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DEPERSONALIZING INDUSTRY

By E. Johnson.

Says an editorial writer in one of our Toronto dailies some weeks ago, "If since 1914, i.e., in five years, the world has reduced to ruins much of the work of the previous five hundred years, it is equally true that during the next five years it may reach decisions which will determine the conditions of humanity for a thousand years to come.

The implication is that the way is open for the next five years—then it will be closed—open to reason; open to right; open to truth; open to justice; open to fair play between man and man; open to foundations of a democracy where justice rules between man and man; or open to the foundations of an apparent democracy that "has a name to live and yet is dead," such as in some of the ancient democracies of the past, the rock upon which every ancient civilization split, and went down to semi-barbarism, such, for example, as ancient Persia, China, India, Sparta, Greece, Rome, etc., democracies in which justice died when the few ruled and the many were slaves, working for hard-hearted masters, law-protected without adequate remuneration for luxuries in which they never shared, no right to their own home, no right to their persons, no right to their children, no right to their lives even. Are we rapidly crystallizing upon another such, so-called, "democracy"? A real democracy is where every man is "free and equal as free as the children in a home, which is the unit of the state, as equal as the children in a home, big or little, strong or weak, educated or uneducated, they are all free in their father's and mother's home; free so long as they do not infringe upon the rights of any other of the children, and equal to all the privileges of the home, including the family inheritance. What would we think of the big brother who grabbed everything and made his little brothers and sisters slaves to keep him in luxury. And though he claimed that he was the oldest and wisest of the family circle, and only did it to increase production in the home so that he could have plenty not only for this home, but for other children in other homes who spent their time in the same way producing things for their big brothers to exchange with him. I fancy I hear the father say to his son "Be just before you are generous. Spend your surplus, if you choose, for the children of others, but do not force your own little brothers and sisters to produce that surplus that you spend; while you are taking the bread, and milk, and potatoes too, right out of their hungry little mouths in order to get silken robes at fabulous prices to wrap your person in, and deep, soft carpets for your unwearied feet, and wonderful chairs, of polished mahogany and silk for you to sink down in—Is there anything better than freedom? Is there anything worse than tyrants and slaves?"

Let us answer the imaginary question of this father. There is nothing better than freedom. The great God of the universe thought so highly of freedom that He made us all "free-will agents." He would not even save us at such an awful cost as an interference with our free-will. For such a salvation would be a destruction of the soul, and therefore a destruction of the mind and of the body.

"O, my-sons, O, too dutiful Towards God's not of Was not I enough beautiful? Was it hard to be free? For behold, I am with you, am in you, and of you; look forth now and see."

Freedom is always of God and freedom is democratic always—but democracy is not always a state of freedom; e.g., in the democracy across the line some weeks ago, three hundred and seventy thousand (370,000) steel workers in the various plants of the United States were forced to go back to work, i.e., they were given permission by Judge Gary and the strike committee, without the slightest concession being granted. "It was a clearcut defeat," says the Toronto Star, "thousands of these employees must go back to conditions of employment which exacted from them the twelve-hour day, seven days per week. When the shift changes they work twenty-four hours of continuous employment."

Judge Gary, who represents the United States Steel Corporation had refused in any way to confer with the employees on the strike was called. "Judge Gary's method of dealing with the case was very simple," says the Star. "Those who went back to work on the old terms, when he told them to, were satisfied workers. Those who 'still remained out were Bolsheviks' and the 'Star' goes on to say 'the men who went back to work, perfectly satisfied,' according to Judge Gary, 'have good reason to be somewhat cautious in giving expression to dissatisfaction, as a very thorough supervision system exists there, and men who express views with which the management disagrees have a tendency to lose their jobs with great celerity.' The Star continues: 'The Steel Corporation's policy has been that of an absolute industrial autocracy, the corporation has waged an increasing fight against any organization or movement designed to give the men a chance to express themselves in regard to the terms of their own employment.'

