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THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF OUR MINING POPULATION CONSIDERED.

BY J. G. CHAMBERLAIN.

One of the objects of this society as set forth in the address made by our President at the last meeting is, "How to socially elevate the condition of our mining population." We do not wish it to be understood that they are the only class of workmen whose social condition should be taken into consideration; but they are the class, that more particularly come within the province of our association.

The social condition of our underground laborers, is probably the most intricate problem we have to solve; and when this is accomplished, many if not all other questions connected with a large and economical output of minerals will be more easily elucidated.

In looking back over the history of the world, we find barbarous people marching forward to civilization, and civilized society falling back into barbarism. The cause of this progress and retro-

gression has been a subject of thought and discussion among the ablest writers and scholars of the present and past generations, and from all we can learn, poverty is one of the most prolific causes of social degradation.

With wealth on one extreme and poverty the other, and these two opposites long continued brings as a natural result, Caste in society, a social condition much to be deplored because one becomes oppressive and the other oppressed.

The Communist will suggest—"make an equal division of poverty," which I consider a most pernicious doctrine, and I abhor it with all my nature. It would weaken the fabric of society, open the door to anarchy, thus inviting a stronger power to become the arbiter, and judging from past history the weaker would become slaves.

From this course of reasoning the question forces itself upon us, what shall be done to prevent such extremes of social surroundings? My answer would be, first seek to give employment, and a fair compensation to those who need it, and further endeavor to teach them how the *greatest* amount of money can be earned per unit of muscle force expended, and how to acquire the greatest amount of this muscle force, then the laborer is armed with the physical implements to become the architect of his own fortune.

But to understand thoroughly the relation of muscle force to dollars and cents, in its acquirement of the latter, he must have both mental and moral training.

He must understand the necessity of obeying such hygienic laws that will give him a sound body and must comprehend his moral obligations to himself and to society, with these acquirements he goes to his occupation confident of his ability to earn a competence for himself and family. He should further learn that "play days" are dangerous to a large number of the laboring class, as well as nearly all classes of society, and who ever expects to become invigorated when they take these holidays by filling their stomachs with intoxicants will be sadly mistaken; and he will find on the day succeeding such a day of rest, that he has lost far more in muscle force than he would if he had continued at his work, and the force of accumulating property lost in debauchery brings no income, and financially he has lost the amount he could have earned, plus, the amount spent in the debauch. The moral loss perhaps is the greatest of all because he has less ability to resist

the repetition of the same course. How fearful the loss of such a "play day;" it is threefold, physically, financially and morally.

Another question now presents itself, how shall we stop this loss? The plan I would suggest is this. Let every proprietor of a coal mine strive to give each miner in his employ three hundred days work each year, and urge each man to work those three hundred days if possible to do so. The result would be, that both proprietor and employees would be the gainers, both would probably have had a good living and laid up something for the future.

Let us consider the opposite course. Take perhaps an extreme case, where a proprietor has employees who only wish to work half of the time, he would be obliged to employ double the men to keep his mines in operation; therefore, in the first case the cost of one day's output of coal, or other minerals, would be the cost of food and clothing for one-half the number of men, plus, the wages paid the same men; the profit in this case would be the difference between the money paid for wages and the cost of food and clothing (in food and clothing, I include the fuel and rent).

In the second case the cost of one day's output of minerals would be the wages paid double the number of men for one-half day's work, plus food and clothing for double the number of men as in the first case, and the loss would be in the last case, one-half the cost of food and clothing, consequently if double the men working half the time, can secure sufficient food and clothing to live upon, half the number of men working full time, will save just what it costs to feed and clothe the other half. Thus you see the loss is first and almost entirely upon the laborer, except as the accumulated profits of the constant worker would be a general benefit to the community in which they lived. In one case we find the social standing of the miner gradually advancing, in the other gradually declining.

In the mines with which I am connected, we have succeeded in giving our employees three hundred day's work the past year, we have tried to do it every year for fifteen years, and those who have availed themselves of this privilege have in most cases secured themselves homes, some have a social standing equal to any of their employers; one at the present time represents Columbiana County in the Legislature, another is a successful attorney in a neighboring State, another practicing law in this State, and another has succeeded as a physician, one has succeeded as an artist,

and several others are holding responsible positions in the Sunday Creek Valley, while another is holding a very responsible position in one of the Southern States, and I would further add that all these men I have mentioned are staunch temperance men. Others who still swing the sledge and pick, will discuss publicly or privately with honor to themselves, the topics of the day, and their social standing is not below the average citizen in the community in which they live.

Let proprietors assist the men in securing institutes for holding meetings, where they can discuss the questions in which we are all interested, help them secure libraries, use the utmost influence in trying to keep the men away from saloons, give them steady work and fair wages; let the men apply themselves diligently to their occupation, and shun the dens of iniquity, and we have no fears but what their social standing will be satisfactory to themselves and to the community.

The paper of Mr. Chamberlain, of Columbiana county, was read by the President. It discussed a subject with which all were familiar, but which as the writer truly said, was one of the most important in connection with the economical production of our minerals. This paper elicited approving criticism, and will appear in full in the next number of the *Trade Review*. Prof Orton, Mr. Jennings, Mr. Roy and others made remarks on this paper.

The third paper, by Mr. R. M. Hazeltine, opened with an unusually interesting description of the development of the mineral resources of the Mahoning Valley, and discussed in detail the duties and practice of the Mining Engineer. Mr. Hazeltine's paper was listened to with wrapped attention, and contained valuable practical information to young engineers.
