
MANUFACTURERS

Great fortunes have been made in America and in England by manufacturing. Advancing civilization served to furnish a market for all that could be produced. Large establishments were built, and they were generally controlled by men of ability and energy. These great manufacturing houses seemed to have a similar experience; for a time they prospered and grew great, and then a process of decay would set in.

Looking more closely, we see that while they seemed to be honest in the conduct of their business, the customs of the times had developed systems of industry that were tainted with injustice and oppression. Children of tender years were employed, because they could be had cheap; and while they should have been in school, or at play, they worked long hours in the poisonous atmosphere of factory rooms. They grew into men and women with

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stunted minds and bodies; their lives were blighted, and the deadly shadow of reactionary effect settled down upon the proprietor and his family.

In the matter of wages, the manufacturer could fix his own wage scale, and, as a rule, employes had to accept. What could they do? The location of the factory had been the cause of their coming together from different parts of the country, where the alluring promise of steady work and good wages had reached them. Once there, they were helpless; for they had spent everything they had in the world to get there. They had to accept what was offered.

Naturally, the scale of wages was fixed so as to make as large a profit as possible for the proprietor; and when there was any economy to be practiced, if he, in competition in the market, had to cut the price of his goods, wages were cut, and the employes were at his mercy.

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As a rule, the wages barely furnished subsistence; so that after years of toil, with their vitality, which was their only capital, gone, they were in an impoverished condition.

But in the moral economy of the universe the vibrations run in all directions from the point of action. Every time there was a cut in wages, or an oppressive order given to the employes, the vibration not only lowered the status of the men, the women, and the children who toiled, but it poisoned the atmosphere for the proprietor and his family as well. The taint of injustice fastened itself on all, and gradually turned their feet toward the path that leads downward.

In all large industries, accidents happen. Laborers get crippled, crushed, killed. This means widows, orphans, poverty, and wretchedness. Justice requires that accidents should be charged up to the business, that those who are maimed should be cared for by those for whom

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they toiled. But no,—the burden is generally loaded upon the unfortunate.

The child, getting but a pittance for its long hours of toil, becomes weary and benumbed, and is caught in a machine and has its arm crushed. Does the proprietor pension it and provide for its future? No; he would send it home and put another child in its place. If he was a very humane man, he would perhaps pay the doctor's bill. He would argue that his employes were free agents; they came to his mill of their own free will, and they must take their chances. He does not think of how they are helping him to build up an enormous fortune without receiving a fair compensation in return, and that he is getting something for which no equivalent is given.