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SOCIAL POSSIBILITIES OF THE MINER.

BY J. G. CHAMBERLAIN.

It is important that the Mining Engineer and Superintendents of Mines should consider this question, as it is this class of labor we have to deal with: we lay out the work and they perform it. If our work is intelligently done, we should have intelligent men to execute it. In sinking shafts, slopes, and driving the most important entries, what class of miners do we usually select? It is those who have a proper appreciation of the work which is to be done, and the skill to do it. It is the men who read and think that we want, and who usually secure the most important and profitable places to work. Education and general intelligence with the coal and ore miner are not out of place, any more than with any other class of labor.

We are in hopes to make some suggestions, which, if carried out, would have a tendency to give us a more intelligent class of miners. Any plan which would give greater happiness, and raise our under-ground workers to a higher social condition, would also stimulate a desire to attain to a higher intellectual standard, and this would have equal force if applied to men following other vocations. The wage question is an important factor in this social problem. If the receipts from labor are only sufficient to purchase the absolute necessities of life, there will be but few opportunities

to advance their social or financial condition. There must be a surplus beyond what is really needed to supply them food, clothing and shelter, in order to lay the foundation for a higher social condition.

A standard for wages cannot be arbitrarily established; the value of labor must advance and recede according to the surrounding circumstances. The value of the products of a person's labor to himself is not so much as to its amount, as it is to its distribution. If it is spent in revelry and dissipation, it has not the same value as when expended in the purchase of nutritious food or comfortable clothing. If he has a surplus beyond his domestic necessities, that surplus invested in a home is of far more value to him than it would be if expended in the purchase of fighting-cocks or blooded dogs.

From this reasoning there are two points to which the miner should give his thoughtful and careful attention. First, to make his wages exceed his expenditures; secondly, to so distribute this surplus as to receive the most value for it. To secure a surplus above the necessities of life should be the ambition of every miner as well as everybody else, and every honest and judicious effort in that direction is commendable.

Wages are so low in many parts of the world that it is next to impossible to accumulate anything beyond a livelihood.

Now, if the laborers employed in our mines, as well as those employed in other industries, are not forced to put their labor in competition with the cheap labor of other countries, they will have in this country opportunities, by being provident, temperate, and industrious, to secure a surplus above a living. The farmer, the merchant, the skilled mechanic, or the professional man, who is not temperate, industrious, and careful in regard to his expenditures, will accumulate no surplus; and the toilers in our mines are no exception to this rule. While it is desirable and proper that every one should strive to secure remunerative wages, it does not necessarily follow that those receiving the highest wages are the ones who have the most comforts, lay aside the largest surplus, or have the highest social position.

Why is this so? The answer is not a difficult one. Some are judicious in their expenditures, sober and industrious; others

are the reverse. Some see in the home of which they are proprietors and owners, comfort and happiness; while others have no aspirations to become the owners of their habitations: a domicile of their own has no charms over a tenement. They argue that it is folly to invest money in a house and lot, when they have no assurance of permanent employment. I have heard this argument many times. It has *some* force. But is there not a remedy, in a great measure, to this changing from one place to another?

If a proprietor understands that his employes desire steady work, and at times when needed are ready to make some special effort to turn out a larger product, as a rule, he will endeavor to give them steady employment, and will not provide for any surplus of men. "No work" often comes on account of unsteady men; and just in proportion to the time lost by these men must extra men be kept to take their places. This overstocks the market with labor, and each steady man at such a place has to suffer to the extent that this overplus of labor deprives him of work.

There is no good reason why the miner cannot work at the same place for years. Work may often be slack. All trades and industries are subject to this ebb and flow; it is inevitable as long as the capacity to produce is greater than the ability to consume. I know quite a number of coal-miners who have worked at the same place for twenty-five years. Have they been the losers? Not by any means. Nearly all of them are owners of neat and comfortable cottages; they have money at interest, or other houses to rent; and when strikes or lock-outs occur (which they seldom favor), they can live for a year or more—raising on their own land nearly, if not quite, food enough to support them. This is not a picture of the imagination, but one of reality, and similar cases are undoubtedly found at most mines that have been worked that length of time.

In our American people, under the benign influence of a republican government, has re-appeared that desire to own a home; which desire once dwelt in the hearts of our ancestors, the Angles, the Saxons and Jutes, when they dwelt in their peninsular home between the North and Baltic seas, before they ever undertook the conquest and robbery of Brittain.

The barbarous Saxons, as they were called by the Romans, worshipping their heathen gods, unchristian as they were, dwelt in their own homes; and the ownership of a home was the insignia of a freeman. This feeling, although nearly extinguished by feudalism and despotism for more than ten centuries, re-appeared in the hearts of the first settlers of this country, and under a free government has brought blessings and comfort to those who heeded its promptings. It should be the aim, as it is the privilege, of every man in this country to own a home. There is no road that will lead more surely to a higher social condition than through the doors of a man's own home. He is the proprietor of a homestead, and this is a long step towards a higher social condition. He has laid a foundation on which to enlarge his patriotism; he becomes more truly a part of the government, and is more interested in both State and National legislation which affects the value and security of property; he naturally becomes conservative,—in fact he has worked himself up to a social condition that is recognized by the community.

As a rule, the dwellers in tenement houses—such as are usually found around our coal mines—are not likely to rise to the same social position as those living in houses they own. They cannot have the same influence in society.

