

The Coal Miner at Home

By Theodore Roosevelt

The first article on "American Workers in Country and Town." The second article will deal with The Social Conditions of the Farmer as observed by Mr. Roosevelt during a recent trip to the abandoned farms of New York

THIS is not a "sociological study," nor a treatise on the industrial conditions in the anthracite regions. My purpose in going thither was much more to learn than to get material which would enable me to teach. I have a strong feeling of liking and regard for the miners; I wished to see them and their wives and their families in their homes, as they did their daily tasks; and to find out for myself something about the social conditions of their life.

Ever since the anthracite strike of 1902 I had been in touch with Father Curran, of Wilkes-Barre, and with John Mitchell, who was then head of the mine workers' organization and whose reputation as a wise leader of the labor movement has been one of the assets of our country. Father Curran, an old and valued friend, I had found by actual experience to be a man of courage and good judgment, well acquainted with labor conditions, and devoted to, and entirely sympathetic with, the people who worked the mines.

I visited not only Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, but a number of the little mine cities near by. On the first day I was with Miss Sanville, the Secretary of the Consumers' League of Philadelphia, and her friend, Miss Cochrane. They had both worked in a silk mill in one of the towns, and had written very interestingly

about their experiences. Late that evening I went to Wilkes-Barre, where I stayed with Father Curran, and the next day we went over the neighborhood with John Mitchell. My object not being to study the actual industrial conditions of the workers, I tried to see but one or two instances of men and women actually at work. I went to their homes, and by their aid endeavored to find out what their social needs were and what ought to be done to widen the chances for enjoyment, and especially for full and healthy development, which each man, woman, and child in this country ought to have.

Any man making such an investigation will realize as the first and most important fact the immediate applicability of Abraham Lincoln's statement that there is a deal of human nature in mankind. It is just as unsafe to judge wage-workers in the lump as to judge capitalists in the lump, or lawyers or clergymen (which is one of the reasons why I as emphatically disbelieve in a "labor party" as in a "farmers' party," or any other kind of class party). If a man is himself the right kind of man, he will speedily find among the anthracite miners, as among the farmers in the East, or the planters in the South, or the ranchmen in the West, or mechanics or lawyers or bankers, that the vital differences and vital affinities have to do with the quality of the man

and not with the accidents of his position or labor, save as these tend to shape the above-mentioned qualities.

With many of the miners I instantly found myself in complete accord simply because they and I looked at life in the same way, and we could discuss—and did discuss—the needs of the mining community as any one might discuss the general needs of the country—merely from the standpoint of common American citizenship. Of course, however, they had special needs, just as they had special temptations—just as struggling young lawyers or young business men have special needs and special temptations; and the prime, but not the sole, factor in meeting such needs or temptations is, as always, the man's own character.

The striking fact was not the difference between the miner who was a good citizen and other good citizens, but the likeness, or, to speak more accurately, the substantial identity in all essentials. I sat on the porch with a miner and his wife while they gave me their views as to the need that the young people should have a chance to dance, yet the still greater need that liquor should not be sold where the dancing took place; we were in entire accord as to the need of amusements for young people, and the further need that vice and pleasure should not be treated as necessarily synonymous. I sat in a candy store and discussed municipal politics with a coal-black miner just off his shift, who had been Mayor of the little burg, who had also been in the Spanish War, and who treated me as a comrade; and I met another miner who had been in the Seventh Cavalry and who grinned friendly appreciation when he found that I knew that "Garry Owen" was the National tune, so to speak, of that regiment. In the neatly kept house of a hard-working miner's wife who was the mother of eight children, we both of us, and two or three neighbors also, became deeply interested in the question of playgrounds for the children. In all these cases the really important thing was not our difference of view-point, but our identity of views. There was the same community of interest and feeling between us as between any other hard-working, self-respecting men and women—whether in business,

or in the professions, or in farming. In other words, our prime interests, our most vital interests, were those we had in common, not those which each of us had because of his or her special social surroundings or work. There were such special interests, of course, and they were important; but the interests inherent in our common citizenship, our common humanity, were more important. Such a statement seems so obvious as to be trite; yet, as a matter of fact, many well-meaning reformers, many political agitators, and many great capitalists—all of course from totally different standpoints—persist in regarding the exactly opposite assumption as true, and treat the miners as beings who have—but ought, or ought not, to have—a "class consciousness" of their own, due to the fact that their conduct and interests both differentiate them sharply from their fellow-citizens.

