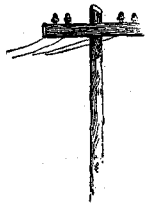


Industrial America¹

I.—Work and Wages in Southern Towns

From a Staff Correspondent



HE traveler has been often laughed at who described the German people as sandy-haired, because his own hotel waiter answered that description. This method of investigation is not to be commended. Yet, if the present writer had questioned no one except his hotel waiter at Columbia, South Carolina, he would not have been led seriously astray as to the industrial situation in the South. "The working people up North," said this negro economist, "can have unions, but we can't have them down here. The town is too full of men that haven't got nothin' to do and 'll slip right in and take your job. . . . There are mighty few men here that get more than three or four dollars a week. Our cook, he gets seven dollars, but, la me! you couldn't drive him away with a gun. . . . I never was outside of this State, and never expect to be able to get out. I get enough to eat here in the hotel, but I can hardly ever buy anything for my wife and children except meal and bacon. I can't get ahead any at all. . . . If one of your millionaires would give fifteen or twenty of our people just fifty dollars apiece, great glory! we would be in heaven."

He was speaking of negro laborers, but had he been speaking of white laborers the picture would not have been very different. The spirit of the old South has not yet completely departed, and the white man who does manual labor feels that he "works like a nigger," and knows that he is paid like one. Particularly is this true of a conservative city like Columbia—a city that has changed so little in twenty years that, were its buildings not of wood, it might be said to be the Old South petrified. Here there is little white labor of any description. The first cotton factory is now in process of erection, and it is the outcome of Northern enterprise. Upon this building—and I saw no other building going up—negroes and whites work side by side. For this I was inclined to congratulate the city for the progressive spirit shown, but subsequent observations led me to the unwelcome conviction that the equality was not due to a high regard for negro labor, but to a low regard for white labor. In Atlanta, Georgia, where the best laborers are organized in trades-unions, it is the union white laborers who will not work side by side with the negroes. The difference between these union laborers who assert caste superiority and the non-union laborers who do not assert it is not a difference in desire, but a difference in power.

This phase of the matter I had a chance to study a little at Charlotte, North Carolina. Here is a town that is alive even according to Northern standards. Already it contains half a dozen cotton factories, all built by Charlotte capital and three of them built upon the building and loan association plan. I know of no better American example of co-operative production. One of them was built upon payments of twenty-five cents a week, another upon fifty-cent payments, and the third upon dollar payments. Each of them has been paying eight per cent. dividends and setting aside a considerable surplus every year. Yet in this town, or city (it has fourteen thousand inhabitants), belonging to the old white and poor district of North Carolina, there is just enough organization among the white laborers in the factories not to allow a single negro to be employed except as firemen (an exception that literally proves the rule). There are no trades-unions here, yet superintendent and men agreed that if a negro were set to work at the machines, every white employee would at once leave the factory. In the North the trades-unions, especially

the Knights of Labor, rest upon a broad assertion of human equality. In the South we may expect them to assert inequality long before the need of all laborers standing together shall force them to recognize equality.

A few years ago the attempt was made to establish the Knights of Labor among the workingmen of Charlotte, but the employers were able to crush it out as easily as they crushed out trades-unions in the North a generation or more ago. The working people in the South are still, in the main, isolated, and unable as well as unwilling to look among themselves for leaders. Production is upon a small scale, and it is comparatively easy for any ambitious workman to become the head of an establishment. So long as this is true, the abler workmen will be constantly recruiting the ranks of the employers instead of leading the ranks of labor.

Some negroes as well as many whites have advanced in this way. One of the principal brickmakers in Charlotte is a negro. A leading cotton-factor told me that he had just given this negro a contract for a million of brick, and that a contract of two millions would have been accepted and handled with ease. This particular brickmaker had never amassed much property. He had, however, given his children an excellent education, and his son was one of the three negro physicians of the place, having all the practice he could attend to. But there were other negroes in the place who had accumulated property. One of these—the proprietor of the negro hotel—I met, and found him a man of much education and a great deal of fine ambition for his race. He asked me with some concern whether it was true, as the Southern papers kept asserting, that white laborers in the North refused to work alongside of negroes. The question was an embarrassing one, and brought home to me the fact that we at the North who deny equality of opportunities to the negro are helping those at the South who wish to keep him down.

