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A MANUFACTURER'S POINT OF VIEW

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IN modern manufacturing, economy is the dominant note. The days before the advent of steam and electricity were days of small volume of business and large profits; but to-day the reverse of this condition obtains, and we find that as a rule the ever increasing volume of business has been accompanied by an ever decreasing percentage of profits. Competition has reduced the margin of profits to a point where the cost of production must be kept at the minimum by every contrivance the manufacturer may invent.

Labor in its last analysis is a commodity, just as much as cotton, and is subject to the unalterable law of demand and supply; and the manufacturers who in these days of keen competition would keep their factories in successful operation, paying to the shareholders a just interest on their investments and at the same time furnishing thousands of workers with the means of earning a livelihood, can pay only the market price for necessary commodities, whether cotton or labor. At the beginning of the last century the workingman and his employer were to all intents associated in business; the terms of the partnership may have been unequal, but the relationship between them was practically that which exists in any partnership. With the advent of the factory system came a change, — the employer became essentially a buyer, the workingman a seller of labor.

Now while labor is a commodity, like cotton, coal, oil, reeds, harnesses, or any item entering into the cost of production, there is added to it the human element, and from this springs the problem.

VOL. 98—NO. 3

In our age labor is not only the necessity of the poor, but it is the ideal of the rich. A man may sell cotton at a loss and say "Never mind; to-morrow market conditions will change and my loss may return to me as a profit." He may sell coal at a loss and look confidently to the future to reimburse him, — these things are mere material possessions; but when he sells his labor, that is quite another thing; for his labor is his own life. That is what manufacturers buy and the multitude of workingmen sell, — parts of the lives of men.

How shall we overcome the conflict between labor and capital? There is but one way and that way lies in the recognition of the common humanity of the man who sells and the man who buys labor.

"Here also," says Carl Hilty, a Swiss thinker, "is the reason why factory labor, and, in short, all mechanical occupation in which one does but a part of the work, gives meagre satisfaction, and why an artisan who completes his work, or an agricultural laborer, is, as a rule, much more contented than factory operatives, among whom the social discontent of the modern world first uttered itself. The factory workman sees little of the outcome of his work. It is the machine that works, and he is a part of it. He contributes to the making of one little wheel, but he never makes a whole clock which might be to him his work of art and an achievement worthy of a man."

I recognize the truth which underlies this view; I recognize the æsthetic value of hand-made things; but I insist that indiscriminate condemnation of machinery

is the child of an immature imagination.

The machine is merely the man multiplied many times, and to it attaches a special dignity because it increases the power of the man to accomplish results. Let me illustrate what I mean from the industry with which I am most familiar. The art of making cloth is essentially the same in the great mills in Fall River to-day as it was centuries ago, when the first textile fabric was woven. Then the raw material was carded, — that is to say, it was cleaned and the fibres laid in a uniform direction by means of a comb in the hand of the carder, — thus the father of Columbus carded wool; to-day huge engines perform the work of the comb, but the carding engine is operated, as was the comb in the old days, by the human hand, only the power of that hand is multiplied many thousand times. In the old days a single spinning-wheel kept one woman employed from daylight to dark, producing less yarn than the doffers now take in an hour from any one of the thousand spindles tended by one worker; and in weaving, the power loom merely reproduces the identical movements of the hands which wove the first textile fabric before recorded history began. The great steam engine which operates the machinery in the factory is perhaps the best illustration of this idea. A double engine of the triple expansion Corliss type indicated at three thousand horse power is capable of producing the power required to raise ninety-nine million pounds to the height of one foot in one minute. How many laborers, think you, would be necessary to accomplish this tremendous task? And the machine itself is the perfection of mechanical skill; in it is the perfect adaptation of means to the end; it is the visible expression of intellectual as well as physical power, for by its means the irresistible forces of nature are controlled and directed by the will of man.

One step farther. The word machine in its first meaning is a contrivance, — a means; in its broadest meaning it is any organization by which a desired effect is

produced. Thus the whole factory is itself one great machine which the manager operates, as the weaver operates his loom; and just as the weaver must understand his machine in all its parts, — the gears, the pulleys, the shafts, the cams, — so must the manager understand his men, who are the gears, the pulleys, the shafts, the cams, of his greater machine.

To return, however, to the main thought of our discussion. As we walk through the factories and observe the operatives standing by their machines, we are liable to confuse the man with the machine, to fail to make the distinction between labor and the laborer, between the commodity and the man who sells the commodity.

