

What passed between the two women during the moments that followed is known only to God and the watching angels.

Long after the people of the outlying farmstead had gone to rest a soul sped upward through the warm soft spaces of the night.

In the grey light of dawn Ellen climbed the hill. She would have no one accompany her and she would return to the great house later, she had said.

Tired as she was, Ellen knelt before the statue. The prayerbook lay where she had dropped it the night before.

SOLUTION OF A GREAT SOCIAL PROBLEM

Edward J. Whelan, in America. One of the many hopeful signs of a happy outcome of the industrial strife between capital and labor is witnessed in the instances which are now and then brought to our attention.

"I have yet to see the American boy whom I could not reason with. He may be excited and unreasonable for the moment, but let him calm down, and he will invariably be willing to admit that he was in the wrong."

So it is with the workingman, if he sees that his employers are really sincere in their dealings with him. And this has been evidenced not so long ago in several cases, one of which was the happy agreement arrived at between both parties in the Philadelphia Rapid Transit controversy.

But there are other countries besides our own that are having their labor troubles, some of which, too, are more serious than those which are puzzling the brains of the sociologists on the Statue of Liberty side of the Atlantic.

The picturesque Province of Asturias in Northern Spain is fast becoming famous for its coal mines. Not, indeed, of recent discovery, it is nevertheless, true that in recent years, since the War, in fact, they have been developed on a very large scale.

But Spain's industries are growing; and for these, as well as for her railroads and her steamers (and her merchant marine is greater than one would imagine; sixty-five of her steamers being the victims of submarines), she uses home-mined coal.

In the Province of Asturias there is a little town and railroad station called Ujo, where are situated the headquarters and plant of the Sociedad Huilera de Ujo (The Soft Coal Company of Ujo), of which the Marquis of Comillas is president.

something which interested me ever so much more, the human element; and to that I directed all my queries. Social conditions were to my mind as near perfection as might be. True, in many places in the United States one will find as much done for the social welfare of man, but I know of no commercial organization that has instituted social work on a scale that so approximates what the medieval guilds must have been as the work done by the Marquis of Comillas among his coal miners in Ujo.

In the coal mines of Ujo there are employed between 4,000 and 5,000 workmen, who with their families form a population of about 20,000 depending for their sustenance upon the mines.

Cooperative stores, eight in number, are to be formed through the valley, maintained by the company and all served by the little toy railroad that brings down the coal. In these stores, which only the families of the employees may patronize, can be bought bread, meat, fish, wine, groceries and articles of all sorts, including even salt pork from Chicago.

The bakery, in which is baked the bread for these seven stores, is deserving of special mention. Every day 14,000 pounds of bread are baked in six massive ovens, giving this employment to a crew of men; and excellent bread it is, too.

The company has taken up the housing question, too, and already has 250 habitations for workmen which shelter in the neighborhood of 1,200 souls. Some of these houses are built in the apartment house style, with four and five rooms to the apartment; others are double houses, i. e., one building with two homes. They are built substantially of stone and brick and are finished attractively.

A hospital with a full staff of attendants is kept for emergency cases and for those recovering from accidents. In connection with this is a dispensary where medicines are distributed gratis to the workmen and their families. Besides, a staff of five doctors, who are stationed in different pueblos of the valley, is employed to furnish medical attention and to visit the sick in their homes.

Nor is the school question overlooked. As Catholicism is the State religion of Spain, religion forms one of the branches of study; so there has not grown up a parochial system of schools such as we know in the States. But here at Ujo something very similar has been introduced; and five new stone and brick schools have been erected where the children of the miners, in number about 2,000, are educated at the expense of the company.

While stopping over there with a geologist as companion who was intent on studying strata and rocks, and lumps of coal and things, I found

