chance for everybody to the extent of the ability of each, and a free field for the expansion of trade. But after a time the social structure feels the grip of an octopus, and wealth and poverty begin giant strides—one to ease and luxury without work, the other to want and distress with work. And all this because society has allowed—nay, insisted on—the private control of that which no man produced, which was here before the foot of man ever pressed the earth, and which will remain after the last man has disappeared. The monopoly of the soil, with its wealth of minerals, is at the very foundation of all our industrial ills. It is the first great error of civilization on which all other wrongs are based. Remove this, and most of the others will fall of their own weight.

The New York Sun, which loses no opportunity to belittle the work of organized labor, calls attention to a number of kindly inclined employers, claiming, in effect, that if there were no union all employers would show like dispositions. Of course, the average wage-worker knows better, yet there is no reason why due acknowledgments should not be made to those corporations who, while doing these things, have not reduced wages.

One of the attractive features of the steel works at Joliet, it is said, is the atheneum, which is a workingmen's club. It was erected by the company in 1894, costing over \$50,000, and contains a reception hall, a library, reading rooms, a billiard and games room, a gymnasium, a handball court, bowling alleys, baths, swimming pool and a lecture hall that seats 1,100 persons. Free instruction in several branches of knowledge is furnished the young men, women and boys employed in the works. In the rear of the building a plot of ground is set apart for tennis and croquet. There is a free kindergarten and for a dollar a month, tuition is provided in shorthand, penmanship, drawing, etc. Membership in the club costs the workman \$2 a year, which may be paid in quarterly installments.

A model institution of the country in its treatment of employes is the great watch factory at Waltham, Mass., which sells building lots to them at a low price and often lends them money to put up houses (over one-fourth of the employes own their homes). The company has built boarding houses for unmarried men and women, and furnishes clean lodgings and excellent meals for a less sum than is charged elsewhere. One of the foremen in the factory has been mayor of Waltham and others have been aldermen. Many are stockholders in the company. A fortnight's vacation is given every year. The work of a relief association is done during the regular hours of labor.

A model company is reported at Whitinsville, Mass., a seat of the cotton industry. Most of the employes

live in 300 houses owned by the Whitin families, who live in the village. Seventy-six per cent of the property in it belongs to the Whitins, upon whom, therefore, the responsibility of building roads, laying asphalt and supplying water and gas chiefly devolves. One of their gifts to employes is the memorial building, which contains a library, class rooms and a large hall for lectures and entertainments. Other gifts are a park and a stone church. In 1896 the workmen had \$633,000 on deposit in the savings bank, drawing 4 per cent interest.

The Drapers, of Hopedale, Mass., employing 1,400 men, do everything possible for their comfort without patronizing them. Most of the company's dwellings, leased to the men at moderate rents, have furnaces, bathrooms, running water, gas or electric light, with lawns. A stone church costing \$60,000 and a town hall containing a library have been given to the town. Almost the entire population is employed in the company's shops and mills.

The benefactions of the Ames family to North Easton, where it has manufactured shovels, plows, etc., for more than 100 years, includes a free library costing \$80,000, bequests of \$210,000 for schools, a memorial hall and a stone church built at an expense of \$100,000.

The Fairbanks, makers of scales, have established at St. Johnsbury, Vt., a library and art gallery, an academy which cost \$200,000, a Young Men's Christian Association building and a museum of natural history.

There are a number of corporations in Detroit that might be mentioned as doing things out of the common run for their employes. No matter what may be the motives on which they are acting, it is none the less true that quite a number of wage-workers are in the enjoyment of privileges denied the great majority of wealth producers. But all these put together—local and foreign—can have little if any effect on the general conduct of employers or the general rate of wages.

It is but a drop in the bucket in the great field of industry. The fact remains that wages are based on the cost of living, and the "good" employer cannot pay any higher wages than the more severe ones with whom he is competing for a market. Take a great establishment employing several hundred men and the chances are that the margin of gain from each one is inconsiderable.

Social settlements are another one of the fads among the well-to-do to better the moral, intellectual and physical condition of the poorer working classes. The best field for this kind of work is in the thickly settled portions of a great city, where thousands of people can be found within a radius of a few blocks, and where the most miserable huddle. The movement started in England in 1885, and from London it gradually spread. Thirteen years ago the first social settlement was founded in the United States. Today there are fourteen settlements in Chicago and thirty in New York city alone, while Boston, Buffalo and other places are also blessed with their presence.

The ideal place for a social settlement is some roomy mansion in a run-down locality. Generally the apartments are large, and can be quickly and economically changed into recitation, reading, gymnasium, auditorium, and other needed rooms, leaving still others for those who, generally well-to-do and always well educated, have resolved to cast in their lot with the poor and needy, and, by living with them, gain their confidence and instil in them such ideas of right and wrong and good and ill living, and habits of economy and thrift, as will make them better citizens and an honor to the commonwealth.

Every social settlement has an individuality of its own, according to its environment. Each one is an example of what can be done in a hard neighborhood. The living rooms are neatly, though very plainly furnished, and everything is kept scrupulously clean, and there is an air of cheerfulness and hospitality without

any effort to run to mechanicalism, yet with system and promptness.