Most of my time was not spent in the really fine cities of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre themselves, but in the little mining towns of the immediate neighborhood. From what I heard, there are communities almost exclusively inhabited by recent immigrants where conditions are very bad indeed, and where the evil is relieved by but little good. These communities unquestionably exist, but I did not happen to visit them, and I speak simply of what I myself saw. All the people with whom I spoke who were competent to judge—including, for instance, Father Curran and John Mitchell—said that conditions had improved during their lifetime; that things were better, and not worse, than they were twenty or thirty years ago; but they were equally emphatic in saying—what indeed was obvious—that conditions were still very far from satisfactory. It is unfortunate that so many people seem unable to combine acceptance of the fact that there has been progress anywhere with acceptance of the fact that further progress is needed. Those who deal with conditions in the anthracite regions are in this respect like those who deal with the economic and social conditions throughout the Nation; they tend to divide into two camps. One consists of those overzealous reformers who, because they see the urgent need of further progress, paint things much blacker than they are and

deny that there has been any progress. The other includes the men who seize on the statement that on the whole things have improved as being equivalent to saying that there is no necessity for any further improvement. There has been progress; there is great need of further progress; and if there is not continuous improvement, there is almost certain to be retrogression.

In the first little burg we visited I almost immediately met a coal miner coming from his work, and introduced myself to him. From his name he was of Irish parentage or descent, but was himself a native American. He was evidently a thoroughly good fellow and good citizen. I asked him some question about conditions, and he then invited me to his house. He was courteous with me from the outset; but when I told him who I was, he became much more than merely courteous. And indeed it was a pleasant thing to realize how the fact that a man was an ex-President at once made the miners (and all the people with whom I came in contact) feel that he was their friend, "their man," and that they had a certain right of ownership in him.

There are plenty of shortcomings in our National life, and plenty of things to reform, and much need of progress; but, after all, we are fundamentally sound. There is no other country in the world where an ex-head of the Government would be received with the same hearty democratic friendliness and sense of proprietorship as among the real working people, in town and country, on the farms and railways, and in the mines and shops, here in America.

To return to my friend the miner. He took me to his house and introduced me to his wife, who, with her two daughters, was at work in the kitchen. She apologized for the condition of her house; but it was not necessary; everything was as clean and neat as possible, both the sitting-room in which the dinner-table stood, and the kitchen, and the first-floor bedroom off to one side. There was a good vegetable garden in the rear. Then we sat on the porch, my host sitting on the steps and his wife and I in rocking-chairs just behind him. One of their married daughters occupied a similar house next door;

and she and two or three of the grandchildren joined us after a while. The miner, of course, was coal black and had just come from his work; and I asked him where he washed. He said in the kitchen; and his wife added, with a laugh, that she and the girls had to go out of the house while he did his washing. He told me that his son was at work in a mine where the company provided a first-class wash-room for all the men, each having, in addition, a locker where they could leave the clothes in which they worked in the mine. This enabled a man to wash before coming home, and to avoid bringing his working clothes home at all. (In one of the mines, as I afterwards found, the company, instead of lockers, furnished a system of pulleys; so that a man could hoist his sweat-drenched mining suit up to the roof, where it dried before he had again to put it on, which was a marked improvement.)

My host said that this was a great comfort and convenience, and I heartily agree with him. Indeed, I think each mining company should be obliged to furnish such a wash-room for its men. In the poorer families, in bad weather, when a miner returns home he often has either to go unwashed or else to wash in the presence of the women folks. There is no hardship in requiring a company to take such action. Recently, while crossing the ocean on one of the big Hamburg-American liners, I was struck by the excellent arrangements made for the stokers in the shape of wash-rooms, sleeping-rooms, dining-rooms, etc. This represented a vast improvement over their condition thirty years ago, and what is done afloat for the stokers should be done ashore for the miners.

