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## ARE THE AVENUES TO A HIGHER SOCIAL INDUSTRIAL AND POLITICAL POSITION INCREASING OR DIMINISHING WITH THE MINER?

BY J. G. CHAMBERLAIN.

The gloom that surrounds the underground laborer in his daily toil, is not productive of high aspirations for social, industrial or political position; the little flickering light of the miners' lamp rather adds to the somberness of his position than otherwise, and his disposition must of necessity partake to considerable extent of his environment. Day after day and year after year the sunlight and the showers, which bring life, beauty and loveliness to the forests on the hills and mountains, to the cultivated fields and gardens in the valleys, to the flowers and grain on the broad prairies, and make glad the heart and fills the soul with grand thoughts and a hunger after higher and nobler things, give their elevating influence but a few hours each day to those who dig and toil under ground to bring forth the coal that develops the heat which sets in motion its millions of wheels, and to those who mine the ore which, when purified by the heat of the coal, is fashioned into ornaments, implements and massive machinery which fills the world with activity.

Shut out the sunlight from any one for twenty hours each day and for three hundred days in a year and continue this year after year, the most cheerful and hopeful will lose to some extent their vivacity, and those who naturally have gloomy dispositions will become

discouraged, disheartened and possibly misanthropic, feeling that every proprietor is a robber and in this condition they do not have far to go to become a communists and atheist.

From this condition of things surrounding the miner, we have the question presented: Are the avenues leading out from such a life to a higher social industrial or political position increasing or diminishing? While there are conflicting opinions on this subject, we will take the position that mankind is progressing as a whole in civilized and Christian countries, and we will find in the countries which have the most liberal laws the greater progress.

Machinery has had the tendency to shorten the hours of labor and to give more time for social and industrial improvement. Perhaps the minimum of the hours of labor, for man's own good, has been reached.

Idleness brings a world of evil. A nation of idlers would become effeminate. The best developed manhood is found where the people labor for their own support. The freedom vouchsafed to every citizen of this great republic, stimulates a desire in man to seek for something to better his condition. The desire may be weak in some but in others it becomes the controlling element of their lives, and there are no legal barriers to pre-

vent such an one from rising to a higher social, industrial or political position.

There are many things that depress and discourage all classes of laborers, who toil all the year and find at the end their financial condition is no better, and perhaps worse than at the beginning; something like resigned despair takes hold of them and they feel that their lot is one of poverty, and the avenues to a competence and position are closed against them.

This is the condition of the laborer in many parts of the world today. Our Consul at Cadiz says the condition of the Andalusian working people "may be summed up as one of light-hearted cheerful poverty.

Our consul at Venice says: "The working classes are far from being discontented, notwithstanding they live in a normal condition of want and insufficient and unwholesome subsistence. This is a sad comment to make on the working classes in a civilized country, and if true, would appear that we have taken the wrong side of this question. The poet may have had this class in view when he wrote, what he considered a self-evident truth: "When ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise." But this is the argument of the tyrant and slave master.

The slave holder in our own country enacted laws punishing any one with the severest penalties who should undertake to teach their slaves the rudiments of an education. Their argument was the maxim of the poet, that the slave was happy and contented in his ignorance and slavery and it was folly, yes criminal to educate and free him, thus destroying his happiness in his blissful ignorance.

There is no reasoning more false, and no results more disastrous to society. Virtue, intelligence and wealth are the bulwarks of a nation's grandeur and prosperity. The soldiers who fight for their homes, their firesides and their fatherland are the truest and bravest. The position we take, and the subject we wish to bring prominently before the Institute is that intemperance, poverty and ignorance have been the great barriers, during all the preceding ages, to the laborers advancement. But these causes which have contributed so largely to keeping this class in poverty, should not be laid entirely at the door of the capitalist. While avarice has undoubtedly done much towards holding them in a dependent condition, intemperance has done its share, which in our opinion is no small factor among the causes. Eliminate this from the problem and the solution becomes much easier.