Nor is this all. There still remains to be seen the real religious element. Not content with the religious life that is fostered in the five towns, each of which has its church and its pastor, the company has built a really beautiful church, which lies very near the middle of the valley, where the mines are located. To it is attached a chaplain, who ex officio is chaplain of the miners and of the schools as well. And this chaplain now is a dear, saintly man, Don Manuel Miranda, who for twenty-one years has labored in the capacity of capellan de los mineros. Everybody knows him and everybody loves him. His heart is with his miners. His church is a realization of how the Church has ever striven to dignify labor. Its symbolism is entirely of mines. For instance, the iron gates that fence it in have for pickets little shovels; the pulpit is supported on each of its four sides by two uprights and a cross piece made in imitation of the beams and cross pieces that support the tunnels of the mines. While the altar—beautiful in its simplicity, and in this it is a great relief from the ceiling-crawling retablos and massive gilded altars which one so frequently sees in Spanish churches—has a beautiful symbolic antependium. In the middle is carved a miner, pick in hand, working away in a coal mine; on the epistle side is depicted a steamship; on the gospel side a locomotive, because it is in these two steam-propelled mechanisms that coal has been of greatest use in furthering the progress of mankind.

Connected with the church is the chaplain's little home where his sister keeps house for him. A few hundred feet away is one of the schools where the community of the Brothers lives, the Sisters' community house being about a quarter of a mile farther up the valley; while on the other side of the church is a hall for lectures and entertainments, and where moving pictures are in order every Sunday. Above the hall is a large dormitory. For what? you will ask. For the men who watch at night before the Blessed Sacrament. Because during two entire nights every week, Wednesday and Friday, there is held Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. And those who watch are not the women folk, who according to some are naturally more pious, but the miners themselves. About 250 have signed for this service of love, for it is optional, and these are divided into bands; and each band has its turn every two or three weeks. On the evening which happens to be the turn of a particular band to watch before the King, the members all assemble at the church for the Exposition. The watches are then divided into turns of an hour each, each miner having but one hour, and some seven feet each guard of honor; and during the rest of the night they sleep in the dormitory above the hall. At 4.30 the following morning a special Mass is had at the end of the Exposition, at which the entire band is present, and at which all receive Holy Communion. Little wonder is it that God's blessing seems to rest upon the work, material, social and spiritual, at Ujo.

One naturally is anxious to know if there be labor troubles at Ujo. From what I could gather they have been reduced to a minimum; and this in the very district where Spanish employers are getting gray hairs, not knowing what to expect on the morrow. The day before a director of a large zinc foundry while showing me through his deserted establishment where the 400 workers who man the furnaces were on strike, leaving the very ore to cool in the furnaces, destroying thus both ore and the furnaces themselves, dejectedly called his establishment an "industrial cemetery." And his is by no means an isolated case. Long and eloquent was his Jeremiah on strikes and the weakening Government; for, as the ministry changes on an average of every few months, the capitalists can look for no definite policy, nor a firm hand, nor even protection from the Government.

Pick up a Spanish newspaper any day at all, and you will find dire patches from all parts of the peninsula telling of strikes in the principal cities, punctuated every day with the blood of two or three murders as a partial result thereof. When I say that there is practically no trouble at all at Ujo, it would seem to be proof positive that the social works in operation there are fruitful of results. Such is indeed the case. Even the individuals bitten by the Socialist bug prefer to work at Ujo rather than in the other coal mines in the vicinity; for together with the social benefits we have described of co-operative stores, homes, medical attention, etc., they receive also a slightly higher wage. And the Socialists, as the chaplain informed me, soon become of a very mild brand; that while still calling themselves Socialists, they hear Mass every Sunday and fulfill their religious duties. If all Socialists would do likewise they would be moderate indeed.

The Socialist press on the contrary, in spite of the fact that the Marquis of Comillas has done so much to benefit the condition of the miners and their families, is strong in its condemnation of the work done at Ujo, calling the Marquis of Comillas and his lieutenant Don Santiago "Jesuits." But all this to my mind is an excellent sign as it shows that the Socialist press fears that in this work lies the solution of the social problem; and such a solution would be disastrous indeed for Socialists, their bag and baggage, their press, their principles, their

very existence. In very truth it is exactly in this that the solution of all social and industrial problems eventually does and must lie. Religion, the very soul of the question at issue, cannot be left out of the reckoning. Make the world sincerely Catholic and all social questions will be settled overnight. For in Catholicism you have a deep regard for and sincere love of one's fellow-men; you have the underlying principle of the fundamental equality of men; you have the synthesis of give and take, and all this because there lies beneath in each individual an immortal soul.

