

Human Welfare*

By J. W. MACMILLAN.

The man who does not perceive that the world is awakening to the value of its human population must have his eyes shut, his ears stopped, and his head thrust into the ground. And the awakening is with amazement and horror. There is something so palpable about the necessity of conserving humanity that we are agnost at the stupidity which prevented us seeing it before. The proper study of mankind is man. The proper object of commerce is to supply the physical needs of man. The proper object of art is to gratify human taste. The proper object of religion is to bring goodwill to man.

Kipling makes M' Andrews soliloquize upon his engine. The old Scotsman knows it "from coupler flange to spindle guide," and loves it. His life is absorbed by the great machine. It is to him all that wife and children are to other men. There is affection, and almost adoration, in his thought of it. So far M' Andrews represents the dominant spirit of the past hundred years. Since the great revolution which the invention of modern machinery instituted, and the later and greater revolution which was caused by rapid transportation, the world has been hypnotized by its own mechanical progress. It has grown rhapsodic over steam and electricity. Its triumphs over space and time have made it dizzy. It has been engaged in continuous ecstatic and delirious idol worship. It has worshipped and bowed down before the huge, gleaming, swift-running mechanism which itself has made, for its own pleasure, and to its own confusion.

But M' Andrews comes of a stern Calvinistic, Cameronian stock, and his conscience forces him to further thoughts. He cannot be merely an engineer, even an adoring one. So he asks:

"What I ha' seen since ocean-steam began leaves me no doot for the machine, but what about the man?" That is the question we all are beginning to ask ourselves "What about the man?" What is the relation of human life, intelligence, happiness to mechanical progress? Should man serve the machine, or the machine serve man? Have we been making machinery set the pace and forcing men, women, and children to keep up at the risk of their lives? Has all our boasted progress been a real gain to humanity? If a gain, has it been in proportion to the effort? From the standpoint of the average family, has the game been worth the candle?

It is perhaps a score of years since Mr. Huxley declared that:

"If there is no hope of a large improvement of the condition of the greater part of the human family; it is true that the increase of knowledge, the winning of a greater dominion over nature which is its consequence, and the wealth which follows upon that dominion, are to make no difference in the extent and intensity of want, with its concomitant physical and moral degradation, among the masses of the people, I should hail the advent of some kindly comet which would sweep the whole affair away as a desirable consummation. What profits it to the human Prometheus that he has stolen the fire of heaven to be his servant, and that the spirits of the earth and of the air obey him, if the vulture of pauperism is eternally to tear his very vitals and keep him on the brink of destruction?"

If Huxley had lived till to-day he would have been comforted. The public conscience has awakened at last, and is clamorously insisting that the average man shall get his share of the benefits of civilization. The newspapers and magazines are full of it. The churches have organized Labor Bureaus and Social Service Boards, and are federating with each other to carry out humanit-

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arian policies. Many of the most notable novels of the present time deal with problems of social resuscitation. The new science of Sociology has sprung into prominence and is taught in every wideawake college. Legislation designed to equalize human burdens occupies the foremost place in Britain, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and many of the countries of Europe. Canada is at the tail of the procession but even she is beginning to stretch and yawn in her parliamentary bed. Perhaps half of the provinces have Workmen's Compensation acts. Several have Tenement House acts. Ontario is reforming her method of treating delinquents. The Conservation Commission is planning to conserve not only our forests and our fish, our soil and our minerals, but our people.

If we Canadian only could be wise enough to take the advice of Postmaster-General Samuel and adopt a policy of prevention! What a national opportunity we possess as the youngest of nations! If only we might have the foresight to escape the bitter journey of experience by learning from our neighbors! Alas, it seems impossible. It is not given to people to be so prudent. Has any nation ever yet sought the physician before it smarted with pain? The day of prophylactic social lawmaking is not yet.

It is a mistake to think of this movement for social justice as a class war. The phenomena I have instanced are not victories of the unprivileged over the privileged. No doubt there is an element of strife between the 'haves' and the 'have nots,' but the movement is quite general and has the momentum of all classes behind it. No doubt there are some purblind, hardshell souls whose only reading of society's welfare is:

"I and mine, thank somebody,
Have got enough of victual."

And, on the other hand, it is not surprising that some of the exploited classes think of their miseries as wilfully inflicted by callous or malignant aristocrats. But the good sense of the majority in every class teaches them a truer and more generous conception of history. The responsibility is social rather than individual. Nothing is more striking than the general assent which greets a measure of social reform. The opposition in Britain has approved much of the recent programme put forward by the government. The need of Workmen's Compensation acts to replace the old and unfair common law regarding industrial accidents has been admitted by the Manufacturer's associations, both in Canada and the United States. When the Minimum Wage Law, the first on this continent, came up in Massachusetts, there was unanimity in the legislature and but one dissenting voice in the senate. The fact is that we are dealing with something so convincing, so obvious, so shocking in its disclosures, and so peremptory in its demand upon our sense of fairplay, that it has but to be plainly stated and given a little time to soak in in order to win the approval of practically every man, no matter what his personal circumstances may be.

LARGE ELEVATOR TO BE BUILT ON PACIFIC COAST.

Word comes from Fort William that arrangements are about completed for the erection of a large terminal elevator on the Pacific coast. The proposition is being pushed by R. J. Henderson superintendent of the Grain Growers' Grain Company's elevators, "B" and "E" at Fort William and the capital will be provided by Fort William, Winnipeg, Minneapolis and Vancouver grain dealers. The concern will be capitalized at \$1,125,000. With the completion of the Panama Canal a considerable part of Western Canada's export grain will go to the Pacific Coast for shipment so that we may expect much activity in elevator building out there during the next few years.

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