Now, where we join issue with the writers of this most excellent editorial is that he seems to regard the Judge Gary incident as an isolated case, repeated occasionally of course, by other forms and other corporations, but very common even over there, and hardly to be reckoned with at all in our own well-educated, broad-minded land; whereas it seems to us that the trouble is not with an occasional manager or judge or capitalist, but the trouble is, as it seems to us, with the system that allows a capitalist, his business manager, or corporation judge, or any other man, or small body of men, to have the power to be unfair and unjust to three hundred and seventy thousand (370,000) other men. The same set of arguments, now used to justify capitalism (the power of capitalists, was, about sixty or seventy years ago,

used to justify slavery), was the power of the slave-masters over his large body of slaves. The trouble with slavery wasn't that there were bad slave-masters, nor was the justification of slavery the fact that there was a large number of good slave-masters who treated their large body of slaves kindly. The real evil of slavery was in slavery itself. What right has one man, or one body of men, to say to thousands or hundreds of thousands of men, "You shall do exactly as we wish you to do, and work as long as we decide you shall work, at whatever wages we decide you shall have, or else you shall go out without work, without pay, without food, without shelter for yourselves and families. Why even the owners of black slaves would never have dared to treat them like that. "Why then," you may ask, "did the United States Steel Corporation allow Judge Gary to treat those 370,000 employees in this arbitrary and heartless way?" Well, the Literary Digest, of Jan. 10th, 1920, answers that question by saying "Industry has been depersonalized by the automatic tool." The automatic tool, invented by some genius, the son or sons of some excellent steel workers, no doubt, has been brought up by the capitalists in the steel industry and so they can dispense with a large percentage of labor, and almost all

skilled labor. They can produce more, and become much richer with the help of a few unskilled laborers, and women and children, and perhaps, a few Chinamen, Mongolians, etc., than they could before with large bodies of skilled laborers. I couldn't help wondering, when I read that article on "Depersonalizing Industry" some weeks ago in the Literary Digest, if the human race wouldn't finally consist of a few very rich capitalists and a large number of automatic tools. As the eloquent Patrick Henry said, "We can only judge the future by the past."

Look at the past: When Egypt went down, three per cent. of the population owned ninety-seven per cent. of the wealth. The people were starved to death. When Babylon went down, two per cent. of the population owned all the wealth. When Persia went down, one per cent. of the population owned all the land. When Rome went down eighteen hundred men owned the world.

One of our Toronto dailies, reported an American speaker, some weeks ago, giving an address before one of the big clubs in Quebec, as saying: "Unskilled labor does not deserve anything more than a bare subsistence. What right have such to complain; if they have food, clothing and shelter, they are getting all they have a right to, or something to this effect. It seemed a hard saying to us, even then, though we did not know how rapidly skilled labor was being rendered unskilled by automatic tools. "Industry has been depersonalized by the automatic tool," says the Literary Digest. "With the advance of the molding machine, long training

and apprenticeship were no longer necessary in making many articles for a wholly unskilled laborer could, with short practice, turn out a product of a quality equal to the best work of the old-time moulder.

"The principle spread quickly to other applications in complementary trades. . . . are we to consider the automatic principle—a permanent force in industry. Or is it only a new and temporary element. . . . The answer may perhaps be found best in a question. Would we dispense with the automobile, or the five-and-ten-cent store, etc., etc.? These and many other commodities of modern life depend ultimately upon the principle of the automatic tool. The Iron Man multiplies the power of the human man without need to eat, sleep, or rest. The price exacted is that the human man shall become as but a cog in the functioning of the Iron Man." Notice the capital letters used in the spelling of the Iron Man and the small letters in the human, the mere cog in the wheel of industry. Is the Iron Man to be the big thing in industry that the American capitalists are always talking about; the "super-man" as it were, and the "human man," the larger part of the human race, but unskilled labor that has nothing to complain of if he only receives a bare subsistence.

"Under modern industrial conditions," (we quote from a Toronto Star, March 24th) said, Fritchard, in discussing the plight of the workers, "skilled man has become a mere appendage to a machine. Machinery has taken the skill away from labor and the skilled worker becomes unskilled. All that it takes to make a

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carpenter these days, is a bag of nails and a good claw-hammer. All other work is done by machinery. If we want to know why modern industrialism is dead, we must look into causes. We are all in Our Father's House. We each have an equal right to the family inheritance. No older brother, be he ever so efficient in seizing the efficiency of others and making it serve his ends, has any right to put an Iron Man in our place and elbow us out into the cold to starve and freeze. "For wot if trade sow cities like shells along the shore, Or thatch with towns the prairies broad, with railroads ironed o'er, Or flash the swift-winged message

o'er wires from sea to sea, If she forge thereby the fetters of America the free, If her juggernaut of commerce o'er, A helpless people ride And invention's crowning triumph goes to crown a Pluto's pride."

At the family residence, Picton, after a protracted and painful illness, Mrs. Rhoda Emily Williams Denike entered into rest on March 19th. Hers was a kind and unselfish disposition which radiated sunshine and good cheer.

Mrs. W. H. Ketcheson, mother of ex-Mayor H. F. Ketcheson, Belleville, passed away on Friday morning, in her seventy-sixth year.



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