Letters from a Workingman

By

An American Mechanic

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PREFACE

THESE Letters were not written as the result of a sociological investigation. They come out of a very real experience. I have every reason for believing that I know the job. Born in a tenement-house on the East Side of New York, a wage-worker at eight, and for twenty-five years living a typical workingman's life, there are few experiences through which a workingman passes, which have not come into my own life. Practically all of those narrated in this book were personal, although the opinions given are composite expressions of what workingmen think concerning the subjects under consideration.

Six chapters of this book were originally printed in the *Outlook*. Three appeared simultaneously in the *Interior* and the *Congregationalist*, and one was printed by the *Christian Endeavor World*. The author appreciates the permission given by the editors of these papers to use this material in its present form.

Charles Stelzle

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I

MY NEW YORK JOB

Dear Jim:

Let me tell you the best thing first: I've got a job! I'm now ready to confess that looking for work in this big town isn't what I thought it was, and what it's cracked up to be back in Petersburg. There may be plenty of work here, but I have found that there are also plenty of men to do it.

One night, after I had spent the entire day among the North River shops, meeting only with failure, I took a stroll along Houston Street, going towards the Bowery. You wouldn't believe me if I should tell you of some of the sights that I witnessed. As I was picking my way through the jammed street, I was attracted by a crowd on the corner. It proved to be an open-air Socialist meeting. How the speaker roasted the present social system! He spoke of the miserable circumstances under which many of his listeners were "existing." He called them "wage-slaves." About everybody else was a "parasite"—on the backs of the workers. They were being cheated out of their rights. They alone were the producers, he declared. "Labour

creates all wealth—therefore all wealth belongs to labour," he kept repeating. It was fascinating to see the eagerness with which the crowd drank in his words. He appealed to their prejudice and their passion, until he had them worked up into such a frenzy that when an automobile passed—probably carrying a "slumming party"—the visitors were showered with vegetables, because they were supposed to represent the hated capitalistic class. I am told, by the way, that the Socialists in New York conduct more open-air meetings than are being held by all of the churches combined, including the Salvation Army and the Volunteers of America. They certainly have lots of nerve. Seems to me that their doctrines have become their religion. A good many of the fellows in the shop are Socialists. Most of them, however, are foreigners, principally Germans and Frenchmen.

Funny thing about the men there. They are quite ready to criticise the rich because of their "uppishness"; but I've noticed that at lunch-time the labourers get off into a corner by themselves, because the journeymen refuse to eat their sandwiches and drink their beer with them. The draughtsmen consider themselves superior to the pattern-makers, the pattern-makers believe that they are a step higher in the social scale than the machinists, the machinists imagine that they can look down upon the moulders, and so it goes.

There are about seven different grades of society among the two thousand men in the shop—reminds me of the women's clubs back in Petersburg. You will remember that none of the wives of the firemen may become members of the club composed exclusively of the wives of the engineers; and as for the wives of the brakemen—they aren't in it. And their husbands all belong to the "Brotherhood." Talk about the aristocracy! We've got a good dose of it here, and most of us are wearing the overalls. It isn't exactly the "class consciousness" the Socialists are all the time talking about; it is really worse, although I don't take much stock in the Socialists' plea for a class spirit. It's fun to watch the clerks in the office as they pass through the shop. It makes me laugh as I think of it. They hold their heads so high that I wonder they don't hit the cross-beams. They look neither to the right nor to the left. Where they get their conceit is more than I can understand. There is just the shadow of an excuse for the class spirit which exists in the mechanical department, because the lines are drawn by higher skill and bigger wages; but these clerks, as a rule, earn about half as much as I do as a journeyman machinist, and my work requires about twice as much brains as does theirs; but because they wear white linen shirts and collars and don't soil their hands and faces they imagine they belong

to a superior order of beings. For general intelligence and useful information I'd back any gang in the shop against an equal number from the general office force. Our boys may not use as good grammar, but they've got the goods in the rough.

I never heard of so many "rules and regulations" as they have in this plant. I had been accustomed to doing pretty much as I pleased. Old man Jenkins used to tell us that he thought if we were worth having about, we would do the square thing by him, and, furthermore, he didn't propose to run a kindergarten for full-grown men —he was conducting a machine shop with well-matured "greasers." Some of the rules are all right, of course. I realize that in a shop as big as this there are always some fellows who simply cannot see the importance of having a well-understood system. I saw an instance of this the other morning. We begin work at seven. On the last tap of a big bell, which can be heard for half a mile, the main gate is closed by the watchman, and all late-comers must pass through the office, depositing a late check. On this particular morning, as the bell was still ringing, I saw a young fellow tearing down the street, trying to reach the gate before it should be closed. He just missed it by three feet. It *was* rather mean for the watchman to slam the door in his face, and the youngster felt it. As he walked up the

street to the office, his face was black with fury. After he had pulled on his overalls he took his chipping hammer and deliberately smashed six incandescent lamps, ripping out an oath at each crack of the hammer, and repeating with variations and always with emphasis: "There, I guess they won't make much out of *that* late check."

I don't object to the enforcement of the rule for late-comers, but most of the rules read as though they were intended for children. There has evidently been a waste of good cardboard, printers' ink, and picture-frame moulding, for I don't believe that one man in twenty has ever read the instructions. If the bosses had been wise about the use of this material, they might have printed some tables showing the strength of hoisting-chains and other material, the best shapes for machine cutting tools, the rules for computing the areas and the circumferences of circles, the weights of various kinds and shapes of iron, the rules of wheel gearing, and other rules having to do with the general subject of mechanics. It seems to me that these might have helped the men, and they need not have lost their self-respect, as might be the case with the rules which are now contained in their eighteen-by-thirty-inch guide-boards.

We've got a good "Super." He's new on the job, but I believe that he is going to make things go. He is a young fellow—not over thirty-five,

but, while he is a "Tech" graduate, he had plenty of practical shop experience before he began to handle men. He has passed down the line with the boys, and hasn't any fancy ideas about things. He knows a good job when he sees it, and, somehow, he usually speaks of it. It makes a fellow feel like trying it again after a word of appreciation from him.

His assistant is a "peach." He graduated from the office. Never handled a tool in his life. They say that he was promoted because he persuaded the old man that he could introduce into the shop a more scientific system. Perhaps the fact that he is the nephew of an old friend of the boss had something to do with his advancement. He is responsible for the rules about which I have been writing. Naturally, when he came into the shop, everybody closed up like a clam. He couldn't get any information. This gave him a good deal of a setback, but he had a few ideas of his own which he introduced. He acts as though he had read a set of rules on "How to Succeed," or some other dope, and he is now trying the thing out on us fellows. He has the most elaborate system ever invented, but he doesn't seem to realize that there is an element sometimes called "human nature" which enters largely into every industrial problem. At any rate, it doesn't bother him very much.

The other day the old man passed through my

department and stopped to watch a fellow named Richter very elaborately laying out about forty pieces of sheet iron, six inches square, getting them ready for the drill press. The location of the holes that he was to drill was a matter of small consequence, and the center punch holes indicating where the holes were to be drilled should have been pounded into the iron with simply a mechanic's practiced eye as a guide. But he had spent at least an hour scratching lines along the four sides of the pieces of metal, so as to have all of the holes as perfectly in line as though they had been drilled in a "jig." The old man was rapidly getting warm. He is an old-time machinist.

"Can't you find some other way to waste your time?" he finally asked.

"Yes," replied Richter, who has a bit of a temper, "but I'm wasting it in this way because I was told to do so."

"Who ordered you?"

"The Assistant Superintendent," Richter answered. The fellows never mention his name unless they are compelled to.

The old man walked away without another word, but soon the Asst. Super came out of the office and down the aisle with flushed face, and told Richter to get his center punch and do the job as he, as a good mechanic, had started out to do it. A few more similar experiences and

young Smarty will go back to the office where he belongs.

Every department in the shop has been intensely interested in a big three-ton cylinder which goes to Australia next week. We have a man waiting in Melbourne until it arrives, and, as the machine sent by our firm will not be accepted unless it is installed, complete, within the time specified in the contract, everybody has been rushing it through as it came to their departments. The original cylinder proved to be defective, so the new one was ordered by cablegram.

Last Saturday it came to my machine. I am now running the big planer. It was my job to cut two one-inch key-ways, each eight inches long, on the four-inch shaft, and two slots, each an inch wide, the full length of the cylinder. It was a piece-work job, as most everything is in the shop. The price was six dollars, and, ordinarily, it required twelve hours to finish the job. I was working under extra pressure, as was quite natural, but I thought of a "kink" or two that I had used in the old shop, and used it, with the result that the cylinder was finished in exactly five hours. That was rushing things pretty hard, and it was taking big risks, too, for if the belt had broken, or if any of half a dozen other possible things had happened, they might have taken me to the hospital or to the cemetery. But I

simply dug into the iron. It was great to see it curl as it came off in strips. The tool cut just dandy. Somehow, when a machine tool acts that way it makes a fellow feel like patting it, as you would your horse. Curiously enough, the number of the machine is "13." Not many of the fellows like to run it, but thirteen has always been my lucky number. My own check number, by the way, is also thirteen.

Well, when the Super came in on Monday morning and heard about the record-breaking time that I had made on the big cylinder, he was tickled to death.

"That's great work, Sam," he said. "No other man in the shop has ever done that job in less than ten hours, I am told."

Naturally, I felt jubilant. Somehow, I like to break records. I feel that way every time I tackle a job. I guess that I walked through the shop with a good deal of pride showing in my face on Monday, but, to my surprise, it wasn't returned by my shopmates. There seemed to be only resentment and bitterness. What could be the matter with them? I asked myself. Finally, as I was busy with another job, one of the lathe hands came over to my machine and remarked:

"They say that you made six dollars in five hours last Saturday night."

"Yes," I answered, but with less interest than I would have exhibited earlier in the day.

"Well, young fellow, do you know what you are doing? You are just cutting down your own earnings, as well as those of the rest of us."

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Just this. The office will hear about it, and they will argue that if that job can be done in five hours upon one occasion, there is no good reason why it cannot always be done in that time. The result will be that the piece-work price will be cut to about one-half. Our piece-work price has twice been cut thirty per cent. in five years. This cylinder job and a very few others have continued to pay us fairly well, and we were able to make up on these what we lost on other jobs. We have found out that when a man, by spurting, makes a little extra money, or when a quick worker gets on the job, our prices are cut down. We have therefore come to the conclusion that the best thing to do is to limit the amount of work we shall send in each week, so as to keep it within a reasonable figure, even though we are compelled to carry some 'dead horse' over to the following week's account. You'll learn your lesson, too, as the rest of us did."

Now I understood why I was frowned upon. I was regarded as a traitor. I had gone beyond the limit of the amount to be earned within a specified time. I rebelled against the thought of any interference with the amount of work that I

should turn out. Wasn't I a free man? Who had a right to dictate to me, anyway? I would earn as much as I pleased. I wasn't going to be handicapped by a lot of lazy or incompetent machinists. That's about the way I figured it out. But this morning my gang boss got a new schedule of prices from the office—the work of the Asst. Super—and, sure enough, *the price of the cylinder had been cut thirty per cent.* How humiliated I felt! I could have gone out to the scrap heap in the back yard and thrown myself into it. What *was* the use? The lathesman was right.

Yours,

SAM.

II

SELF-RESPECT VERSUS "SOCIOLOGY"

Dear Jim:

There is many a tragedy being enacted among the men in this big plant. I do not refer to the times when a man is caught in the shafting and whirled around until the breath of life is knocked out of him, or when he is cruelly crushed by the machine of which he had, up to that time, been the master. This happens only too often. Rarely a day goes by but what the clanging bell of the hospital ambulance is heard in the shop yard—a sound which means that another poor fellow is about to be carried away, perhaps never to return. At best, he will probably be crippled or maimed for life. Only the other day I saw a labourer literally cut in two by a powerful machine which he was cleaning. You've heard of the artist who said that he always mixed brains with his colours. We mix blood with our machines. It probably doesn't make them any better, but we've got to pay the price, anyway. But I hadn't this in mind when I began to write. It is a disagreeable subject to think about, even.

There are other kinds of tragedy, which, while

not so cruel to the observer, are nevertheless heartrending to the one who is often a silent sufferer. I don't know that I can tell you exactly what I mean, but I do know that there is many a fellow who wears greasy overalls who might have been a master musician, an artist, a poet. That is, he has the mind and the heart for it, but often he has been deprived of the necessary training to make him what his Creator intended he should be, because of the poverty of his parents or because of some other reason for which he is probably not responsible. If he could only express his thoughts, his ideals, his ambitions!

Most workingmen think more deeply than they are given credit for. That's why they are so silent. Not many silver-tongued orators can fool them. It is comical to watch the stolid faces of some of our boys as they listen to the spellbinders sent out by the political parties, who are occasionally given permission to address them in the shop yard at the noon hour. With pipes gripped between their teeth, they will listen, forgetting to puff, until the pipes go out; then, after the meeting, they will give a grunt, clean out their pipes by sharply rapping them on their left heels, and that's all there is to it. Sometimes, in order to hide their emotion, they will swear like troopers—or like workingmen, perhaps—or else they will speak more gruffly than ever. But it is all a sham. They don't really mean it.

They are afraid that they will be found guilty of sentimentality, and that is a weakness of which they will not be convicted.

There is an old fellow in the blacksmith shop —an Irishman named O'Neil—upon whom I called the other evening, as a member of the sick committee of our Mutual Benefit Society. He is a giant in build, and must have been a strapping athlete in his day. He still has the grip of a professional wrestler. He was just recovering from an attack of pneumonia. When I reached the floor just beneath that on which he lives, in the tenement that he calls home, I heard the sweetest song in the tones of a violin. To my amazement, I soon discovered that O'Neil was the player, and, more wonderful still, he had himself made the instrument upon which he was playing. It seemed hard to believe that those big, gnarly hands had shaped that delicate violin, and that they could get such marvellous music out of it. And it seemed unnatural when I saw him again back at his old job, holding a red-hot piece of steel over the anvil, gently tapping the spot that he wanted his helper to strike with his big sledge. But, somehow, O'Neil lent dignity to that dirty blacksmith shop. I was reminded of a picture that I once saw in an art exhibit showing a group of cupids busily engaged in the humdrum work of the kitchen. To be sure, O'Neil doesn't look very much like a cupid, but

he did appear to lift his job into something higher and nobler.

Way up on the top floor in the department which handles miscellaneous jobs there is a red-headed, red-whiskered machinist. He happens to be a Scotchman. I rather think that he would take exception to this statement, because he would insist that nothing ever "happens." I suppose that he has inherited this idea from his ancestors. Now you'd imagine from this description that he is a bold, fiery kind of a fellow. I can easily make myself believe that he was that at one time, but if he was he has certainly changed very decidedly. He is more highly respected by the men than any other chap in the place. Douglas is not popular with the men because he sets out to make himself popular by always agreeing with his shopmates. Indeed, he frequently goes full tilt against their opinions, and principally against their actions. Often have I seen him approach the fellow who had just ripped out a string of oaths and rebuke him, although never with a suggestion of pharisaical supremacy. He was simply trying to show the blasphemer that it would pay him to cut out his foolish, senseless swearing. He does not belong to any of the fraternal organizations, but I have known him to spend many a night with a sick shopmate. Frequently he leaves in the home part of the not over-abundant cash in his pocket,

but, better than that, he leaves a smile on the face of the tired, discouraged nurse-wife—the children hope that he will come again, and the sick man feels the cheer of his presence. He never talks about these things, but somehow they come out. He is an arbitrator in personal disputes in the shop, and the boys never repudiate his decisions. Not infrequently he dares approach the boss in behalf of a supposedly wronged fellow-workman. The boys admire his disinterested nerve. Somehow, he seems to know when the rest of us have met with adversity, or even the smaller discouragements which make life seem hard. Always there is a strong, cheerful word which usually braces up the fellow who thinks that the whole world has gone wrong. The apprentices are particularly fond of him because he appears to have a lively interest in their affairs. Never does he seem to hand out wisdom in large chunks, with an air of superiority. Never is there a suspicion of cant. Douglas is just a sane, healthy-minded, strong-hearted workingman. May his kind increase! We need them. The sympathetic touch of a shopmate counts for more than most of us imagine. And that's what makes Douglas, the machinist, a bigger factor in the lives of these two thousand workingmen than any other single individual.

Douglas has been keeping his eye on a certain fellow on his floor who had been making the

rankest kind of a fool of himself. He was the champion pool-player of the ward; indeed, his reputation had extended to nearly every saloon in town. The saloon-keepers sometimes arranged games for him, advertising them on big posters. He enjoyed seeing his name in display letters over the saloon windows. He didn't get much else out of it excepting a few drinks and some indifferent cigars. He lost so much time that the foreman of his department finally fired him. Losing his job seemed about to finish him. He went from bad to worse. He hadn't been home since the last "big" exhibition game. Most of his meals he got at the free-lunch counter, and there always seemed somebody who was willing to stand treat. His wife had become the breadwinner of the family, but she didn't get much of the bread. One morning they found her in an alley, on the way to the back door of a saloon, where she was to have done a day's washing. She was compelled to go without any breakfast, or the children would have had none. She wasn't equal to it, however, and had collapsed even before she began her day's work. Douglas heard about it. I wondered why he did not get downright mad; but he didn't. That's a curious way he has. The rest of us were calling Scotty all kinds of hard names. That night Douglas went after him. He knew the saloon in which Scotty spent most of his

time. Nobody knows what Douglas said to him, but the first thing we knew he was at work in another shop. It was Douglas's doings. A month later I met Scotty on the street. He was wonderfully braced up. His clothes were fresh-looking. The flush had left his face. There was a steadiness in his gaze which pleased me. I stopped him with a cheery salute. "Oh, I've got a job," he said, with a little confusion, but as though that were the most important event of his life. Then I remembered my own experience, and understood. "I've cut out the exhibition pool, too. I'll no longer be any man's fool." He put it stronger than that, but it wouldn't look well written out.

While Douglas undoubtedly stands out as a helper of his fellows, he is by no means alone in such work. The boys in the shop are always ready to help the fellow who is down and out. They would never permit a fellow-workman to be buried in Potter's Field, neither would they consent to his going to the poorhouse if they could possibly help him. They have a perfect horror of the Charity Organization Society. I imagine that it is largely due to the use of the word "Charity" in the name of the organization. Perhaps another reason is that they will be recorded in the office of the Society, no matter how small the assistance given. Then, too, the fear that the neighbours will know about

their poverty because of the investigator's questions keeps the most worthy from applying for aid. You will rarely, if ever, find a trades-unionist coming to the office of the Society. The union takes care of its own poor and unemployed. The Cigarmakers' Union alone has expended in this way about seven and a half million dollars in the past twenty-seven years.

There are all kinds of folks around here who want to help working people. I have discovered a new species. It calls itself a "so-see-ol-o-gist." It goes about in groups—usually four in a bunch —two males and two females. Once in a while some of them come through the shop to "study industrial life"—as one of them remarked to me. Sometimes the bunch is chaperoned by a professor of social science or some other dismal subject. Occasionally they represent a charity organization or a religious outfit of some kind.

I have no doubt that some of these folks are sincere in their investigations, but how in the world they can expect to learn very much about us by a swift passage through a crowded machine shop, where most of their time must be occupied in getting out of the way of grease and things, is more than I can understand. They talk about us as "problems." Say, Jim, how would you like to be a "problem"? Oh, rot! It makes me tired. I read a magazine article the other night which told of the experiences of a college

professor among the "labouring classes." About all he seemed to have discovered by his association with us is that we "swear horribly." Then I saw a book in which the writer—after a limited apprenticeship in a number of factories —came to certain very definite conclusions concerning what the workingman really is and what he may become. But, principally, he spun a great yarn about what the workingman may not become. That fellow seems to have missed out altogether. He failed to discover that there isn't the slightest difference between workingmen and other kinds of men—provided that they are given an equal chance. Furthermore, his artificial classification is rank nonsense.

Among the men working here I have found degrees of human nature so fine that they cannot be measured by the most exact micrometer that was ever invented. You cannot deal with workingmen as the entomologist deals with his millions of bugs. They refuse to be "grouped," and they prove it by annihilating the carefully made deductions of the sociologists. The sociologists' rules cannot account for it. They regard with astonishment the workingman who seems to possess powers equal to their own.

All this by way of introduction. Last night we had a personal experience which prompted these remarks. Douglas had just come in. We live in a six-story tenement. That is about all

one can live in on the East Side of New York. While we were seated in our front room chatting, there came a rap at the door, and without waiting for our "come in," there entered a group of smartly dressed young people. "Slummers," I said under my breath. The men did not remove their hats, while the women glanced quickly about, somewhat uneasily, I imagine, because I think that they partly realized this wasn't exactly what they were after. But the young fellows pulled out their note-books and began to ask impertinent questions about my most personal affairs. I tried to be courteous at the beginning of the interview, largely because I regarded the matter as a huge joke. But pretty soon I reached the limit of my patience. Douglas began asking them the same kind of questions about their own lives and about their forefathers. At first they smiled and looked at each other in rather an amused fashion. But very soon he had them on the run, and they retired in the greatest confusion. By Jove! but I was hot! After they left I just roared for a moment because that seemed the easiest way to let off my feelings, but I felt more like saying some cuss-words. Like some other blooming idiots, these youngsters imagine that every tenement-house neighbourhood is a slum. With impunity have they been prodding their kid-gloved fingers into working people's private affairs. Without

shame have they been "slumming" in the respectable tenement-house district in which the workingmen make their homes. If I had butted into their own homes in the same way that they burst into mine, they would have called in the police. But wherein lies the difference?

