

at court for a warrant for the arrest of her assailant, the magistrate expressed himself as follows:

"You cannot have a warrant. You are a criminal, and you have got no more than your just deserts. God says in the Bible that by the sweat of his brow every man must earn his bread. You are keeping the girls from earning their bread. Your strike is a strike against God!"

But despite it all—despite cold, hunger, police brutality, magisterial insult and injustice, the shame and degraded companionship of the workhouse—these girls have kept up their spirit, a spirit that has brought them much sympathetic outside aid, a spirit that is, as I write, bringing toward a successful close the longest, biggest, bitterest struggle for better living conditions ever waged by women in America.

BETTER FARMING, BETTER BUSINESS BETTER LIVING¹

BY SIR HORACE PLUNKETT

I HAVE urged that the progress of Western civilization has been dangerously one-sided; that the modern city—the center of thought and therefore of influence in National affairs—has been developed to the neglect and in some ways at the expense of the country. Public opinion, which must be moved before any large social readjustment is possible, takes the urban view, and, naturally, may be slow to agree with this judgment. Many who admit the facts as I have stated them question the existence of the problem; the majority, if they take more than an academic interest in it, say that it is in process of solution.

This attitude of the city mind is not new; it pervades the literature of the Augustan age. I recall from my school-days Virgil's great handbook on Italian agriculture, written with a mastery of technical detail unsurpassed by Kipling. But the farmers he had in mind when he indulged in his memorable rhapsody upon the happiness of their lot were out for pleasure rather than profit. While the suburban poet sang to the merchant princes, Rome was paying a bonus upon imported corn and generally entering upon that fatal disregard for the interest of the rural population which was one of the

accepted causes of the coming decline and fall.

How all this comes back to me when I talk to New York friends on the subject of these pages! I am told I am not up to date in my information; that there is a marked revulsion of feeling upon the town *versus* country question, and that the tide of the rural exodus has really turned, as I might have discerned without going far afield. At many a Long Island home I might have seen, on any Sunday, weather permitting, the horny-handed son of week-day toil (in Wall Street), rustically attired, inspecting his Jersey cows and aristocratic fowls. These supply a select circle in New York with butter and eggs, at a price which leaves nothing to be desired—unless it be some information as to the cost of production. Full justice is done to the new country life when the Farmers' Club of New York fulfills its chief function—the annual dinner at Delmonico's. Then agriculture is extolled in fine Virgilian style, the Hudson villa and the Newport "cottage" being permitted to divide the honors of the rural revival with the Long Island home. But, to my bucolic intelligence, it would seem that against the "back to the land" movement of Saturday afternoon the captious critic might set the rural exodus of Monday morning.

These reflections and experiences are introduced with serious intent. Far be it

¹ The fourth of a series of articles on "Conservation and Rural Life," the first of which appeared in The Outlook of January 29.—THE EDITORS.

from me to say a word in disparagement of the new rural life; it is associated with memories of characteristically American hospitality. Moreover, it is distinctly helpful in giving to those who cultivate it a point of view which will enable them to grasp the real problem of the open country as it exists, for example, in the great food-producing and cotton-growing tracts West and South. Many of these men are prominent in public affairs and full of good works; and although their interests are essentially urban, they are, in the conditions as I have presented them, the natural leaders of the country life movement. I hope to be able to show that this is not one of those new movements by which nothing but resolutions are moved.

Those who have had the patience to read these papers up to this point may now wish to put some pertinent questions to me. "Assuming," they may well say, "that we accept as true all that you tell us about the neglect of the rural population and the grave consequences which must follow if the matter be not adjusted, what on earth can we do? We agree that the welfare of the rural population is a matter of paramount importance to the city population and to the Nation at large. But may we remind you that you said the evil and the consequences can be removed and averted only through the active intervention of those immediately concerned, the actual farmers—that the remedy for rural backwardness was to be sought for in the rural mind? 'Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?' Must not the patient 'minister to himself'? What are we townsmen to do, or to induce the farmers to do, and how?"

Fair questions these, and altogether to the point. The patient ought to minister to himself, but he won't, because he has acquired the habit of calling in the physician of the town. The physic in vogue is a public opinion which aggravates the disease. The prescription must be changed. Dropping metaphor, I proceed to sketch the scope and aim—the broad principles and chief working details—of a movement which will unite statesmanship and practical philanthropy towards an all-round improvement in the conditions of life and labor upon the American farm.

→ Agriculture may be looked at as a sci-

ence, as a business, and as a life. I have already adverted to President Roosevelt's formula for solving the rural problem—better farming, better business, better living. Better farming simply means the application of the teachings of modern science to the practice of agriculture. Better business is the no less necessary application of economic principles and modern commercial methods to the business side of the farming industry. Better living is the building up in rural communities of a domestic and social life which will withstand the growing attractions of the modern city.