Both my host and hostess dwelt on the lack of amusements in the town, especially for young people. My hostess remarked that it was natural for young people to want a good time; and that young girls and young men should have a chance to dance and enjoy themselves, and she didn't think the churches took into account their need for amusement. She added, however, that the dance-halls that were run in connection with saloons were very bad indeed; that it was unwholesome and very dangerous for young girls, and, for

the matter of that, for young men, to go to these dance-halls, where they were so apt to get drinking and stay out late at nights. I answered that I agreed with her upon all the points she raised; young people have got to be amused, and they have got to be amused in the ways they like. If they prefer dancing, well and good; if they prefer games, well and good; but every form of amusement can be carried on under conditions which render it vicious and degrading; and it is the duty of philanthropists—and perhaps especially of the churches, if they desire to be potent regenerative factors in social life—to see that healthful amusements are provided. If young people are deprived of amusement, or if the effort is made to amuse and “improve” them only in ways which somebody else thinks they ought to like, but which, as a matter of fact, they don’t like, then, lacking healthful pleasures, they will find unhealthful pleasures instead. There could be but few better ways of spending money than in providing in such a little city as this that I am describing means of simple, healthful amusement for young people who otherwise will not get it, and who may be driven into vice in consequence. Private individuals could do this, and churches could do it even better, but only on condition of studying the real needs of the young people and trying to meet these needs in a spirit as broad as that of St. Paul, and with his large charity for those who differ in the non-essentials, provided they agree in what is fundamental.

When my host brought me in, one of his small grandchildren had pounced on his tin dinner-pail, rattling it to see if there was anything inside. There was a satisfactory sound from within, and the small boy shouted gleefully, but his grandfather grinned and said, “No, Johnny; it isn’t cake; you won’t care for it.” Whereupon Johnny uttered a wail of indignation; and so I gave him two or three dimes, and told him to go off to the nearest store and buy himself some cake. Away started Johnny in a great hurry, due to the fact that he was better acquainted with the actual conditions than I was; for his mother appeared a moment later and remarked, “Well, that boy knows perfectly that I am making cake now, and

the ice-cream man will be around soon, and then he will be sorry he hasn’t the money for ice-cream.” However, Johnny proved to have forethought; for he speedily returned with his cake, and also remarked that he had saved ten cents with a view to possible ice-cream.

I should have liked to stay with this family much longer than I was able; but time pressed and off I had to go.

The next place I stopped at was the house of an elderly lady, with a grown-up son and daughter. The house was as comfortable as possible, clean and well kept, pictures on the walls, a nice porch; and a candy shop, of which the son took charge, just adjoining. This was indeed an American family of old stock. The members at first refused to believe who I was, and the son remarked to my companion, “Some of the men tried to tell me that man was the ex-President; but I told them they couldn’t josh me, even if he did look some like him; I guess he a factory inspector; that’s what he is.” Much to my amusement, in this household I found that my views were far more radical and, to use the terminology of the day, “progressive” than theirs. In fact, in their views on trades unions, individual bargaining, capital and labor, and the like, they were at least as conservative as some of my good friends of the capitalist class whom I regard as reactionary and who regard me as a revolutionist. My hostess was the widow of a soldier who had fought in the Civil War, and their son was a member of the Junior Order of American Mechanics; and he spoke very warmly of what the lodge did in the way of caring for its members who suffered from misfortune and the way it frowned upon the drink habit. The only complaint of the life which they made was that the neighbors gossiped altogether too much—not a fault peculiar to any one social stratum. My hostess was connected with a church and a member of one of the church organizations for social and charitable work; but she spoke very strongly about the fact that the clergymen did not understand the need of the young men and young girls for healthful amusement. She said it was quite useless in such a community as that in which they lived to expect that young people would not like to dance and

have fun, or that the young men would stay idle all Sunday without any amusement or occupation. She said that it would be an excellent thing if amusement rooms or halls could be provided, by preference connected with the churches, where no liquor would be sold and from which the young people would have to come home before midnight, but where they could dance and enjoy themselves. She also said that the candy store was always open on Sunday, and that it was a kind of club for the young men round about, who could come there and sit and talk, and so be kept from worse places, to which they would assuredly go if they could go nowhere else. Being of good, thrifty stock, she also added that Sunday was one of the best days for selling things, anyhow.