When we consider it costs a nation more to gratify its appetite for intoxicants than to supply it with food and clothing, the capitalist as well as the impecunious should become aroused at the enormity of such a waste. If it was merely the squandering of money we might look at it in a somewhat different light. It not only drains the pocket of money, but impoverishes the mind and bankrupts the moral character. Thus, the ability of the intemperate to secure a competence is lessened in proportion to the loss they sustain financially, mentally and morally by the use of intoxicating liquors.

The condition of the miner at the beginning of this century, throughout the world, was such,

that few if any advanced to position of practical, social or industrial importance. But from that time to the present there has been a gradual change for the better. Laws has been enacted in Europe and this country which have tended to ameliorate their condition.

Within the memory of many not past the meridian of life, the hours of labor have been shortened and the earnings of the lesser hours have greater purchasing power than that of the longer days. To the ambitious and provident the shorter hours of labor gives opportunities for study and more time for mental, moral and social improvement. And, if the underground worker avails himself of these opportunities and does not recklessly squander his earnings, he will accumulate property and if equipped with an education and a competency, so that he is not bound to one kind of employment; there will be avenues opened in many directions that will lead him to higher positions in society.

Right here we must enter our emphatic protest against one thing, that is practiced by many labor organizations to a considerable extent, because we consider it a crime to all classes of labor and to society generally. It is this, they will allow only a certain number to learn the trades of skilled laborers and these probably members of their own families; thus forcing children to learn the trades of their fathers whether they are adapted to the occupation or not, and many will fail or become second-rate workman when they might have made a grand success in some other trade or profession had the doors of other trades not been closed against them.

How wonderfully short sighted this is. If a man is excluded from one kind of employment he must seek some other. And as he goes out in search of it he may find the doors of all classes of skilled labor closed against him and his only recourse is to common labor, which generally is in greater supply than demand. When laborers combine to degrade their fellow workman, they are making a chain that in the end may bind themselves.

Suppose the farmers could combine to prevent others from tilling the soil except as employees, we would soon have a landed aristocracy and they might largely control the price of food and thus, if possible, become a greater curse to society than the grain gamblers.

There should be no patent right in this or any other country on the avenues to any class of labor; and there should be no hinderances to their becoming skilled in any branch of labor which they are competent to perform; and no position, social, political or industrial should be too high for the miner or anyone else to aspire to.

When one class of men undertake to proscribe anyone from learning trades, they are encroaching upon dangerous grounds.

The introduction of machinery, the inventors of new processes of refining and modes of manufacturing are displacing almost entirely certain classes of skilled labor. Should such find all avenues to other trades closed against them and they are forced to common labor the effect of such proscriptions would come to them with great force.

No one can safely say, "I have a trade that cannot be displaced by

machinery or inventions of some kind." For along the great highway of time are strewn the wrecks of many trades of skilled labor, and the implements and machinery they used are merely kept as relics of the past.

After carefully considering this question we are forced to stand on this broad platform: That all trades, occupations and professions should be free to all and then those who have ability, education and are honest, temperate, frugal and attentive to business will hold the best positions.

We have assumed that the miner is living on a higher plane every way to-day than ever before, and we will try and show some of the causes that have produced the elevation of this class of labor. The field of causes is so broad and varied that we can only point out a few which seem to us the most important. Ignorance, intemperance and poverty are the great barriers to preferment. Hence intelligence, wealth and sobriety are the controlling forces that take a man into high positions of trust and influence. Admitting this to be the case, we will be met at once with the question, how is the miner to lift himself out of the lower into the higher position? We are free to admit it cannot be done in a day, a year, or a decade; and never until the lion shall lie down with the lamb, will all those who are held down by these three powers be entirely freed from the yoke that binds them. But when we look back over the past thirty years, we see in the present light, hope and happiness, where thirty years ago was darkness, despair and misery. It is doubtful if any per-

son belonging to this Institute knows of a miner who during the decade from 1850 to 1860 was able to accumulate sufficient capital to purchase a comfortable home. My acquaintance with this class of laborers during this time was not so extensive as in later years, but at a large gathering, composed mostly of miners, some two years ago, the question was asked if there was anyone, among the several hundred present, who knew of a miner who had saved sufficient from his wages during those ten years to buy a respectable home, and there was no response. But to our certain knowledge there was in that gathering from twenty-five to fifty miners who owned their own houses and had not only the necessities of life but many of the comforts. These homes were bought mostly by their earnings during the ten or fifteen years immediately succeeding 1860.