No, ye students of the working classes, you cannot deal with us as you deal with the creatures and the objects of a lower order. But "brother" is an open sesame to every heart, even though each heart may have a beat all its own.

Yours, SAM.

III

HUMAN NATURE IN THE SHOP

Dear Jim:

They have abolished the piece-work system! Need I tell you how great a relief it was to read the notice to that effect on the bulletin-board? On January 1st we go back to day's wages. I was in pretty bad shape after that rush job on which I made a "record." The treatment that I got from some of the fellows almost used me up. I wasn't positively boycotted, but it was tough to realize that I had aroused against myself the ill feeling of some of the best men in the shop, simply because I had done a piece-work job in one-half the time in which it had ever been done before. They naturally felt that I was responsible for the reduction in the piece-work price which followed. The ruff-scuff tried to make it unpleasant by throwing at me bunches of oily waste and hard-wood driving-blocks—when I wasn't looking, of course—but that wasn't nearly as hard to bear as the indifference of some of the men whose friendship I really care for.

However, they are rapidly forgetting about it,

and it may be that I shall soon be restored to my former place in their estimation.

The change in the system was due to the influence of the Super. He felt that he could get just as much work out of the men without the piece-work system, and he was sure that there would be a much better feeling throughout the shop. I've noticed, by the way, that while he hasn't seemed to take any of the men into his confidence—which might make some of them feel cocky—he has gained their confidence to an unusual degree. He has had placed near the door a small box with a slot in the top, above which is a sign that reads in the following words:

We want suggestions for improving this plant. If you have an idea on the subject, write it briefly, sign your name, and drop it into this box.

Already there have been made a number of improvements upon the recommendation of the men. The firm has just installed a series of long wash-basins with innumerable faucets so that we may use clean, fresh water in washing at noon and at the end of the day's work. The men formerly used wooden pails, each man owning his own pail. It was impossible for more than four men to get near the old iron sink at one time, as there are hundreds of men on each floor.

The result was that after a fellow had scrubbed the thick dirt and oil off his hands, sometimes using sand or some other heroic stuff, he was compelled to push his face into the greasy water, which, you can imagine, isn't a very self-respecting thing to do. The chap that owned two pails was regarded as an aristocrat, but as there wasn't room for many more than two thousand pails under the work-benches and machines, mighty few of them were privileged to join this class. It was dirty, sloppy business anyway, and everybody is immensely pleased at the improvement.

But the firm is getting some good out of this arrangement, which, upon first thought, seems to be entirely for the benefit of the men. Before the basins were introduced it was quite a common practice, especially among some of the floor men, to sneak off at about ten minutes before quitting time, if the boss didn't happen to be around, wash up in some dark corner, and, upon the first tap of the bell, run for the gate. Now that is impossible. Every fellow works right up to the regular time to stop, and takes his place at the long basins with the rest of us who didn't happen to have a claim on a pail in a far-away corner or behind a big machine. The basins are going to pay for themselves in a very short time—in more ways than one.

There's one thing about the Super that we ad-

mire hugely. He never makes a splurge about "social welfare work." He tries to be decent to the men, doing the square thing about keeping the shop clean and paying fair wages—at least as fair as the trade seems to permit. There probably isn't a man in the shop who feels that he is getting all that is coming to him. But the Super hasn't introduced any kindergartens or day nurseries, and such-like, so that the firm may exploit the fact that they are running an "ideal" shop—as a good business proposition. That sort of thing may be a good advertisement so far as the public is concerned, but our boys would resent anything that seemed in the least like paternalism. Somehow, that's the temper of the American workingman. He hates like the mischief to feel that anybody owns him or is trying to baby him. They tell me that in London, during a recent strike, the strikers paraded the streets with men stationed at the ends of the lines with caps outstretched, ready to receive the contributions of the onlookers. Imagine that in New York or Chicago! In fact, in any other town in this country.

I imagine that there are some chaps in the shop who would not be against a scheme in the nature of a social welfare enterprise. They would consist, for the most part, of two types. The first would be the very few men who felt that some other fellow needed the assistance which

such work would render, even though they themselves did not have much to do with it. And the second would be of the kind that compose that class who take anything that comes their way, as a sort of graft. I don't mean to say that the firm would not do a whole lot of good through social welfare work, neither would I infer that absolutely no self-respecting men would avail themselves of the privileges offered; but, as a general proposition, unless there was some kind of force used, comparatively few average workingmen would have anything to do with a plan which seemed to have back of it the spirit of patronage or paternalism. Somehow, it seems to the fellows that when a firm is too good about such things they must have something up their sleeves, and sooner or later it will come out. It's too much like a "con" game, you know. Maybe we're wrong, but we have been taken in so often that most of us are mighty suspicious of anything that seems like a special favour, out of which the boss isn't going to make more than we will get out of it. Therefore, when a particular scheme is presented by the office, it seems a natural thing to be "ag'in'" it on general principles.

Now, our Super is constantly introducing new features in the social welfare line, but we never hear the term mentioned. Many of his little plans have to do with the comfort of the men, but he goes about introducing them without any

fuss. He doesn't lecture the men about the high regard that the "dear boss" has for them. He doesn't tell how they are blessed above all other workingmen because they are employed by the John Streator Company. Others do that for him. The mechanics who come to us from other shops notice it. They tell us that there is a difference. And they ought to know. Conditions are not ideal, by any means, but we are much nearer the ideal since Jerry Howell became the Superintendent.

Strikes have been very numerous in the city recently. Every morning the papers have stories of violence committed, supposedly by trades-unionists, or at least by their friends and sympathizers. It's pretty hard to tell which, if one depends entirely upon the newspapers for one's information. In many cases the newspaper owners are interested directly or indirectly, and usually the business office dictates the editorial policy. They have had some strikes here in the past. None of them have been very serious affairs, nor have the men been out for very long at any one time. But, apparently, to the old man, to strike is to commit the unpardonable sin. I passed through the main office the other day and saw hanging near the door the photograph of the oldest employee in the shop. Just beneath the picture, in the narrow margin of the card mount, was this legend:

HARRY JONES
Oldest employee in the works of the
John Streator Co.
Born in Wales, Sept. 4, 1827
Entered our employ Oct. 1, 1843
HE NEVER WENT OUT ON STRIKE

That's a pretty good record. To be with the same concern for nearly sixty-five years means a good deal, both to the firm and to the workman. But I confess that I went away from that photograph with a funny feeling. I am sure that some of the strikes engaged in in this shop during the past sixty-five years were justifiable—as strikes go, of course. Striking is bad business at best, but once in a while a strike seems necessary. I wondered if that was really the best thing that could be said about a workingman. Never a striker! Well, I'm not looking for trouble, but I am more anxious about some other things in connection with my reputation as an American artisan than that I never went out on strike! It riles me just the least bit when I think of it even now. "He never went out on strike!" I'm wondering what kind of a crowd we'd be if we all had the same kind of a record. I wonder, too, how the old man would classify Moses, the strike leader of that bunch of two million brick-makers who walked out because Pharaoh didn't do the square thing? Of course he couldn't frame Moses's photograph and write that epitaph

beneath it, but I guess that Moses wouldn't care very much about that. He did accomplish some other things which probably overbalance the crime of creating a labour fuss down in Egypt. But then Moses never worked for the old man, so it's pretty hard to tell what might have happened on either side.

While there is no immediate danger of a strike in this plant, I have recently heard a good deal of trades-union talk. Not that that necessarily implies a strike, but it just naturally makes a man feel that there's something in the air.

There's a fellow in my department who is going to make a lot of trouble for us some day. He is a big Yankee. Never learned the trade regularly. That is, he never served an apprenticeship in a machine shop. He started his life's work Down East as a sailor. Then he became a New York policeman. He was fired off the force, or "broke," as he puts it, for violating a rule—I've forgotten what it was. Then he became a handy man in a marine engine shop. Soon they had a strike, and Big Dan was given a machine. He worked there long enough to learn how to turn out rough work on the planer, and, having a good deal of nerve, he applied for a job in another shop, got it, then, after a couple of years' experience, came here. By this time, of course, he is a pretty good mechanic; or at least he is a gretty good specialist. He would

not be called an all-round machinist, as he can run only one kind of a machine. For several reasons the men in the shop do not like him. They have a kind of a prejudice against him because he evaded the five years' discipline and hardship of an apprentice's life. They look upon that as a kind of a skin game, and they feel, somehow, that he has taken an unfair advantage of them. They cannot be made to see that he really deserves considerable credit for pushing himself along as he has done, although I suppose that they might forgive some other things if he hadn't "scabbed" it in that engine shop.

Aside from this, he has a way of going about the shop and turning out gas jets which seem to be burning unnecessarily, and which the men may have forgotten to turn down. That seems a very commendable thing to do, and it makes me laugh when I think of the men's prejudice against him on this account; but they accuse him of being just a common "sucker." He has another economical streak for which he is hated still more bitterly. The engine starts up at about ten minutes before seven in the morning, so as to get a good strong movement before the strain of hundreds of machines is put upon it. Dan always comes into the shop at six-thirty, fills his oil-cans and lamps, gets his tools ready for work, and just as soon as the shafting begins to turn, he throws over his belt and starts up his

machine. This is almost always greeted with a yell from some part of the shop, but Dan seems absolutely indifferent to ridicule or to threats of any kind. He is a tremendous pusher. If he were a gang-boss or a foreman, he would be a perfect tyrant. As it is, he is the most cordially despised man in the shop, and mostly because he is too industrious and too economical—in his way. Yours,

SAM.

IV

LABOUR AND THE SALOON

Dear Jim:

If the women of the W. C. T. U. in Petersburg should get a glimpse of the saloon proposition in this burg, they'd have a fit.

I never patronized the saloons back home. No man who had a reputation to keep up did so. But somehow it seems different here. You've simply got to be associated with them in some way if you are mixed up with most any kind of workingmen's doings. At home we had a town hall and a meeting place or two for the town societies. The saloons had no public halls. They had no need for them.

Here, the saloon-keeper has a monopoly of practically every public hall in the neighbourhood. If a labour union wants a meeting place, to whom does it naturally go? To the saloon-keeper. If there is to be a dance or a christening, who can most easily help out? The saloon-keeper. If a fraternal organization wants a "camp" or an "eeyrie," the saloon boss controls it. Even under the most favourable conditions, there is a saloon down-stairs, and in many cases

the men are compelled to pass through it in order to get to the meeting place. It requires considerable nerve to pass right on without accepting an invitation to take a drink, or to stand treat yourself. Often these invitations come from the saloon-keeper, who certainly is on to his job. He permits many of these social organizations to meet in his hall free of rent or at a very nominal price, but he has an understanding with the men that they are to patronize his bar. It is embarrassing to a fellow not to hold up his end of the deal when this is generally understood. It looks cheap and stingy, and few of us care to be accused of being either.

I remember with some amusement the hideous cartoons of the saloon-keeper that were displayed in the temperance journals distributed by the W. C. T. U. Naturally, I looked for the real thing. To be perfectly frank, he isn't very much in evidence. There probably are a good many of that type among the thousands of saloon-keepers in New York. But I've seen very few in the tenement-house districts that might have served as models for those cartoons. Why, they are the most genial lot of fellows that you ever saw. They seem to know your name and greet you with it, too, after you've been in their place just about twice. If a fellow in the shop is hard up, he borrows money from the saloon-keeper, and he is almost certain to get it every time he asks

for it. Lots of the men have gotten into our shop through the influence—direct or indirect—of some saloon-keeper. This is especially true of the labourers. At least a dozen fellows that I've heard about have gotten political jobs through the saloon-keepers' pull with the captain of the ward or some other "statesman,"—nearly all of whom are saloon-keepers. If any of them get into trouble of any kind with the police and need a bondsman to bail them out, they send for the saloon-keeper. I don't know of any man in the community who is in closer touch with the people than this individual.

Over on the East Side quite a good many of the saloon-keepers' families are connected with churches and Sunday-schools, Protestant as well as Catholic. Many saloon-keepers are perfectly friendly towards religion and religious workers. I've seen saloon-keepers greet, in the most cordial manner, the minister of the mission or church attended by their families. And they seemed thoroughly sincere. They never shut out the Salvation Army lassie who comes in to sell the *War Cry*, and woe betide the fellow in the saloon who insults her. Recently I've noticed that a "saloon evangelist" regularly conducts meetings in some of the saloons on the Bowery. I wonder, sometimes, if the saloon-keeper permits it because he doesn't fear the influence of the preacher, or because he thinks the

notoriety of the thing brings his place additional business.

The families of these saloon-keepers seem to be perfectly decent in dress and in manner. They are in the workingman's class and do not, as a rule, seem in the least different from our families. They probably dress a little better, but the average saloon-keeper in the workingman's neighbourhood doesn't get much more than is paid a first-class mechanic. Most of the saloons are owned by the brewers, and the saloon-keeper is simply an employee or agent.

In spite of the fact that they are hedged in by all kinds of laws and penalties, the saloons are doing a big business. And there's a reason. It isn't all because the workingman likes his beer. When I first came here I tried the cheap restaurants near the shop, but I simply could not stand it. I am not over-squeamish about things, but the food that was handed out to me nearly made me sick. And the dishes and other furnishings —Gee Whiz! You could smell the grease of the dish water, and the fly-specks were too numerous to mention. As for the table-cloth,—it could not have been changed in a month. The waiter was filthy. He jabbed his dirty cigarette-discoloured fingers into the food that I was about to eat, as he literally threw the stuff at me. I really felt that I was a bit better than a pig, so I quit.

Some of the fellows in the shop told me about

a saloon around the corner where I could get a dandy lunch, free, provided that I drank two schooners of beer, or I might have the lunch for ten cents without the beer, if I did not object to having the meat and vegetables mixed up in the same plate. Otherwise, the same food, in two dishes, would cost me fifteen cents. I went, one day, and paid fifteen cents for the lunch, served for the "aristocrats" who needed the extra plate. I had been paying twenty-five cents. The food was well-cooked and it was piping hot. It was not necessary to sit in the barroom, as they provided a separate room for those who ordered the food, and had drinks or not, as they chose. It was served by a young girl—the saloon-keeper's daughter. She was quiet and neat, and no one took liberties with her. The food was cooked by his wife. She had been a cook in a down-town restaurant before he married her.

I now have my meals there regularly. I am waiting for some enterprising fellow to start a clean eating-house over near the shop. Not a so-called "saloon substitute" with its patronage and cheap-water-wagon trimmings, presided over by a weak-looking individual who acts as though his customers needed his benevolent outfit, but a genuine business enterprise, run to make a profit, but run so that a self-respecting workingman can patronize it without losing his sense of manhood and independence. There are many of us who

would rather go to such a place away from the saloon, but until we can find one where the food is as temptingly served as it is in the saloon, even at the free-lunch counter, most of us will continue to go to the saloon.

Probably the biggest business of the saloons near the shop is done at the noon-hour, and for the reason just given. But they also are fairly busy at quitting time, many of the men stopping in before they start for home. Most of the men who go to the saloons at night are labourers or low grade mechanics—the fellows who are doing the hardest kind of manual work. Are working people poor because they go to the saloon, or do they go to the saloon because they are poor? No doubt both propositions are true, in part, but I wonder which has most to do with it?

The assertion is often made that if we got the eight-hour day, we'd spend more time in the saloon. That's a slander, for I've noticed that the men who work the longest hours spend the most time in the saloon. It is the man whose vitality has been least exhausted who is more easily content to go directly home after his day's work is done. Ordinarily, when your skilled mechanic goes to the saloon, it is for the purpose of treating or accepting a treat. There is some treating among the lower grades of workingmen, but in most cases these drink their glass of beer for the sake of the beer, and not so frequently on ac-

count of the social instinct. The men get together in the same saloon according to nationalities, trades, or political belief, and each saloon seems to have about the same crowd night after night. It becomes a sort of free and easy club, without any apparent intention of making it such. There is no sense of responsibility on the part of the men for maintaining it. That is up to the saloon-keeper. Hitched up to this fact is the spirit of democracy that is found there. A single five-cent piece puts a man on an equality with every other man in the place, without any apologies. This is mighty attractive to the average workingman.

There is rather a curious situation developing in trades-union circles with regard to the saloon proposition. At a recent convention of the American Federation of Labour, President Gompers devoted considerable time in his annual report urging the delegates to use their influence in having their locals meet in halls which are free from saloons. He requested that they secure rooms in public school buildings if no other halls were available. The delegates from the Brewery Workers' and Bartenders' Union were present, of course, to listen to this petition. It was a pretty nervy thing to do, but Gompers has the reputation of being nervy. Practically every member of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labour is a total ab-

stainer, and several of them are active members of the Anti-Saloon League.

Other labour bodies have also taken action with regard to the saloon. A number of Internationals do not permit their locals to meet in buildings in which there are saloons. The Central Bodies in some cities are now supporting Labour Temples from which all intoxicating liquors are excluded, according to a clause in their constitution. The longshoremen have a prohibition clause in their contract with the stevedores and any man caught drinking may be immediately discharged. A large number of unions refuse to pay sick or death benefits if the members were injured or killed while intoxicated. The labour papers frequently contain editorials against the liquor traffic, and the Central Labour Union of Madison, Wisconsin, recently unanimously passed a resolution, recognizing, first of all, the evils of intemperance, and second, the mutual responsibility that the members of organized labour sustain towards each other. It was resolved that members abstain from treating each other in order not to lead their fellow-workers into temptation, and, if necessary, "for the sake of the weaker brother" to swear off altogether. Pretty soon the W. C. T. U. will want to become affiliated with the A. F. of L. because they come mighty close to agreeing on the temperance idea.

Meanwhile the Brewery Workers have gotten

out a petition urging organized labour to work and vote against the introduction of a "local option law" and prohibition in general, largely on the ground that their enforcement will throw out of employment hundreds of thousands of workingmen; while the Bartenders' Union is the only local labour lodge in the country which regularly opens and closes its meetings with prayer, in which it is led by an elected chaplain, who petitions the Creator to safeguard its members from the hands of their enemies!

Yours, SAM.

V

THE WORKINGMAN AND THE CHURCH

Dear Jim:

Don't imagine that I am going to the dogs altogether. I still go to church. That is, I go once in a while. When I find the right kind of a church, I'll go oftener. My church relationship was a comparatively easy matter when I was a youngster. I just naturally grew into the habit because mother helped me along. I don't say how. It was all right. I got there, and it did me lots of good.

But church-going in New York isn't what it was in Petersburg. It was like clockwork there. It came as regularly as one of the other chores. There are no such chores here. Nobody seems to care a hang whether church keeps or not. Some do, of course, but to judge by appearances on the East Side, in the tenement-houses, it doesn't make much difference. The church bells ring, and early in the morning the Catholic churches are crowded, but mostly by foreigners. A Polish Catholic church near our tenement has a workingmen's mass at seven o'clock in the morning, which is usually jammed. I've seen

them crowd clear out to the gutter long before the hour for service. They tell me that the pastor of the Protestant chapel near by, who was once a newspaper man and has pretty broad ideas about things, congratulated the priest upon his success in reaching the men.

"Ah, yes," the priest replied, "but if you should come around in a year from now you would not find one of these men. They will have become Americanized."

One Sunday evening I passed this church and heard a terrific racket down in the basement. Somebody seemed to be having rather a hilarious time. Stepping inside a long, narrow room, I saw a crowd of about a hundred men and women—all working people—dancing to the music of a squeaking violin, while the priest sat upon a small raised platform with his feet elevated higher than his head, resting them upon a little pedestal, as he was puffing away at a big cigar. That's *one* way of "reaching the masses."

There are quite a good many missions scattered throughout the district. They are supported by the up-town churches. I have attended two or three of them. The preaching wasn't so bad. It was really better than I expected. But the system! I could never go it. The patronizing air of the up-town helpers would put any kind of an institution out of business

provided that a fellow wasn't compelled to stay —and I wasn't. They say that the members of the "chapel" are members of the "home" church, with all the privileges of full membership. But the chapel people are never informed of the business meetings of the home church, neither do they have any say as to how the money which they themselves contributed shall be expended. I believe that if the chapel people should exercise their rights as members of the home church and take possession of the church meeting it would create a panic.

Furthermore, the missions are run by the folks from up-town, through the officers elected by the up-town people. Not being present at the business meetings and being unknown, no fellow down here has any kind of a show to be elected to anything. All this is against the spirit of democracy which is so common in workingmen's lodges, in the labour union, and in the saloon. The entire scheme is un-American and therefore cannot succeed among American workingmen. Maybe they imagine that we workingmen couldn't manage a little church of our own. Well, if I couldn't scare up a bunch of fellows who had as much horse sense as some of the high-collared office men officials I've seen in a mission or two, I'd feel ashamed of my kind. They may not be on to the technical terms of the church, but I guess they could learn all right.

