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The Kingdom of God in a Foundry

By MARION M. JACKSON

OUR concern is now an autocracy—a benevolent one perhaps, but none the less an autocracy operating for selfish gains. Your welfare work, which is declining, is a palliative.

"You are now working men for less than a living wage; a good part of your fortune has been made as a result of this. You are in control of this property, and responsible for the one thousand men and families, or three thousand people."

So, in 1921, John J. Eagan of Atlanta described the American Cast Iron Pipe Company, in which he was the largest stockholder—a corporation which he had seen grow from almost nothing to the successful pipe making plant in Birmingham, known as Acipco, with a selling force covering almost all America.

When in 1903, as a young man who had recently inherited wealth, he had invested in the stock of the company, some of his friends said, "He's bought a gold brick." Instead, due to his wise judgment and skill in selecting men, the venture had proved most successful. So much so, that in 1911 Eagan, always intensely religious, had remarked to a friend:

"Never again do I expect to entangle myself in active business. My income is more than I need. The plant in Birmingham is doing wonderfully. It is in the hands of a man in whom I have absolute confidence. From now on, I am going to devote all my time and income to the advancement of the Kingdom of God."

At the time, "the advancement of the Kingdom of God" had for Eagan little bearing upon the business of the American Cast Iron Pipe Company. But with his decision, he had begun a study of social, civic and industrial

questions in the light of the standard of right and wrong set up by Jesus Christ. This study was to change his whole outlook on life, particularly in the realm of economics.

The change came gradually. Its growth was hastened by the horrors of the war with Germany, after which Mr. Eagan began to make more frequent trips to Birmingham, and to stay longer at the plant. It culminated in 1921, when, for his own eyes alone, he analyzed the situation in writing, eliminating any chance of missing or mistaking the facts, by putting them down on paper before him, facing them, and then recording his convictions and outlining his plan of action.

His conclusions were inevitable. Eagan could not deceive himself.

IN the great shops at Acipco, he had seen huge ladles filled at the blazing mouths of the cupolas in which the pig iron was melted. He had seen the travelling cranes, man-driven and guided, grip these ladles with hooks of steel, and go flying with their monster burdens over and through the midst of sweating men, working in flickering shadows where a mishap meant indescribable agony, if not certain and frightful death.

Men wearing goggle-eyed masks to protect their faces and eyes from the fierce heat and flying particles had leaped to skim the scum of impurities from the surface of the seething contents, while he stood by watching.

And then, before him, the giant ladles, slowly and carefully tilted, filling the dust-laden mirk with a myriad of star-like sparks, had poured the glowing metal into the lips of the pipe moulding flasks that ringed the pits. About them men swarmed, unmindful of danger, yet alert to jump for life if a slip should transform the pit into a pool of hellish torture.

This is the story of John J. Eagan, who tried to make and sell cast-iron pipe in the light of the teachings of Jesus. He began his career with a strong religious bent given him by his mother. At thirty he inherited a moderate fortune; by the time of his death in March, 1924, at the age of 54, he had more than trebled it. His property, like his business skill, he regarded as a trust: at his death he willed the common stock of the corporation he controlled in trust for his workers and the pipe purchasing public.

Just beyond and below, he had seen men going to and fro in an alley way between blazing furnaces—hours spent in a fiery atmosphere which Eagan himself could not have endured for minutes.

And he knew the barren homes from which these workers came—the changing shifts in the dusk, or before the dawn, passing one another on the way to work—which went on continuously from Monday morning till Saturday night.

THEIRS was a necessary labor. Equipped with materials and tools by the capital of Eagan and others, and guided by the knowledge of chemists and engineers and the brains of the executive force, these men were making life possible for millions of people, who depend for water, heat, light and oil upon the network of pipe, made in Acipco, and hidden beneath the homes, factories, stores and streets of hundreds of hamlets, towns and cities, scattered throughout the United States.

Chemists, engineers, and executive force were being well paid. The investors of capital had received in dividends the sum total of their investments again and again. As the company's surplus had grown, their shares had risen and were steadily rising in value. These stockholders could count upon even greater returns upon their capital.