Nevertheless, the negro is rising. I was prepared to believe it whether Southern people told me so or not. To my surprise, they did tell me so, with but few exceptions. One man told me that thirty years ago he was so positive that a negro never could be educated at all that now, when he had "seen it done," he didn't know what you couldn't make of a negro. There are a good many of the contemptuous "practical" men left, and their favorite assertion is that if you educate a negro he will not work, and will forge and steal. One of them in South Carolina assured me, with great confidence in his exactness, that "sixty per cent. of the negroes in the penitentiary were educated." State School Commissioner Mayfield indignantly denied this, and in order to test the matter I inquired at the State's prison. I found that about sixty per cent. were "educated" if by "educated" was meant able to read and write. When I asked how many of the negroes of the State could read and write, I was again told, "about sixty per cent." When I asked how many negroes they had who had been to the negro colleges, I was told that they were very rare. Indeed, as the State School Commissioner had told me, there seemed no difference between the moral effect of education on a negro and on a white. Particularly in the case of the girls was the testimony strong as to the self-respect developed by the higher education.

In the Carolinas I obtained no exact information as to the amount of property the negroes had accumulated. If my informant was talking about the progress of the negro, he generally said that a great many of them owned their own homes. If he was talking of how much taxes they paid, he was apt to say that they paid next to nothing. At Augusta, Georgia, I learned that both statements were measurably true. There were, I was told at the county Treasurer's office, nearly one-third as many negro taxpayers.

¹The series of articles of which this is the first will be prepared by Mr. Charles B. Spahr, of the editorial staff of *The Outlook*, who is now making an extended tour through the South, the West, and the Northwest, for the express purpose of studying for *The Outlook* the present industrial conditions of the country.

as white, though, all told, the negroes were taxed upon but \$785,000 of property, while the whites were taxed upon \$23,000,000. At Atlanta I was told at the State Treasurer's office that the negroes paid just three per cent. of the taxes of the State. This percentage seems small; yet it may be remembered that those of us in New York City who own less than \$5,000 own but four per cent. of the property in that city. If the negroes in Georgia had among them fourteen millionaires instead of fourteen millions widely distributed, they would, perhaps, have more influence upon legislation.

The wealth of the white people in the South is nearly all in the hands of those who had next to nothing before the war. Wages, it is true, are pitifully small. Carpenters told me they were getting fifteen to twenty cents an hour, when they had work, and grown men at the cotton factories are receiving 75 cents a day and the rent of a house costing \$600. Yet so incapable were the old slave-owners of either working themselves or managing enterprises that the control of every sort of business has passed into the hands of those who know how to work. In some of the cities the old aristocracy of blood still rules in society and in politics; but even there the old régime is giving way before the uprising of the self-made men who represent the New South.

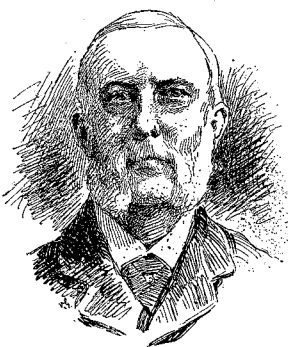
C. B. S.