In Ujo in the coal mines of the Sociedad Huilera I have seen the best solution to the social question that I know of. Religion is the guiding star. The system, though offering some difficulties in a country not entirely Catholic, might, however, with but few changes be imitated in practically all its features. But in this, as in all other phases of life, perverse human nature is the real obstacle to social progress. Men think too much of themselves, too much of money and luxury, too little of duty and of the justice and charity that are so necessary for the welfare not only of the individual but of the commonwealth so sadly harassed, these days, by the untuly passions of thoughtless citizens.

WHAT'S TO BECOME OF US?

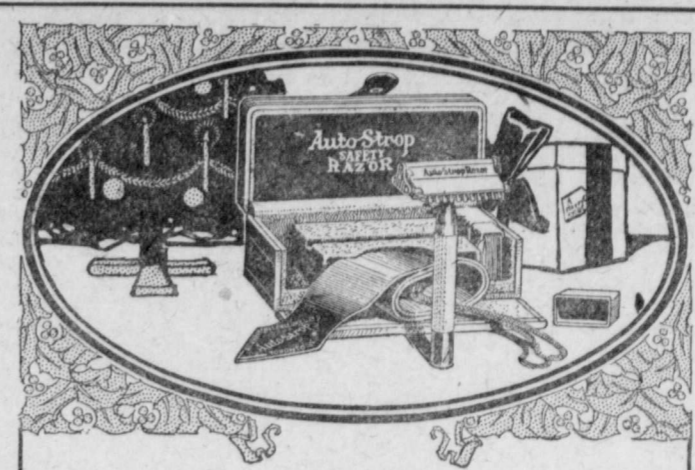
From all quarters come fearful complaints of present world conditions. Christianity is losing ground, say the hopeless ones. One of these gentlemen a few days ago told a congregation that "the people today know little of Christianity. Caricatures of Christianity are found in some of the obsolete forms in the prayers and in the church service, and these have made Christianity appear ridiculous." The gentleman who uttered these words is an Episcopal clergyman.

Here are the views of another preacher, a Presbyterian minister: "There is no religion in the Bible nor in our articles of faith. There is no religion in our churches. Religion is not something you believe. It isn't attending church or saying your prayers or holding your church membership." With preachers expressing to their congregation such views, is it any wonder that they are inclined to the belief that Christianity is a failure? How could it be otherwise? But whence the failure? It is because these very preachers are upsetting every canon of faith. They preach nonsense. Were it not better for them to take up St. Paul and preach after his manner of speaking? Pandering to the world is bringing about a deplorable condition throughout the Protestant world. Churches are empty not so much because people are losing their belief in religion, but because there is no religion to be found in the churches. The pulpit has been turned into a platform. The Sunday evening forum has taken the place of the Gospel as preached by a man ordained to preach. Almost every subject is discussed, but the one great subject, the salvation of the soul. Many ministers seem to be afraid to touch upon the old topic of hell. They preach the goodness of God, entirely overlooking His justice.

Are not many of the present day preachers on a par with the Corinthians, to whom Saint Paul wrote: "For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" Frederick Harrison an English author and lecturer of renown and a traveler who is a keen observer, declares that he has become a pessimist, which is a most unfortunate condition into which to get. Mr. Harrison gives as his reasons that "the world War has changed everything and in the end has ruined much of good and of promise." This man of study and of travel says that "the boom in education has not brought any nobler literature, any greater art, any purer drama, any finer manners." He takes a whinck at the churches, thus: "The churches have not shown any power to restore religion to its true place as the guide of human life." And he concludes that "the result of the chaos in spiritual and moral training is a manifest loosening of the canons of moral life, defiance of discipline by the young and ambitious, mockery of age and all the lessons of age. Worst of all, the sacrifice of the degradation of marriage to be a temporary partnership entered into as a frivolous mode of getting a good time and to be cast off as easily as a lodging which is not convenient." There is a great deal of truth, of course, in what Mr. Harrison says. But who is to blame? The education of today is not education at all. Schools have become social centers in which little thinking is expected of the pupils; the plunges, the gymnasium, athletic occupy the mind far more than do the more serious things which go to provide education.

The old Church, the one Church founded by our divine Lord is doing what she can to help her own and to bring back those who have fallen away. If improvement is to be brought about it must come through the teaching of the Catholic Church. Lack of perseverance is disastrous.

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Shedding its fruit when time has flown
Down the gulf of eternity.
—JOHN BOYER O'REILLY



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