

cultural conditions, and which are briefly discussed, are the agricultural organization society, coöperative associations and the department of agriculture. The aims of these organizations are described and a review of the work accomplished is given. And although a great deal more could have been said along these lines, the author says enough to give the reader an idea of the forces at work to ameliorate the condition of the Irish peasant class, and to give a suitable setting to a book which is impartial, interesting and commendable.

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At the Works: A Study of a Manufacturing Town. By Lady BELL. London, Edward Arnold, 1907.—xvi, 272 pp.

The manufacturing town is Middlesbrough; the authoress is the wife of Sir Hugh Bell, the great ironmaster, and her subject is the social condition of the workers employed at the blast furnaces and other iron works. The book thus forms a useful supplement to the *Reports* of the Mosely Commission (1903) and the reports of the British Iron Trade Commission on *American Industrial Conditions and Competition* (1902). Higher wages and the greater use of mechanical appliances form the main differences between blast-furnace practice in the United States as compared with Great Britain. Mr. P. Walls of the National Federation of Blastfurnacemen said, in his Mosely report, that "considering that blastfurnacemen in the North of England work three shifts of eight hours, and that the American works two shifts of men on twelve hours, the former are as well paid as the latter. In most instances the twenty-four hours' money just about balances. . . . When we come to what is termed the common labourer the Americans get practically double the wages paid in England." This extract gives us a standard of comparison.

At a Middlesbrough blast furnace a laborer works from 6 A. M. to 5 P. M. (including mealtimes) for 3s. 6d. a day, and from that point wages range upwards to the furnace-keeper, who gets from £2, 10s. to £4 for eight hours' work. Lady Bell says:

Out of 1270 people paid in a given week, 23 (these were boys only) received under 10s. per week, 50 more boys received under 20s., 96 men, mostly laborers, received under 20s., 398 received between 20s. and 30s., 410 between 30s. and 40s., 235 between 40s. and 60s., 58 between 60s. and 80s., and four over 80s [p. 48.]

Stability of employment is high, 440 out of 585 workmen having worked for the same employers over five years. We thus appear to have the possibility of considerable prosperity among the working classes of the town. But here Lady Bell comes in to translate these bare figures into terms of human life, with due allowance for human weakness and incapacity, and the picture takes another hue. Although the blast-furnace workers are picked for their strength, so great are the demands made on their physique that more than half of them are spent at fifty and have to take lighter employment. Exposure to extremes of temperature and to poisonous gases makes them liable to disease and accident, and though compensation must now be paid for accidents the loss and expense entailed are a severe burden.

A great French writer [says Lady Bell] has said that the cardinal difference between the lot of the rich and the poor is that the former have more margin in which to remedy mistake and misfortune. In studying the lives of the workers described in this book, we become convinced of the truth of this saying. The path the ironworker daily treads at the edge of the sandy platform, that narrow path that lies between running streams of fire on the one hand and a sheer drop on the other, is but an emblem of the Road of Life along which he must walk. If he should stumble, either actually or metaphorically, as he goes, he has but a small margin in which to recover himself. But it is good to think that in face of these conditions—it may be partly, indeed, because of them—many of the ironworkers of the North hold strongly and undauntedly on their way [p. 271].

In very many cases the margin is very narrow. Out of 900 cases investigated, 300 were below or on the margin of poverty without sufficient food or clothing. Rent for a four-roomed cottage is always high—from 3*s.* 6*d.* to 7*s.* 6*d.* per week, mostly about 5*s.*—"in nearly all the budgets I have been able to verify, entirely out of proportion to the rest of the expenditure" [p. 68].

The two chapters on "Wives and Daughters" are perhaps the most valuable in this valuable book. Nowhere else can such a picture of the working woman's life be found. Conditions of men's labor differ in different countries and times, wages are raised and hours shortened, but the labor of the workman's wife in the home has been practically unchanged. She is the helot of modern industry and yet the most important person in it, for upon her capacity or incapacity depends the real reward of the great majority of our population of today and to a great extent the character and efficiency of the workers of the future. To depict such a life truthfully requires great knowledge, great insight

and great sympathy, and all these qualities Lady Bell has brought to the task. It is difficult to read these pages without a pain at the heart. When motherhood, the crowning glory of woman, becomes a tragedy in the midst of mean surroundings and petty inconveniences, the problem of racial degeneration becomes very real. Lady Bell rarely allows herself to become impassioned, but in every paragraph the comparison is drawn with the middle-class woman sheltered from temptations, sheltered from over-work, sheltered from the results of her own inefficiency, until the cumulative effect is more powerful than volumes of indignation.

Much of interest could also be quoted from this book on the lack of recreation in our new manufacturing towns, except such as is to be found in the public-house, in betting and in gambling. Betting, rather than drinking, is the vice of the English industrial classes and is even harder to eradicate. On the other hand, it is encouraging to find from the chapter on reading that, out of 200 houses, in 37 the inmates were "great readers," and in 25 they read books described by Lady Bell as "absolutely worth reading"; in 58 they read newspapers only and in 50 novels only. This is probably as good a result as any other class could show.

To sum up: this book is emphatically worth reading; it is clear, restrained, straightforward and sympathetic; no social reformer should be without it, and still less any economist who wishes to see book terms translated into facts of life.

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Municipal Ownership in Great Britain. By HUGO RICHARD MEYER. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1906.—xii, 340 pp.

Poor, deluded Britain! Happy, wise America! The trifling corruption that is alleged to have existed at infrequent intervals in a few American cities pales into insignificance as the author of *Municipal Ownership in Great Britain* unfolds to the startled reader the colossal stupidity of the British municipalities. Nearly forty years ago the doctrine got a footing in Britain that franchises granted for public-service industries and involving the use of special easements in the highways "should be subjected to special limitations and special taxation designed to secure to the public at large a share in their profits." The result was the enactment of the Tramways Act of 1870, under which the Board of Trade (one of the most important administrative bodies of the British government) was authorized under certain conditions to issue