As for doing the business, leave that to the men who are doing it all the time in their own organizations. It surely cannot be very much more complicated. Perhaps they couldn't pay all the bills, but why can't the up-town church form a sort of partnership with the down-town mission which would be the real thing? This would be a whole lot more satisfactory than the way in which they are now running the works.

I don't imagine that workingmen would crowd into every church that was free from this system, but they certainly won't take hold of one that is governed in this way. The officials don't expect very much of the people either in the way of financial support or otherwise, and the mission people do not disappoint them.

A couple of Sundays ago I attended the service in an up-town church. I was very well received by the usher, and the people seemed rather pleasant, but I didn't wait to meet any of them. Why should I? I wasn't in their class, and probably never will be. I know that well enough. And I don't propose to get into any kind of a deal in which I can't hold up my end. I can't dress as well as they can, neither could I entertain as they do. I would constantly find myself in an inferior position, socially and financially, so—no rich man's church for me, no matter how welcome I may be. The fellows in the shop tell the story of a preacher who put

on a pair of overalls and attended a number of churches to see how a "genuine" workingman would be welcomed. They felt quite indignant about it, because, they said, no self-respecting workingman would go to church that way. He'd pull off his overalls, put on the best clothes that he had, and go to church like any other man.

There is what is known as an "institutional" church near by, which is open every night and nearly all day, and in which they have all sorts of things going on. I like that immensely, so far as the idea is concerned. It would seem to indicate that these church folks have an interest in us seven days in the week. But somehow I can't get away from the notion that they are trying to use these meetings as a bait to work in their religion. I don't object to religion, but I hate like everything to feel, or to give others a chance to feel, that I have been euchred into a thing. If I get religion, I want it straight and aboveboard. I won't be tricked into it.

For ten days, recently, the preachers of New York held what they call a "noonday shop campaign." They came into the shops to talk to the men about religious subjects. As our plant covers so much space, and largely because the men will not go into another department for a meeting, it was decided to have three meetings in as many different departments. We had three dif-

ferent preachers. I attended all of the meetings. They had some pretty good singing, and the boys liked that. There was always a cornetist who played for ten minutes. The fellows expected him to begin with the long-meter doxology. He nearly stunned them by playing the latest ragtime. That fellow was sure on to his job. It made the boys finish their lunches much sooner than usual. Then they began to crowd around him. He played some extra tunes that the men wanted, and by the time the preacher took hold he had the whole bunch in pretty good humour.

But the preacher lost his grip. Really, he never got it. His first words queered him. "Now, men," he said, "we've come down to-day to do you good." Then he looked over his audience with a sickly kind of a grin, as though he expected the crowd to cheer him because he had thusly made a martyr of himself. From where I stood I could see the wink being passed all through the crowd. Some of the men began to leave.

"You know we are all workingmen. I am a workingman too," he went on. He certainly didn't look it.

"Whereas you toil with your hands, I toil with my brain." I could see some of the fellows who were going to night-school five evenings a week, and some of the men who are compelled

to do more hard thinking than he seemed to have done, put on a look of disgust.

Well, as I say, he didn't make good. While he was praying—he prayed five full minutes—half the crowd went. He had only seven minutes and a handful of men left. Few of these remained to the end. He wore a clerical vest and a long-tailed coat, with all the rest of it that goes with that style of a preacher. He never came back.

The following day we got another specimen. He began with a kind of a swagger air, which I suppose he thought was very fetching. He half-apologized for being a preacher, for which the boys heartily despised him. They hate a coward. If he has no use for the ministry, why in the name of common sense doesn't he quit the job and earn an honest living? He certainly failed to make a hit, and that was the last we saw of him. The next day not quite so many men came, but there was still a pretty good crowd. After the cornetist got through, a young fellow stepped on to a machine and began to talk in an off-hand way about the six mechanical principles that enter into the manufacture of machinery. He at once got every fellow's attention. He was meeting them on their own ground. That chap didn't seem to be preaching at all, but before he got through he landed some body blows that most of us remember. Instead of the men leav-

ing, others kept coming until he had more than the first fellow started off with. He spoke every day for a week.

The boys liked his meetings. They asked the preacher—for he was a preacher, we found out afterwards—to come once a week for a regular meeting. He has consented to do so. They say that they'll chip in and buy a little organ, and they want some regular hymn-books, too. One of the men has already started in to make a box to keep them in. I never dreamed that the men could become so interested in a straight-out religious proposition. It just shows what a real flesh-and-blood, get-up-and-get kind of a preacher can accomplish. It isn't so much what a preacher does, as what he is, that counts. The fellows seem to have sized up these men at once, and they evidently gave them their right measure.

But why is it necessary for a preacher, whose business, I take it, is to get alongside of men so as to help them, to be so densely ignorant about even the commonest things that concern workingmen? Many of them seem all up in the air—like that first specimen that came into the shop. There wasn't a single point of contact between him and the men that he was addressing, and the men knew it. There is no doubt that he was a good man and that he meant well, but it requires more than that. Our preacher—we call him that

already—the one who is going to hold "church" for us—seems to know. There's something human about him. He seems to appreciate how hard it is, sometimes, to do right and to be right.

But there is a better day coming. I believe it because the preachers are taking hold of things in a new way. They are studying our problems from our view-point. The Central Federated Union in New York has received fraternal delegates from at least four different ministers' associations. These men meet regularly on Sunday afternoons with the delegates from the local unions of the city, and I am sure that they are getting a new notion of what the labour movement stands for. On the other hand, the Central Body is sending fraternal delegates to the ministers' associations. They will probably learn some things about ministers and the churches that they never knew before. I understand that this plan is in operation in about one hundred cities throughout the United States.

Yours, SAM.

VI

MY ANARCHIST FRIEND

Dear Jim:

During the past week I have been working with a genuine Anarchist. No doubt there stands before your mind's eye a squat-looking, beer-smelling, long-whiskered, fire-eating, bomb-loaded foreigner. But you have another guess coming. Balzer is perfectly harmless. He wouldn't hurt a fly. Why, he doesn't even eat meat, because he so thoroughly hates the sight and smell of blood. When I first heard him spoken of as an Anarchist, I shuddered. I couldn't quite understand why he was permitted to work here. I wondered why somebody did not start a movement to have him deported. But since I've gotten to know him, I've come to believe that there are some other citizens who are regarded as being desirable, but who should be exiled before the government tries its hand in dealing with Balzer's kind. Now Balzer is a good deal of a dreamer. That's what you and I would say. He is what is known as a *philosophical* Anarchist. About the first day that I worked on the job with him, I timidly asked him if he had ever thrown a bomb.

"No, I never have," he replied. "Not all the men who throw bombs are real Anarchists, nor do all Anarchists throw bombs. Men throw bombs because of their natural wickedness. Comparatively few Anarchists, as I know them, would kill their fellow-men. As a matter of fact, many of them are non-resistants. We claim Tolstoi as a brother. These Anarchists who destroy life are usually men who have been seized with a frenzied desire to right in a big hurry the evils of society. They do our cause more harm than good. They are the revolutionary Anarchists. Often they are formed into revolutionary societies, especially in those countries where peaceful agitation seems almost non-effective, and then they proceed to destroy the representatives of the government, because, principally, by so doing, they will attract attention to the evils which they are fighting. But the philosophical Anarchists are far more numerous than the bomb-throwing kind, and while they are not so active in their propaganda methods, nor do they make as much noise, they are nevertheless doing a great deal of educational work."

"But what are you driving at, Balzer," I asked him. "What do you want to accomplish?"

"That's just it,—you always want to accomplish something. Then you introduce a multitude of laws—so that your lawyers may find loopholes through which their rich clients may

escape the penalty of their wrong-doing, while they maintain their exalted place in society; meanwhile you hope to compel the 'hoi polloi' to do right by virtue of the power which lies in the policeman's club. It cannot be done. You simply cannot force a man to be good. The philosophical method is to create so high a standard of living in a community, that no one will be respected unless he lives up to that standard of morality. Practically every man will be *boycotted* into living a righteous life, because the sentiment of the community demands it. He will be ostracized—he will be an outcast, unless he does so—that will be his prison. All the machinery and power of the law could not get Rockefeller to open his mouth concerning the supposed misdoing of his Standard Oil Company. No matter what the newspapers said about him, he remained silent. But when the Church, for which he seems to care, began to talk about 'tainted money' and call into question certain of his acts, then, for the first time, he tried to explain and square himself. That's what I mean."

"But, Balzer," I still insisted, "isn't that rather hazy? Do you suppose that many men would do right, or, on the other hand, that many would disregard what has heretofore been recognized as law, simply because there is a kind of an understanding to that effect among the citizens in a particular town or community?"

"Yes, I do. In the first place, I do not require a law to compel me to love my wife and children. I never think of law in my home. Love reigns there. We are rapidly getting away from the idea of punishing children, excepting through love, even though Solomon did say that sparing the rod would spoil the child. Furthermore, as a citizen of this country, I never think of the law. I simply go about my business, feeling that everything must be all right so far as I am concerned, because I just naturally want to do the right thing. And I am simply an average citizen. You say that it is for your lawless citizen that laws are enacted. But I say, these laws are being evaded by those who should really receive the heaviest penalty, because their sins are social and economic. They are cold-blooded in their schemes to outdo their fellows—to grind those who should be treated as their brothers. Actually, our present system permits them to become our so-called captains of industry, and leading citizens, and there seems no way of getting at them, excepting through the educated moral sense of the community. On the other hand, the poor man who commits a theft of a loaf of bread to save his family from starvation, has the full penalty of the law inflicted upon him, so that he may serve his fellow-citizens as a horrible 'example.' If anything, this should be reversed. It is not even fair to apply the same

law to different individuals. There is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals. That poor fellow who stole the bread was probably cursed into the world. He has had none of the advantages of the man who has been raised in a Christian home, with all that that implies, and yet, the same standard of morality is expected of him. Under an Anarchistic régime, this would be practically impossible. Every man would be treated according to the opportunities that have been his in making of himself the best kind of a citizen. He that has little, of him little will be expected, while he that has much, shall become the servant of all.

"You know," he went on, "that in New England there are certain blue laws which nobody thinks of enforcing, because the sentiment of the community is against them. The same thing is true in every state and city. This is practically a state of anarchy."

Last Sunday afternoon I attended the Anarchist meeting presided over by Balzer. There were about two hundred men, women and children present. They had some excellent music, a young man about eighteen—an apprentice in our shop—playing the violin, while Balzer's daughters sang a duet, which was really quite well done. Balzer himself gave the address. The thing about it that impressed me was not the philosophy of his argument, but his earnest

appeal to the audience to live the simple, natural life. I could easily have riddled some of his statements, and I wondered what attracted those who came, but I could not help seeing that the human element was made so strong that the whole thing became very real to them.

Balzer isn't a member of the union. I suppose that the union has too many rules to fit his philosophy. But there are few men who are more willing to do a fellow a good turn than he is. He'll sit up nights with a "comrade," or some one else who isn't a comrade; he will make sacrifices that would put many another chap to shame. He will give away his wages to the poor of the neighbourhood, and try to help them in every possible way. The children are immensely fond of him, and will follow him through the streets, clinging to his arms and legs, and calling him "Papa Balzer." Maybe he's a freak, but he's certainly doing more good than harm, and I'm glad to count him as one of my friends.

Yours,

SAM.

VII

EAST SIDE CROWDS AND FOREIGN MISSIONS

Dear Jim:

There are twenty-two families in our tenement—four on each of the five floors and two in the basement. Perhaps the story of the family that used their bath-tub for a coal bin, covering it at night with boards and a mattress for a roomer, has reached even you. I don't know where it originated, but I have an impression that it's a newspaper yarn. A real bath-tub would be such a luxury and the rental of an apartment containing one would be so great that no one but a fool would think of doing such a thing. If it were a matter of making money out of it, it would be more businesslike to hire out the room to one's neighbours, who crave the luxury of a genuine bath. But seriously, most of my friends and neighbours want to be clean. It is pathetic, sometimes, to see how hard they try to keep out the dirt. There is so much of it where there are so many people, that it is difficult to conquer it, but many of them succeed—at least, so far as human limitations will permit. There are some who become discouraged and let

things slide, but most workingmen's wives are everlastingly busy with their housework, and they deserve great credit for it.

As early as five o'clock in the morning at the free baths down by the river, the docks are crowded with workingmen who want a plunge before beginning their day's work. But there are many more at night, and on Sunday, if they can keep out of the way of the policemen, they swim right off the docks.

There might be some justification for storing coal even in a bath-tub, because there is no place to keep it in quantities, excepting down in the cellar, where each family is given a little closet-like affair in which to keep their miscellaneous belongings. But there isn't much fun in lugging a scuttle of coal to the third or fourth floor, so practically everybody buys coal by the pail and has the coalman bring it up, although it costs about three times as much as buying it by the ton. The same is true of flour and about everything else that we need in the way of food. That's what makes the cost of living higher than most folks imagine—more, even, than it costs the rich, for the same things. And we pay cash for everything, too. Strange as it may seem, we pay higher rent, proportionately, than is being paid by many an up-town family, for the same space. There are really some advantages in being rich—it is so much cheaper to live!

Needless to say, there is considerable overcrowding in our neighbourhood. I've never had a chance to count my neighbours, but I would estimate that there are at least one hundred and fifty people in our tenement. Some of the tenements have more than that. In one of the five acre blocks in another part of town, there are nearly seven thousand persons living—more than twice as many as live in Petersburg. Another block on the East Side contains 1,672 persons per acre. In a little "tract" of fifty acres, there are more people than live in the entire state of Nevada. My home is in the midst of the most densely populated part of the world. Talk about China and London—they aren't in it compared with us.

I used to hear that the lower East Side was inhabited altogether by foreigners. There are thousands of people here who were born right in New York, sometimes in the very houses in which they are now living. Most of these native born people—sons and daughters of foreigners, in nearly every case, hate the foreigners, especially the "sheenys" as they call the Jews. But the Jews are making good. Their children almost invariably stand at the head of their classes in the public schools, and they are usually the most respectful youngsters in the neighbourhood. They take advantage of everything that is offered them in the social settle-

ments, the missions and every other institution which presents any kind of privilege.

They say that during recent years forty Protestant churches moved out of the district below Twentieth Street, while three hundred thousand people moved in, and they were all working people. Some of us are wondering wherein lies the friendship of the Church for us. I heard of a church some time ago that sold its property because there were so many foreigners in the neighbourhood, then they sent the money to the Board of Foreign Missions. Curious, isn't it, that they could not see the needs of the foreigners nearer home.

Whether it is pure cussedness on their part, or whether it is really because they want to see something done for their neighbours, or possibly because of their general ignorance of the entire subject—I have never met a workingman, unless he belonged to the Church—who believes in foreign missions. If the foreign mission folks are really doing business that counts, and I am sure that they must be doing work of a big, broad kind, they ought to get busy among workingmen. I'm pretty sure that the story of their hospital and their school work in foreign lands, would make a big hit for the Church at home, among the fellows who don't care a rap for the Church to-day, because they believe that it's all up in the air or has to do simply with the hereafter.

But these church folks take too much for granted. They imagine that we ought to know all about what they are doing. We don't. I suppose that the average fellow in the shop knows as much about the church around the corner, as he knows about its mission work in Timbuctoo—and he cares about as much. It doesn't enter into his life. It is a thing separate and apart from him. Once in a while they will get out a couple of thousand cards or dodgers, advertising a special preacher or a particular meeting, but this method doesn't impress the men. They pay little attention to it. If they had an especially good opinion of the Church to start with, all that would be necessary to get the crowd would be to send out such a notice, but the Church works in an unfavourable atmosphere.

The advertising managers of some of the big business enterprises that use the newspapers and the magazines could give the Church some pointers on how to create a better understanding among the people. Then it will be up to the Church to deliver the goods. The church managers do not seem to realize that we know that we don't have to go to church. They can't speak with any authority on the subject, because there is no command, even in the Bible, for a godless workingman or any other heathen to go to their church, and workingmen know it.

Some day they'll raise up a fellow who will make the Church the most attractive proposition on the pike—and he won't have to use disgraceful methods, either. He will simply put the church next to its real job—the winning of the common people, who once heard Christ gladly.

When that is done, there won't be very much trouble about the question of the foreigners in the lower end of New York. When they stop talking about building up the churches and say more about building up the people, they will begin to get on to their job. When they get hold of the fact that the Church is simply a means to an end and not an end in itself, then they will attract the common folks, who are always attracted by unselfishness. That is, they are attracted in the end. But most churches want to see the end before they begin. They forget that full churches do not come on mere promises. They come as the result of promises fulfilled. Not simply that certain people, somewhere, or at some time, received certain blessings because they attended church, but did they get the real thing in that particular church, and has that church got some more of the same thing—that's what will tell.

Most of the fellows in the shop attended Sunday-school when they were youngsters. They could join in singing the old familiar Sunday-

school tunes, if they would. And they like them, too. There seems to be a tender place in their hearts for the Sunday-school, no matter what they may think of the Church. The fellows that I know are about as orthodox as the average preacher. They have no use for infidel lecturers. Neither are they attracted by the so-called liberal theology. If they were, the Unitarian and the Universalist churches would be crowded by workingmen. But workingmen don't attend these churches. The bosses are the supporters of "liberal" churches. I tell you, it's the heart appeal that counts for most, every time. It seems to catch the best and the worst of us. And there are both kinds among the workingmen.

I feel sorry for the preachers. Some are getting a pretty good thing out of it, but the great majority, as I've met and heard about them, have a pretty tough time of it. The union hod-carrier gets more money in New York City on the first day that he goes to work, and without any previous experience, than is paid hundreds of preachers who spent about fifteen years, at a great sacrifice, in getting the training for their life's work. We expect more of them than we do of the average man, morally, socially, intellectually, and in their general make-up. They do a lot of extra work for the community, without any extra pay. As soon as a preacher gets a

little beyond forty he is likely to be out of a job, or else he is compelled to get a poorer one. They say that in at least one big denomination, one preacher out of every eight is compelled to apply to the Church for charity, either for himself or for his family, even though his salary has been paid steadily.

The preachers ought to join a labour union. They have been depending on the Lord to help them out with mean, stingy congregations, but the Lord helps those who help themselves.

Yours, SAM.

VIII

CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM AND THE GENUINE ARTICLE

Dear Jim:

I'm not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I'll bet a week's wages that the next ten years will see some mighty big changes on the industrial horizon. This is the era of the common man. The plain folks—the masses—are asserting themselves as never before. I can't imagine any force big enough to stop their onward march. That's the way I size up things as I see the situation in New York. I couldn't begin to tell you of the doings which have led me to this conclusion. But I can tell you that I have never seen such hopefulness and such enthusiasm among working people as I have seen in meetings and conferences made up of even those who are hardest pressed. As a matter of fact, the poor Russian Jews from the East Side sweat shops are a bigger factor in the social propaganda than any other class. I suppose that this is due to the fact that they got such hard knocks in the old country. You can't get into any kind of a meeting which has for its object the bettering of conditions

among workingmen, without running into a bunch of Jewish agitators. There are eight hundred thousand of them in New York, too. Not all agitators, of course, but Jews.

During the past winter a Fifth Avenue church which had been having merely a handful at its Sunday night meetings, invited a Socialist to give addresses on popular labour subjects, which were followed by a free-for-all discussion in the chapel. For a time the thing didn't attract much attention, but one day a newspaper took hold of it and made sport of it. The result was that the church was soon filled, and the managers of the affair had to issue tickets of admission for the second meeting. I went over one night, and just barely squeezed in.

It was a bit odd to see the Socialist preacher march in behind the rector with a long, soldier-like stride. He was dressed in the black gown of an Episcopalian minister; but instead of the regular orthodox choker, he wore an ordinary collar and the loose-flowing tie which Socialists and other folks with temperaments like to wear. He delivered a mild sort of a sermon on social reform, which might come from most any other kind of a preacher without creating any unusual excitement. But the people in the second meeting in the chapel put on the cracker. This meeting wasn't anything like your average church "after meeting." There was no exhorting and

no pleading. It was straight from the shoulder hitting. Nobody apologized for anything that he said. I wondered what the millionaire vestrymen must have thought of the affair. They certainly got plenty of hot shot fired into them. That is, it was aimed at them, all right. Whether or not it landed is another proposition. But the thing that impressed me was the fact that nearly everybody who spoke had a foreign accent, and most of them were Jews—young fellows who evidently had been reading up on the subject. It would have taken a world beater of an encyclopedia to answer all of their questions. The way the rector handled the crowd was simply great. He never once lost his temper, even though some of the things that were said were direct flings at him. Sometimes he smiled when I expected to see him fly off the handle. For a preacher, he was certainly on to the job.