Having invested more than the rest, Eagan had profited, and would profit most of all. His future, together with that of his family, was assured.

But what of these sweating, toiling men?

To-morrow their jobs might be gone. Or worse, their lives might be blotted out in a weltering deluge of clinging fire, if anything should go amiss, while Eagan and the other stockholders were seated at polished desks, or asleep in their comfortable homes.

What then would the laborer and the laborer's family have to show for their toil and danger?

Writing to his wife, Eagan said:

"One man, who has been with the company twelve years, is earning only two dollars and a half per day. He has three children, lives in two rooms. His wife and he sleep in one room, his three children, a girl of sixteen, a boy of fourteen, a small boy five, sleep in the same bed in this kitchen and dining room, the other room.

"One of our men, white, has been in bad health, and has had to give up his little cottage, for which he paid seventeen dollars per month rent, to move upstairs over a store at twelve dollars and a half per month. They had to take their little girl out of school because they could not clothe her sufficiently. . . ."

To Eagan, Christ was a living spirit, speaking to us today through conscience, reason and experience. In His presence what must Eagan say—not of others—but of himself, who was profiting so largely by the labor of these people?

The answer could be neither softened nor altered for him by pointing to Acipco's Y. W. C. A. Building, the company's medical and dental clinic, the death, accident and sick benefit provisions, the pension system, and the store operating on a cooperative basis to reduce the cost of living.

All good—yet these, as he had said, were only a "palliative." True, they had made Acipco's labor the most stable and contented in the district, more than repaying their total cost to the company. But they could not satisfy this man who was facing the facts and applying to them Christ's law of love for others and sacrifice of self.

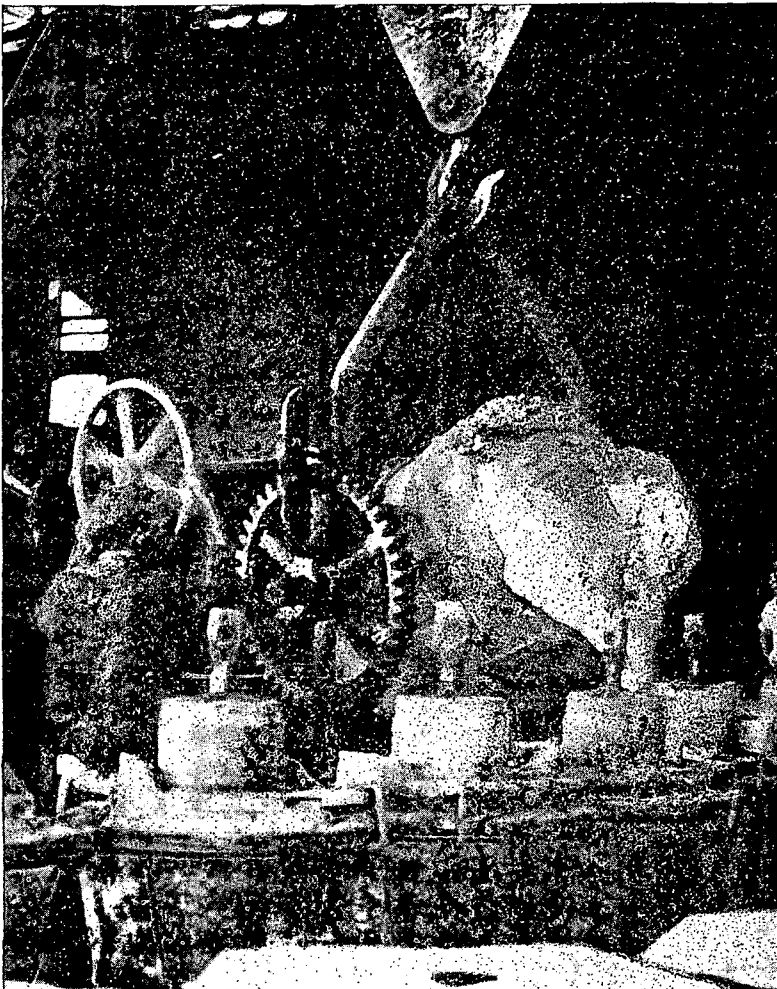
Nor could Eagan dodge the issue by saying that the president of the company was another than himself, and that, after all, the responsibility was the president's and the corporation's, and not his as an individual. John J. Eagan could control the corporation and elect the president.