The children of these miners have, as a general thing, if their parents have been temperate and industrious, secured fair education; some have become doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and superintendents of mines.

These are not isolated cases, but all over this country there are ten miners who own their own homes and have a social, political and industrial position in the community in which they live, where there was one in 1850. There are no fears that this statement will be successfully controverted. Is not this a remarkable progress?

We will not, to any extent, enter into the political questions which may have a bearing on this subject, but we might say if protection has stimulated a demand for a large output of coal and other minerals

and advanced wages, it has also stimulated immigration, and with the blessings of industrial activity we have the depressing effects of unrestricted immigration. Therefore we cannot directly attribute all this progress to protection. It comes to a considerable extent, from the proprietors who recognize the rights of this class to a greater extent than formerly. This brings us face to face with the question of immigration, which we fear, if there is no check put upon it, will retard the upward progress of the miner, as it is next to an impossibility for any combination of labor to advance wages when there are two or more men ready to supply the place when only one is needed.

Our cheap lands cannot absorb the great flood of foreigners who are emigrating to our country. If they come here with sufficient means to purchase land and become producers of food, the evils of an unrestricted immigration would not be so apparent, but the majority are dropped into our large cities and towns swelling the tide of the unemployed. Many of this class are paupers or criminals. Taking this view of the question we are in favor of putting some restrictions upon foreigners coming into this country, no matter what their nationality may be. One important question that presents itself to us in this connection, is how shall we keep everybody at work? If there is employment for every one we need have but little fears of riot and blood-shed. Let every idle man and woman work and the occupation of the blatant anarchist would be gone and he would be compelled to work or starve.

As labor is generally considered

a commodity and its value fixed by the demand and supply it has to carry a burden it should not bear. Let it be recognized as something higher than the products of the soil or of the shop, because it supplies a place that machinery cannot fill. It has brains; it can think and calculate; intelligent labor can do thousands of things beyond the power of machinery. It can save and defend our property and our lives; it may become the means of fearful destruction to both, hence all should strive to open the way to make it the greatest blessing possible to mankind. To do this we must recognize the skill of the hands and the ingenuity of the mind of more worth than so much animal or mechanical force, which is bought and sold and its value fixed in proportion to the horse power it can produce.

Labor is seeking comfort, enjoyment and happiness, and if we deal with it as a commodity it draws nothing from the better part of our natures, we gain it no sympathy, and become indifferent to its appeals for help.

The ratio of value of intelligent labor to brute or mechanical power of equal volume, we are unable to determine, but we are sure the greater the difference the higher will be the standing of the laborer socially, politically and industrially.

Let us discard the idea of dealing with labor as a commodity and look at it in another light.

While we purchase the plow, the power that propels it and the muscle that guides it as cheap as we can, let the brain that directs the cunning of the hand, that controls the direction of the plow, watches and saves the corn from destruction, be

looked upon as something higher and nobler than the mere machines. Scientists tell us the frog deprived of its brain put in motion in water will swim until it meets with some obstruction. If this power expanded in swimming could be stored away it would have the same value as the same amount of power stored up by a machinest. But if we could impart to that frog a brain that could reason, it could be directed to swim with a thread from the stranded ship to the shore avoiding obstructions, the thread could then pull a larger one and so on until the cable reached from ship to shore and with life saving apparatus the crew and passengers could be brought to land. In these

two supposed cases we have two kinds of labor or power; the first is practically that of a machine, the second that which is produced by intelligence.

When the higher value of this power, produced by intelligence above muscle force, is fully appreciated and properly paid, the laborer will step upon a higher plain and everybody will be happier. Because they will then see and recognize the rights of each other and joining hands will go forward fighting the battles of life together, and should they on the way disagree in facing life's conflicts, they will settle their differences by profit sharing and arbitration or by some amicable arrangement.