There were a number of men in the store, among them a miner just off his shift and as black as the coal he had been mining. He was obviously an intelligent man and a good citizen; and we at once plunged sympathetically into a discussion of municipal problems and the difficulty of doing what ought to be done and at the same time of avoiding the spending of money that ought not to be spent. He told me that the Poles in the town (he was himself of Polish parentage) had a new picnic-ground where they could dance and have a good time; and he was happy to say that the young generation, born on American soil, were drinking much less than their fathers had drunk. Like the others, he spoke of the need of amusement, but, rather curiously, he had never taken any interest in baseball, which seemed to be somewhat of an obsession with many of the boys and young men. I told him that I thought baseball was as good as any other healthful, vigorous amusement, that the first requisite was to have an amusement that would amuse, that if the boys liked it, it was just the game they should be encouraged to play when they had leisure.

In the half-hour's talk with the miners in this candy store the thing that impressed itself on me, as always, was the fact that here in America, at any rate, in any community, in any social stratum, it is not usually the conditions and qualities peculiar to that stratum, but those common to all

our people, that count for most. There are times of iron stress when the need is one which affects only a certain class, and affects all the members of that class; and there are very gross injustices and inequalities affecting whole classes which should be remedied at once. But frank recognition of this fact should be accompanied by equally frank recognition of the fact that in most cases it is not what is vaguely called the "social system," but individual virtues and shortcomings, that count most; normally, the hard-working, sober, forehanded, intelligent father or son does well by himself and his family; normally, the chief burden of sorrow and misfortune comes because the father is selfish or shiftless or idle, the son takes to drink, the wife or daughter slights her duties because she is weak and cares too much for vapid excitement. Surely, all this can be said of the family of a millionaire just as of the family of a miner. There is much that is wrong in our social system, much that needs action by the people in their collective capacity, either through the Government or through private association. But such collective action, absolutely necessary though it may be, is never all-important, is never a substitute for individual action, and is usually very much less important than the sum of the individual's own qualities and characteristics. Individual self-help, and the help—moral, spiritual, or material—given by one individual to other individuals, will always remain at the base of good and successful citizenship.

After leaving my friends who owned the candy shop we walked up one of the back streets. Here we were impressed with the very unattractive character of the surroundings. There were no sidewalks; the streets were simply straight lanes of ground along which the houses were strewed; the gutters—which evidently did service as sewers—were merely natural hollows and watercourses in this ground, and no attempt had been made to deal with the litter and refuse of the houses. I know how difficult it is to secure permanent improvements in small mining towns of this character, where the permanence of the town depends upon the length of time it takes to work out the mines. Nevertheless, it is certainly highly

undesirable for people to grow up in ugly, slovenly, down-at-the-heel surroundings. The school I saw here, for instance, was in the middle of a dusty and cindery waste, without a sign of a playground, so that it was utterly impossible that what all thoughtful people recognize as being some of the most vital needs of child life could be adequately met.

There were some buildings going up in this new district, and the head carpenter on one of them promptly foregathered with me, he having been a National Guardsman who did his best to get to the front in the Spanish War. His intelligent interest in and knowledge of public questions made me rather wish that he could be used as a lecturer on civics in not a few prominent colleges and big city clubs and business houses that might be mentioned. I think that those who preach to the educated man—to the graduate of a particular school or college—about his duty to the country often tend to lay the emphasis on the wrong side. If he remains aloof from his fellow-citizens, the damage done is not really as much to them as to him, and he is the man who suffers most. The country needs his services a little, perhaps only a very little; but he needs the country infinitely more.

Although the houses in this part of the little town were in unattractive surroundings so far as the streets were concerned, the houses themselves were comfortable. For the most part the owners were raising corn and potatoes, vegetables and flowers, and often chickens; and the children might have rabbits. There was a big coal-breaker in the neighborhood. I was chatting with a miner who had come out to shake hands with me, and who was in his bare feet. He saw me look at the breaker, and asked me if I would not like to go through it; and upon my saying "Yes," he told me to wait a minute until he could put on his shoes. He soon came out with his shoes on, and we started to the breaker, where he introduced me to the engineers, foremen, and various others. Then another miner turned up with a kodak and took a picture of all of us. There was a multitude of small boys following, and some of these I arranged in front, quoting what, at my home at Oyster Bay, the hired man used to say when he took