"I have worked on the same machine for twenty years," said an old slasher-tender one day, "until I have come to know the machine — and the machine to know me." The statement is very suggestive and the workingman who made it had the imagination of a poet. "I have come to know the machine — and the machine to know me." In a sense the man does become a part of the machine he operates: and the more he becomes a part of it, the more effective will be his day's work. He becomes a part of the machine in that his intelligence animates it, in that he makes himself the master of his instrument.

The man who had the imagination to make the statement just quoted, was not brutalized by twenty years of labor operating machinery. I know this man in his own home and I believe that in his daily life he deserves, as few of us do, the name of Christian gentleman; and his wife, although day in and day out for many years she has tended eight looms in a Fall River cotton mill, deserves, as few women I have had the honor to know, the rare title of lady.

Let us take this man and this woman as types of the brutalized working people, and in their home seek further light concerning the problem. The husband came to this country from Lancashire

in early manhood, being then by trade, as he is now, a slasher-tender. The wife came to America in childhood, attended the public schools until by law she was permitted to work, when she became an eight-loom weaver. After their marriage and their wedding journey from the church to their tenement, they returned to their work, and in the ten or twelve years following, saved enough from their wages to buy a comfortable home, costing perhaps three thousand dollars, and had in the savings-banks a balance sufficient to make it seem to them that the wife might with prudence leave her looms in the noisy weave-room and devote her time to her home and the two daughters, for whom she had the ambition that they might receive the education which would remove them beyond the walls of a factory. Her life of comparative ease was brief, for within two years another child was born, and after a time, fearing that the added expense of bringing up the newcomer endangered the fulfillment of her ambition to educate her daughters, she returned to the factory and remained there until she had made her vision a reality.

This is but one of many similar instances which have come under my personal observation. I am not familiar enough with the man with the hoe to venture an opinion, but as regards the man who operates the machine, I cannot believe that he stands bowed by the weight of centuries or that the influence of the machine in itself is brutalizing. There is much in the modern factory system that is brutalizing, and reforms are necessary. These reforms can come only when the man who buys labor learns that he who sells labor is a human being like himself, and when the employee comes to the realization that his master is not a monster whose one thought is to grind the workman under his feet. Laws may be enacted — should be enacted; but before they can avail greatly a better social understanding must exist between the man who buys and the man who sells labor.

We have said that labor is a commodity just as any other necessity which enters into the cost of production is a commodity; but there is added to it the human element, and this makes the buying of it the most difficult task which confronts the manufacturer. The manager of a cotton mill buys cotton, and nobody is interested except himself and the broker who sells it; he buys coal, and nobody cares about the terms of the trade except himself and the dealer who sells it; but when he buys labor, not only does his trade mean much to him, much to the few hundred individuals with whom he makes his bargain, but it means much to the whole army of the dinner-pail, which daily answers to the roll-call in all the factories throughout the land.

Let it now be our purpose to inquire more specifically into the problem and see how, outside any appeal to law, a better understanding may be brought about between the man who buys and the man who sells labor. To this end we may take a concrete example. There exists to my own knowledge one factory, which for half a century has exemplified in its management the ideal for which I am contending. It is a small concern, employing at the most not more than three hundred hands. The superintendent knows each of his men personally; he talks with them about the things nearest to them, the little happenings in their home life, which are to them as dear as are the joys and sorrows which lighten or make dark his own fireside. In event of an accident to any of them, the doctor's bills are paid and their places held for them until their recovery. In the fifty years of this corporation's history, it has been called upon to defend in the courts but one tort case, and that brought by a miserable fellow with an illustrious criminal record, who tempted Providence to crown it by perjuring himself to obtain a few dollars from those who for twenty years had befriended him. In the fifty years of the history of this corporation there has occurred but one strike, brought

about by walking delegates who knew nothing of the conditions which obtained there; and that strike lasted but seven days, when the men returned in a body under the conditions which had previously existed.

The method here employed may be called utopian, but the results prove it to be practical. At the same time the two incidents cited illustrate the difficulties which the manufacturer encounters in establishing a better social understanding with the workingman. The man who sells labor, as a rule, misunderstands his employer quite as often as the manufacturer misunderstands him. He fails to realize that his employer is a human being, endowed with an immortal soul, who has the welfare of his employees at heart; he fears the Greeks bearing gifts, and cannot understand that the man who buys labor may act from an altruistic motive. He often assumes the same attitude toward his employer which he fancies that his employer holds toward him, and he makes the meanest, the most selfish motives the basis of his trade. In my personal experience, the man who is most thoroughly hated by his employees is the man who has the physical, mental, and spiritual welfare of his workingmen most at heart.