This threefold scheme of reform covers the whole ground, and may be safely adopted by the country life movement. But in the actual work I would make one change in the order of procedure. I have learned, while working on the same problem in Ireland and studying it elsewhere, that in a better organization of the farmer's business is to be found, not only the chief remedy for his economic disadvantages, but also the only way of setting in motion those improvements in his industry and that brightening of his home life which are included in better farming and better living. I shall therefore take first, and give most space to, better business.

→ The superiority of the business methods of the town over those of the country is obvious, but I think it is not universally understood wherein that superiority lies. What strikes the eye is the material apparatus of business—the telephone, the typewriter, street cars, the advertisements, the exchange; all these form an impressive contrast with the slow, simple life of the farmer, who very likely scratches his accounts on a shingle or keeps them in his head. But most of this apparatus is due merely to the necessity of swift movement in the concentrated process of exchange and distribution. Such swiftness is neither necessary nor possible in the process of isolated production. But there is an economic law as applicable to rural as to urban pursuits, which has been recognized and obeyed by the farmers of most European countries, including Ireland, but has been too little heeded by the farmers of the United States and Great Britain. Under modern economic

conditions things must be done in a large way if they are to be done profitably, and this necessitates resort to combination.

The advantage which combination gives to the town over the country was recognized long before the recent economic changes forced men to combine. In the old towns of Europe all trades began as strict and exclusive corporations. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries new scientific and economic forces broke up these combinations, which were far too narrow for the growing volume of business to be done, and an epoch of competition began. The great towns of America opened their business career during this epoch, and have brought the arts of competition to a higher perfection than exists in Europe. But it has always been known that competition did not exclude combination against the consumer; and it is now beginning to be perceived that the fiercer the competition, the more surely does it lead in the end to such combination.

A trade combination has three principal objects: It aims first at improving what I may call the internal business methods of the trade itself, by eliminating the waste due to competition, by economizing staff, plant, etc., by the ready transmission of intelligence, and in other ways. In the second place, it aims at strengthening the trade against outside interests. These may be of various kinds; but in the typical case we are considering, namely, the combination of great middlemen who control exchange and distribution, the outside interests are those of the producer on one side and the consumer on the other; and the trade combination, by its organized unity of action, succeeds in lowering the prices it pays to the unorganized producer and in raising the prices it charges to the unorganized consumer. In the third place, the trade combination aims at political control. By various methods it tries to influence the course of legislation and administration so as to favor its own interests in their relation to other interests. I am not now arguing the question whether or how far this action on the part of trade combinations is morally justifiable. My point is simply that the towns have flourished at the expense of the country by the use of these methods, and that the countryman

must adopt them if he is to get his own again.

This truth will be easily realized if we look for a moment into the problem of distribution as it applies to agricultural produce and see what the essentials of it are. This produce finds its chief market in the great cities. Their populations must have their food sent in so that it can be rapidly distributed; and this requires that the consignments must be delivered regularly, in large quantities and of such uniform quality that a sample will give a correct indication of the whole.

The fulfillment of these three conditions is not within the power of isolated farmers, however large. It is an open question whether farmers should themselves undertake the distribution of their produce through agencies of their own, thus saving the wholesale and possibly the retail profits. But unquestionably they should be so well organized at home that they can take this course if they are unfairly treated by organized middlemen. The Danish farmers, who are very highly organized, have established (with Government assistance which their organization enabled them to secure) a very efficient machinery for distributing their butter, bacon, and eggs in the British markets. Other European farming communities are becoming equally well organized, and so will control the cost of marketing their produce. But where, as in America and the United Kingdom, the town dominates the country, the machinery of distribution is owned by the business men of the towns and is worked by them in their own interests. They naturally take from the unorganized producers, as well as from the unorganized consumers, the full business value of the service they render. With the growing cost of living, this is a matter of urgent importance to the towns. In the pending cheaper-food campaign, voices are heard calling the farmers to account for their uneconomical methods.

In the face of such facts it is not easy to account for the backwardness of American and British farmers in organization. The farmer, we know, is everywhere the most conservative and individualistic of human beings. He dislikes change in his methods, and he venerates those which have come down to him from his fathers'

fathers. Whatever else he may waste, these traditions he conserves. He does not wish to interfere with anybody else's business, and he is fixedly determined that others shall not interfere with his. These estimable qualities make agricultural organization more difficult in Anglo-Saxon communities than in those where clan or tribal instincts seem to survive. I may mention, in passing, that I should expect the negroes in the South to be easily organized. It is fair to the farmer to admit that his calling does not lend itself readily to associative action. He lives apart; most of his time is spent in the open air, and in the evening of the working day physical repose is more congenial than mental activity. But when all this is said, we have not a complete explanation of the fact that American and British farmers persistently disobey an accepted law and refuse to follow the almost universal practice of modern business. I have a further, and I think important, explanation to offer.