I don't know how much good was actually accomplished by these meetings, but although it gave the soreheads a chance to get off their crazy notions, it also permitted many an honest workingman to openly express his opinion on the social questions of the day and this made him feel much better. I rather think, however, that the church folks got the most good out of it, because they got right up against the things that are being talked about on the East Side. If that rector's sermons have ever been purely academic,

I'll bet that this experience will knock all of the cobwebs out of them. As a result of these meetings, other churches have gone into the thing, until it has developed into a regular talk-fest, especially for the Socialists, who never miss a chance to get a platform. At one of the meetings held in another part of town, a chap got up and after describing the poverty of working people, he said, with a great flourish: "That's what makes people sin: you wipe out poverty from the individual man's life, and sin will go with it."

"Then I suppose you would say that all of the capitalists are saints," quietly answered the preacher. Even the Socialists laughed at the uncomfortable orator.

We are hearing a good deal about the "Christian Socialists" these days. There are several organizations composed of men and women who want to be called by that name. I don't see just why they tack on the word "Christian," unless there is something about the genuine unadulterated article that isn't "Christian." But it is to laugh, for the political Socialists, most of whom aren't idealists, particularly, but just practical politicians, haven't much use for the Christian brand of Socialism which has become so persistently aggressive. They had a first-class row about the church proposition at their recent convention in Chicago—the biggest squabble of the convention, in fact, and that's saying a good deal,

but the debaters seemed to be practically all on one side, judging by the Socialist newspaper reports. They were "again" the Church and religion, although they finally told the rest of the Socialists throughout the country that they were entitled to any kind of religion or no religion at all—just as they saw fit. Which, of course, was very informing in this land of the free and home of the brave.

Just for a joke, a writer in the *International Socialist Review* said that as the Church people had organized a "Christian Socialist Fellowship," he proposed to start a "Hebrew Socialist Fellowship." This immediately raised a storm of protest, the matter being taken seriously. The editor "trusts that the moral of the incident will not be lost on the next Socialist who thinks of starting another Fellowship or Association."

The Christian Socialists have just held their annual convention. Eugene Debs, the Socialist candidate for President of the United States, gave one of the addresses. He was welcomed as another Lincoln or Washington. Some folks in the meeting put it even stronger than that. No position or honour or title seemed too great for their guest. All this must have seemed like a huge joke to "Gene," who certainly hasn't such notions about himself, and who has for years been roasting the preachers and the churches to a finish. He once made the remark to a big crowd

of workingmen that "whereas in former days we had wooden churches and granite preachers, we now have granite churches and wooden preachers."

But again the Jews stormed the meeting. Carnegie Hall, which holds several thousand people, was used on Sunday afternoon for a popular mass meeting. Over one-half of the audience was composed of Hebrews.

Most of the men and women who are in the Christian Socialist movement imagine that workingmen—especially the trades-unionists—are falling all over each other to get into the Socialist party. They're dead wrong. There are few organizations which are fighting Socialism harder than are the trades-unionists. The Socialists have been long trying to put the trades-unions out of business, because they have felt that the labour unions have been standing in the way of the progress of Socialism by being too easily satisfied. Most of the rows in labour union meetings are caused by the constant conflict between Socialists and bona fide unionists. The Socialists call our leaders "labour fakirs" because they will not go the limit with them in their hot-air schemes; at the same time they take everything that comes their way through the efforts of these same "labour fakirs." They're a queer lot. At almost every meeting one of them will spring on us a new resolution, denouncing something or

other, and ending with a vague kind of a recommendation which is supposed to represent the attitude of Socialism towards that particular proposition. But there is nothing but words, words, words. They must sit up nights to think them out. These resolutions are always voted down in our union on general principles. And as no one understands what they mean, anyway, we have no heartaches because we have done the wrong thing and thus stopped the "onward march of progress."

At the meetings of the American Federation of Labour, there have been annual fights on the "Socialist resolutions," which are regularly introduced and just as regularly fired out. It has gotten to the point that it really does not matter what the resolution may call for, it will be voted down simply because it was introduced by Victor Berger, the leader of the Socialist wing, or some other Socialist in that faithful group of about twenty, who annually make their pilgrimage to the Federation of Labour Convention. As there are about four hundred delegates, they can't do very much damage by their votes. To be sure, they do get their speeches into the papers —especially their own papers, and this makes so much more propaganda stuff for them. But I've noticed that every night of the ten days' session of the labour convention, this group of twenty is out on the streets of the city in which the con-

vention is being held, holding open-air meetings. And they generally get the crowd.

There are some things about these Socialists that I admire immensely, although most of their doctrines don't appeal to me at all. In the first place, they go after the people. They have no fine buildings or churches, and very little money. Their speakers are poorly paid or not paid at all. They seem to be everlastingly at it. Not only during a political campaign, but all the year round, and every year. Every Socialist convert becomes a Socialist propagandist. His "falling from grace" is next to impossible. They never seem to get discouraged. The harder you hit them and the oftener you land them in jail, the more they seem to enjoy it. The funny thing about their preaching is that they do not promise you an immediate cinch, whatever they may offer in the future. They promise persecution and trouble and even death, but their call to come and suffer does attract. And yet, their preaching is hopeful. Never in their meetings does their discussion send away men doubtful as to the final success of Socialism, nor do they have any doubt as to its effectiveness as a cure-all for the evils in human society. They just make a business of it. There may be some men in the shop who are church-members or lodge men, and keep it quiet. But there isn't a Socialist in the shop or the union who isn't known.

You can't very well get them to talk about anything else. With all this in their favour, it isn't to be wondered at that they are making progress.

But in most things they are very impractical. They don't seem to consider that in any kind of a social system, you've got to include every kind of men. A little while ago a prominent Socialist around here advocated the founding of a "Home Colony," from which all "ignorant" and "vulgar" people were to be excluded. He would have no place for them in his model community. I wonder where most of us common folks would come in on such a scheme? To be sure, any company of men and women have a perfect right to form an exclusive colony, so that they may be rid of the men and women and children who are poor and ignorant, unlovely and unfortunate, but the fact remains that the majority of us are just these things, and we simply must be reckoned with. I can't get away from the fact that any movement, to really succeed, must take into account all the sin and the meanness that lie deep in the hearts of men, for most of us are mean and selfish. Somehow, it must be a good thing to be compelled to mingle with even the ignorant and the vulgar. For never yet has it failed that exclusiveness bred selfishness and contempt for the masses of the people, of whom God made so many. The real test of a social system is its ability to take the very worst man and make him

a good man. The "common" man—he is the fellow who must be met on his own ground, and no real progress can be made unless we take him with us. Yours,

SAM.

IX

STRIKING ON THE APPRENTICESHIP PROPOSITION

Dear Jim:

The thing simply had to come. I'm out on a strike! It wasn't the work of the business agent, or walking delegate, as he is sometimes called—the men themselves seemed determined to go out, in spite of all that he could do to prevent them. His job is no cinch. He got a terrific roasting at one of our recent meetings. He was making his regular report, telling about the sick members that he had visited, the men for whom he had found employment, those who needed help of various kinds, and so on, when a hot-headed fellow blazed at him:

"Why didn't you call a strike at Owen's? They've got six non-union men in that shop."

"I have seen them all," Hutchins replied, "and given them application blanks for membership in the union. They promised to come in as soon as they could."

Then another chap jumped on him:

"You know that Fisher is hiring more appren-

tices than our contract permits—why don't you make trouble for him?"

"Because we'll soon have troubles enough of our own," said the business agent. "If I'm not greatly mistaken, we'll have the fight of our lives in less than a year, and we can't afford to butt into things at this stage of the game. We might better spend our time getting ready for something big, and hit hard when we do strike."

But the restless youngsters, all of them unmarried and with no particular responsibilities, gave him no peace. Night after night they got after him, working up the rest of the men, until finally it was voted to make a fight on our shop because the old man had hired more apprentices than our laws allowed. While the apprenticeship question was the thing upon which we struck, there are quite a good many other grievances that came out at a meeting of the strikers. Not any one of them amounts to very much in itself, but when they were discussed at our meeting and stacked up, it looked as though we were a pretty badly used set of men. The wonder was that we had so long stood these conditions without making a protest!

For some inconceivable reason, the old man has given the management of affairs into the hands of the Assistant Super. Howell happens to be out West, where he went to superintend a ticklish job, but the boss might better have seen

our representative than to give the whole matter into the hands of this fresh kid. To make things worse, the Assistant Super has declared that he will not see our business agent. He insists that he will deal only with a committee of our own men. On the face of it, that seems like a reasonable proposition. But any fellow who dared go to the office and make a fight for us would be a marked man as long as he remained in that shop. He probably wouldn't stay there very long, because he would be conveniently dropped as a trouble-maker, when the chance came. Naturally, a man is compelled to say some strong things, no matter how polite he may want to be, when he is making a fight for a crowd of men who feel that they are being wronged. For that reason we prefer to have the business agent represent us, because the office can't touch him. Anyway, I'd like to know the difference between our business agent and the boss's business agent. Young Smarty doesn't own any stock in the company. He simply represents the stockholders. They have a perfect right to have him make a deal for them. But why haven't we the same right? They'll have to show me.

There are just two fellows who did not go out —Big Dan and the old fellow who "never went out on strike." Dan came out at noon about three days ago, to buy a can of beer. We had

been urged to keep away from the shop, only the pickets being on guard. But there were some other fellows around who were looking for trouble. They had heard about the chaps who were at work, and when Dan came through the gate they lined up on the sidewalk and paid him their respects. It was when he came back from the saloon that they fixed him good and plenty. One of them stepped up behind him and kicked his bucket of beer clear across the street. Naturally, Dan objected. He objected with his fists. But the gang was too much for him. When he got up, his own mother wouldn't have known him. He was able to go home that night, and, to the surprise of the picket, he showed up the next morning, but he has given up drinking beer. Rather a tough way of giving a lesson in temperance, isn't it? But, do you know, while there probably isn't a man on strike who would have done Dan that way, there wasn't a bit of sympathy expressed for him when the pickets reported this little episode at the meeting of the strikers next morning. They have great contempt for the scabs who are coming in to take our places, but they hate, with all the hatred of which they are capable, the fellow who is a traitor to their cause. I am told that a big Swede is running my machine—old "13." May his—well, never mind! He'll get his all right, if the boys ever get back. The term "scab," of which

you have heard so much, is applied only to the fellow who takes another man's job during a strike. It is not used when speaking of the ordinary non-union man in times of peace.

They have put the office men at work in the shop. That is, those of them who have served their time and are familiar with the machine tools. Somehow, the boys do not have it in for the office men for doing this work. I mean that they don't dislike them any more than they would under ordinary circumstances. There isn't much love lost between them anyway. With these men and the foremen, the two traitors, and about fifty scabs, they are getting out the repair work, but everything else is at a standstill, and it resolves itself into a question as to who can hold out longest. We have a strike fund that will last a couple of months, but six dollars for single men and eight dollars for those who are married don't pay many bills. Just to encourage us, the district business agent came into our meeting yesterday and gave us a pretty good "jollying." He told of some of his experiences with the bosses in other strikes, and how he had made monkeys of them all. Almost every second word was an oath. Some of the boys wouldn't stand for his language, and they suggested that he cut it out. But he couldn't help it. Every little while he let loose again in telling about what he had accomplished. His speech

didn't help very much, because he was too much of a "four-flusher." In other words, he was a big bluffer. Our own little fellow, while not so great in the fireworks line, says more in three minutes than his superior can say in half an hour. The regular "walking delegate" who looks after local business is very much like the rest of us. This officer is changed quite often, but it brings out into the open some pretty good fellows. They get a fair day's wages for their salary, and it keeps them hustling, as a rule, to earn it. They don't work as steadily as the rest of us, but when they do work there's something doing. Sometimes our local man is called to other cities to help out, but as a rule he sticks close to his job around here. And, as I said before, he has troubles enough of his own.

It is when the business agent goes higher up that he sometimes gets away from the boys. He becomes a sort of professional man, sits in his office, or talks to the fellows from the platform or through the Journal. That isn't always satisfactory either to him or to us; but I suppose it is one of the penalties of the job.

Because there is this separation, you can easily understand that sometimes there is a little misunderstanding. The National officers are always being accused of something or other, the stories, as a rule, being started by outsiders, although sometimes they originate with some fellows who

want their jobs. But it is remarkable that the rank and file thoroughly believe in O'Connell, our National President, and in nearly every other official. And these men do not make any bids for popularity, either. They just go ahead on the job to which they have been elected by a popular ballot, and try to make good. We are quite satisfied with our officials, in spite of the trouble-makers.

A little while ago one of them addressed a mass-meeting of the machinists in New York and vicinity, and we presented him with a gold-headed umbrella and a diamond ring. I suppose that already some lawyer-secretary of a manufacturers' association has called attention to these unusual adornments of our official and accused him of grafting, or "How could a labour leader afford to wear a diamond ring and sport a big gold-headed umbrella?"

But to come back to the strike and its cause.

I suppose you are wondering why we fellows should go out on strike principally because there are too many apprentices in the shop. Why shouldn't any American boy be permitted to learn any trade? That's what the newspapers and the bosses' journal are asking. If the unions keep up this "pernicious fight," they say there will soon be no more machinists. "The demand is already greater than the supply." In the first place, the latter statement is not true. I dis-

covered that when I came here to look for a job. Some of the bosses almost kicked me out of their offices, until I felt like joining those Socialists that I wrote you about. Furthermore, it isn't the machinists' union that is preventing boys from learning a trade. The bosses themselves are responsible for this. There is hardly a shop in town in which, under ordinary conditions, a boy will be turned out a full-fledged machinist. He stands a pretty good chance in a small shop, but in the big ones he will probably become a "specialist." He is hired at about three dollars a week, and put to work on a machine. He is kept at work on this machine—unless he is an unusual youngster and kicks hard—for an indefinite period. Sometimes he never gets away from it. We have a screw-making machine in the shop which trims a brass rod to the required thickness, cuts the thread, carves out a little shoulder, smooths off the head, and nips it off the rod, completed, in less time than it has taken me to write this sentence. All that the apprentice has to do is to shove in a long brass rod at one end, from which the machine helps itself. He never touches the screw from start to finish, neither does he bother much with the machine. He is responsible for six such machines. That is, he feeds six. The machine does the rest. When he runs one of the old standard machine tools, he is able, in about a year or so, to earn

pretty nearly as much as a regular machinist on that kind of a job, but his pay is advanced only about a dollar a week. He spoils more work, and it may not be as good in all respects, but it goes. When the boy finishes his apprenticeship and is ready for a journeyman's wages, he is also ready to be fired, and that is what often happens to him, unless he will work for very small wages. The Super himself told me some time ago that not one boy in twenty amounts to anything after he has finished his apprenticeship. So that the plan not only results in cutting out the mechanic whose place the apprentice has taken, but the boy himself never becomes a full-fledged machinist. That's why there are so many incompetents, and that's why the union is fighting the apprenticeship proposition. It isn't all a disinterested fight in favour of the boy, because you can see how it affects the journeyman, but indirectly it is really a fight for our American boys, who are fast being crowded out by foreign mechanics, who come here better trained than the average American machinist. The bosses are not philanthropists. They are in business in order to make dividends. They hire as many apprentices as they can get hold of, squeeze them dry, and then throw them out. If they were compelled to hire fewer boys, the boys who are hired would stand a better show.

Talking about machine tools—you know that

when machinery was first introduced in other industries, we machinists flattered ourselves that we would be right in it; but since they have begun making machines to make machines, and to turn out still other machines that make the machines that made these machines, we too are in danger of being turned into machines. That is, we may become parts of machines—the least important part—a necessary evil. We are not worth as much as a machine to the boss, but we cause him a great deal more trouble.

Trade schools have been started for the purpose of teaching boys to become all-round mechanics. It is supposed that this will help, and I guess it will, to some extent. Employers' associations are strongly backing these enterprises, but in most cases these schools become recruiting stations for scabs when a strike is on. Most of our fellows believe that they are run principally for this purpose. The boys are attracted by the promise that graduates are given positions as foremen and superintendents upon graduation. Now, anybody who knows anything about any of the trades knows how ridiculous such a promise must be. There is quite a difference between using the playthings practiced upon in the average trade school and the real things that the youngster will be up against in the shop. He will find that even in ordinary practice he has a few things to learn; and as for

superintending skilled mechanics—it is preposterous!

What's going to be done in regard to the apprentice question is a problem. We simply cannot continue to set up an artificial barrier. I think that every level-headed machinist realizes this. And the employers probably will not go out of their way to teach a boy the trade satisfactorily when they have so little use for skilled mechanics. They will always need a limited number, but the day has gone by when your average machinist will be in great demand, excepting in small shops and in repair shops. They will probably always need the machinists who assemble the products of the machines, but in general there will eventually be just two classes —the fellow who will simply be a machine attendant, and the big man at the top, who does the real brain work, the designing and the superintending. Yours,

SAM.

X

SPIES IN THE SHOP

Dear Jim:

For several days we have known that the doings at our secret conferences were being reported to the office. They knew about our proposition for arbitrating the strike before our committee reached the shop. It was quite evident that there was a spy among us, and we were sure that he was a member of our executive committee. Hutchins quietly got to work, and by a process of elimination he narrowed the thing down to two men. Last night we got the fellow. I need not tell you how it was done, only to say the evidence was "found" in his room. I am a member of the executive committee, so I saw the goods. It seems this chap is in the employ of a detective bureau. A big bunch of correspondence gave away the whole thing, or at least enough of it to indicate to us how the plan is worked. He was hired by this concern at one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month and expenses. The amount of wages that he received from the shop was to be deducted from this. Daily he was to send a report

to his superintendent at headquarters, giving certain detailed information as to what went on in the shop and in the meetings of the labour union. He was instructed to have himself elected to office and appointed on important committees in the labour union. And he was to use his influence against our Grand Lodge officers. For instance, here is a circular-letter which we discovered:

To Operators Everywhere:

You will hear read in the Lodge room in the next few days a referendum vote limiting the term of the Grand Lodge officers to two terms. If it is carried it will put O'Connell and his gang out, they having already served more than the required number of years.

We desire that you do all you can, in any way that you will not be suspicioned, to get the members to vote YES. Also keep this office informed all the time as to the habits of all Grand Lodge officers and business agents. If they drink, how much? Also their attitude towards the fair sex. This is important.

As soon as you read this, return it to this office, so that we will know none of them got away.

The chap was evidently not very particular about returning his letters of instruction. He was never addressed by name. He was always greeted as "Dear N. 47." No one in the shop was supposed to know that he was a spy, not

even the boss himself. The letters were usually signed by "Hercules," who is "the President" of the Detective Agency.

Here is one from a concern in Cleveland, which has been sent out to large employers:

Dear Sir:

This Service makes a specialty of handling labour troubles, either existing or contemplated.

We break strikes in all parts of the United States and Canada, and are prepared to submit a list of references from manufacturers and others who have employed us during the past five years.

We have in our employ experienced guards for the protection of life and property during strikes and lockouts. These men are all over six feet in height, and selected for their ability to handle this class of work. All have seen strike service, many hold State and city police commissions, and should not be confounded with guards furnished by our imitators and recruited from slums of the cities.

We furnish secret operatives of all trades, *Union* or *Non-union*, for work in mill, mine, factory, store, etc., for the purpose of securing inside information.

Is your shop being unionized?

Is your output being restricted?

Is the union running your shop?

Is material being wasted or stolen?

Have you a "shop committee," and who are they?

Do your foremen show favouritism?

Are you losing castings in your foundry?

Do you care to know what is being done at union meetings?

Let us place a mechanic operative with you, and find out.

In handling strikes we take entire charge of the same, furnish necessary guards to protect men while at work or escort them to and from work if boarding outside.

We employ, transport, and deliver non-union men to fill up affected plants.

We charge no premium on such mechanics, but employ them at prices per day you wish to pay them, charging only for the actual time agent may be engaged in securing them.

Men employed by us will be taken to affected plant by our guards and safely delivered, and strikers not permitted to molest them.

We have found from experience that strikes are broken quickest where new men are boarded inside or adjacent to affected plant, and we are prepared to fit up and maintain temporary boarding quarters, furnishing coloured cooks, waiters, etc. Our captains are thoroughly competent to handle such boarding quarters, making same practically self-sustaining. Sanitary arrangements are successfully looked after, and nothing is allowed to go to waste.

Secret men attend all meetings and report proceedings. This service possesses the necessary equipment, such as Winchester rifles, police clubs, cots, blankets, etc., to handle any sized trouble. We are represented in all of the larger cities of the United States and Canada, and a representative will call on you free of charge upon request.

The spy's instructions were to watch the fore-

man and the superintendent as well as the men. The "personal" letters consisted, for the most part, of lessons in a certain kind of shop economics, quotations from such celebrated "political economists" as Elbert Hubbard, and a general exaltation of the spy system as against a square, up-and-down, man-to-man talk about matters concerning which there may be an honest difference of opinion between the boss and his men. The "President" tries to make the miserable Judas believe that he is doing a noble service both to the employer and the employee by carrying nasty little tales about matters which he may easily misunderstand, and in which affairs the fellow gossiped about has absolutely no chance for squaring himself. "No matter how humble his occupation may be," says the "President" concerning his inspector, "he is nevertheless an essential factor in the great engine of human progress."