the children on the hay-wagon—"little apples in the middle." I then went through the breaker, my object being to look at the boys who stand over the chutes sifting out the slate from the coal. Forty or fifty years ago there was no age limit, and boys began their life labors at eight or nine years by working on this job. Nowadays, fortunately, the law forbids boys under fourteen from being thus employed; and where I was visiting it was well enforced. Certainly it is an industry which needs the most careful regulation; for it was not pleasant to see even fourteen-year-old boys thus employed. None of the miners to whom I talked, however, sympathized with this view, all taking the position that at fourteen years the boys ought to begin to help the family. I asked if it was not unhealthy, and they said "No;" my question being due to the fact that my brief stay at the breakers seemed to fill my lungs with dust, which also coated me on the outside pretty thoroughly; and my friend the miner asked me to come into his house and wash. This I accordingly did, passing down through the garden and entering the kitchen, where his wife was on her knees scrubbing the floor, she and her surroundings being as neat and clean as possible. I apologized for shaking hands with her, my hands by that time being black, partly because of my visit to the breaker and partly because of the various miners with whom I had been shaking hands. However, it was all right, for she dipped her hand back into the bucket after shaking mine; and I speedily had a good wash at the sink.

We took lunch at a very nice little store—on milk, which was sold in sealed bottles, and some excellent crackers, which we bought in a grocery near by.

Then we went to another small town, where I visited the superintendent of schools—a fine fellow doing excellent work in seeing to the observance of the laws about the employment of minors. He took me to see the priest, whom I had already known as a power for good in the community—a man who had battled effectively for temperance, for order, for obedience to the laws, and for raising the standard of decency in social life. I had

been much struck by the parish house of one of the Slav Catholic churches; a house in which they had rooms in which young people could dance and amuse themselves. The priest, whose guest I at the moment was, had, as he informed me, an American congregation (an English-speaking congregation, chiefly of Irish parentage or descent). He told me that this parish house was undoubtedly a good feature; and that he and his congregation sometimes had the use of it for their own entertainments. I told him what the different miners had been saying to me about the need of young people having places where they could dance and amuse themselves, and about the evil done by the dance-halls run in connection with saloons. He told me that these saloon dance-halls—and all dance-halls where liquor was sold—were among the most potent sources of vice and demoralization; and that, though he thoroughly believed in amusement for the young people, he thought that girls and boys should go to dances where they went by invitation, and where there could be enough supervision to prevent rowdiness and drinking; his idea being that the dances should stop at twelve, when there should be a supper and then the boys and girls should go home. Miss Cochrane and Miss Sanville, though they agreed fundamentally with this proposition, did not agree about the invitation dances, stating that there was need of some places where boys and girls could go of their own accord uninvited, although in these places also the regulations should be such that at or before midnight the place would be closed and the boys and girls go home.

We also visited a silk mill; this silk mill having been established in the region because of the abundance of labor, which is furnished by the young unmarried daughters of the miners. The law against the employment of girls under legal age is now well enforced. The silk mill in question was as neat and clean as possible in every respect, and the conditions seemed to be good, except that I do not think proper provision was made for enabling the girls to sit down, a much more important matter than at first sight it seems. The girls all spoke English well, being, for the most part, born on

American soil of Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Bohemian, and other foreign parents. They were well dressed, good-looking, and apparently healthy. Naturally, to well-meaning but over-enthusiastic reformers, this work seems monotonous; but I don't think it seems so to the workers; and a very little conversation with them was sufficient to show that they esteemed themselves as fortunate in having the work to do, and that they felt that they were—and indeed I have no doubt that they actually were—rising steadily in the social scale. They certainly seemed to have advanced very much beyond the stage of the newly arrived immigrants; that is, beyond the stage in which their families were when they came to this side. I see no reason to doubt the assertion of my friend the priest that there has been real progress during the last thirty years; so that, while there is very much that remains to be done, it is nevertheless true that much has been done, and that the movement on the whole has been forward and upward. Selfish men, and short-sighted, self-satisfied men who do not recognize the need of further improvement and who insist that there is no need of further legislation regulating the conduct of corporations and wealthy capitalists and employers towards their employees and towards the general public, stand for retrogression; but it is a mistake for the reformers, in their zeal for further reform, not to recognize the fact that there has already been real progress. We are far ahead of the days when the Molly Maguires flourished. Under the conditions which produced the Molly Maguires there was no interference at all by the State, but a lawless individualism. The brutal selfishness of the exploiting master was met by the murderous violence of the laborer, who was neither better nor worse than the employer; so that one form of conscienceless greed was pitted against another in a strife which was both ferocious and degrading.