Furthermore, there was the question of the company's duty to the public. Should wages be adjusted by increasing the price of the company's output, thus passing the burden to those who must have the pipe to live? Or should a cut be made in dividends, and the saving used not only in increasing wages, but also in decreasing the selling price of pipe, in this way checking and lessening (if only by an infinitesimal amount) the mounting cost of living for multitudes?

Must not someone take such a step as a beginning, if mankind were ever to be saved from the steadily increasing burden? Or should the old course continue?

Above all, should the men working in Acipco's plant have a voice in deciding these questions so vital to their very lives? Or should one man, the president of the company, decide?

Eagan, so questioning himself, wrote the answer:



The giant ladles, slowly and carefully tilted, poured the glowing metal into the lips of pipe-molding flasks

"One-man control will destroy this country. At the risk of loss you cannot stand for this."

And the battle with himself had ended, when at the close of this remarkable "human document," he registered his final conclusion:

"You are . . . afraid to assume the responsibility."

Having decided that "autocracy" ought to end at Acipco, and that he had the power to end it, and that only his fear of shouldering the responsibility of leadership was standing in the way, nothing short of death or the absolute loss of power could have stopped John J. Eagan.

When the directors offered him the presidency of the company, he accepted instantly. First he had put through a plan acceptable to the minority who had opposed his views. They received preferred stock for their holdings in common stock, leaving Eagan owning all of the common stock.

The newspapers made much of his announced intention of running the company on a Christian basis. As to their comment he wrote Mrs. Eagan: "It does seem strange that the decision of Christian directors to practise the teachings of Jesus Christ in their business should cause newspaper comment."

AT the 1921 Christmas banquet of the men of the plant soon after his election Eagan explained his plan. The directors had decided that henceforth the heads of the four departments into which the company's work was divided should be the heads of their departments in fact, as well as in name, and that these four, together with the company's president, would constitute a Board of Management having charge of Acipco's business as an executive committee of the Board of Directors.

When the plan had been approved by a popular vote of the entire working force of the company, the Board of Operatives was organized. Its twelve members were, and continue to be, elected by the workmen, voting each in his own department.

This board has access to the corporation's books. It must be consulted by the Board of Management on questions affecting the employes, such as changes in wages, hours of work, working and living conditions. Two of its number are nominated by its members to serve on the company's board of directors.

The members of the Board of Operatives are white. They are elected, however, by the combined vote of the white and colored workmen of the plant. When matters touching the interests of the colored workers only are under consideration, they consult with the colored directors of Acipco's Negro Y. M. C. A., twelve in number, who are elected by the colored workmen.

As soon as the Boards of Management and of Operatives were organized and regularly at work, the next step was taken. On April 22, 1922, Eagan addressed a letter jointly, to the two boards, in which he said:

"My conviction that the first charge upon industry should be 'a living wage' for every employe employed therein and doing honest work has led me to the decision herein expressed."

He proposed that the earnings upon the company's com-



John J. Eagan

mon stock should be paid to the two boards, as trustees, to be used by them to insure to each of the employes of the company "an income, which together with his wage . . . will enable the employe to maintain a decent standard of living," the boards to be the sole judges of the amount needed to accomplish this.

If there was any balance, a dividend of 8 per cent upon the monies which he had actually invested in the stock was to be paid him. Everything remaining was then to go to the trustees for the employes. Eagan retained the right to revoke or amend the trust agreement on giving twelve months notice.

Some of the members of the board, laboring men, demurred when they were asked whether they would accept the trust on the ground that the proposal was manifestly unfair to Eagan. But they finally accepted, as Eagan argued they should. A few days later, he wrote Mrs. Eagan:

"It is all intensely interesting, and it is such a joy to have self-interest eliminated."