The form of combination which the towns have invented for industrial and commercial purposes is the Joint Stock Company. Here a number of persons contribute their capital to a common fund and intrust the direction to a single head or committee, taking no further part in the business, except to change the management if it does not yield a satisfactory dividend. Our urban way of looking at things has made us assume that this city system must be suitable to rural conditions. The contrary is the fact. When farmers combine, it is a combination not of money only, but of personal effort in relation to the entire business. In a co-operative creamery, for example, the chief contribution of a shareholder is in milk; in an elevator, corn; in other cases it may be fruit or vegetables, or a variety of material things rather than cash. But it is most of all a combination of neighbors within an area small enough to allow of all the members meeting frequently at the business center. As the system develops, the local associations are federated for larger business transactions.

The object of such associations is, not to declare a dividend, but to improve the conditions of the industry for the members. After an agreed interest has been paid upon the shares, the net profits are divided

between the participants in the undertaking, to each in proportion as he has contributed to them through the business he has done with the institution. In the control of the management, the principle of "one man, one vote" is strictly observed—an essential condition of co-operative as distinguished from joint stock organization. These conditions have to be embodied in a constitution and procedure which will be recognized by all concerned to be equitable, and will thus make it to the interest of every member to give his whole-hearted support and aid to the undertaking. It is clear, however, that organizations which fill these requirements are not likely to be spontaneously generated as rapidly as the circumstances demand. This is why a country life movement is required to work out what is essentially a rather difficult problem of organization.

In Ireland, where the analogous problem is far more urgent, we have an Agricultural Organization Society whose function is merely to show farmers how to reorganize their business on co-operative lines. We have to work against difficulties which have no counterpart in the United States; yet we manage to make steady progress. Organized bodies of farmers are learning how to purchase their agricultural requirements of the best quality and at the lowest price, and to compete with the foreign importer in exercising control over the distribution of their butter, eggs, poultry, and other produce in the British markets. About half the export of Irish butter comes from co-operative dairying societies.

But of the many objects for which Irish farmers combine, that of getting working capital upon more favorable terms will perhaps be the most interesting to American agriculturists. In the poorest Irish districts a large number of co-operative credit associations have been formed, mainly with the object of enabling their members to escape from the degrading indebtedness to storekeepers and usurers which is the invariable lot of unorganized peasantries. These associations borrow upon the joint and several unlimited liability of their members. They lend money to their members, under rules and regulations which are designed to

meet one of the great financial grievances from which all farmers suffer. The ordinary banks lend money to agriculturists for a term (generally ninety days) which has been fixed to suit the needs of town business. Thus, a farmer borrows money to sow a crop and has to repay it before he harvests it; or to purchase young cattle, and has to repay before they mature and are marketable. The co-operative association lends only for what is technically called a productive purpose—that is, a purpose calculated to make a profit for the borrower. Furthermore, the committee, who know the character and capacity of the borrower and can judge of the soundness of the purpose,

fit the term of the loan to the requirements of the case. These details illustrate my main contention—that one of the chief advantages of organization to the farmer is that it enables him to do his business in a way that suits him, instead of adopting a town-made system unsuited to his needs.

Our Irish co-operative movement, taken as a whole, is to-day represented by nearly one thousand farmers' organizations, with an aggregate membership of some one hundred thousand persons, mostly heads of families. Its business turnover last year was twelve and a half million dollars. In estimating these figures American readers must not think in continents.

A concluding article in this series of articles by Sir Horace Plunkett will appear in the next number of *The Outlook*.—THE EDITORS.

CARMELA'S WEDDING

A STORY OF THE MESSINA EARTHQUAKE

BY KATHERINE BEMENT DAVIS

THE Chief City Accountant came downstairs for perhaps the twentieth time that day. He looked worried. He had looked worried ever since the first ship-load of refugees was sighted. It was not because his desk was piling high with official business, which meant whole nights of work later on; it was not because he was working twenty-two hours out of the twenty-four—the trouble was the women. The Chief City Accountant was soft-hearted, and all day long, from early morning until late at night, they were coming to him with their tales of horror and their appeals for miracles that no human being could work.

In his wake came a small figure in a costume that would have been absurd if it had not been pathetic, for she was dressed in odds and ends from some attic, the things that were thrown out of the windows into the carts which made their rounds when we knew that the fugitives were literally naked.

"What to do?" began the Chief City Accountant in his usual formula. His

English was very intelligible, which was a great comfort in those days. "I know you have said that you only take one from a family. It is true that you have already this girl's aunt; but really it is two or three families who live in one room, and she is the only one who can earn for hers." He took the girl by the arm as she shrank behind him, and presented her.

This was my introduction to Carmela, as picturesque a Sicilian girl as one could see. She had the look of the East about her, the type that belongs, in imagination at least, to the harems of the Orient, a type that has existed in Sicily since the days of the Saracen occupation. Her face was oval and colorless except for the red lips; eyes and hair black, the latter hidden at first sight by the inevitable scarf, in this case but a torn half-breadth of faded calico. Her slight figure was concealed in a voluminous basque, evidently once the property of some stout, middle-aged personage. It was of the fashion of forty years ago, faded and