Frequently references are made to court decisions against organized labour. These are to be talked about at the noon hour among the men. As workingmen do not read very much, the writer says, the inspector is instructed to direct their thoughts into "right channels," which mean always against the labour leader. Socialism, the limitation of output, loafing, the value of the piece-work system, and all the "evils" of trades-unionism are treated in little sermonettes,

which are covered over by a slick hypocrisy that is positively disgusting.

The spy did not deny that he was connected with the Detective Agency. He couldn't very well, because we also had some letters which commended him for the work that he had done, here and elsewhere.

This whole matter has made the men feel bitter. Whatever measure of confidence they had in the old man before the strike has disappeared. There really had been no hard feeling against him among the men. They rather blamed the Assistant Super for the troubles that they have gotten into. We know that he has been lying about us. For instance, we were told that he said to the old man that we were not receiving any strike benefit, and that we could not possibly hold out very long. He knew better. Why should he feel it necessary to misrepresent matters? If only we could get directly at the old man himself, we could easily straighten out most of our troubles, because I'm pretty sure that he'd give us a square deal. Yours,

SAM.

XI

SETTLING THE STRIKE

Dear Jim:

Some unusual things have happened since I last wrote you. The Asst. Super has been fired, for just plain common lying. The old man discovered that he was deliberately misrepresenting the facts in a number of matters, especially as they had to do with the strike. It seems that since the management of the strike had been turned over into his hands, he had been receiving all the reports from the Detective Agency. These reports were systematically doctored by the Asst. Super, the old man simply getting a verbal report as to conditions in the shop and on the outside. There is no doubt that the spy himself exaggerated the real conditions, and the Detective Agency doubled up on the yarn, adding plenty of ginger and tobasco sauce in order to make it more interesting, so that by the time the story reached the old man with the Asst. Super's significant shrugs and tones, the boss must have thought that he had a devil of a lot of fellows to deal with.

One day the story reached him that there was

a plot on foot to do him up. Now the old man is no coward. He is an old timer with lots of fight left in him. It wasn't that he was afraid. But the thought that his own men, many of whom he had worked with in the shop when he himself learned the trade, should turn on him with murderous intent, just about used him up.

I can see how the story started. At one of our meetings—the time that the outside business agent came in to give us a talk—one of the fellows who had come into the shop just a few months before the strike, got up after his talk, and said, rather hotly :—

"I think that we should use the same weapons that the bosses are using—Gatling guns and Winchesters."

Instantly there came hisses from all over the hall.

"Sit down," "Put him out," "Anarchist," "Shut up," the fellows yelled.

Then, for the chap was very much excited, he went on :—

"You fellows are being badly fooled. This hob-nobbing in the National Civic Federation between the leaders of the labour movement and the capitalistic class can bring no good thing to the proletariat. We are being sold into the hands of the enemy by those whom we have elected to fight our battles. They attend banquets and go off on junkets with the captains of

industry (with a sneer) and the men who are hand in glove with the heads of great corporations. They wear full dress suits and high silk hats. They are entertained in the magnificent parlours and hotels of the rich. They are flattered by their wives and their daughters. How can they insist upon the righteous demands of labour? How can they remain class-conscious, after being wined and dined by the very man that we are fighting? And who pays for it all? We, the workingmen of the world. We not only pay for the luxury of our oppressors, but we pay the bills that settle the accounts which are used to silence our leaders.

"It has even reached the White House—this conspiracy against the workingman. Only the other day the President received a delegation of our enemies from the West, and the report has gone out that he favours their side of the case. I say that we should treat the President as the Russian peasantry are treating their royal dukes."

That was the limit. The yell that followed this remark must have been heard a block away. When the fellow was finally rescued, he was scared to death, for some of the men had crowded pretty close to him and threatened to kick him out of the hall.

When quiet was restored, a charge of making an Anarchistic speech was preferred against him. A few days later he was given a fair trial, and

by a unanimous vote, he was fired out of the union.

Evidently the spy made the most of the affair. I don't know, of course, what he reported to headquarters, nor what headquarters reported to the Asst. Super, but whatever they reported, the Asst. Super knew better than to say that we had threatened the old man's life, for he had undoubtedly heard the whole story. When the thing was sifted, and it was plain to the boss that the Asst. Super had misrepresented the case, he fired him so quick that he didn't have time to say "Good-bye" to any of the office force.

It came out too, that the Detective Agency had sent its man into the place without the knowledge or consent of the boss, but soon they began sending him reports of what was supposed to be going on in the shop, all of which was said to be against his interests. They then made him an offer to keep him informed of the doings of the union, besides posting him about the waste of material and all the rest of it, and on the advice of the Asst. Super he made the agreement with the agency. You see, the Asst. Super had it in for most of the foremen because they had refused to give him any information about conditions in the shop, when he got on the job, and he thought that he would get back at them through the stories given him by the spy. The

whole thing is off, now. The spy system has been knocked out, and the men are back at work. I guess that affair of the Anarchist had a lot to do with settling the strike. When the boss got the straight of it, he called in half a dozen of the old fellows who had worked with him, and he had a kind of a "heart to heart" talk with them.

Practically all of the questions in dispute were settled to the satisfaction of the men, excepting that referring to the employment of the apprentices. The old man insisted upon retaining the boys, but he agreed, hereafter, to hire only a limited number. He also said that the scabs would have to stay. At any rate *he* would not put them out. The boys feel good about the settlement, and they are all glad to get back.

It seems strange to find the big Swede running my machine. I was given the one next to it. I had all I could do to keep from knocking off his block. But after a few days I began to feel sorry for the old chap. The fellows had nicknamed him "Sloppy Weather." I don't know why. Perhaps it was because he seems to be always crying. That is, his eyes are weak and teary. He took their jibes so good-naturedly that soon the men jollied him in the same spirit. It seems impossible to insult him. He simply won't be insulted. About every other scab has gone. Big Dan dropped dead on the platform of

a Brooklyn Elevated Station, one morning, shortly after we got back. It was a case of heart failure. He always rushed for boats and trains, just as he rushed his work in the shop. Of course, old Jones is still on deck, but the fellows have come to look upon him as a kind of a freak, and they rather feel that he belongs to another world.

At least one good thing has come out of the strike—we have come to learn more about every other fellow's real worth. Some of the men that we had regarded as cracker-jacks in the labour world, are now down and out. They were great at shooting off their mouths, but when it came to making good, they weren't in it. It was quite plain that they had no brain power and that as leaders they should never be trusted. Unless the fellows forget, they will never again come to the front in any kind of a deal. The question of leadership is really the most important phase of the labour question. This was very clearly brought out in the meetings of the union. Most men are so apt to be led into doing fool things just because another fellow is a good talker. It seems to me that if I were a boss I'd encourage every good man in the shop to join the union, if it were simply to keep the fellows from being stampeded. It isn't the professional labour leader that ordinarily does the mischief. It's some fool bunch in the shop or in the union that

carries everything before it. Of course, the fellows who go into the fight professionally, become the spokesmen for the crowd, but they rarely originate the trouble. Often they are held responsible for what the men themselves have forced upon them. If there were more good men in the union—men who could think and speak clearly—it would result in two desirable things: first, there would be better leadership; and second, the men would fight out in their secret meetings, in a war of words, most of the battles that are now being fought out on the streets of our big cities with the bullet and the bludgeon.

Meanwhile, we are slugging away. We get a good many knocks—those of us who stand for the union, but a fellow must expect that. Even the folks that fought for the early Church got some hard raps. I notice, by the way, that no one in this country is getting many of them for the Church's sake, these days. And things aren't what they should be, either. There is a good deal about this labour movement that suggests to me what the fight of these early crusaders must have been. I can't help but feel that the great Carpenter was a member of the organization of His craft, and I'm pretty sure that Paul, the journeyman tent-maker, belonged to the tent-makers' guild. Anyway, it was among the working people of his day that he had his biggest success, and if the accounts are true, the labour

unions stood by him in the fight for the "big" Church—the Church to which we all belong, even though we aren't Baptists or Methodists or Episcopalians. Yours,

SAM.

XII

LABOUR LEADERS WANTED

Dear Jim:

If you want to hear a good rough and tumble debate on the labour question, you should go to the popular meetings in Cooper Union. As usual, the Jews are in control, but this isn't to be wondered at, because Cooper Union is just on the edge of one of the Jewish districts of New York. But they don't waste much time discussing such questions as: "How Many Angels Can Dance on the Point of a Needle?" as some of their forefathers used to do. Not much. They are too overcrowded in their tenements to have any interest in multiplying the density of population—either celestial or terrestrial. They are there to find out how and where they can get better jobs and more wages. The management invites the best speakers in the country to talk it out with the crowd. Some time ago a well-known politician—maybe you'd call him a statesman—gave the address. It was a good speech—lots of horse-sense. The crowd got back at him, just as soon as it was let loose. Somebody asked him: "What can a man do who is out of

a job and can't find one?" "God knows," replied the speaker. It took a good deal of nerve to give that kind of an answer, because about every other man in the crowd thought that he knew, too. You'd think so, anyway, if you could hear the cock-sure remedies that the "reformers" on the floor spring on the meetings. I've attended most of the meetings this winter. It didn't take me long to find out that the questions are very much the same. I haven't heard a new question asked in some time. That is, the form of the question may be new, and the subject talked about may be different, but the principle involved is the same. The chairman might easily adopt a series of formulas, and arrange the sets of answers in proper order, because they must all be familiar to him by this time. Then he could reply as each question is asked: "This inquiry is answered by formula seven," etc. Of course, there wouldn't be so much excitement about it, and the audience could not have as much fun with the speaker, but it might save lots of time, and they could work in a good many more questions. That should appeal to the crowd, anyway, because there are usually half a dozen or more on their feet at the same time, and there are always a pile of questions left unanswered.

But the speaker doesn't know all this. He generally sweats over every question, and makes hard work of it, while the crowd sits back and

enjoys him. Not that there are no serious questions and no serious-minded folks present. There are; many of them. And they get lots of help, too. It's a good move, this Cooper Union meeting, and it may yet accomplish as much real benefit as the classes in the arts and sciences which are going on in the rooms upstairs, although in an entirely different way, because out of these meetings of workingmen will come some of their real leaders, and it's a good thing to have them hear all sides of the question discussed before they take hold of the job in earnest.

If there is one thing above another that stands out among the fellows that I know, it is the fact that the day has gone by when the cheap, short-sighted, ignorant blatherskite of a "walking delegate" or whatever else you may choose to call this kind of a so-called labour leader, can long curse the workingman. His day is done. There is a new type of leader coming on. And the men who are going to help us most are the men who have come up from the ranks, or, better still, who are yet in the ranks. Slowly but surely such men are emerging from among the masses. Sometimes unappreciated by the very ones whose battles they are fighting, and whose destinies they are working out, they are coming up just the same, to take the places which belong to them by virtue of their fitness for the job.

They aren't the men who have the gift of gab. Some of the best men we've got to-day are not great orators. We don't need the spellbinder as much as we need men with patience and endurance. There is no job which requires these virtues more than that of a leader of labouring men. For workingmen are an ungrateful lot, and they expect perfection in the men that they elect as their leaders. I wonder, sometimes, if the man who is to be our Moses is not to be one who hasn't been regularly elected to office, but who is a good deal of a free lance. At any rate, this may be the kind of a man that will get the movement started in a big way, and then the rest of them will attend to the details.

I'm sure that the day will come when men will become professional labour leaders in the same spirit that other men go into the ministry, for instance. They will expect to sacrifice and suffer—and they won't be disappointed. A couple of months ago, a Chicago trades-unionist and his wife consecrated their little two-year-old boy to the cause of labour. They held in a church a regular meeting of the Typographical Union, to which the father belonged, and several prominent trades-unionists and others gave addresses. The parents solemnly surrendered the youngster to the Cause, answering questions which were very similar to those asked when a baby is baptized, only the meaning was different, and then the

minister who officiated at this point in the proceedings offered a prayer of dedication. The papers made a big fuss about it. They called it sacrilegious and all that sort of thing, but these folks were in downright earnest. This is only the beginning of what will take place among workingmen with reference to the way in which our leaders are to be selected. It's going to be a religious affair with them. This doesn't mean necessarily that workingmen are always to ask the preachers to dedicate their children to the cause of labour. In the case to which I refer it happened that the father was a churchman. Labour organizations may get up their own order of service for such events, and they will call in only their own officials. They'll set up a kind of a church of their own. As a matter of fact, quite a good many trades-unionists have been advocating that this be done. They want to use their own halls for the meetings, have their own members serve as "preachers" and officers and singers, and go it alone as a religious proposition. Several of them have written to the labour journals about such a scheme, but so far it hasn't been very favourably received, although the Socialists have their "Sunday-schools" and "preaching services" every Sunday in a good many cities, especially in New York.

After all, there's lots of religion in the labour movement, take it just as it is. So far as the

practical side of things is concerned, the trades-unions are making a fight which is about as religious as most anything can well be. They don't go in for much of the psalm-singing brand of religion, and then throw up the job. They seem to begin just about where that kind leaves off. And maybe, on the whole, they make just as few mistakes. Instead of singing about "The home over there," the fellows that I know most about are busy trying to get a decent home right here and now. And they haven't much use for the kind of religion which says that their job is not Christian. Some day the labour fellows will add to their creed more of the real spiritual interests in life and then the Church will have to hustle to keep in the procession. If ever workingmen get on to the Church job, and really mean business, there'll be something doing, for who knows how to suffer and sacrifice more than the men and women in the ranks of labour? Once let them get started on a genuine religious crusade, and there'll be a repetition of the days of the apostles.

It might be a fine thing to have the Church and labour get together on the job. There's no good reason why this is impossible. I can tell you right now that either they'll get very much closer together or else they'll drift considerably farther apart and the thing is going to happen pretty soon. For matters seem to be getting to

the point where there's going to be a line-up—for and against labour.

The preachers who are joining Citizens' Alliances and other organizations which are supposed to stand for law and order, but which really are often just as tyrannical as labour unions are said to be, are going to be on the other side—against us. And this for the reason that no labour union man is permitted to join a Citizens' Alliance. That is, no man who believes in strikes may become a member, and that includes practically every trades-unionist in the country. It should include every live citizen, who believes in progress. The man who wants peace at any price might better give up right now. Labour troubles come as a result of an advancing civilization. Social unrest usually is a sign of social progress. There are no labour troubles in "Darkest Africa." Curiously enough, the very missionaries that these preachers are sending over there are going to create them. They will stir up discontent among the people who have been satisfied with low ideals and rank physical conditions, by showing them a higher and a better way of living. They'll educate them and so give them a bigger outlook. Then the people will begin to move, just as they are moving to-day in Japan and India. Whether they'll move in the right direction is largely up to the church folks. I wonder if the church people will have the nerve

to stay in the game clear to the finish, and see their converts through? And if they are ready to do it in Africa, I wonder why they can't do it here? This, it seems to me, is the biggest proposition before the Church to-day, and upon its working out will depend the future of the relation of labour to the Church, and of the Church to labour. Yours,

SAM.

XIII

TRADES-UNION PRINCIPLES

Dear Jim:

We had a queer experience the other night at a meeting of our local. We initiated five candidates, and it required the services of as many different interpreters to obligate them. There was a Swede, a German, a Hungarian, a Bohemian, and a Frenchman. The fellows had lots of fun about it, but it was serious business to the officers who were doing the job. Every one of the candidates went through the entire performance without a smile. Those foreigners were certainly a solemn bunch. The ceremony reminded me again and again of the pledge required by the American Federation of Labour, that its members will "never discriminate against a fellow worker on account of creed, colour or nationality." Once on a time, we machinists were obligated to introduce into our lodges only white candidates. But about a dozen years ago the American Federation of Labour told us that either we would have to cut out the word "White," or they would cut us out. We cut out the word. The lodges that are still using the

old form are doing it against the laws of the union.

It isn't to be wondered at that in some parts of the country there is this feeling against the coloured man among some trades-unionists, because there are many eminently respectable citizens in the same communities who keep them out of their churches and all other organizations with which they are identified. It's easier for a coloured man to join a white man's union than it is for a coloured man to join a white man's church. It's hardly a square deal to hold against the labour union the charge of discrimination, when all through the South and in certain other sections of the country, these folks in the supposedly better classes are doing the same thing.

But when it comes to a straight out and out proposition with reference to the foreigners, you can't find an organization that does more than the labour union to Americanize him. All you've got to do to get the proof is to go to the stock yards district in Chicago and study the influence of the labour unions over the thousands of foreigners of different nationalities that work in the yards. Or if you travelled through the coal fields of Pennsylvania among pretty nearly the same class of people, you would find that John Mitchell's organization has been a great civilizing agency among them. The miners' union have

their constitution translated into nine different languages. Most of these foreigners come to this country with the idea that the word "government" means oppression. Through the labour union they soon come to know that it means friend.

These immigrants are real flesh and blood people, with human hopes and aspirations, with human needs and human hearts. They are men, and they must be so regarded.

Perhaps it is because this has been recognized by organized labour, that the union is so influential with him. The public school has its place in educating his children, but he, himself, becomes most familiar with American institutions and customs through the labour organization of which he becomes a member. Here he gets rid of his clannish instinct. He comes to know more about the brotherhood of man. Here his standard of living is elevated. Here he learns his first lesson in democracy.

To the trades-unionist, the immigrant has no romance. Whether he comes from sunny Italy or stormy Russia, he is looked upon as a workingman who needs help, and who in turn may give help to those of his class.

There has been no sentimentality about the job, but the union has succeeded in giving him a broader outlook.

There is a general impression that in our union

we demand equal wages for all workmen, putting all men on a dead level. This isn't at all true. We ask for a minimum or living wage, but we do not object to an employer paying as much more to any man as he thinks that man is worth. If the boss makes our minimum wage the maximum amount which he will pay, then it seems to me that he and not the union is doing the levelling. It has been said that if a superior man were paid more than the union rate, the rest of the men would hear of it, and then they would all demand the same wages as the best man is receiving. If this should be true, it would be due not to the union, but to the general feeling of the average man that he is just as good as any other man, if not a whole lot better. This feeling crops out not only among union men, but non-union men as well.

But why shouldn't a workingman have as much right as anybody else to have a minimum rate of wages? The doctors get together and decide what shall be the least amount for which they will make a call. The coal dealers agree on a uniform price. The same thing is true of practically every business in the country. Even some preachers' organizations will not install a minister unless the congregation promises to pay him their union rates of wages. Why doesn't somebody set up a howl on some of these folks? Why does everybody jump on the labour union

when it simply follows the examples of those who are supposed to know better?

Same thing with "limiting the output." How often do we get slammed on this question. Why doesn't the country jump on the coal operators who deliberately decide at the beginning of the season just how much coal is to be mined, so that they may regulate the price? What about the owners of the steel plants and other great corporations, who do just as they choose about such matters? Nobody seems to care very much about what these people do, but the whole crowd will throw it into the workingman when he tries to make a fight for a decent living. The corporations do these things so that they may get a bigger profit. The workingman seeks to regulate his craft so that he can make both ends meet.

They call us a trust. How can an organization be a trust when we are all the time after new members, trying to get every man in the craft to join us, and sometimes lowering or cutting our initiation fee altogether, in order to make it easier for him to do so? A trust is exclusive. It's a close corporation. Our union is a wide open institution, whose doors are closed only to incompetent, immoral, and disreputable characters.

Then they say that we are insisting upon a "closed" shop. There's quite a difference between a closed shop and a union shop. As a

matter of fact when the average employer runs a so-called "open" shop, it is actually a "closed" shop to the trades-unionist, because the boss will not employ a union man. One of the questions that is asked every man who applies for a job in most big shops is this, "Are you a member of a labour union?" If he is, he steps down and out.

The day of individual bargaining has gone by for most workingmen. We prefer to do our bargaining collectively, through a chosen representative who knows all about the game, because he is a specialist on that sort of a deal. He knows the tricks that are commonly practiced on workingmen, so that he can properly represent our interests. He goes to the boss and makes him a proposition that the union which he represents will furnish him with competent men. These men are to work so many hours per day, and all other details are to be settled by mutual agreement. Our business agent can control the men in his organization. They will abide by the contract which he has made. We cannot control the men who are outside our organization, so that we ask the employer to employ only our men, in order to have perfect harmony. If these outside men will agree to make the same contract that we have made with the boss, they come in on the same terms. We ask no more of them than we are willing to do ourselves.

I'll admit that it isn't a square deal to force a man into the union, if he feels that he doesn't want to join. But if he will not come in then he has no right to the benefits which come as the result of our fighting and sacrifices. Many a workingman who says that he has "conscientious scruples" against joining the union, simply means that he is against paying dues and assessments for a thing which he believes he will get anyway, because the other fellows will do the fighting for him. I call that a snide game.

It's all nonsense to say that the bosses would have advanced us without the help of the union. They don't do things that way. Some of them would, if they could, but unless the bosses as a class were compelled to do so the better type of employers would find it hard to compete with the fellows who declined to advance wages and other privileges. As it is, under the union rules, they are all on a common footing, and they know just what every other employer is compelled to pay his men, unless there are special reasons why he may pay more or less, but in such a case, the thing is balanced up in some other way, so that they are still in the same class. Our plan really protects the man who wants to do the square thing by us.