As the letters to his wife at Atlanta show, Eagan's un-resting brain was constantly full of big and little projects for making health and happiness possible and secure in the lives and homes of the thousands who looked to his company for the means to live. He was busy with questions of organization and wages, the distribution of the product, housing problems, better home contest, schools, churches, better baby shows,—even with a greased pole and pig for the labor day celebration. Yet with it all Eagan was care-

ful to make plain to the men that he did not regard these things as a gift either from the company or from himself, but as a just part of the laborers' share in that which they themselves had helped to earn.

At the same time, in urging the men and their chosen representatives to make decisions for themselves as to the company's policies, he sought to put into the whole working force of Acipco—the men beneath the cranes, the salesmen scattered throughout the country, the executive heads—the spirit, not alone of service, but of sacrifice for others, as taught by Jesus to herdsmen and fishermen 1900 years ago.

Yet we had no illusions as to what he had undertaken.

"The real question," he wrote Mrs. Eagan, "is 'have I the spirit of Christ? And if so, have I enough of His life in me to sell it to these men?'. . ."

"To change men's ideals so that they prefer sacrifice for Christ to gain for self, can only be done by the power of Christ."

In a letter, written just before Christmas, 1922, he said:

"Our men are feeling the Christ spirit as never before.

"But what a need there is!

"I learned more of this to-day as I walked home with a Negro workman who has been in our employ only sixty days. Came from a farm near LaGrange. Earns only fifteen dollars per week and has a wife and five children. Has not enough money to buy books and clothes to send them to school. . . ."

This president of a twentieth century corporation in a Southern state, himself Southern born and reared, saw more than the Negro and his needs. Christ was as real to him, as he walked with the Negro home through the deepening shadows in the Alabama city, as to the two disciples walking with the Master to Emmaus in far off Judea. The white man could not close his eyes to the worries and burdens of the black man at his side, and continue to walk with Christ. Eagan had seen this, and had made his choice.

With the close of 1922, and at the opening of 1923, he was again reviewing and analyzing the situation, forecasting the future after a year of service as president of the company. Beneath the figures 1922, he wrote:

Faced management of Acipco.

Faced financial outlook as had lost money in 1921.

Answer—Shipped more tons and made more money than in all our history. Organization very much stronger today than a year ago—More lines and greater possibilities—\$200,000 appropriated for 1923 to make organization stronger.

Minimum wage secured.

'Hitherto hath the Lord helped me.'

Cooperation between management and men, democratic control with a leader sincerely striving to "walk with Christ," had paid.

Below the question whether he should continue to serve as president of the company, he wrote:

"For Jesus' sake, make a plain path for my feet.

"Outlook this year good one from business standpoint. Way open for you to adopt new sales policy based upon lowest possible profit, and largest possible service to public—To sell service and sacrifice to all your salesmen.

"Way open for you to put in better system of welfare and service for men.

"Your policy as to purchase of iron, etc., safer and better than would be without you.

"You have put in a life time in business and now have the opportunity to turn it into service for the public.

"'Fear not for I am with thee—be strong and of good courage—Have not I commanded thee? Why criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward'."

To the list of obstacles to be overcome, he added:

"Old selfish system that tries to regulate instead of substituting the system of Christ."

His vision, already broad and deep, was becoming broader and deeper, as his readiness to sacrifice himself reached forward toward his ultimate goal. His thought, a few years before, had been that his whole duty would be fulfilled if he spent his income wisely in furthering worthy causes. But now, having sacrificed leisure and a great part of his income, as the result of an honest examination of the sources of his income and leisure, he wrote:

"Would like to waive all returns from stock and receive as salary only sufficient to support my family."

And, to be noted in his plans and purposes, he made these jottings:

Thirteen hundred men and their families involved.

The whole present industrial system and the present conception of Christianity as a thing not closely connected with investments and the daily job involved.

