
HANDS WITHERED AND BOUND.

A bandaged hand was displayed by a distributor of begging cards, who told of a severe injury that resulted in physical incapacity. His hand, he said, was withered, and he was unable to work. When arrested, his hand was found well and strong, and he was sent to jail for ninety days. In that institution, in spite of the spectacular incapacity with which it is managed, the man's two able hands may be made to serve some useful and productive or serviceable purpose. But it must be admitted that on the outside, owing to less pardonable mismanagement, his efficient hands could not be made to serve any useful purpose whatever. He practised deception. His hand was not withered. But so far as the possibility of its productive employment is concerned it might as well be. Were he an alien enemy the military authorities would find useful productive employment for both his hands increasing the value and productiveness of our northern areas. But as he is a citizen, the civic authorities must confess to a mismanagement that renders his hands and thousands of other hands abler and stronger than his as useless as if they were withered.

Our elected representatives, through their judicial machinery, are eager to punish the man who ties up his efficient hand and pretends that it is withered. But they seem quite oblivious to the beam in their own eye when their helpless incapacity, lack of resourcefulness, and ignorance regarding the work they undertake render thousands of efficient hands uselessly idle. It is not from withered hands but from withered and shrunken opportunity that the people are suffering. There are plenty of hands to do everything found to do. In fact, there are thousands of hands too many. And, confronted with the problem of want through an excess of capacity for satisfying all wants, the men who assume the direction of public affairs are helpless. The man who in trickery and deceit ties up one hand is sent to jail, while the man whose presumptuous eagerness for duties he knows nothing about ties up a thousand hands is allowed to masquerade as a statesman.