A good many folks say that we have the boss at a disadvantage, because we are not incorporated. He cannot hold us to our contract, while

he himself is liable to damages. Now that isn't true. It isn't true so far as his dealings in a business way are concerned, for all contracts these days are "subject to strikes and lockouts." It isn't true concerning his relations with us, because an unincorporated concern can neither sue nor be sued, so that we are still on a common basis. As we are not looking for weeks and months of idleness, there is no particular hankering for long periods of non-employment. If we should go out on a strike, I guess that the loss would be pretty nearly even. As a matter of fact, it is usually in favour of the boss, for, whereas our wages are lost forever, because we cannot work on the days that are past, the boss, in most cases, can increase his force, and make up much of what has been lost during a time of strike or lockout.

But why not incorporate? you ask. First, because there is nothing in particular to be gained by it, and second, because there is very much to be lost. There are certain outfits which will stoop to most any kind of a mean deal in getting the best of workingmen, for a consideration, and there are some employers who are in the same class, who will take advantage of the offer of these agencies. Suppose we had a fat treasury,—and we are all aiming to accumulate big strike funds—and suppose that we were out on strike. In comes your agency spy, who

might either commit an act of lawlessness, or get some fool bona-fide union man to commit one, which would result in the loss of property or for which heavy damages might be secured by the company. This sort of a deal would simply put us out of business. I don't believe for a moment that my boss would stoop to such a low-down trick, but there are bosses who might, and there are plenty of subordinates who are none too good for a job of this kind. In their glee because of the extermination of the union, some bosses would be strongly tempted to close their eyes to the methods whereby this end had been secured.

But about this whole business of judging labour unions—why does everybody gauge us by our worst points, whereas they themselves expect to be judged by their best? Folks don't treat any organization as they do ours, in this respect. It's hardly a square deal. When the average man thinks of the labour union, his mind runs at once to the last union "slugging" story reported by a sensational newspaper, which in all probability was greatly exaggerated and for which organized labour does not at all stand.

It might not be amiss to tell about the way in which organized labour has elevated the great mass of workers. Their labour halls have become social centres, where lecture courses are given, and where the union man may take his

wife and family for social functions. Why don't our enemies tell about the sick and death benefits paid out by our national and local organizations, so that a trades-unionist never appeals to anybody for charity? What about the correspondence schools that are being supported, so that a man may become a better mechanic? Let's hear about the technical courses that are printed in our journals. Who ever talks of the fight that organized labour is making for equal pay to men and women, for equal work, so that the women folks may get a square deal? What about the struggles of labour in behalf of children? Who is doing more in a practical way for the abolition of the sweatshop; for the wiping out of unsanitary conditions in shop and tenement; for the securing of a shorter work day, so that there may be time and strength left for the better things of life? Aren't the lessons in coöperation, in team-work, in real brotherhood, worth anything? Yours,

SAM.

XIV

A NATIONAL LABOUR CONVENTION

Dear Jim:

I have just returned from the annual meeting of the American Federation of Labour, where I was sent as a delegate. I had the time of my life. Not only were my travelling and hotel expenses paid, but the Central Federated Union gave me more than enough to pay me for the time that I lost. Labour men are no slouches when it comes to putting up the money for the fellow who represents them at a convention. Some of the boys who were compelled to travel long distances had as much as two hundred and fifty dollars given them. Perhaps others got even more than this.

It was the first time that I had ever been inside of a hotel. They had at least six kinds of dessert every day, and the fine November weather gave me such an appetite, that I generally ordered about four of them. I don't know that I'll ever have such a feast again—that is, for so long a stretch. Funny, though, how quickly I got used to the plain grub that I eat when I am working.

Of course I met all the big guns in the labour movement. Gompers, who has been the President of the Federation ever since its organization, something like twenty-five years, was re-elected, with only one vote against him. Victor Berger, the Socialist leader, has been casting his solitary ballot against Gompers for a good many years, and he always makes a little speech when he does so. But the delegates certainly think a lot of their President. "Sam ain't no hot air artist," one of them said to me. I always had an idea that he was about six feet tall. You'd think so if you looked simply at his head. It's a big head—but it isn't swelled. He is short in stature, but long on brain. His broad shoulders, big forehead, and strong jaws make him look like a "captain of industry." He is slow and deliberate in his speech, carefully weighing every word. While he has the reputation of being cautious, it is quite evident that he is also very courageous.

Gompers acts like a man who feels the responsibility of his position. Some radicals think that he is too conservative, but I guess that Sam is on to his job, all right. I understood why Berger has no use for him, when I heard him talk on Socialism. My, but how he did roast the thing!

Gompers was once a Socialist, so that he understands the game. But that was a long time

ago. There isn't a Socialist on the Executive Council of the A. F. of L., because the system stands no sort of show with the delegates, and they elect the members of the Executive Committee.

The reporters and the visitors were all the time waiting around hoping that John Mitchell would speak. But Mitchell did not say very much. Most of his talking was done in the committee room. During the first week he arose once, and got the Chairman's attention, but the hangers-on and the new delegates were disappointed when he simply seconded a motion, and he did it in very few words. Not that Mitchell can't speak in public. He proved later in the convention that he could, but his power isn't so much in his ability as an orator, as it is in his ability to think things through, and then put them into just about a sentence. His union is the biggest in the Federation, the Carpenters coming next.

There were dozens of big men in the convention, not so well known as those that I have mentioned, but all of them making good on difficult jobs, and all of them deserving promotion. They'll get it, most of them, only it's unfortunate that in many cases it will be the bosses that they are fighting who will recognize their worth first of all, and we'll lose them, principally because we don't appreciate them.

But they all looked like old campaigners—the four hundred or so delegates who made up the convention. Quick and alert to the true inwardness of every matter presented to the convention in speech and resolution, it was hard to fool them. When it seemed impossible to settle a question on the floor of the convention, it was referred to the Executive Council with power. It's a mighty good thing that this group of men have such uncommon good sense. They sometimes make mistakes, but that's what gives hope to some of the rest of us.

There were eleven standing committees. They were composed of men who are tried and true. They digested the great mass of resolutions and other material which naturally comes to a labour convention, sometimes sitting up until morning to give those interested a chance to be heard. And by the way, it is really remarkable how patiently the delegates will listen to long speeches in defense of particular propositions. One address covered just about four hours and involved the reading of lengthy documents, but not a kick was made on the time consumed—so eager was everybody to give the fellow making the speech all the show he wanted in order to make good.

But woe betide the man who attempted to trifle with the convention. That was an audience that would stand no fooling with. The unskilled

trades—the labouring men—sent up some of the best men. Their speeches were among the best delivered. But every craft had at least one man who knew how to fight his cause on the floor, if necessary.

The convention naturally discussed the interests which are peculiar to labour, but in talking about them, a great many other apparently outside topics were brought in. Sometimes, a stranger listening to the discussion might have imagined that it was a session of the United States Congress, instead of a labour convention, of such national interest were many of the questions debated. The breadth of information of the delegates was surprising.

The man who presented the best arguments won his case. That isn't usually true in Congress; it's generally a case of politics. There are practically no politics of that kind in an A. F. of L. convention.

There wasn't a single Anarchistic appeal, nor was there anything that could be called un-American. The convention was not composed of "agitators of social unrest." Most of the men were bona-fide workingmen.

Some time before the convention was held, a prominent detective agency sent out circulars to employers whom they thought would be interested, stating that they would have men in attendance upon the convention, who would report

all the proceedings, which might be had for ten dollars. This must have been a joke—or else it was a case of graft—because all the sessions were open to the public, and complete printed reports were afterwards sold for twenty-five cents a copy, or ten cents each, sold in quantities. Their spies might have saved even this small amount, had they cared to do so, for each morning the printed proceedings of the previous day were laid upon the desks of the delegates.

We listened to the fraternal delegates from England and from Canada, as well as those who had been sent to these countries by our Federation, so that we got a pretty good idea of the labour movement throughout the world. Some day the workingmen of the world will combine into one big labour organization. Then there'll be something doing. We'll have the power to stop war, or, better still, to prevent war.

Indeed, we shall run the governments of the world, for most every question that comes up to-day is an economic question, in which the workers are vitally interested. The workers are doing some of these things in England, and the way that the politicians are flim-flamming us in this country, will force the workingmen to organize a distinctively labour party, which will take in not only the trades-unionists, but large numbers of other people whose interests are the same as ours.

It's quite true that there isn't a "labour vote" in America to-day, because heretofore it hasn't seemed necessary to develop one. And the labour leader or politician, or the labour leader *and* politician who says that he carries in his pocket the votes of American workingmen is a liar. If he really believes it, he is a fool.

But it was quite plain at this convention that the trades-unions are going into politics. It'll take a little while to get the average workingman to vote regardless of his party, but no doubt he will come to it. The great "statesmen" and the representatives of the Employers' Associations may have had good reason in the past for sneering at us because of our boasted power, our threatened punishment to our enemies, and promised rewards to our friends, but some things do move sometimes, and history has proven that the masses may be counted among them.

Yours, SAM.

XV

A LIVING WAGE

Dear Jim:

There's a plan afoot to get more wages for the men in our craft. We certainly need the money. There are fair reasons for our making this demand, because the cost of living has gone up tremendously, and the standard of living has gone up proportionately. Now if you put these reasons together, you'll see that we ought to have a pretty good case. I don't suppose that the boss will see it that way, but how in the mischief are we to tell whether we've got a good case or not, when he opposes us no matter what we put up to him in the way of added privileges? We've got to be the judges in the matter. The only way that we have of finding out that we're wrong is to get some hard knocks in the shape of defeats. But even then we're not altogether convinced, because sooner or later we'll try it again, since we don't quite believe that we're getting all that's coming to us.

The old man asked our business agent one day:

"How much wages would satisfy you, anyway? If I should give you the advance that you

are asking, you'd come around again in a little while, asking for more."

The walking delegate didn't deny it, and he was right. Perhaps you've noticed that as a rule, the worst strikes are engaged in not by the men working for the lowest wages, but by those who are getting the biggest money. There is no particular point at which we'll promise to stop asking for more, because that sort of thing is too mechanical. Wages don't represent a fixed value. If they did, that would help. There are men in New York getting three dollars a day, while in the West the same men could get four for the same amount and kind of work. The cost of living makes some difference, but the method of living has also a whole lot to do with it.

We live very much better, in some ways, than our forefathers did. Some of us have organs and pianos in our homes, and some other things which are in common use, that must have been luxuries not many years ago. It is not a question, however, as to whether or not we are living better than the folks who were satisfied with less, a hundred years ago.

The world has moved along since those days, and we're going to keep up with the procession —if we can.

The bosses have done it. Fact of the matter is, many of them are so far ahead of the rest of us, that they have forgotten that we're in the

procession at all. They've been so busy with their steam yachts and automobiles—pretty soon it will be flying machines—that they've ceased thinking about the chaps who helped them create their wealth.

The Socialists may be wrong when they say: "Labour has created all wealth, therefore all wealth belongs to labour," but of this I am sure: labour hasn't gotten its just share. We haven't begun to keep pace with our employers in getting our part of the things which have come as the result of our united efforts. If we have gotten some advantages, the bosses have gotten more. We're going to get more of them. We prefer to get them peacefully, but we're going to get them.

While American workingmen produce more than the workingmen of other countries, and while they receive higher wages, they are actually paid less in proportion to what they produce, than is paid these workingmen in foreign lands. At any rate, that's what United States government reports tell us.

It isn't up to the workingman, particularly, to lay out a scheme that will solve the wage question. He may be compelled to do it, some day, but the capitalists have it in their power to hire the men who could do much towards solving it, if they would. They know a good many things about business affairs that the workingman doesn't

know, but which he must know if he's to give the world a fair solution of the wage question.

But your average capitalist isn't over-anxious about setting up a plan that will give the workingman more of the profits. He is busy trying to make all the profits that he can for himself. It is only as we force it out of him, that he gives up anything at all. And the harder we push him, the nearer we'll get to the place to which we are entitled. We shall try to hold every inch that we gain, and fight for more. When we reach the limit, we'll know it, because the matter will adjust itself. It's a barbarous way of getting at things, I know, but we're waiting to be shown a better way.

A living wage doesn't mean exactly the same thing to any two men. My "living wage" wouldn't satisfy the Super nor the old man, because they've a higher standard than I have. For some men to "live" means summer homes and European trips, besides a lot of other stuff that some of my friends don't care a rap about. To others, it means simply bread and meat, rent and fuel, clothes and the barest necessities of life. We're getting beyond the latter definition of the term, because the great mass of working people are getting to have higher standards. After all, a "living wage" is largely a matter of taste and disposition. It means the securing of that which will satisfy the cravings of the soul, the mind and

the body of each individual man. Therefore there is no specific amount that can be set down as a "living wage," and with which all men must be satisfied. By the time a man gets to the point which he once considered just about right, he finds that his ideal has advanced way beyond his old standard, and he finds himself pushing on as hard as ever towards even higher and better things. That's why our business agent couldn't promise that we'd be satisfied with the next raise in our wages, and that's why, in a year from now, we shall probably be after still better wages, —provided that we get the raise that we are now after.

It's because I believe all this that I would not hinder the old man or any other boss from making all the money that he can, and spending it exactly as he pleases, provided, of course, that he makes it honestly, and gives me a chance to make all I can, and that I get my share of our united enterprise.

The Socialists say that with their program in operation the beautiful pictures and art pieces owned by the rich will be placed in our public museums and galleries for the benefit of all. I'd kick on that—for the sake of the rich, as well as for my own sake. They need the pictures and all the rest of it, just as I need them. I'd a great deal rather have a bit of a picture in my home that really belonged to me, than to have the

privilege of going to a public gallery and looking at a hundred of them. I insist that my "living wage" must not be limited by anybody—be it employer or labour union or Socialist. I'll take no man's standard as mine, unless it accords with my own ideas.

I'm perfectly willing to sacrifice for the sake of the man who is down, and stand ready to do all that I can to help him, even though I am compelled to give up quite a good deal of what would permit me to live as I feel that I ought to live. But this is simply one of the things that I want to do, and no man must deny me the privilege of doing it.

Somewhere I came across this poem:

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods there be
For my unconquerable soul.

"In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Amidst the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

"Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet, the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

"It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the Master of my Fate,
I am the Captain of my Soul."

I've carried it in a note-book for a long time. I think it's great. No whining, and no baby act about that—is there? About all that most of us want is a man's chance. We have no right to expect more, but we have every reason to demand that the show to make good be given us.

Yours,

SAM.

XVI

OUR SOCIAL SCIENCE CLUB

Dear Jim:

Some of the fellows in our local, and a few outsiders who are interested in social questions, particularly as they affect labour, have organized a sort of a debating club, which meets once a week in the rear of a saloon. We pay the saloon-keeper a regular amount for this privilege, and it is understood that we need not patronize his bar, unless we feel so disposed. There are about twenty men in the group, most of them radicals, of course, but, on the whole, pretty decent sort of chaps.

Some of the men believe in God. Some believe in man. Others believe in both God and man. And the rest believe in neither. It is agreed that every man has a right to freely express his opinion, no matter what it may be, but that no fellow must become personal in his remarks. That is, he must not offend any of our group by becoming personal, although he may say what he pleases about most anybody or anything else. You can't always tell at what a man has aimed by what he hits, neither is it always the

gun that makes the loudest report that does the most business, but in the end every chap gets about as much credit as he is fairly entitled to. To hear some of the speeches you'd decide that the speaker had spent so much time getting an aim, that he had forgotten how to pull the trigger, and about others you'd say that they ignore the rule that a cannon must be about a hundred times heavier than the shot it fires.

But let me tell you about some of our discussions.

One night somebody remarked that we were a solemn, serious-minded sort of a bunch, and that what we needed was more "optimism," and then the speaker quoted from somebody or other:

"God's in His heaven—all's right with the world."

"Is that so?" said one of the Socialist members. "You really believe that 'all's right with the world,' and that we should become that kind of 'optimists'?

"I know some people who call themselves by that name," he went on. "They have adopted mottoes something like these: 'Forget it'; 'There is no evil'; 'Look happy and you will be happy'; 'You can conquer any situation if you will smile enough.'

"Sounds rather pretty, doesn't it? There is a certain amount of truth in these little 'Sunshine' opiates, but what are the facts?

"In the first place, there are some things which it would be criminal to forget, because they are evil. Looking happy and smiling is a very fine antidote, but we can't all be 'Happy Hooligans,' and most of us don't want to be. We'd rather be real men, leaving the tomato can and the scrubby beard to those who enjoy that sort of a job.

"There is sin in the world. There is tragedy. There is suffering. There are hundreds of thousands of children who are in the mills and factories who should be at home or in school. There are slums, with their hell-holes. There are saloons, with drunkenness and brutality. There are underfed and overworked men and women in our great cities. Will the rosy, posy attitude of the long-haired man and the short-haired woman doctrinaires smile these away?

"'God's in His heaven'—yes, but all's not 'right with the world.' It's going to be right and that's why we can well afford to be optimists. But not the kind that expects to usher in the millennium by a smile. There is work to do, and fighting, too. It is a work and a fight that require red-blooded men."

He got pretty much excited, and would have gone on forevermore, but the rest of us just applauded him for all we were worth, and then he quit.

This discussion naturally led us to talk about

mottoes and their value, when the sergeant at arms remarked, with emphasis: "You fellows ought to study the Bible if you want to learn some of the greatest truths ever given mankind. Take such sayings of Paul's as 'Charity begins at home,' and 'Know thyself.' Aren't they great?" The rest took it in very solemnly as the learned brother gave them a little sermon on the mystery of the latter text. But if there had been a man in the crowd who had even a Sunday-school scholar's training in the Scriptures, he might have made the speaker feel like thirty cents, for neither of his texts can be found anywhere in the Bible.

I could see the fraternal delegate from the minister's association grinning hard—we succeeded in getting him to join us—but he didn't say anything about it, just then, probably because the sergeant-at-arms "sermon" was a pretty good one, and he didn't want to spoil the effect of it.

Pretty soon Scripture texts were flying thick and fast, and one might have taken the doings for a prayer-meeting.

"There's just one text that always makes me a little bit warm," said one of the fellows—"'Be content with your wages.' I can't go that. It's against my economic belief and practice, and I don't want to have anything to do with a Bible that teaches that kind of economics."

Of course, it was up to the preacher member

now, but he surprised the lot of us by the way that he put the explanation.

"It was a great preacher that said it originally," he began. "There probably never was a greater than he, with the exception of Jesus Christ. At any rate, Jesus said of him a few days after he preached that sermon, 'Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.'

"But what did he mean? Did he imply that there should never be a strike or a demand for better conditions?

"Let us look for a moment at the circumstances under which the words were spoken and the persons to whom they were addressed. The story is found in the third chapter of the Gospel of Luke. The fearless preacher—who afterwards was beheaded because he dared to denounce the reigning monarch for his sin—was speaking to a great multitude that had come out to hear him. The burden of his message was summed up in the single word—Repentance. And it was noted that this repentance had particular reference to sins committed against men. As the preacher proceeded, the people began to ask, 'What shall we do, then?'

"He answered, 'He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.' Then came the publicans—the government grafters of the day—

and said to him, 'Master, what shall we do?' The preacher answered, 'Exact no more than the law demands.' Finally came the soldiers—often the brutal representatives, the policemen of a foreign government; men who were following the example of their superiors by robbing the working people. It was a case of graft which was very much worse than anything unearthed in our day. 'And what shall we do?' they asked. And John the Baptist answered, 'Do violence to no man; neither accuse any falsely; stop grafting on these poor working people, and be content with your wages.'

"It was not intended to teach that workingmen in every generation should be content with their wages. It was intended to teach that these brutal, conscienceless soldiers should not demand from the masses of the people, upon pain of bodily injury, that which did not rightly belong to them, in order that they might add this money to the wages received from the government. The words, 'Be content with your wages,' must be viewed in the light of the spirit of the entire address. No one, not even the most radical agitator, can successfully deny that the preacher was making a fight for the poor and the oppressed.

"And so, instead of degrading the toiler, this injunction is actually a plea for fair treatment for the man who was powerless to resist oppression."

Another time we got talking about the question as to what extent our employers were justified in saying that they would run their business as they please, regardless of the opinions and desires of those who were working for them.

"That may have gone a couple of hundred years ago, during the feudal period," a member who is a good deal of a communist said, "but we're living in a different age. The public has something to say about it nowadays, and workingmen are an important part of the public. If the principle will stand that a majority can dictate a prohibition policy, for instance, then a majority of another class can put through some laws which have to do with the relation of capital and labour—unless of course, the Supreme Court declares the law unconstitutional."

There's a good deal being said in labour circles about the recent decisions of the Supreme Court in regard to labour matters, so the speaker felt disposed to rub it in, although I suppose that the Supreme Court judges can stand it. We argued it out one night that the Supreme Court had decided that an employer was justified in discharging a man simply because he belonged to a labour union, thus practically boycotting him, but a workingman must not boycott an employer, according to another decision of the same court, no matter what his offense may have been.

