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Human Drones—A Study for all Toilers.

By The Editor.

There is nothing in modern literature more charming than Maeterlinck's description of the honey-bees. He makes the actors in his little colony so real that we can imagine them to have human attributes. Not a sentence but makes us frame in our minds the human counter-part. One chapter in particular—that describing the drones—so truly pictures a type of life with which we are all too familiar that it will bear repetition in these columns.

ROBBERS AND GLUTTONS.

"If skies remain clear, the air warm, and pollen and nectar abound in the flowers, the workers, through a kind of forgetful indulgence, or over-scrupulous prudence perhaps, will for a short time longer endure the importunate, disastrous presence of the males. These comport themselves in the hive as did Penelope's suitors in the house of Ulysses. Indelicate and wasteful, sleek and corpulent, fully content with their idle existence as honorary lovers, they feast and carouse, through the alleys, obstruct the passages, and hinder the work; jostling and jostled, fatuously pompous, swelled with foolish, good-natured contempt; harbouring never a suspicion of the deep and calculating scorn wherewith the workers regard them, of the constantly growing hatred to which they give rise, or of the destiny that awaits them. For their pleasant slumbers they select the snuggest corners of the hive; then, rising carelessly, they flock to the open cells where the honey smells the sweetest, and soil with their excrements the combs they frequent. The patient workers, their eyes steadily fixed on the future, will silently set things right. From noon till three, when the purple country trembles in blissful lassitude beneath the invincible gaze of a July or August sun, the drones will appear on the threshold. They have a helmet made of enormous black pearls, two lofty quivering plumes, a doublet of iridescent, yellowish velvet, an heroic tuft, and a four-fold mantle, translucent and rigid. They create a prodigious stir, brush the sentry aside, overturn the cleaners and collide with the foragers as they return, laden with their humble spoil. They have the busy air, the extravagant, contemptuous gait of indispensable gods who should be simultaneously venturing towards some destiny unknown to the vulgar. One by one they sail off into space, irresistible, glorious, and tranquilly make for the nearest flowers, where they sleep till the afternoon freshness awakes them. Then, with the same majestic pomp, and still overflowing with magnificent schemes, they return to the hive, go straight to the cells, plunge their heads to the neck in the vats of honey, and fill themselves tight as a drum to repair their exhausted strength: whereupon, with heavy steps, they go forth to meet the good, dreamless and careless slumber that shall fold them in its embrace till the time for their next repast."

SOME HUMAN SPECIMENS.

Now, what in our human society is the counter-part of the drones? All those who in the family, in business, in church, or in state live upon the labors of others. Picture to yourself the grown up boy, who has enjoyed all the luxuries that foolish parents can provide; see him with his swagger, his insolence, his intolerable conceit and, above all, that colossal stupidity which ever accompanies inaction, and you have a perfect simile to the drone. And all over this land, and especially in the homes of the rich, are they to be found. And they will continue to pose and impose until the day of reckoning, for surely will that day come in every man's life.

Picture once more the parasite in business. He grows rich on the labors of his fellows. It may be an employer who, on the one hand, is a member of a combine to rob the public and on the other hand a member of an anti-union movement to prevent the public from protecting themselves. Or it may be a speculator who is growing wealthy because his land is increasing in value as the result of his neighbors' honest toil. Or it may be only an ordinary lobbyist who has succeeded in securing legislation whereby the output of others is taxed while

he is permitted to charge double. Above all, it may be one who, having inside information, to which he is no more entitled than any other citizen, is using it for his own enrichment. All these are human drones, in the sense that they stand in the way of honest work and live on the products of others' labors.

Perhaps you would picture the church drone. True, he can make parade of piety. On great occasions he delights to lead the way—except in real service—and this he never renders. For him, too, there is coming a day of reckoning.

But if you would see the drone of drones you must contemplate the pompous autocrat of the political hive. Yes, you know the breed. He was elected to carry into effect the wishes of the people but he has used his office for his own advantage and the benefit of his relatives. He is like the Lily of the Valley for he toils not, neither does he spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like him. Swollen with the rotten pride that misused power always engenders, he delights to tell the common toilers how they should build their cells and collect their honey, but ever he is a clumsy, arrogant obstructionist and he eats, eats, eats incessantly.

Millionaire Fels has told us that no man can become as rich as he in a lifetime unless he lives on others' work. Can you not see around you men and women reclining in the lap of luxury who are feeding on your honey and finding fault with you because it is not sweeter and more plenteous?

Thanks, however, to our good friend, Maeterlinck, we are assured that there is a day of reckoning. Listen to his words:

THE DAY OF RECKONING.