I can imagine some will say that, granting all I have claimed for the corporation referred to, nevertheless it employs but a handful of men, and when we attempt to apply the same methods in a great corporation, employing thousands, we face a different problem. Here neither the manager, the superintendent, nor the overseers can know personally each man in his employ. This is indeed true; but the manager can claim from all the men in his employ the same loyalty, the same devotion, which the great general commands from his troops. There is in Fall River a man who employs as many thousand operatives as the corporation we have referred to employs hundreds; yet with him the same conditions obtain, and the explanation is the one I have suggested,

— this man possesses the essential qualities of a great general.

If the factory be a small one, giving work to a hundred men, the manager may know each personally; but if it be a large one, so that such personal acquaintance is impracticable, he may know them as a general knows his army, — he may inspire them, if he be a great man, with his own spirit. But, says the doubtful one, this off-scouring of the world, these men akin only to brutes, will not respond to leadership. Said Emerson, "What a force was coiled up in the skull of Napoleon! Of the sixty thousand men making his army at Eylau, it seems some thirty thousand were thieves and burglars. The men whom in peaceful communities we hold with iron at their legs, in prisons, under the muskets of sentinels, — this man dealt with hand to hand, dragged them to their duty, and won his victories by their bayonets." Do you believe, after the victory, those thirty thousand men thought as thieves and burglars or needed to be held in irons? And again, bowed as low by the weight of centuries as the pessimist would have us believe these men to be, still are they men capable of infinite development, animated with the mighty impulse which compels the race to rise from worst to better, from better to best.

The relation of the man of business to the thousands in his employ is in a measure comparable with the relation which existed in another time between the feudal lord and his retainers. The retainers served their master in the great game of war; to-day the workingman serves his master in the great game of business; but with this difference — loyalty was the ideal of service in the one; in hatred does the other serve. To accomplish the highest results in the commercial régime, loyalty must be engendered in the soul of the operative. This cannot be accomplished in a day, it must be the result of slow but certain growth based on a recognition of the common humanity of the man who buys and the man who sells

labor. The feudal lord and his retainers understood one another because they fought in the same cause, faced side by side the same physical peril, used the same weapons. At the end of the battle master and man sought the gift of sleep in the same camp. They were comrades. It is not so to-day; the master fights for power, the man for his daily bread; the master fights with his mind, the man with his body; one sleeps in restless misery in his mansion, the other sleeps in discontent in his tenement.

Thus far we have approached our subject from a comprehensive point of view, treating it, I fear, in a manner more academic than practical. Let us now take a purely practical standpoint and look at some of the facts concerning a great strike in the textile world, which for five months prostrated an industry representing a capitalization of fifty million dollars, condemned to idleness twenty-seven thousand operatives, and filled with misery and discontent a city of one hundred and twenty thousand persons.

The strike was brought on by a cut-down in wages of twelve and one half per cent. At the time, the manufacturers were at their wits' end in an attempt to operate the factories without a loss of profit in competition with Southern mills, which then enjoyed a temporary advantage in cheapness of labor, then, as now, unorganized. It is due to the secretaries of the textile unions to say that they opposed a strike, as the conditions pointed to certain victory for the manufacturers. In the excitement of the moment, hatred, resentment, prejudice, prevailed, and the unions voted to quit work unless the old schedule of wages was restored. The condition was impossible, the manufacturers justly made no concession, and the long strike ensued.

A suggestive fact should here be noted: — the labor leaders opposed the strike, the sentiment of the majority of workers was against resistance, for but twenty-five hundred out of twenty-seven thousand operatives voted at the meetings of

the unions; yet a handful of enthusiasts, self-willed, unmindful of the common welfare, brought about by their votes a calamity from the evil results of which, after nearly two years, neither the corporations nor the operatives have recovered.

The question may rightly be asked, how did it happen, when the strike did not meet with the approval of the labor leaders and was unpopular with the mass of the workers, that it endured through so many months of bitter hardship? Why did men and women whose better judgment rebelled against an unavailing strike accept its conditions and make no concerted effort to terminate it? There are many reasons, but the main motive, I believe, was an unreasoning loyalty to the unions as embodying the ideal of the rights of the workingman. The authorities at Washington may declare what we deem an unrighteous war; but when the drum beats and the call comes for volunteers, we are ready to offer our lives in the service of our country,— the individual sacrifices himself to the common cause. The strike was declared by a small majority of votes cast by twenty-five hundred men and women assembled at the meetings of the unions; yet twenty-seven thousand acquiesced in the result.