But to return to the main question. Our friend went on, something like this:

"The courts of law have decided that a man's market value is just about $4,995 more than a sheep—unless the sheep has a fancy pedigree. He is worth, this human machine, $5,000. But here comes a man who wants a thousand of us—worth $5,000,000. He needs us, because without our trained movements his great system will be worth just so much iron for the scrap pile. He had nothing to do with our development. A thousand factors have entered into our make-up for which he was not in any way responsible. We, therefore, advance him $5,000,000 in the persons of ourselves, at a stated rate of interest, to be paid us in wages. Economically speaking, some of us are really worth more than a five thousand dollar machine, but some of us may be worth less. Let us take it for granted, for the present, that we are receiving just what we are worth.

"But the thousand of us pay back taxes, of various kinds—and proportionately we pay more than he does—the money which helps establish the community in which his factory is located. We help maintain the peace and prosperity of the town, supporting legislators and municipal officers, which make the town a safe place in which to transact business. In the making of the laws, we, the citizens, had one thousand times as much

to do as the factory owner. We helped to make the charter under which he runs his business. He cannot say, therefore, that 'this is my business, and I shall run it as I please.' 'It is OUR business, and we shall run it to our mutual interest,' must be the true sentiment which shall impel us to do our best to make it the finest business that we know how to make it.

"If either of us insist that this is 'MY business,' exclusively, acting as individuals and seeking only our individual interests, then we at once place ourselves outside the realm of mutual helpfulness, and we become veritable Anarchists, deserving the penalty which attaches to that position—to go it alone, without the privileges which come from the social forces that must make this world a comfortable, happy abiding place, and which we have all had a hand in producing. The man who assumes this position has no right to expect the coöperation of the other fellow, and he must be prepared to be regarded as a natural enemy, because, according to his principle, it's every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost."

That was going it some, even for us, but we agreed that he was pretty nearly right. The beauty of this kind of a club is that no one talks merely for effect, because there is no audience of admirers. Every fellow must make good on his assertions, or try to, so that naturally he does his

level best. That will help every one of us, because we have already discovered that it isn't going to hurt any of us to think a thing through.

Yours,

SAM.

XVII

JOINING THE ARMY OF THE UNEMPLOYED

Dear Jim:

Whether it's because I've become too prominent in the union, or, whether, as the gang-boss said, I spoiled a piece of work, I can't say —but I'm actually a "journeyman" now—on the road, a tramp machinist.

About that spoiled job—that's a thing that's likely to happen to anybody. I didn't quite fasten the "dog," on the side of the planer, which regulates the forward and backward movement of the machine, with the result that the tool went bang into a projection on the piece of work that I had on the platen, and with a report that was heard all over the shop, several of the cogs under the machine broke off, and the old thing went bumpety-bump clear off onto the floor. You never heard such a racket. Of course, I should have given the wrench an extra twist, but I didn't—that's all there is about it—so I lost my job.

You can bet that I'd never make that kind of a mistake again. I have learned my lesson. But some other boss will get the benefit of my experience and increased value. For I certainly

am a more careful mechanic than I was before the thing happened.

These are hard times, though, and it's pretty hard to get a steady job. I've picked up a few days' work here and there, but nothing that lasted more than a week. Hundreds of men in the trade are doing nothing, and they've been in that fix for a good many months.

How they get along is more than I can tell. They look mighty seedy, most of them. It would be pretty hard to convince a foreman that they are high-class mechanics, but I know some of them can do as good a job as was ever done in any machine shop. Lots of the fellows are just tramping it throughout the country, riding in "side door Pullman cars"—running chances on being shot at by the deputy sheriff.

The men with families can't get away so easily, so most of them are hanging around, calling at the office of the business agent every day, hoping that something will turn up.

There's a society in town that is trying to get the out-of-works to go to the country during the summer months, so that they can at least make a living, but very few mechanics are going. It's all right for some people, I suppose, to go to the country, but a mechanic who goes to the country and becomes a farmer for a little while, will have a dickens of a time getting a job when he gets back to town.

"What have you been doing?" the boss will ask, when he applies for a job.

"Working on a farm," replies your expert machinist.

I can imagine the grin on the boss's face when he hears this. To his mind the chap before him will appear like a failure—a down and out—and he isn't hiring that kind of men, if he can help it. Instead of getting credit for trying to make a decent living he'll be discredited as a first-class mechanic when he wants to get a job at the thing that he can do best.

The same thing is true about some other jobs that a man might pick up right here in town. Who wants to hire as a machinist a man who has worked as a porter? It's an awful come-down, anyway, for a man to work at anything outside of his trade. It hurts a man's pride, and even a greaser has some of that stuff in him—perhaps he has a good deal of it to spare. But it's there, and I suppose that we've got to reckon with it.

Maybe that's the reason that I held out so long, hoping that something will turn up. If the situation doesn't change pretty soon, I'll be up against it good and hard. But actually, I've tried to get a job as a porter, or most anything else, but I haven't found it. The experience that I gained when I first came here has helped me anyway. I'm not so ignorant as I was then. I

know the town better, and I can enjoy the funny side of it more, because I've learned some things during the time that I've been here.

There are at least half a dozen "bread-lines" in town, run by missions and other philanthropic societies. Here the men take their places so as to get a hand-out of a roll and some coffee. A big bakery on Broadway has been doing this for a good many years. I understand that they are the original bread-line people. At midnight all the bread that has been spoiled for business purposes or which remained unsold at the close of the day's business is given to the crowd that waits for it, summer and winter. These men aren't all bums, by any means. Many of them are just as straight as they can be—unemployed workingmen, who have at last been brought to the point of starvation.

This bread-line business is all right, and it helps a good deal, but it just rouses the very devil in me to feel that some other man is the master of my bread. I don't want anything to do with cheap coffee stands and lunch counters. I want to pay my way like any other man. I want *work*, and I want it now. I believe that I'm entitled to it, and any man who prevents my getting it, no matter what his place or position, is my enemy. If the capitalists think that they can manipulate the market, thus closing down factories and preventing men from earning a living,

and not be hated by them, I wonder what has become of their sense of justice and fairness? And then, to cap it all, they'll drive their big yellow automobiles through the streets, and flaunt their riches into our faces, while our wives and children suffer all the tortures of a miserable, god-forsaken poverty.

They'd like to banish us out of their sight, so that the appearance of our starving families may not make them uneasy. Some of them wanted to send that Broadway bakery's bread-line over to the east side, instead of having it near their own neighbourhood. They're afraid that some day the poor thin-blooded creatures that await the bread that's doled out to them may march up Fifth Avenue and start a riot or do some other awful thing. It may not be a bad idea to give them a scare, so as to make them realize that there is actually a great deal of suffering going on among the east side poor, and that it isn't all newspaper talk, but I rather think that the danger will not come from that direction—it'll come from the men who are nearer the top, who have been more thoroughly aroused on the question, and who are better able to make a fight.

The other day a big corporation passed a law that hereafter it will not employ a man who is over forty. It wouldn't be very far from this dead-line to the Broadway bread-line for some

men in the craft. I suppose that this rule made more Socialists than most anything that has ever been done by the Socialists themselves. It makes me pretty sick to have one of the big corporation men say that "the rights and liberties of the labouring men will be protected and cared for, not by the labour agitator, but by the Christian men to whom God, in His infinite wisdom, has given control of the property interests of the country." Divine rights, indeed! It's a mighty comfortable thing to put their rascality onto the Lord, and make Him their scapegoat, but they can't quite make some of us believe that God is either a partner in their soul-destroying and body-consuming business, nor that He has delegated them to become our staunch protectors or our gracious benefactors. They've got to give us better evidence of it than they have done thus far.

If these men are so very much concerned about protecting us and giving us our rights, I'll tell them how they can prove their sincerity. According to government statistics, we kill in our coal mines more than three times as many per thousand employed as are killed in France or Belgium, and nearly three times as many as are killed in Great Britain. We kill more per million tons produced than we ever did before, and more than any other country kills, in spite of the fact that the coal mines of the United States

may be more easily worked and with less danger than those of any other coal-producing country in the world. Within a few weeks recently, about seven hundred were killed in three mine accidents.

Some one has figured out that in the Pittsburg district one life is snuffed for every 50,000 tons of coal shipped, and the annual shipment is about 50,000,000 tons; one for every 3,800 cars which carry freight out of or into Pittsburg; one for every 7,600 tons of the 7,000,000 tons' annual production of iron and steel, and one for every 870 tons of the 800,000 tons of steel rails yearly put upon the market.

Some of these victims are burned by molten metal, through the bursting of a blast furnace, or when a huge ladle is upset in the steel mills; others are caught in the rollers in a plate mill, and some are crushed in the machinery of the rail mills. Many are killed in mines by falling slate, some by gas explosions, and others by falls from derricks, scaffolds, and like structures.

The railroads in our country kill an average of eight thousand persons a year, and injure eight times as many more, most of whom are workingmen. The railroad man as well as the worker on the high seas, is supposed to sacrifice himself when it comes to a question as between the safety of himself and that of his passengers.

Can it be possible that there is no remedy for

this wholesale slaughter? Is there no compassion for the women and the children who remain? Must workingmen themselves pay the price not only for their personal mishaps, but out of their earnings, pay also for the mishaps of their fellow workers? Shame on any law or system which penalizes the workers for accidents for which they are responsible to only a limited extent, freeing from practically all care and responsibility those whose interests were being served by faithful men who gave their lives so that the world might be the gainer.

If our "guardians" really want to do a good job, let them put in more safety appliances, and let them make the conditions under which men are compelled to earn their daily bread a bit more humane.

And yet, even though conditions are so wretched, and even though the worker realizes that it may be his last day on earth, thousands go to mines and mills and shops, knowing full well that if they do not go, there are thousands more who stand ready to take their places, especially during such a time as this, when hundreds of thousands are, like myself, walking the streets, looking for a job.

Yours, SAM.

XVIII

MY TENEMENT-HOUSE NEIGHBOURS

Dear Jim:

We had to move from our tenement about a month ago, and find a place where the rent was lower, because I am still out of a job. Over on the west side we finally got two rooms for about two-thirds of what we were paying in the old neighbourhood. I thought that we were in a bad enough fix over there, but this layout is worse. Our old tenement was a mansion compared to this. The rooms are in a rear house, the living room being about twelve feet square. The bedroom is eight by twelve, with only a single window. It isn't really a window—it's an opening eighteen inches wide and about two feet high. It looks out onto another rear house in the next street, the space between the two buildings being something like fourteen inches.

The buildings are three stories high, and so, with six families in each house, there are twelve families facing this narrow "canyon." Some of my neighbours have been using the space down at the bottom, between the buildings, as a dumping ground for all sorts of trash, and you can

imagine the condition of things there. But you can hardly blame them very much. The people that own the houses are responsible for the general shiftlessness of those who live in them. For years they haven't made any repairs. The shutters look like a toothless old woman. There's little use closing them, because they are of no real value. Some of them are off their hinges, or the hinges are broken off the shutters, and they hang like drunken men to the side of the building. The halls are so dark that you've got to feel your way along the sides. You'll often run into some one on the landing. Sometimes it's a drunken man lying on the floor, or a child that was playing in the darkness. The other night I found a miserable drunken old woman lying on my bed. She evidently crawled in by mistake while I was out.

The dirt is thick in the halls, because it's so dark that it can hardly be seen with the kind of lights that are used when the stairs are being scrubbed.

Try as we will, we can't get rid of the bedbugs and cockroaches. They seem to swarm out of the rotten walls and ceilings. I'm not exaggerating when I say that I've seen more than a hundred roaches scamper away into cracks and corners, when a cloth which was hung up to dry behind the stove has been removed. Sometimes we are compelled to lie on the floor during the

night so as to escape the bedbugs, but some of them get us even then.

Once in a while we have to listen to frightful sounds which come from these neighbours of ours. It isn't only the quarrelling and the shrieks of drunks, but the moaning of the sick and the dying, and what is sometimes even more sorrowful, the groaning of an old woman who has been helpless for several years on account of her age. She either shuts herself into the bedroom or else somebody else shuts her in, and then she will talk to herself, and cry, or just moan, moan, moan, in the most horrible fashion, for hours at a time.

Just across from our place there is a paralyzed mother who is trying to take care of a consumptive baby.

On the next floor, in our building, in two rooms, there's a mother and two little fellows, about eight and ten. She makes a living by taking in washing. The plastering is about half down in her main room, which is used for a workshop, besides all the rest of it. She also has a bed in this room, which is used by the boys. For weeks the youngest of these boys has been sick with typhoid fever. It's been as hot as—as it sometimes gets to be in New York during July, but that poor kid has been suffering all sorts of things, while his mother has been doing the washing over a stove not more than

three feet from the bed in which the patient has been lying.

On account of the hard times, the folks next door to us have been living on bran for at least a week. They've tried to cook it up into different styles of dishes, but it's the same old bran. One of the children went down to the freight yards and swept it out of the corners of the cars. Every morning, two pretty little girls in our tenement go over to the market to pick up the rotting fruit which has been thrown out by the marketmen. The family has been feasting on the stuff.

A fruit peddler, who is a near neighbour of mine, keeps his stock of goods under the bed. There is no other place in which he can keep it. I saw his children playing with a new box of lemons that he had just brought in from the produce dealer.

There was a teamster and his family living across the way, in one of the better houses. They had four rooms running clear through the floor. He owned his own team one time, but he got the consumption and soon he had to give up his team, because he needed the money to support his family. He didn't last very long after he went to bed, and his family—a wife and four-year-old girl—took two rooms in another tenement, where the rent was cheaper. Pretty soon the little girl was taken sick with rheumatism—

at any rate the doctor called it that—and then she had an attack which affected her heart. Her mother was sewing on babies' white coats for a department store, in order to support herself and her own baby. One day I saw this little kid perched on the top of a pile of coats, pulling out the bastings. She worked as though her life depended upon it. But she didn't last long. The bad weather took her off.

Another widow-neighbour of ours, with a little family to support, is making an average of fifty-five cents a day, working on slippers. She works seventeen hours a day.

One day last winter a wealthy woman spent forty thousand dollars on a dinner in one of the swell hotels up-town. While the doings were going on inside a policeman outside was approached by a thinly-clothed woman with a baby in her arms, who asked him for help. The big cop looked at her baby and said, in his gruff voice:

"Why, your baby's dead!"

With a shriek the woman collapsed.

The policeman sent her and her dead baby to the station-house in the patrol-wagon. The baby had been starved to death.

Just over the tops of the tenements I can see the shining cross on a big church steeple. There'd be a lot of comfort in that cross and what it stands for, if I could forget that these miserable

ramshackle tenements all about me are owned by a great church corporation.

The various charity societies have tried to help some of the folks that I've been telling you about, and they've really done a lot of good. But by far the most help has come from our own neighbours. There's hardly a family around here but what would gladly share their last dollar with some other family that hadn't as much. Nearly everybody in the tenement pitched in and helped the family that was living on bran—as soon as we found out about it. They were given enough food to last for two weeks. When that gives out, they'll get more, if we've got it.

When a charity worker came to an old woman who was living alone, and who without doubt was hard up, and offered her a dollar's worth of groceries, the old woman said: "Give that to the poor: there are lots of folks around here who haven't got as much as I have." There's certainly nothing stingy about the people in the tenements. There are a good many things in which they can't help their neighbours, but when it comes to sitting up with the sick or the dead, or when their neighbours need food or fuel, they'll respond more readily than any other class of people, even though it costs them lots more to do it.

As a matter of fact, all the charity societies combined touch comparatively few of the people

who are in need. They are cared for by friends and neighbours, or else the insurance companies of various kinds, and the lodges look after them in times of sickness or death.

Pretty nearly everybody is in some kind of a mutual benefit society, and the clubs get up benefits for a large number of those who are suffering. I suppose that the best way to do the business is on a scientific basis, and by folks who make a specialty of it. If only they could cut out the hardness of their ways of working, and have less machinery about the job, I'd be inclined to say that they might better do most of the work. But what I want to insist upon is that the poor are doing a whole lot for themselves.

Meanwhile, the cost of living is going up higher and higher. Meat's been advanced three cents a pound at a jump. If that were the first raise, I wouldn't kick. But the packers have been boosting their prices for some time. Few of us can afford to eat meat these days. In spite of all the talk about trust busting, there hasn't been much progress in getting these plutocrats to come to time. Is the whole thing a joke, or is it impossible to get at the thing at all? Where in the world are we coming out? I'm not ready to give up the fight, by any means. I get pretty warm about it, once in a while, but somehow I have faith in this country and in our form of

government, and I believe that the people are going to get busy some day, and then there'll be something doing. Yours,

SAM.

XIX

SOME ROAD EXPERIENCES

Dear Jim:

Since writing you last, I have travelled a bit, and seen something of the country. That is, as much as a fellow can see of it from the trucks or the inside of a freight car, which was closed most of the time. I nearly died of thirst once or twice, but I did manage to get enough to eat. One day I saw a tramp thrown out of the car that I was in, full force against a train passing the other way. I never found out what became of him. The last I saw of him he was lying on the ground between the tracks, unconscious or dead.

It seems impossible to believe that I have really been a tramp, but I suppose that that is what I shall have to confess to. It didn't seem so bad after a while, and it would have been an easy matter to have gotten into the way of tramping it all the time, if it weren't for some things that I'd already gotten into, and the friends that I have made. But this experience has taught me some new things, which I had never known or heard before, not even in the Cooper

Union meetings or the Social Science Club. I tell you this world is a funny old place, when you come to think of it, with all the misunderstanding and ignorance as to how the other fellow lives. It's so easy to blame the chap that's down and out, but few care to find out how and why he got there.

I met quite a number of respectable fellows on the road, most of them unmarried men who were going to some other town trying to find work. You'd be surprised to know how many of these tramps that I travelled with are college men or sons of pretty decent parents. But they've got a screw loose somewhere—these wanderers—nearly all of them, and here they are, begging or stealing a living, until pneumonia gets them or they are killed off by the railroad detectives or by the wheels of the cars on which they are stealing a ride. No one bothers much how a tramp has died, or what becomes of his body afterwards. Most of the tramps, of course, are a downright lazy, thieving lot, but I've wondered how many of them started in just as I did,—out of a job, and honestly trying to find one. More than most folks think, I guess.

I got a job of a few weeks on the railroad out in Ohio, doing day labourer's work. The sun was blazing hot on the tracks, and I nearly fainted several times, but I stuck to it until the job was finished. It was pretty tough to take my place

with a lot of Dagos and Hunkies, even for so short a time, but I was in for anything that I could get when I reached this junction point of the railroad, where all passengers, inside and outside the cars, were compelled to change.

They weren't such a bad lot of fellows after I got acquainted with them, except that they were such a dirty bunch, but after that west side tenement, I could stomach most anything. I never saw a lot of men who would stand so much cussing and swearing as they did, and how they did jump when the gang-boss ordered them about. They didn't work very hard, but I guess they earned all that they got. I found out that they sent back to the old country all the spare cash that they owned, but some of the fake bankers that they dealt with robbed them of most of their money. They were all the time getting circulars and letters from these agents, coaxing them to go back to the old country, although the steamship agent knew very well that they'd have to come back to America, but that meant two more steerage passages for him, and that was what he was after. These fakirs used every possible method to get the poor foreigner to have confidence in them, some of them even posing as priests who had only the interests of the men at heart. They were cheated right and left, and the wonder is that they had any money at all.

The foreigners seemed to get word of the

coming hard times before we did. When payments of wages came slow, and men were being laid off, they began to get out of the country. You can bet that the steamship companies made the most of the chance to help them along. So many of them got out that they are now having a hard job to get enough of them for certain kinds of work which they alone will do. But they'll come back, and they'll bring hundreds more with them, just as soon as times get better.

The railroad company for which we worked lodged us in old box cars that couldn't be used on the road any more, and gave us forty-eight cents a day less than they were paying other labourers. There were twelve men in each car, so that the company made over five dollars a day out of their old shacks; which weren't costing them a cent to keep. They never came near them. No repairs were made, and we had to keep them clean—that is, as clean as they ever got.

Up the tracks a way there were several boarding-houses—little bits of shacks, but by putting five men into a room, the landlord could accommodate quite a good many. The men paid a dollar a week for their part of the bed.

If I should tell you about some of the things that were permitted, or, rather, encouraged, in these houses, you would hardly believe it. It all went with the dollar a week, and the landlord made a good thing out of these practices.

It was in Chicago that I lived in a ten-cent lodging-house. Right in the midst of the toughest part of town, it was a dreary dirty place. But it was crowded most of the time. Saloons there were by the dozen, and of the worst kind. Attracting the wickedest element in the city, they were the centres of every kind of deviltry. It was a different kind of a saloon than those to which I had become accustomed near the old shop. Here there were private drinking rooms and stalls. Women of the street hung out in them, and weak-minded men. There were some cheap variety shows and dance halls in the neighbourhood, and Chinese restaurants with their shady reputations were plentiful. Pawn-shops and museums of anatomy, gambling dens and places of general cussedness, could be found on nearly every block.