"But the patience of the bees is not equal to that of men. One morning the long-expected word of command goes through the hive; and the peaceful workers turn into judges and executioners. When this word issues we know not. It would seem to emanate suddenly from the cold, deliberate indignation of the workers; and no sooner has it been uttered than every heart throbs with it, inspired with the genius of the unanimous republic. One part of the people renounce their foraging duties to devote themselves to the work of justice. The great idle drones, asleep in unconscious groups on the melliferous walls, are rudely torn from their slumbers by an army of wrathful virgins. They wake in pious wonder; they cannot believe their eyes, and their astonishment struggles through marshy sloth as a moonbeam struggles through marshy water. They stare amazedly round them, convinced that they must be victims of some mistake, and the mother-idea of their life being first to assert itself in their dull brain, they take a step towards the vats of honey to seek comfort there. But ended for them are the days of May honey, the wine-flower of lime-trees and fragrant ambrosia of thyme and sage, of marjoram and white clover. Where the path once lay open to the kindly, abundant reservoirs, that so invitingly offered their waxen and sugary mouths, there stands now a burning-bush all alive with poisonous, bristling stings. The atmosphere of the city is changed. In lieu of the friendly perfume of honey the acrid odour of poison prevails; thousands of tiny drops glisten at the end of the stings and diffuse rancour and hatred. Before the bewildered parasites are able to realize that the happy laws of the city have crumbled, dragging down in most inconceivable fashion their own plentiful destiny, each one is assailed by three or four envoys of justice; and these vigorously proceed to cut off his wings, saw through the petiole that connects the abdomen with the thorax, amputates the feverish antennae, and seek an opening between the rings of his cuirass through which to pass their sword."

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE.

And even so surely as in the little society just described there came a time when outraged nature asserted the primal law that "Only they who work shall eat," so in this greater world of men, in every department of activity, the day is coming when the

down trodden, the despised, the wronged shall assert their God-approved right to reap where they have sown. They will reassert, too, what seems to have been well nigh forgotten, that "the laborer is worthy of his hire."

Vain, extravagant, vacuous society jade—you who have neglected your true work as daughter, wife and mother; you whose children have grown up in idleness and without a trace of worthy ambition or noble generosity; you who have spent your husband's ill-earned gains in all forms of excess, and who have made the name of woman a reproach in the land—you tilt your nose at your toiling sister on the street and, Brahmin-like, shrink from the touch and the shadow of the common and the coarse. Yet know that the day of your accounting will come. It is not alone that in your declining days the reproaches of your own kindred shall sadden your heart, but you must endure the curses of those at whose expense you have ministered to your empty pride. Nor will a little ostentatious philanthropy appease the God of vengeance. What He wants and what the people ask is not charity, but even-handed justice.

And you—big, blustering, lazy, good-for-naught. You have been living on your parents long enough. Prepare now to work, if any power of work remains in your carcass. For it must be true that "He who wins the crown shall wear it," and as yet you have won nothing but the hatred and ill-will of those who know themselves to be more worthy, and who are ready now to claim the pre-eminence which is justly theirs.

So, too, you intriguing man of business—you who have trafficked in the lobbies and grown fat on the spoils of dishonesty—prepare now to disgorge, for the patience of the workers is exhausted and the hour of reckoning is at hand. Nor will all the efforts of combines and mergers in and out of the legislative halls prevent the people in this last West from coming into their own.

For them, too, it is true that "Those who eat must labor."

But when the human workers rise in their wrath it is you, O fat, pompous political drone, that will be singled out for the first onslaught. If you were not a drone, if your mind were not dulled by your carousing, if you could only get among the workers for a little and know what is in their thoughts, you would begin to fear. But you are too self-centred to think of common workers and their opinions. Perhaps it is a kind providence which makes you unable to understand the signs of the times. Yet the workers are surely beginning to understand, and when once they understand they will begin to plan the overthrow of all useless marauders. Then in their little limited monarchy there will be equality of opportunity and favors for none. There will be no legislation on far-reaching issues unless the people have first given their consent—no waterway contracts and telephone deals and navy policies. But they who toil shall govern, and even as in the little garden hive the queen lives but to serve, so in the legislatures that are to be there will be no thieving, arrogant autocrats glorying in their plunder, but every leader will take for his motto the watchword of the first prince in our land—"I serve."

And as for you workers, even though there are many breaking down your family and social peace and helping themselves freely to your hard-earned wealth, cease not to gather, but in your gathering find time to think, for out of clear thinking all true progress springs. Think how much of your honey is drained away to meet the needs of the manufacturers' association, how much is necessary to sweeten the nectar of the railway magnates, the mine owners and the favored presidents of land corporations. Yes, and there are many other things to think about if you had only time. But unfortunately you have ranged up in two parties, with objects no less remarkable than the admiration of the two great classes of drones—the Reds and the Blues. Even now to some of you the suggestions of this article are sacrilege, but to others who think of posterity and permanent welfare the thoughts expressed may have a little meaning. Our good friend Maeterlinck is not wholly and altogether absurd.