This fact illustrates the power of the unions both for good and evil, and enforces the value of that ideal of loyalty to which I have alluded. The power of labor unions rests in the loyalty not only of the members, but of all working people, to the ideal which underlies the unions — the dignity of labor — the sacredness of the day's work. The fact that every workingman may not realize that he is loyal to an ideal, does not alter the fact — he is loyal, and his loyalty underlies his every act. This loyalty gives a power to the unions which cannot be computed in terms of the commercial world; it is the motive, however, animating a force which the commercial world must recognize and direct with judgment.

The power of unions is unlimited and may be used to the physical, mental, and moral advancement of the workingman, or it may be directed to his destruction; it may serve the advancement of mankind, or it may retard the increasing purpose of the ages. The need of labor unions, as the need of a nation, is for intelligent leadership. The power is there, — who shall direct it? Steam existed countless ages before Watts, electricity before Marconi flashed his first message through miles of unresisting space; yet ages of men and women watched the steam pouring from countless teapots, and rubbed amber for an evening's amusement, before the master came to make these forces the willing servants of mankind.

Allow me to intrude myself to the extent of presenting my personal impressions of the great strike in question, first explaining my individual relation to the employers and employees. In a small way I am directly an employer of labor, — the machine-shops to which I give my daily attention employ perhaps two hundred hands; the cotton factories in the management of which I am indirectly associated, several thousand. From a purely commercial standpoint, then, my bias should have been toward the welfare of the manufacturers. For fifteen years, however, I have been associated with St. John's parish, composed of Lancashire working people and their American children. My association with them has been as intimate as my association with the manufacturers; perhaps more intimate because the less highly organized the social development, the greater the possibility of intimate relations. I have had the honor of officiating as best man at a wedding of an employee, of serving, in the absence of a clergyman, at the burial of a workingman's child, of holding the hand of a laborer in his last hour of life; and if I have any message relating to the labor problem, it is this, — the values of life are relative, and be the man born to wealth or poverty, his instincts and emotions are the same.

The great strike was declared; labor faced capital in open battle; market conditions proclaimed that the cause of labor was lost; capital would suffer greatly, but in the end would be victorious because in this instance its cause was just. Twenty-seven thousand men and women were out on a strike; this number included the people of all nations, — English and French, Irish, Portuguese, Italians, Poles, and Jews; men and women whom the smug and comfortable term the off-scouring of Europe. You might have expected a demonstration of force from this army; but when at daylight the engines turned over in the deserted factories, and the few workers, either without loyalty to an ideal or possessed with keener vision than their fellows, answered the summons of the bells, beyond a few broken windows, there were no evidences of violence. Later in the day the streets of the city presented no unusual sights, except that they were more crowded, as on a holiday. Men and women, who under normal conditions would have been standing by their machines increasing the wealth of a nation, stood gazing into shop windows enjoying a leisure unknown for years. Here and there little groups gathered about one more earnest than his fellows, who harangued a listless audience concerning the rights of man. At nightfall the crowd dispersed and a stranger could have found no evidences that a great battle was being waged in the city.

In a few days mass-meetings were held in the theatre, at which speeches were made by men conspicuous in the labor movement, urging the workers to be true to the cause, — but still no violence. The workers were self-contained, confident of victory. Only once was there an occurrence suggesting public disorder. This happened after weeks of resistance, when the hardships of the battle had become well-nigh unendurable. At the close of a mass-meeting a weaver, braver than his fellows, spoke the truth, his motive being the common good. He had the intelligence to understand the situation, the

vision to see that the existing conditions pointed to certain defeat for the labor cause; he had the courage of his convictions and spoke his mind. In a moment the meeting was in an uproar and a mob followed the man of convictions through the main street. The man was rescued by the police and the crowd dispersed. The next day he returned to his looms and a few followed him. To-day his name is a name of reproach in the City of the Dinner-Pail; but his little service to the cause of labor will live always.

While the workers were holding mass-meetings, striving by every ingenuity to maintain a lost cause, the representatives of capital were immersed in the endeavor to start the factories, to supplant in a thousand homes want with plenty, despair with hope. They fancied the workingman to be their enemy, they fought selfishly as did their opponents; but in this instance they fought in the cause of right. Physical suffering was the lot of the laborer, — cold, hunger, pain. Mental stress was the lot of the manufacturer, — the determination to achieve, regardless of bodily comforts, the terror of defeated hope, defeated ambition. Recognition of one fundamental fact would have relieved in a moment all this bodily suffering and mental stress, — the fact that whatever conditions benefit capital must benefit labor as well, and that any measure which, adopted, would be of lasting benefit to the one, must of necessity be of permanent advantage to the other. The forces of labor and the forces of capital waged a fierce battle, yet their interests were identical. Each side suffered hardships, springing from a common cause; the battle fought by capital, rightly analyzed, was not against labor, but against market conditions, and the battle of labor was against the same conditions. If, instead of contending with one another, these two forces had united in the common cause, untold suffering might have been avoided.