And the cheap lodging-house in which I lived was filled with victims from the surrounding dens, most of them miserable specimens of humanity, down next to the lowest step,—the street or the lake. Not very far away was the morgue, ready to get the wretches who had come to the end of their unhappy lives.

For a few days I worked in this lodging-house, washing windows and doing general chores. The man who had had the job before me fell out of the second-story front window, and was instantly killed. He was a young chap who had

come from New York, believing that he could make a fortune "out West." He had a little note-book in his pocket, in one of the inside covers of which was written: "My ambition—to win $50,000." I wonder how he thought he was going to win it? He certainly was willing to start in low enough on the ladder of fortune. Too bad that he didn't get a better show. They carried him over to a near-by undertaker, and telegraphed his folks, who were poor east siders, using the money that was coming to him for washing the windows. The undertaker told the preacher who read a little service over him, that the young fellow didn't look a bit like a bum. That must have been some comfort to his folks back home.

I didn't stay in the lodging-house very long, because the union got me a job. I held this job long enough to put me on my feet. I bought a new suit of clothes, the first I had had in nearly two years, so that I didn't need to use black ink to colour up the worn spots on my old clothes. Fact is, I gave them away to a fellow who isn't as particular as I am, and he will probably wear them out. It wasn't very pleasant, though, to get so much ink on your clothes, especially after being caught in a rain-storm. I didn't mind getting machine shop grease onto my hands and face when I was in line for it, but I did object to ink. Made me look too much like a clerk.

Just across from the lodging-house there was a big hall which was used for all sorts of meetings. But I noticed that the biggest crowds came when the Socialists were in charge. One night they had a jammed house. The meeting was called for the purpose of starting a fund for the aid of the working class in Russia. While the meeting was in full swing, a fellow who is a cook in a west side saloon that does a heavy free lunch business, came marching in at the head of a procession, carrying a big red flag.

The speaker stopped when he saw the crowd coming up the aisle, and the cook shouted:

"Here's the dear old flag."

While the audience cheered and waved hats and handkerchiefs, the flag was placed in a prominent place on the stage.

Then the speaker said:

"This flag stands for our warm, red blood. It means life and hope for the proletariat. It means destruction to the capitalist class."

There was some more cheering, and then half a dozen men and women made short talks, mostly about the meaning of the flag. They told how it had come to be the common flag for the Socialists of the world, and that under it would be ushered in the real freedom of the people.

The man who brought it into the hall told the crowd that he felt the need of the flag at the meeting, and that he had sat up the pre-

vious night and sewed it together with his own hands.

They hadn't gone very much further along in the meeting when the chief speaker began to roast the government in great shape. He was followed by some one who wasn't on the program—a wild-eyed chap in the audience, who seemed to get all stirred up by the remarks of the speaker. He went him a good second for a while, then he got way beyond him and began to advocate some pretty rough measures. He was a radical all right.

Half a dozen cops who were in the meeting stepped onto the platform and called it off. For a little while there seemed to be a fine chance for a row, because dozens of the Socialists began to protest, but it was no go,—the cops ruled. Probably the Socialists knew by previous experience, that there was a bunch of plain clothes men in the crowd, who were experts in the use of billies and something even more persuasive, so they quit. Chicago is certainly a hot place for agitators. And just now they seem to have some pretty good arguments. They're making the most of them, too, not only in the open meeting, because that's really a very small part of their game, but through the use of printed stuff, for that's the best way of getting at the workingman, anyway. They've got a big crowd of comrades who are pledged to get up every

Sunday morning, for the purpose of putting Socialist leaflets printed in various languages, into the morning papers that are lying on the front steps of workingmen's homes. If they don't win out, it won't be their fault.

Yours, SAM.

XX

EXPLOITING THE WORKING CLASS

Dear Jim:

I don't believe that one half of the deviltry that comes from the bosses' side in the labour fight can be traced back to the bosses themselves. And there's a good deal of it, even though it's covered up with polite phrases and smooth dealing. There is no slugging done, and no picketing, but they use the courts as clubs, and the silent blacklist as a bludgeon, to say nothing about some other weapons that make no sound, but which quietly do the business in a way that is eminently respectable. That's what makes the thing all the more maddening. The fellows who hatch these things are the sharp lawyers who have gotten fat jobs as "secretaries" of employers' organizations. They are certainly making the most of their chances for holding on to the positions which pay them more than they would ever earn in a legitimate law practice. It's simply another way that some lawyers have of getting a living by keeping folks stirred up. They have the advantage because of the fact that they can do their dirty work in the dark, where no one can meet them, and compel

them to prove the charges that they are all the time making against the labour union.

There's sometimes just enough truth in what they say to make the whole yarn seem plausible. They will select some insignificant strike event and play it up to beat the band. That's always been their business. They have been accustomed to making out a case for their client, no matter how poor a case he might have to begin with. It's been their policy to keep out of court every fact which might in any way favour the other side. And they are doing it in this new job. Once in a while they will get hold of something which is clearly in line with their general charges, because, under great excitement, labour men do occasionally commit acts of lawlessness, and they will say or do some other fool thing.

Then is the time to watch the game. Your expert employer's agitator will work the daily papers for all they are worth—and they are worth a good deal to him then—and he will print hundreds of thousands of circulars and booklets, so that the whole world may know about the "great menace" of organized labour. If we had as many press agents as the bosses have, and if they were one half so slick, and provided that we could get our stuff into the newspapers, we could put out some stories that would make mighty interesting reading. But we have neither the men nor the money with which to do

the job, and I don't know that we care to do it. These business agents of the bosses have a fashion of calling secret conferences of frightened employers of labour, and then, with much mystery and many confidential whispers, they go through the motions. When they get the bosses into the proper hypnotic condition their poor victims are ready to cough up millions of dollars "to fight this demon of the industrial world—the professional labour agitator."

It's amazing the way the bosses fall into the trap. I'll confess that there are times when some labour unions should be fought to a finish. If I were a boss, I rather think that I'd feel like putting them out of business when, for instance, they get into a rank jurisdictional fight which works the very mischief with all the trades concerned, or when they make demands which are simply ridiculous. But, in the first place, you can't put the labour union out of business. It has come to stay. It is simply a question as to whether it's going to be a good unionism or a bad unionism. And yet thousands of employers are being fooled by the vain hope that if they can throw out the labour union they will have solved the labour question. If it isn't the labour union, it will be something else, and probably something worse. Furthermore, it's up to the employers to help improve the labour union. They have a responsibility in this matter which

they can't evade. The bosses simply can't go on prospering unless we prosper with them. We're going to rise or fall together—that's pretty well established by this time. Either our interests are mutual or else they aren't. If they are, then we'd both better find it out, and work more like partners. If they aren't then we'll act accordingly. Most workingmen and most employers believe that they are, and the wise men on both sides are doing their best to make trades-unionism just what it should be. But you never can improve the labour union by hiring a crew of trouble-makers who are simply looking for soft snaps, and who, for the most part, are about as unscrupulous as they insist the professional labour leader is.

Some of these secretaries have been encouraging the stirring up of race prejudice in order to play one set of workingmen against another. This has been done in a good many cities by bringing in a lot of negroes as strike-breakers, so as to humiliate the men whose jobs they have taken. They will get the dirtiest bunch of ignorant blacks that they can find—most of them bums and outcasts and criminals, and parade them before the white men for the express purpose of getting them riled up, so that they will begin to throw brickbats, which will give the bosses an excuse for calling out the militia, or give them the chance to say that the

strikers are violators of the law. I saw hundreds of these negro strike-breakers marched through Chicago streets a little while ago, while crowds of people were watching them from the sidewalks and the windows. Of course, everybody yelled at them, because even many of the citizens who were not concerned with the strike that was on, got hot under the collar because of the proceedings. Most folks have little enough love for the "nigger," without making it still harder to look upon him as a brother or a fellow-citizen. It's remarkable, too, the way they are crowding into the cities. They are coming into the cities of the North in greater numbers than they are in the South, but meanwhile, most of the jobs that they used to do are being taken away from them by other workingmen, principally the foreigners who are also coming in in even greater numbers. The coloured barbers, waiters, janitors, and whitewashers, besides some other coloured workers, are being replaced by white men, so that the poor coloured brother hasn't much of a show. As a result of this, there are naturally a good many idle negroes throughout the country. I learned a good deal about these things while I was tramping it. I'll predict that some day there'll be the very devil to pay in some cities on account of the negro proposition, and it will be the workingman who'll have to bear the brunt of it, no matter how the fight goes.

The negroes were brought to this country, originally, by the employing class, so that they might exploit them for their own benefit. They are being used to-day by other employers to exploit the white workingman, and still for their own benefit.

Not satisfied with this, large numbers of foreigners have been assisted to this country, especially before the government passed a law against it, so that they might be used to underbid the American workingman. The big corporations have been pleading for a tariff law which would protect their business from the competition of manufacturers in other countries who might undersell them in the open market on account of real or supposed natural advantages, but meanwhile they have encouraged the importation of labourers who would underbid the men who were trying to make a comfortable living in this country. And so the bosses have been getting their share both coming and going, while the workingman has been getting it in the neck. The high tariff on one side, and the proportionately low wages on the other, have put out of his reach many of the articles that he needed.

But the American workingman is beginning to see through the smoke of the battle. While race has been pitted against race, and religion against religion, he is recognizing in his

opponent a brother, whose interests must be his interests, and whose cause must become his own. We are getting together in spite of it all, and one day we'll present a solid front against those who would exploit us. Many of the immigrants are of rather an inferior order, but if they are good enough to bring over to take our jobs, they are good enough to be organized into labour unions, and that's what we're doing with them just as fast as we are able. I don't know what we can do with the Chinese and the Japanese. We are being told that we are narrow and selfish in the way that we are treating these people. "Give them a man's chance," their champions are shouting at us with a good deal of feeling. The trouble about it is that they don't really want an *American man's* chance—they simply want a heathen's chance, with all that that implies. I wouldn't be opposed to giving them a man's chance if they wanted it. But they are satisfied with the very low standard of living which they brought with them from their own country, and it happens that the rate of wages is usually determined not by the highest standard of living, but by the lowest, in a particular craft.

If some of their friends—who are in almost every case benefited by the coming of the Chinese or the Japanese—should be brought into competition with them as we are, I guess that they too would set up a howl about the deg-

radation of the American people. They don't become College Presidents, and Secretaries of Missionary Societies, these foreigners that we are talking about—they become workingmen. And that's different.

Oh, these folks who are way up in the grand stand, eating and drinking the good things of the land, and wearing the best that the country affords,—how easy it is for them to look down on the game in the arena and tell the fighters what they ought to do. Let them come down and try it themselves. I'll venture to say that the sight of the blood and the smell of the sweat would give them a fainting sensation. But we're in the midst of an experience of which they never dream.

Nine-tenths of a man's happiness depends upon how he was born. It makes a whole lot of difference whether he first saw the light of day in a tenement or in a mansion. Fact is, if he's born in a tenement, he won't see much light anyway, and the chances for his seeing it very long are against him. Hundreds of thousands are doomed to work in unsanitary factories, with long hours of labour, and lack of a living wage. Poor and insufficient food, no money with which to buy medicine or to pay doctors' bills, the lack of leisure, the swift approach of old age, the dismal future—these are not very conducive to broad thinking. Small wonder,

then, that the great mass of working people haven't the breadth of vision that most people expect to find in them. Many of them have forgotten how to smile. To laugh is a lost art. The look of care has come so often, and for so long a period at a time, that it is now forever stamped upon their faces. The lines are deep and hard. Their souls—their ethical souls—are all but lost. No hell in the future can hold as many terrors as the hell in which they now live. They fear death less than they fear sleep. Some, indeed, long for the summons, daring not to take their own lives. Pain and hunger are their lot. Dirt and sadness do always follow them. Like lean, warped animals, they slink through the grayness of life, under the iron law which seems to grip them. Isn't this enough to take out of them all the spirit of fair play? It's a dog's life at best—and it's the life of vast numbers of labouring men. They're foreigners, most of them, true enough. But this is the level to which some "Captains of industry," but principally their cold-blooded representatives, would bring us, if their schemes for the control of labour should go through, and that's why we're going to fight them to the very last ditch.

A so-called sensational newspaper sent to the opera a woman, herself a graduate from a Jewish sweat-shop, but who has become a leader among the kind of people that I have described, so that

she might tell something of her impressions in the columns of that journal.

Here is a part of her story:

"What interested me most was the condition of the people. I had never before in a public place seen so many women in all their extravagance of dress—their satins and silks and gold cloth, their laces and jewels. Here was represented no slight amount of human labour. A gown, a glove, a shoe, a jewel, a bit of lace, a fan. A million men and women—aye, and children!—labouring for these idle sisters!

"If we consider also all they possess that they have not brought with them—a heap of gowns, of jewels, wardrobes bursting with their stores; houses, yachts, automobiles, carriages, silver and gold plate, collections of wonderful things of the world, rich carpets, tapestries, ornaments, many books, fine paintings—and leisure! leisure! Think of it! Time to grow, time to learn, time to see, time to hear, to absorb the best things of life; time to get culture, refinement, learning, knowledge, wisdom.

"A million people working for them. And they render no service in return. And yet no wide-spread, keen realization among them of the deep injustice of grinding the lives and the health and the hopes of the workers into unearned profits.

"The world that works is waking up. And waking particularly to a sense of its own great

power. Some day they will peacefully take that justice which is denied them, and not only for themselves, but for all. The rich and the idle may remain indifferent, some of them or most of them. It will not very materially matter so long as they who do the world's work are aroused to know their own power to usher in the dawn of industrial democracy, justice and peace. Come to us and help if you believe in justice to all and freedom from wage slavery. We have manhood enough in us to refrain from coming to you with our chains and asking that you strike them off for us. We shall strike them off ourselves."

Not always is the feeling so strongly or so bluntly expressed, but running through the lives of the great masses of the people in our cities, there is a note of social unrest which is also a note of warning against the flaunting of riches in the faces of the helpless and hopeless poor.

That's what arouses the brute in the workingman. When they see fatness and strength sticking out everywhere among the rich, and then realize that in spite of all that they can do, their wives and children must still suffer for want of the common necessities of life, they find it hard to keep back the feeling that there's something wrong somewhere.

Some people have a fashion of quoting the bricklayer and the plasterer and other supposedly highly paid mechanics; but we aren't all brick-

layers and plasterers, by any means, and they forget that even these men work just about half the year, take it the year through, so that their wages aren't nearly as high as they appear to be. In this country it isn't a question of production,—we can beat the world at that. It's a matter of distribution—of giving every fellow a square deal—and that's the labour question in a nutshell.

Yours, SAM.

XXI

FINDING A WAY OUT

Dear Jim:

I'm back in old New York. Been away just six months, and am mighty glad to smell the East River again.

I've got a job in a little shop that one of the boys started who used to work for old man Streator. He's in the same line, except that he simply does repair work. But he deserves a lot better, and if he keeps on, he'll have a shop that'll be a credit to anybody. If I had the money, I'd like to go in as a partner, but that's a long way off, I suppose. He's starting in all right, by making it a union shop clear through. And the boys who are working for him are doing their level best to make his plant a go.

We've got some rattling good plans for pushing the union in some of the big cities. You've heard of the religious revivals. Well, we've started similar meetings in behalf of trades-unionism. We hired some of the best trades-union speakers in the country, and engaged some pretty good musical talent. The meetings ran for two weeks in each city, in a big hall, with meetings going on every night. We held

"after meetings" for those who were interested, answering questions and giving further detailed information about the workings of the union. Then we had cards of admission to the union all ready to be signed, which were later turned over to the different local unions. We got a good many new members in this way. I almost forgot to say that we began the meetings with a big parade through the principal streets in the neighbourhood of the hall, with three or four brass bands in line. There were flags and banners with announcements of the meeting, while some of the boys handed out cards along the line of march, advertising the object of the parade and giving the purpose of the meetings in the hall, with a list of the noted speakers, and the musical attractions. If we can keep up this kind of a movement, we'll get a good many to join us. We started in by beginning a campaign of education for the members themselves, because we felt that every trades-unionist should be ready to defend his position as a union man. Dozens of men and women served as ushers, and on the various committees.

We have also started an advertising campaign. The union labels are being boomed in great style, some of the locals, especially the printers, garment workers, cigarmakers, hatters and shoemakers, spending large sums of money for this purpose. We are taking advertising space in the

newspapers, and giving away buttons, booklets, blotters, souvenir postal cards, match-boxes, calendars, and other novelties, which call attention to the label, indicating that it stands for a clean shop, fair wages and reasonable hours.

Good printed matter is also issued by many of the unions, giving reasons as to why every workingman should be a trades-unionist. The Retail Clerks are getting out a stack of such matter and distributing it widely. The unions are working as never before to increase their membership. When the plan of the A. F. of L. and the Society of Equity—the farmers' organization—goes through, watch out for the union label on your vegetables. But seriously—some day the farmers and the wage workers are going to unite—there are now regular farmers' delegates in the annual A. F. of L. convention. When that takes place, and the farmers pledge themselves to use only union made goods, and both farmers and wage workers get together on the political question,—they will be world beaters.

All we need is clear-brained and warm-hearted men who will direct this movement unselfishly. Some of those who are outside the trades-union could help us, but they are so interested in statistics, that they haven't quite gotten hold of the big human side of the question. The beautiful schemes that look so well in books and magazines, and that sound so fine when they are pre-

sented from the lecture platform, go all to pieces when applied to flesh and blood men, because they leave out altogether the element of human nature.

It's all well enough to tell us what we ought to do during a time of strike, and when we are getting ready to strike. It's a mighty easy proposition to nicely balance the arguments for and against, and subject the whole thing to the test of an elegant system of ethics. But this labour business is no Sunday-school picnic, neither is it a matter that can be settled right off the bat. There are too many complications, too many things that don't appear on the surface, and that it's hard to put into so many words, so that the outsider will understand. We need some folks who can explain these matters better than we can do it ourselves, and since it's hard to do this, unless you've been in the game, we aren't making the progress that we might. It's one thing to make a study of the workingman's problems from above, even with sympathy and sincerity of purpose. A man may even tramp it, or go into the shop or live in a tenement, but he does it knowing that at any moment he may leave it if he wants to do so. Anyway, he misses a good deal of the joy and happiness of working people, because of their appreciation of many things that come to them, and which pleasure your student knows nothing at all about. But oh, the hope-

lessness that comes so often—too often, for most of us. I'd give a good deal if I could forget some of the things that I've passed through. Perhaps I ought to be glad of the experience, because it will help me understand some other fellow who is passing through the same trials, and that's worth something.

Lots of good people get impatient with us because we don't seem to appreciate what they are doing for us. To be perfectly honest, we'd rather do these things for ourselves, in just the way that we think best. It may not be the best way, but it's our way, and there's a good deal in that. We'll appreciate having them show us how the things may be done, but we want a hand in the doing of them. We'll work with these folks and we'll be glad to have them work with us, but the whole thing must be on the level, like the big democracy that we all believe in.

It kind of goes against my grain to be regarded as one of a great big mass, each just like the other. I don't believe that there are two of us exactly alike. Without looking at the signature, I could always tell when I was in the old shop, whether the drawing was made by Schmidt, Reid or Spolkhaven, the three draughtsmen who did most of the work for my department. There were certain marks about the drawing, and a style that belonged to each of these men, which made their drawings have a certain individuality. Same

way with most jobs about the shop, that gave any kind of a chance for hand-work, and in some cases, even in machine-work. I could tell who had put the finishing touches onto the job, for each fellow had his own way of doing it, even though the pieces were exactly alike.

Now, these men couldn't help doing their work in just this way. It was the way that they were made, or the way that God made them. So let's quit trying to put men into moulds, and squeezing them into the same stereotyped form. They won't be natural, and they can't do their best work in that way. That's one reason why I am dead set against Socialism. It's too mechanical. There isn't imagination enough in the ideas of its leaders, except in some directions which aren't very practical. I'd a great deal rather feel that I'm to blame for my shortcomings and failures, than to lay them up against society.

But I do want a square deal. I haven't always gotten it. I was out of work too long a time, for instance. I had to live in that miserable tenement when it didn't seem necessary. There's still a good deal out of joint in our industrial system. I don't know what it is, and I haven't got any pet scheme to push which will cure all the aches and pains of human society. But I can't help feeling that there are a good many folks who, if they weren't so plagued indifferent or lazy, so confounded comfortable and easy-going, really

could mend matters. I wish that I could help wake them up to it. I suppose that it would be hard for the bosses to make the move. There's so much in the way. Business dealings are too mixed up.

But there are some people who can do it, and some of them are bosses, too. They can get busy creating a sentiment in favour of a squarer deal all around. If I understand the Church, that's a good share of its business. There's nobody that can do more in getting matters set right than the churches, if they will only start in on the job. There are millions of church-members in this country, more folks than there are Socialists and trades-unionists, combined, by a good deal, and probably more than there ever will be. It ought not be very hard to map out a policy for them to follow, if the teachings of Christ are ever to be applied to every-day living. If the Church hasn't a program about these things, it is out of date and it has outlived its usefulness. We are certainly up against it, if ever we were, and somebody must lead the way.

Yours, SAM.