It may be truthfully said, that there are many places where it might be unwise for any one to try and make a permanent home, because the coal or other minerals might soon become exhausted; but such an occasional condition does not affect the argument.

The home brings many comforts; it can be beautified by trees, shrubbery and flowers: all these add greatly to the happiness of the owner. Home life in a tenement never can bring around the fire-side the social comfort and happiness, that feeling of safety, which enters into the home life of the family who are secure in their title of ownership to their home.

The feeling of safety from want that permeates every member of that household, carries with it so much hope, and joy, and assurance of power to battle against poverty and its kindred afflictions, that they become, by the power of the position which they have attained by their temperate and frugal habits, permanent members of the society in which they live. The community take a greater interest in these than in the transient members of society

who come and go, as it were, with every change of the wind. This class cannot draw to themselves the same attachments as those who are known to be permanent settlers. The homestead-owner goes cheerfully at work to beautify the surroundings of that home, and considers the investment a good one; his library is increased from time to time with useful books, newspapers and periodicals.

The effect of this is far-reaching. The children see and feel that their social condition is on a level with the thrifty and industrious classes, which make up the best elements of society; they have kindred aspirations for education and refinement. Every tree, shrub and flower, every betterment to the house and grounds, takes hold of the heart, and builds up stronger attachments for the home that is their own; and when they leave the paternal roof, they carry with them a love of home life, and a strong desire to have a home of their own. This feeling would be carried forward from generation to generation, building upon itself, until we would have a community which would be a power to do good; and invincible, when called upon by their country to defend their homes and their liberties.

Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, of England, truly said, when in this country a short time since:

“It is not your colossal fortunes that have interested me. What I most admire, what I do long to see, and never shall see in my own dear England, is what may be called your upper and lower middle classes. I have seen among them men who would do credit to any capitol in the world. I have seen tens of thousands of houses occupied by their owners. I am told, in general your farmers own their own farms, your cultivated gentlemen own their own houses, and your artisans own their own cottages. What a state of satisfaction and content this produces in times of peace; what an irresistible force in times of war.”

MR. J. S. DOE: I have been much interested in Mr. Chamberlain's paper, and am much obliged to him for writing it, and endorse every word of it. There is one point that the managers or proprietors of mines should take into consideration; that is, to take more notice of their men outside of work. It has seemed to me that men working in coal mines have no chance for sociability among themselves. When they come out of the mines, they seek

that sociability where they feel most at home, and these places are in most mining towns, saloons. If the coal operator would furnish some place or room which the miners could call their own, furnished with magazines and papers, with pipes and cigars, and innocent games, the men would eagerly gather there and have a social time; that would lead to the lyceum, and that to a library. There would be comparatively little trouble in doing this. It is in my programme in the new mines I am now opening to start such a place on a small scale, and I would be thankful for further suggestions from the members.

PRESIDENT ROY: I don't know as there is any one that can make more valuable suggestions upon this subject than can Mr. Chamberlain. Just what is now proposed he has done. I first went to Washingtonville twelve or thirteen years ago, and found Mr. Chamberlain's miners in possession of a house of their own, which they called the Miners' Institute. The company gave them a lot and paid part of the cost of the house. The men had a band of music. I saw young men coming up out of the mine, washing themselves, and hastening to the place to enjoy it privileges, laying the foundation for lives of usefulness and honor. One of the young men I then saw is now a leader of the House of Representatives here in Columbus, on the Republican side. At that time he was digging coal; he got his first ideas of a broader life from the Miners' Institute, and now he is one of our best legislators. His brother who was then digging, is now a leading lawyer in an adjoining State. Another made a drawing in crayon, entitled Coal Mining Scenes, which you will see on the wall yonder, illustrating incidents in a miner's life, which has won the admiration of all the men of the State House. At least eight or ten of these miners of Washingtonville have turned out bosses or superintendents, some have gone West and now own property, and are rising business men. One studied medicine in Cleveland and is now a practicing physician. Since then the good work by Mr. Chamberlain has been going on. His theory and practice accord well. I know of no place where the feeling is better between the miners and owners. There are fewer strikes there than any where else in the State. The miners speak well of the operators. In other places the men are accustomed to call the proprietors tyrants,

and charge that they are trying to sink them into still deeper degradation, but in the district where Mr. Chamberlain lives you hear nothing of the kind. I believe if something of this kind were done everywhere—and it should be begun at once—in the way of encouraging the miners, they would do much better, we would have a more intelligent set of miners, and they would soon have property of their own. Miners are generally located in isolated places, affording little opportunity for sociability. One of the causes of discontent among miners is working underground. The gloom and isolation react upon the minds and emotions of the men.

The work is sometimes done in too much of a rush, and sometimes there are not cars enough, while again there is no work at all. The men meet in the mine when work is slack, and discuss that which is uppermost in their thoughts—their grievances. If some Institute were provided for them, so that when they come up out of the ground they would find books and papers to entertain or instruct them, their attention would be turned from the one question of digging coal, and they would soon become a more contented class.

PROFESSOR ORTON: I have had the pleasure of looking over the various coal fields of the State, and it was the conviction of myself and associates on the late coal screen commission that the miners of the Leetonia district are better off than those of any other district. The coal there is only 28 inches thick, and the price for digging is inside of \$1.00. The miners don't average \$2.00 a day I suppose, but they are given steady employment, and they are better off than in any other field in the State. They have what is of great importance, steady work, besides the other influences that have built them up. I would be greatly gratified to have the paper spread abroad among the miners and owners throughout the State.