That night I went to Wilkes-Barre, where I stayed in the house of my old friend Father Curran; John Mitchell being another guest. The following morning we three started out to go through the small mining towns in the neighborhood of Wilkes-Barre. Most of

what I saw was, of course, a repetition of what I had already seen. There were, however, several new points that came up. I visited a number of houses of "foreigners," as the English-speaking miners call them—that is, houses of Poles and other Slavs who had been in the country a score of years, or had been born in it. These houses were excellent, the buildings themselves neat, clean, and comfortable, and the gardens in good condition.

On the other hand, I visited certain quarters where newly arrived immigrants—Italians or Slavs—were herded together, and where the conditions were frightful. The crowding and filth in the rooms of the decayed buildings were like those in the worst tenement-house districts in a big city, and the streets were squalid. After seeing these, I could thoroughly believe the statements made as to the very bad conditions of certain towns where all the workers are newly arrived immigrants from eastern or southern Europe; and I could also understand what had hitherto rather puzzled me, the fact that the English-speaking miners, those of Irish and Welsh descent, and including apparently the few Germans and Scandinavians, declined to share dance-halls and places of amusement with those whom they styled "foreigners," meaning thereby these newly arrived immigrants who had not had time to develop the American standard of living and standard of social behavior. They had no feeling, as far as I could see, against their fellows, of whatever national origin, once they had reached the American standard in these two respects; except as far as failure to learn English, where such failure existed, naturally proved a bar to social intermingling.

I asked why the municipal authorities did not insist upon cleaning up these conditions and demand the observance of a higher standard of decency. The answers generally were either that the people themselves objected to any such cleansing of conditions, or else that the mine companies, the owners of which were often absentees, were primarily interested in keeping down taxes, and would not submit to improvements which cost money. As regards the last point, if true, it is ultimately a shortsighted policy, for

it is to no one's interest more than to that of the capitalist that every wage-worker should be a self-respecting, thriving citizen whose instincts and surroundings and self-interest combine to make him a law-abiding man, sharing in the general desire of all good citizens both to secure social and civic betterment and to work for such betterment on sane lines. As regards the first assertion, that these new immigrants themselves objected to the effort to make things more decent, it was no doubt true as regards those among the immigrants whose standard of living was very low.

All the upper-class miners took the ground that there should be some sifting out of immigrants, so that there should not come hither, to be put into competition with American workingmen, enormous masses of men with a far lower standard of living, and therefore with a tendency to lower both wages and social conditions generally. John Mitchell and Father Curran both felt very strongly that there should be such an intelligent sifting out of immigrants, so as to bring hither only those who would be fitted to add to the value of American citizenship; and the great majority of the intelligent men of all grades who spoke to me on the subject took this stand. Most of them were the sons or grandsons of former immigrants; most of them were Catholics; they had not the slightest "Know-Nothing" hostility to foreigners as such; but they felt that the owners of steamships and railways, and to a less extent some of the great employers of labor, exercised a very unhealthful influence in the way they stimulated immigration to this country, wholly without regard to the character of the immigrant; they felt that they themselves, the men who were speaking to me, had profited enormously by becoming completely assimilated with the American life round about them, and that it was a serious disadvantage to every one if the immigrants arrived in such enormous masses as to resist this assimilation, and to lower the standard of living, the standard of wages and of social conditions generally among the laboring classes. They all told me that conditions in the mines had grown better, and not worse, during the last thirty years, that the old miners and the sons and daughters of the old

miners had, as a rule, risen, and not fallen, in the social scale; and I could see for myself what thoroughly fine people most of the young men and girls born on this side are, no matter from what part of Europe their parents came, whether from eastern, northern, or southern Europe. But my informants also insisted that there were certain regions where during the last ten years conditions had grown worse instead of better; these being regions where the population is composed almost exclusively of late foreign arrivals. There was a general feeling that the competition of these incomers with a very low standard of living was bad for the better-class workingmen; and, moreover, the conservative labor leaders evidently feared what such a population might do if there came a time of stress.

I was much interested in seeing, thanks to the courtesy of the superintendent of one of the mines, a big playground established under his care for the children of the neighborhood. It was a fine thing; and I only wish that either the municipal authorities, the State authorities, or churches, or private individuals, would see that such playgrounds are established all over these cities. Of course part of the trouble comes from the fact that the cities are of rather ephemeral nature. I saw houses put up by different coaling companies which struck me as very bad, but in at least one case the explanation was advanced that the time was coming near when the mine would be exhausted, and that then all the houses would have to be abandoned.