In the end a conference was arranged to be held at the State House, the governor of the commonwealth acting within certain limits as arbitrator. The governor was a manufacturer and a large employer of labor, who, in spite of the fact, was elected to his high office by the enthusiastic support of the labor vote. He exemplified in his relation to his employees an ideal previously suggested. He could not know personally each man and woman in his employ; but his spirit of fair play animated his workers as the spirit of a great general animates his army, and they were ready with their enthusiasm, when the opportunity came, to place him in a position of influence and opportunity. They had for him that loyalty which should exist on the part of all working people toward their employers, and he inspired their loyalty only because his humane attitude toward them compelled their devotion.

The conference was held in the State House and the strike was ended. The solution was a simple matter. The margin between the cost of the amount of cotton required to make a cut of cloth and the market price of the same cut of cloth under the old schedule of wages was to be taken as a basis, and wages in the future were to be computed on that basis; a four per cent advance, representing the margin then existing, was to be made at once, and wages were to vary weekly with the fluctuations of the market. No plan could be devised of greater advantage to the man who bought and the man who sold labor; each would share alike in the advance or depression of market conditions. A few days after the conference, smoke again poured from the factory chimneys, the whirr of the spindles and the ceaseless clatter of shuttles were again joyful sounds within the factory walls; at the bell hour the army of the dinner-pail again responded to roll-call, — the long strike was ended.

HYACINTHE AND HONORINE

BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS

I

UNDER Le Berceau, upon her own terraced hill of vine and olive, lies the little mountain village of Castellar, nigh Menton. In the midst extends an open space about an elm; to the south and north stand houses, and their fretted stucco of many faint and blended colors, their green and blue shutters, dark windows, and mellow roofs mingle in a color harmony as proper to its environment of hills and orchards and crags as the nest of the bird to the lichened bough, or the coat of the sand-colored lion to his lair. A street opens out of the Place de la Mairie, and here shadows merge deliciously, and the little windows aloft stare into each other's eyes. Sunshine breaks through and burns where some scarlet or yellow rag flutters from a casement. Dark stairways wind on either side. Sometimes they ascend and sometimes abruptly fall through arch on arch, until at the end, under low, dim halos of darkness, light and leaves appear, and the silver-gray of the eternal olives shines wanly and whispers like rain. The street seems marked with sharp parallel lines that drop abruptly from tiles to cobblestones. The walls are broken, and the plaster has fallen in patches upon which seeds have found foothold. Pellitory-of-the-wall prospers in every niche and breaks the lines of the buildings with bosses and traceries of dull green. Silence reigns here, and faint, evil scents haunt the gloom; but the end of the street lies open, shines full of light, and abounds with life and sound. A fountain spouts one glittering thread into a stone basin at this point, and the water purrs gently with a pleasant sound. Above the trough archways leap and carry sunshine across

great shadows; between the houses Le Berceau's enormous bulk slopes upward and springs out of the terraced hills in planes of snow-capped stone. The sky is very blue, and far beneath rolls out, like watered silk, the sea.

Beside the fountain of Castellar there ascended a hot and pleasant smell of roasting coffee. Here sat a woman at her door, and cooked the fragrant berries, until their scent saturated the air and passers-by sniffed approval. The fire in a little brazier spluttered, and upon it Laure Vilhon twisted a metal globe that contained the coffee. She was a woman of sixty, with a brown face, firm mouth, and small black eyes that shone out from under a wrinkled forehead. She wore a white cap on her head and a purple shawl wrapped about her. The shawl made a beautiful patch of light at the end of the dark alley, and its color, modified into the gentler hue of remote mountains, was repeated mistily where the earth loomed and the hills rose far off through the screen of the trees.

The church clock rang out the hour, and Madame Vilhon rose from her stool, stamped her foot, and showed annoyance and impatience.

"It is too bad — lazy, worthless thing! If he come not instantly, I will refuse him the work and give it to another," she said, in a high-pitched, displeasing voice.

No visible person heard the remark, but it had fallen on small, quick ears. Honorine Vilhon came out of the house to answer her mother.

"He will surely come. It is far from Grimaldi, and he has to carry his brushes and paints."

Madame Vilhon regarded her child without sympathy, yet Honorine softened most eyes that gazed upon her frail and