Probably the best-known social settlement in this country is Hull house, Chicago. It is in the most criminal and cosmopolitan section of the city, and twenty nationalities find hospitality beneath its roof. Here is a theater, and room for lectures, classes in millinery, dressmaking, chemistry and cooking, and for manual training and sloyd. The kitchen furnishes good and substantial food, and it exerts a strong influence in the direction of economic cooking. The Northwestern University has a settlement where classes of all kind are the principal attraction, and the Chicago Commons is run by a professor with his wife and four children, while several students have also joined—all living in one of the run-down neighborhoods, and trying to exercise an elevating influence on their surroundings.

Another well known settlement is the Neighborhood Guild, in New York city, in the midst of a densely crowded section known as the Ghetto. Ten college graduates live in the building, which is specially equipped for the business, and the work is educational and economic. A children's penny provident bank has 5,000 depositors, and there are twenty-two clubs of boys, girls and young men and women. Then there is an immense amount of social investigation into the condition of working women, the uses and abuses of pawn-shops, evictions and benefit societies. In fact, there seems to be no end to the work that can be done, and a number of the investigations by social settlement members have been printed in official reports and the more popular magazines.

As a rule the attitude of the social settlement toward the trade union is cordial. In fact the settlement has often assisted in forming unions, though in the disposition of labor disputes, strikes are naturally discountenanced until all efforts to come to an amicable agreement have failed. And like the old knights of labor

assemblies, these social settlement unions strive to instruct their members in the underlying principles of wages, showing how impossible it is to compel an employer to pay more than the market permits.

As yet none of these social settlements have become self-supporting. Those who receive the benefits pay part of the expenses, the remainder coming from outsiders interested in this kind of effort to improve the social condition of the people. Nominal dues are charged those who attend the classes, but if unable to pay, they would not be necessarily barred from participating in the benefits. It is said that as a rule members who are helped, after a time, are able to and take a pride in aiding in the support of the institution, and do not, like many who accept alms, become confirmed paupers.

It does not take the members of a social settlement long to realize that there are many things they cannot do that ought to be done. Public officials are asked to abate nuisances, the board of health's attention is directed toward unsanitary buildings, sweatshops are pointed out to the factory inspectors, parks are asked for, and clean streets demanded; and the legislature is appealed to for laws regulating many things that the individual is powerless to affect.

John Stuart Mill wrote that efforts for little reforms generally produce no effect at all. It is energy wasted. Perhaps the effort to ameliorate the condition of the masses through the social settlement should not be called little, but when one sees the immense field there is for this work, and the comparatively insignificant effect of these well meaning men and women to make poverty more bearable, it is permissible to wonder if the same amount of energy could not be better spent in removing the conditions that make for poverty. Palliatives have their uses, but the cure for poverty does not lie in the direction of providing plasters to cover the economic sores of society. It is constitutional remedies that are needed. Remove the causes that

create poverty-stricken men and women, in so far as it is possible, and the need for social settlements would not be so apparent.

In Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" there is the account of how Christian, at one stage in his journey, saw a man pouring water on a blazing fire, yet the more water he used, the fiercer burned the flames. Christian marveled greatly at this, until his guide took him to the rear of the fire, where he saw another person pouring on oil. It was no wonder the water did not quench the fire. It is something like this with the work accomplished by social settlements. Laws and customs are making people poor faster than all the efforts of philanthropists and humanitarians can overcome. These little oases created by the Hull House, the Neighborhood Guild, the Chicago Commons, the Cooper Settlement, and all the others have little if any effect on the great masses surrounding them, where the struggle for existence is carried on under the most depressing and horrible conditions.

There is still another view taken of social settlements. Not a few hold that such efforts are apt to make people put up with social injustice, when, if no attempt was made to pad the yokes around the necks of humanity, there would be a revolt quickly removing the cause of such distress, or at least the efforts of society would be directed toward solving the problem of increasing poverty in the midst of increasing wealth. Statistics have shown that poorhouses, poor commissions, and church benevolent associations produce the pauper class demanding their attention. While this charge has not been brought against social settlements, it is none the less a fact that their influence has not been felt outside a very narrow circle, and that there has been no way yet devised whereby the immense sacrifices made by those who are doing the work may be made an important factor in the regeneration of society.

The probabilities are that manufacturers who sur-

round their employes with slightly better conditions than the average employer either make it up by an increased output or add conditions to the privilege of employment that substantially vitiates the good done. There are people who would rather be poor and free than rich and a slave. And this is to their credit. Material advantages can sometimes be purchased at too great a price. Manhood is of more consequence, in the long run, than a well-lined stomach and a well-clothed back. Had all men always concluded it were better to be a live ass than a dead lion, the spirit of rebellion would never have blazed forth and carried the race forward. The world honors a Kosciusko, a Garibaldi, a Luther, a Cromwell, a Washington, because they took their lives in their hands and defied the power of "divine right" rulers and strove to overthrow the constituted authorities, civil or religious. In a lesser degree, but equally entitled to honor, are all who in their walks of life cry aloud against the inequalities and injustices of the economic world, and in their way endeavor to bring about more equitable conditions. And if in the struggle with poverty a hero falls by the way and is carried to the potter's field, none the less should he be esteemed as one who has done what he could to establish the reign of justice.

But after all is said and done, it is evident that these things are simply makeshifts for justice. They speak well for the good intentions of those behind the scenes, but add nothing to the solution of the industrial problem. Charity and philanthropy have their places in the world, but neither can settle the labor question. That can only be solved when each worker is given all he earns, and the extremes of affluence and poverty disappear.