I thoroughly enjoyed one call. Having stopped near a row of houses, I entered into conversation with a lad who had just come out of the mines, a clean-cut, respectable young fellow. As soon as he found out who I was he took me into his mother's house, saying that she would be very glad to see me, as she was the mother of eight children. It was an attractive household. The mother was evidently a thoroughly good woman, the house was clean and neat, and the home life evidently happy. There was a pleasant-faced young girl carrying a little baby in her arms, who proved to be a small sick brother, and she told me that I must come into the next house and visit *her* mother, who had

twelve children. Here, as elsewhere, although the families were entirely contented, they spoke to me of the advantage it would be if there were a little more chance for amusement, and also for self-improvement, for the young men and girls. The girl who was carrying the baby spoke with great approval of what some of the young miners had just done on their own account. They had provided a building in which entertainments, including dancing, for both young men and women, occurred at stated intervals. She added: "Yes, there is no liquor sold there either. The boys that run it are good temperance boys, and everything is just as respectable as possible, and we all go home at eleven o'clock." Of course the very best kind of place of amusement is that which is thus furnished by the exertions of the young men and women themselves, with the help of their elders. The best way in which either churches or philanthropic individuals or societies can help is by turning in and aiding the persons who are taking the lead in providing this kind of entertainment for themselves and their associates.

Then the girl with the baby piloted me into her mother's house, and again it was a real pleasure to be in such a house, with such thoroughly good, self-respecting, hard-working people, so cheerful in every way. One of the treasures eagerly shown me, by the way, was a book about myself. There was a piano in the corner of the dining-room in this house, and the mistress asked if any of us could play and sing. Father Curran's assistant, it proved, could play, and the chauffeur could sing, and so we promptly held an improvised concert, all of us joining in so much of the choruses as we knew. When I say "us," I mean the members of both families, myself and my associates, and all of the neighbors who could get into the room with us. I hope my hostess and the neighbors enjoyed themselves as much as I did.

Another house that I stopped at was that of a Welsh miner, a capital man, combining advanced views with sanity to a degree not too common in any class of life. He was a member of the Methodist Church, and spoke warmly of the good that the Methodist Church did, although he seemed to feel that, when dealing with

a very hard-working and rather rough laboring population, it could with advantage take a broader stand in the matter of amusements for young people than is perhaps necessary in country regions with different traditions.

There was a big new school-house, named in my honor the Roosevelt School, which of course I had to visit; and I was much interested in a call at the barracks of the State Police. This is a body of mounted men in the employ of the State. All those that I saw were ex-soldiers of the regular army, clean-cut, up-standing, clear-eyed men whom it gave one a glow of pride to see.

Most of the rest of my time was spent in very interesting visits a little apart from the line of what I had hitherto been doing. We had a thoroughly enjoyable lunch at Father Curran's, about thirty priests being present. Half of them had as boys themselves worked in the mines, and they were genuine exponents of democratic Christianity. It was a pleasure to see how most of them worked with the Protestant clergymen of the neighborhood; they were acting in practical fashion on the theory that differences of dogmatic theology can be suffered to rest in abeyance as long as all of us, without regard to creed, show the right spiritual and ethical temper in struggling for the common good of mankind. I took afternoon tea at the house of another priest, and dinner at the house of a big lumberman who had been a practical disciple of Conservation policies and who is conducting his own lumber business, from the standpoint of tree-growing, of tree-felling, and of fighting fire, along the lines that mean the building up through use, and not the destruction, of our forests.

It would be idle to try to draw specific conclusions from a visit as short as this. Yet what we saw impressed on us the need of wide and thoroughgoing application of certain general principles. Reformers and advocates of betterment, even beyond other people, need to keep in mind that re-

forms in the mining regions, as elsewhere, must be based on full recognition of the fact that this applies to both employer and employee. On the other hand, the reactionary, the dull-witted ultra-conservative, who persists in saying that no improvements can or ought to be made, either through the State or through the collective action of private individuals, is himself a more efficient worker for extreme unrest than any of the agitators whom he denounces. Very much should be done by the State, and by the corporations themselves—both under direction by the State and of their own individual initiative. Much should be done by those churches and individuals and associations that do in good faith recognize that in this life, while each of us must keep himself, yet each is in a very real sense also his brother's keeper. The work can, of course, best be done by teaching the men who need help how themselves to take the lead in helping themselves; and the help must, of course, be given in such shape that it will be a benefit—a remark which will seem only a truism to those unacquainted with a certain type of charitable mind. There is no use in providing advantages in such fashion that those to be benefited decline to take advantage of them.

