

INDUSTRIAL PROGRESS.

BY GEORGE A. CHACE.

A BRIGHT old gentleman said to-day: "I'm in my eighty-fifth year. When I was a boy, seven years old, I worked in the mill. We had to work fourteen hours a day. I remember I was working in the factory when peace was declared in the war of 1812." Within the memory of a man, what great progress has been made! No little boys are now allowed to work at seven years of age in the mills of America. Nobody, except possibly the manager, would think of working fourteen hours a day.

Within the life of this gentleman, a woman would work a week for fifty cents. It was customary to work six months without pay in learning a trade at which a smart woman could earn half a dollar a day. The crudest quality of calico sold at fifty cents a yard, and the first woman laboured ten or twelve weeks to earn enough to buy the material for a new gown. To-day a weaver in a cotton factory in New England can earn enough to buy the same quantity of a better material, in the latest style of design and finish, in a half-day. In other words, if people were content with the things which their grandparents enjoyed, there would to-day be at least nine days of leisure, for rest and improvement, out of the ten days of toil in the olden time. What is true of factory life is relatively true all over, for this is the century of progress.

What has made the change? In the answer to that inquiry may we not hope to find the right methods for the future of our industrial progress? It is not necessary to study the ancient laws of work and wages, for the conditions are modern and not ancient. The evolution is going on around us. Like a mighty current the tide is coming in, scattering or submerging obstacles, lifting rich and poor together upon its advancing waves. Underneath are the Everlasting Arms, bearing upward the masses of mankind; and an Infinite Wisdom is shaping the sentiment of the public. No manufacturer wishes to run his works fourteen hours a day, or to employ children who ought to be in school, nowadays. It is repugnant to his ideas of right, as much as slavery has lost its place in the thoughts of the plantation owner of the South. We are coming into the light. Our grandparents worked fourteen hours in the mill, and all the rest of the day was night. They lived only in the dark, except on Sunday. Thank God for Sunday, with all its light. It saved our fathers.