

FACING THE UNEMPLOYED PROBLEM

"There is no wealth but life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is the richest who, having perfected the functions of this own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others."—"Unto This Last," John Ruskin.

As day by day we see our Empire looked more deadly in the clutches of the world's greatest strife, our minds turn to the economical aspects of our Dominion.

We are working hand in hand, putting our greatest energy to the fore, for the purpose of giving of our best, to the Empire. Should we not look further and prepare a resting-place—a haven of peace and plenty—for the war-worn motherland when she has once again dominated over her enemies and proven that Christianity alone shall rule?

If this is to be our aim, must we not first consider our unemployed? Here we acknowledge that political economy must play an important part. Let us verify this statement from John Stuart Mill's thesis on the subject:—

"In so far as the economical condition of nations turns upon the state of physical knowledge, it is a subject for the physical sciences, and the arts founded on them. But in so far as the causes are moral or psychological, dependent on institutions and social relations or on the principles of human nature, their investigation belongs not to physical but to moral and social science, and is the object of what is called political economy.

"The production of wealth, the extraction of the instruments of human subsistence and enjoyment from the materials of the globe, is evidently not an arbitrary thing. It has its necessary conditions, of these, some are physical, depending on the properties of matter, and on the amount of knowledge of those properties possessed at the particular place and time. These political economy does not investigate, but assumes; referring for the grounds to physical science or common experience. Combining with these facts of outward nature other truths relating to human nature, it attempts to trace the secondary or derivative laws, by which the production of wealth is determined, in which must lie the explanation of the diversities of riches and poverty in the present and past, and the ground of whatever increase in wealth is reserved for the future."

From the foregoing paragraphs we pass to chapters on production, distribution, exchange, and all economic questions to find that wealth is not golden coin, but the possession of something which has exchangeable value.

What is the exchangeable value of unemployment? The very murdering of man's humblest ideal; the deadening of all that is good; the breeding of all that is unholy, and the ruining of all health. In short, it is living death. Can we band together now, while our unemployed question is less vast than in the year to come and our slums of the minor type? Surely, while our motherland is holding Germany at bay we can grasp the immense trade of that enemy and thereby make work, not only for our unemployed, but for those of the Empire; and, in so doing, provide a sure and happy refuge for those of the war zone who will not have the heart to start afresh in their own land when war clouds pass.

There are many and varied causes which one could gather in explanation of the menace of unemployment in a Christian country; we will mention only one. That is, that some human beings are so educated, or perhaps we should use the term uneducated, and constituted that they are unable to manage their lives or cope with the world and find a living. For that class—and it is numerous—we are responsible.

It is an undisputed fact that many human beings can work but cannot manage. We all know men who work, and work hard, but they cannot spend their hard-earned

money to advantage, hence poverty reigns. The unemployed are of the same type, but a degree more unfortunate. For the unemployed who refuse to work we recommend hard labor at the jail farm, and the money earned by them taken for their families; if unmarried, for orphans or some unfortunate human beings.

John Ruskin says:—"Political economy means, in plain English, nothing more than citizens' economy, and its first principles ought, therefore, to be understood by all who mean to take the responsibility of citizens." Again he says:—"In the simplest and clearest definition of it, economy, whether public or private, means the wise management of labor."

We are accustomed to give charity, and what is it? Charity of the present day means giving a little to ease our consciences, to ward off visible evils and cover the appalling sight of starvation for a time. Let us go back to Christ's love and find the necessary employment for the man which will make the self-respecting unemployed a citizen indeed. Can we do this? Most assuredly we can!

Let us consider how this "unemployed problem" affects taxation, for money is raised by taxes. The Provincial Government report for 1913 tells us we spent during the year over one million on hospitals and public charities and some \$44,000 for health purposes, while on education and agriculture we spent only \$1,600,000.

Is it not time to consider a more economical and adequate manner of dealing with such crises? Especially when we remember the number of private, or, more properly speaking, non-governmental, charitable institutions and societies in the city alone; also that out of the million dollars spent by the Government, criminal institutions, refuges, houses of detention and havens take over \$200,000. Those institutions do not include hospitals for the insane or epileptics, many of whose inmates come there through stress of poverty.

Toronto has more than her share of the unemployed. True! She has also a generous share of charitable institutions, even those where man—a weak, starved body—is given stone to break and a breakfast with it. Does it not seem strange that we ask for bread and are given a task which seems so hopeless? Forever the pile of stone to break! Forever the hungry man!

Would it not be more profitable for our Council to purchase farm land? Have the unemployed, masons and carpenters work on buildings; others till the soil; others tend the cattle. We find country butchers on all sides blaming the high price of meat to lack of cattle. Let each man be put to his trade or on his ability. As time goes on factories could be erected on the same basis for goods made in Canada—ever bearing in mind that the demand for the made-in-Canada spoon on sale now is greater than the supply. Men could be paid for their work, and allowed cottages for their families. Schools could be erected for the children. In fact, this measure could be carried through to such an extent that our Councillors would be no longer distressed by the cry of our unemployed through the city streets.

If you care to scan the weekly reports issued by the Trade and Commerce Department at Ottawa, you will find tremendous demands on Canada for everything from all countries. The farmer and manufacturer cannot possibly meet the demand. So that this civic productive scheme would help, not injure, them.

Remember, Toronto the Good, Germany never wasted little things, and to-day she is slumless. War has blocked and destroyed the immense trade of the Kaiser's land. Will we not lend a hand to build a trade worthy of the name of Canada, a world-wide trade that will stamp out our slums, give work to our unemployed, spread made-in-Canada goods throughout the universe, and so bring peace, happiness and plenty to our fair Dominion?

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said:
'This is my own, my native land?'"
Old Bachelor.