As for those who write about the mining regions, let them remember two facts: It is bad to portray the conditions with such hysterical overemphasis, such over-insistence on the dark side of the picture, that sensible men turn contemptuously away, tired of the effort to disentangle the true from the false. It is even worse to sit by with smug complacency and deny that there is anything to be improved. There is very much to be done; and the first thing to be done is thoroughly to understand the real identity in all that is fundamental between the men in one position and the men in another, between the men who live under conditions which create the problem to be considered, and the men who, living under different conditions, must join in solving the problem.

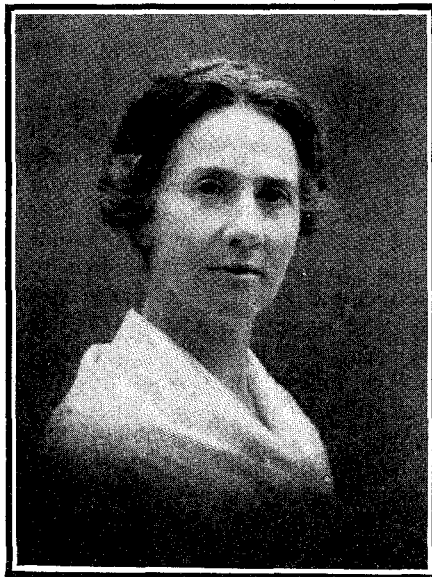
Americans of Influence

The Great Work of a Little Woman

It doubtless sometimes seems to people who receive appeals for financial aid that the multiplication of philanthropic societies has reached a point that is somewhat trying to the endurance, if not the patience, of their supporters. Nevertheless, a new National organization has just come into existence which is so human in its appeal that we are glad of the opportunity of bringing it and its central figure to the attention of the readers of *The Outlook*. It is called the Holman Association. It has recently been founded by Mrs. Joseph C. Bloodgood, of Baltimore, and its President is Dr. William H. Welch, the distinguished physician and scientist of Johns Hopkins University. The cause of it all is a wiry little woman about five feet high, who, before she undertook the arduous work which she is now doing, had always been considered fragile. For eight years this fragile woman, Lydia Holman by name, a trained nurse by profession, has been working tirelessly, enduring hardships and privations for the mountain people of the western part of North Carolina, where there are scattered many thousands of native-born Americans among hygienic conditions so painful as to be seldom found outside the slums of our large cities. Miss Holman has taken care of her own horse, done her own housework and cooking, and at any time, day or night, has ridden miles alone to answer the calls of the sick. She is forced to live without a companion because

she cannot afford to pay two helpers, for one would probably be afraid to remain alone when Miss Holman is called out on one of her rides over the mountains. In communities where physicians can be obtained, Miss Holman does not believe in the hospital nurse who attempts to practice medicine; but in these mountain regions good doctors are unknown. Miss Holman was called to this field to serve professionally in a typhoid case. A rich woman who had come from the North to these mountains needed some one who would take the responsibility of physician and nurse. Miss Holman was summoned; her patient rapidly recovered, to the great surprise of the natives, who entreated the new wonder—the woman doctor—to remain and help them in their dire need. She resolved to take up this voluntary medical missionary work because of the cry of motherhood and babyhood, for the evidences were all about her of mothers dying in maternity from atrocious care or none at all. Her lines of work have been maternity cases, minor surgery, typhoid, pneumonia, rheumatism, tuberculosis, and even dentistry. She has taught home nursing, the prepara-

tion of food for the sick, hygiene, and social service. Her records show that she has attended three hundred and eight mothers and babies, all of whom are living, but some of whom would surely have died in the days when professional and scientific treatment was unattainable. Miss Holman has found the people very responsive, believes in their essential sterling qualities, and says of them, "Give them half a chance and see what they can become." She



LYDIA HOLMAN