

UNEMPLOYMENT AND CRIME.

Chief Justice Mathers' emphasis to the Grand Jury on the close connection between the abnormal amount of crime and the abnormal amount of unemployment is a challenge to all of us to do some hard thinking. One has only to approach the subject from a fresh angle, to come upon it, as it were, suddenly, to see in the present large volume of unemployment not only something crude and criminal, but something ridiculous.

Here we are in a country the vastness and richness of which are standard topics for every platform orator. Millions of acres of land call for men to till them. Dusky belts of pine-land call for the woodman. The earth is ready to give up treasures to the miner. There are a thousand hills for cattle and sheep to graze upon. And all over this vast country there are cities and towns and villages calling out for the conveniences of life—sidewalks, streets, sewers, telephones, electric lighting, railways and other means of communication and distribution.

Nevertheless, with all this potential demand for labor, we are regularly confronted with armies of unemployed men and women, who stretch out to us willing hands, asking that they be allowed to earn the wages necessary for a decent existence. Some failure or other of our social system to react quickly, some breakdown in our elaborate machinery of business, keeps the work needed to be done from the hands anxious to undertake it.

The Free Press has no philosopher's stone whereby to solve this vexed problem. But it does urge that the grave stricture upon our present social organization implied in the charge of Chief Justice Mathers be taken generally to heart. If many minds were to busy themselves upon this evil of unemployment, a canker which eats into the very vitals of our democracy, the chances of a successful solution would be all the greater. Of one thing let us be assured—there is no necessity for unemployment. The smug view that unemployment is chiefly due to laziness and vice is a cruel insult to a classless, but composed for the most part of honest men and women.