Cruelty to Children

By Philip Poindexter

There is probably no merely human institution that is above criticism, however beyond reproach its motives and purposes may be. The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, however, probably receives an undue share of criticism from the public press, without a corresponding acknowledgment of the good it is instrumental in accomplishing. Fortunately, the activity of the officers of the Society is not interfered with on account of the imputations of blame, which are made rather in the interest of sensational journalism than for the sake of personal liberty. In all probability, a great majority of those who have heard of the Society over which Mr. Elbridge T. Gerry presides, and which is as frequently spoken of as the "Gerry Society" as by its incorporated name, have an idea that the principal activity of the officers is in taking young girls and boys away from theaters where they have been

acting, singing, and dancing. And, as a certain large proportion of the great majority alluded to see no very great harm in children acting in reputable theaters, the "Gerry Society" has come to be looked upon by such as these as a meddling institution that had much better find more useful work to do. As a matter of fact, the theatrical cases in which the Society has interfered do not represent nearly one-half of one per cent. of the total work of the



President Elbridge T. Gerry

Society. Such cases have been given an undue importance through the exaggerations of the reporters, who know that the newspaper proprietors value sensationalism beyond all else, save the money for which sensationalism can be sold. It may not be known to those who have accused the "Gerry Society" of meddling, that where there is one place of public amusement where children are protected from contamination by vicious persons, there are at least ten in which there is no safeguard whatever. Because there are men and women of blameless life on the stage, there are thoughtless and ignorant persons who believe that there is no safer or more respectable road towards happiness, fame, and competency than the path across the boards and behind the footlights of the stage. But there is scarcely a well-informed father in the city of New York who would

not rather see one of his girls dead than to have her embrace a theatrical career. It does no good to argue such a question, for it is one of feeling, based upon that knowledge which every man has acquired who knows the various aspects of the curious life that is lived by nine out of ten of the men and women of the playhouses. If, therefore, the "Gerry Society" did nothing else than to prevent children who are too young to have any discretion or comprehension of evil from going on the stage, then the Society would be worthy of the hearty support of that section of the public which has a true and genuine appreciation of refinement of feeling and of cleanly living, sprung therefrom. This is no condemnation of the stage, no attack on the theater. Nor does the "Gerry Society" either condemn or attack. The law—



Superintendent E. F. Jenkins

a wise law—says that children, until they have reached a certain age—presumably an age when a child has a realizing sense of personal responsibility—shall not act or sing or dance in public. The law recognizes that employment on the stage is what the insurance people call "extra hazardous," and it is the duty of the "Gerry Society" to see that this law is enforced. But, as this is so small a proportion of the work of the Society, let us

dismiss it, and see what else is done.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was established in New York in 1875, and its title is descriptive of the work that the Society has tried to do. Men and women are cruel to children more frequently, perhaps, because of the brutality to which drunkenness leads than from any other cause; but the records of the Society would tend to confirm one in the belief in inherent depravity or natural "cussedness," for there are instances of children being badly treated by fathers and mothers and guardians where all other motives were absent. Then there are many children abandoned in a great city like New York every year, and all available records are silent as to cause or motive. The abandoned children, the children of abandoned parents, the little ones who must make their own way in the world or starve—these, naturally outcasts at the beginning of their lives, would soon become criminals, without ever having had a chance to lead correct and proper lives. The philanthropy that endeavors to look after these forlorn and friendless children is one that should have the sympathy of every well-feeling man and woman in the world.

The Society now has become so well recognized an institution in New York that all children arrested for petty crimes and misdemeanors are sent to the house of the Society instead of being detained in the ordinary station-houses. Then each of these cases is investigated by an agent of the Society, so that the Society may advise the police justice as to what had best be done towards the reformation of the youthful culprit. I was in the house of the Society one Monday morning. The day before forty-one boys under sixteen—ten years was about the average—had been brought to the Society. These had been arrested on various charges— theft, gambling, begging, drunkenness. Probably there were not five boys among all of these who had any idea of the immorality of wrong-doing. "Anything is right for which you are not arrested" is about as much of a moral as these children of the street have ever been taught. They have naturally stretched this idea of right to include everything at which you are not caught. To be caught is what makes any act wrong; the fear of being caught is the only restraining deterrent. That is a nice moral equipment for the battle of life! From comfortable and respectable homes, from homes of luxury and refinement, through colleges and churches, men go into careers of crime that lead to prison. For such men we feel sorry. But how should we feel for those who have never had any chance what-