The substitution of service and sacrifice in place of "pecuniary gain."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

At the outset, he had written Mrs. Eagan:

"I know this following out the principles of Jesus Christ is not to be easy. When was it ever easy to follow Him whose path leads only to the cross? But I know also that this is the only safe thing to do, and the *only* way."

Now he was writing her:

"Have been very busy here—Am so happy over the way our doctors and entire medical service are working—We have authorized to-day the employment of a baby specialist, a throat and nose specialist, and a trained welfare nurse with an auto. . . ."

In September, 1923, just before the break-down which was to result in his death, he said in a letter to his wife:

"As we approach difficulties they seem to disappear or to be overcome. God is blessing us greatly. I thank you for your prayers for my physical strength. Am trying to do my part in taking care of this body.

It is great that He promises wisdom to those who work in faith.

Then came his illness.

At Asheville, where he went in search of health, word came to him of the action of the Board of Management and the Board of Operatives at their joint meeting December 31, 1923. It is recorded in their minute book, in an entry of that day, thus:

"It is the judgment of these two boards that we are now paying a 'living wage,' and effective January 1, 1924, this 8 per cent dividend should be paid to Mr. Eagan."

Such was the verdict of the men themselves, as to the results of cooperation between management and men at Acipco. It is believed to be unique in industrial annals.

One further step is yet to be taken before the whole plan of cooperation, as designed by Eagan, will be in effect: the election of two directors to speak for the public in the company's Board of Directors, as was provided at the last meeting of stockholders which he attended.

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Again One Man and An Empire

Gandhi moves for Indian unity

By SAVEL ZIMAND



From an original painting by Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, brother of the poet

Gandhi

THE All-India-Congress meets during Christmas week at Belgaum, under the leadership of Gandhi. It seems probable that December, no less than last February, will enter into the history of India as a great turning point. And again its pivot will be a man who comes not with a sword but who, from the Himalayas to the cape, is known to shepherds and peasants and princes and wise men as the Mahatma, which means great soul.

In February Gandhi was released from prison. His had been the most potent figure in Asia since the massacre of Amritsar in 1919. That stirred India to its depths and loosened a new nationalism which at his hands was turned from violence into the great protest movement of non-cooperation. In February of this year, also, came the shoot-

ing down of the Sikhs at Jaito, the fighting tribe which has accepted his doctrine of non-violence; and Jaito took its place beside Amritsar in the popular ferment.

I was at Poona when Gandhi was released. I was at hand when the Sikhs were shot down at Jaito. I find that my American friends can grasp the drama of these things (of which I shall tell), but they fail to grasp the great welding of social forces which has been going forward and which within the month will be the driving power behind a new crusade for parliamentary self-government. They do not know what it means that such rival leaders as Mrs. Besant and Gandhi have sunk their differences. They do not sense the significance of gains made this fall in overcoming ancient sources of cleavage between Hindus and Mussulmen. They do not apprehend the reverberations in India to be looked for from the conservative triumph in the October elections in Great Britain.

These swift moves can all be hung upon incidents in which Mahatma Gandhi has himself figured—his release last spring; his slow recovery; his fasting, (more powerful than a thousand harangues) as a protest against the race riots; his espousal of the Untouchables (which can only be compared to the Abolitionist agitation in the American 50's); and last his willingness to suspend the boycott and join with all parties in framing a scheme for parliamentary government.

I shall try to interpret these developments in the light of my contacts this year with the men and forces which are now gathering head. But above all I shall try to interpret them in terms of the personality of the Mahatma, and the chords he strikes with fearless gentle fingers deep in the hearts of a people whose secular education has been

slight, but who for centuries have been attuned to the life of religion.

Again, one lone figure stands out in disparity against imperial army and law and civil establishment.

Again in the East, we are witnessing the surge of the human spirit.

ONE of my many vivid recollections is a scene in the Prince of Wales Museum at Bombay. At that time Gandhi was still a prisoner, and in the city of Bombay the cotton workers were on a general strike. I wandered through the museum and came upon a group of cotton workers with ragged and filthy pieces of white cloth tied around their thighs. They were gazing at a painting. From where I stood I could not make out what they were looking at so intently. I saw one of them point his finger and then