

DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL ETHICS [SELECTIONS]

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I. Introduction

¶1 It is well to remind ourselves, from time to time, that “Ethics” is but another word for “righteousness,” that for which many men and women of every generation have hungered and thirsted, and without which life becomes meaningless.

¶2 Certain forms of personal righteousness have become to a majority of the community almost automatic. It is as easy for most of us to keep from stealing our dinners as it is to digest them, and there is quite as much voluntary morality involved in one process as in the other. To steal would be for us to fall sadly below the standard of habit and expectation which makes virtue easy. In the same way we have been carefully reared to a sense of family obligation, to be kindly and considerate to the members of our own households, and to feel responsible for their well-being. As the rules of conduct have become established in regard to our self-development and our families, so they have been in regard to limited circles of friends. If the fulfilment of these claims were all that a righteous life re-

quired, the hunger and thirst would be stilled for many good men and women, and the clew of right living would lie easily in their hands.

¶3 But we all know that each generation has its own test, the contemporaneous and current standard by which alone it can adequately judge of its own moral achievements, and that it may not legitimately use a previous and less vigorous test. The advanced test must indeed include that which has already been attained; but if it includes no more, we shall fail to go forward, thinking complacently that we have “arrived” when in reality we have not yet started.

¶4 To attain individual morality in an age demanding social morality, to pride one’s self on the results of personal effort when the time demands social adjustment, is utterly to fail to apprehend the situation.

¶5 It is perhaps significant that a German critic has of late reminded us that the one test which the most authoritative and dramatic por-

trayal of the Day of Judgment offers, is the social test. The stern questions are not in regard to personal and family relations, but did ye visit the poor, the criminal, the sick, and did ye feed the hungry?

¶6 All about us are men and women who have become unhappy in regard to their attitude toward the social order itself; toward the dreary round of uninteresting work, the pleasures narrowed down to those of appetite, the declining consciousness of brain power, and the lack of mental food which characterizes the lot of the large proportion of their fellow-citizens. These men and women have caught a moral challenge raised by the exigencies of contemporaneous life; some are bewildered, others who are denied the relief which sturdy action brings are even seeking an escape, but all are increasingly anxious concerning their actual relations to the basic organization of society.

¶7 The test which they would apply to their conduct is a social test. They fail to be content with the fulfilment of their family and personal obligations, and find themselves striving to respond to a new demand involving a social obligation; they have become conscious of another requirement, and the contribution they would make is toward a code of social ethics. The conception of life which they hold has not yet expressed itself in social changes or legal enactment, but rather in a mental attitude of maladjustment, and in a sense of divergence between their consciences and their conduct. They desire both a clearer definition of the code of morality adapted to present day demands and a part in its fulfilment, both a creed and a practice of social morality. In the perplexity of this intricate situation at least one thing is becoming clear: if the latter day moral ideal is in reality that of a social morality, it is inevitable that those who desire it must be brought in contact with the moral experiences of the many in order to procure an adequate social motive.

¶8 These men and women have realized this and have disclosed the fact in their eagerness

for a wider acquaintance with and participation in the life about them. They believe that experience gives the easy and trustworthy impulse toward right action in the broad as well as in the narrow relations. We may indeed imagine many of them saying: "Cast our experiences in a larger mould if our lives are to be animated by the larger social aims. We have met the obligations of our family life, not because we had made resolutions to that end, but spontaneously, because of a common fund of memories and affections, from which the obligation naturally develops, and we see no other way in which to prepare ourselves for the larger social duties." Such a demand is reasonable, for by our daily experience we have discovered that we cannot mechanically hold up a moral standard, then jump at it in rare moments of exhilaration when we have the strength for it, but that even as the ideal itself must be a rational development of life, so the strength to attain it must be secured from interest in life itself. We slowly learn that life consists of processes as well as results, and that failure may come quite as easily from ignoring the adequacy of one's method as from selfish or ignoble aims. We are thus brought to a conception of Democracy not merely as a sentiment which desires the well-being of all men, nor yet as a creed which believes in the essential dignity and equality of all men, but as that which affords a rule of living as well as a test of faith.

¶9 We are learning that a standard of social ethics is not attained by travelling a sequestered byway, but by mixing on the thronged and common road where all must turn out for one another, and at least see the size of one another's burdens. To follow the path of social morality results perforce in the temper if not the practice of the democratic spirit, for it implies that diversified human experience and resultant sympathy which are the foundation and guarantee of Democracy.

¶10 There are many indications that this conception of Democracy is growing among us. We have come to have an enormous interest in hu-

man life as such, accompanied by confidence in its essential soundness. We do not believe that genuine experience can lead us astray any more than scientific data can.

¶11 We realize, too, that social perspective and sanity of judgment come only from contact with social experience; that such contact is the surest corrective of opinions concerning the social order, and concerning efforts, however humble, for its improvement. Indeed, it is a consciousness of the illuminating and dynamic value of this wider and more thorough human experience which explains in no small degree that new curiosity regarding human life which has more of a moral basis than an intellectual one.

¶12 The newspapers, in a frank reflection of popular demand, exhibit an omnivorous curiosity equally insistent upon the trivial and the important. They are perhaps the most obvious manifestations of that desire to know, that “What is this?” and “Why do you do that?” of the child. The first dawn of the social consciousness takes this form, as the dawning intelligence of the child takes the form of constant question and insatiate curiosity.

¶13 Literature, too, portrays an equally absorbing though better adjusted desire to know all kinds of life. The popular books are the novels, dealing with life under all possible conditions, and they are widely read not only because they are entertaining, but also because they in a measure satisfy an unformulated belief that to see farther, to know all sorts of men, in an indefinite way, is a preparation for better social adjustment—for the remedying of social ills.

¶14 Doubtless one under the conviction of sin in regard to social ills finds a vague consolation in reading about the lives of the poor, and derives a sense of complicity in doing good. He likes to feel that he knows about social wrongs even if he does not remedy them, and in a very genuine sense there is a foundation for this belief.

¶15 Partly through this wide reading of human life, we find in ourselves a new affinity for all men, which probably never existed in the world before. Evil itself does not shock us as it once did, and we count only that man merciful in whom we recognize an understanding of the criminal. We have learned as common knowledge that much of the insensibility and hardness of the world is due to the lack of imagination which prevents a realization of the experiences of other people. Already there is a conviction that we are under a moral obligation in choosing our experiences, since the result of those experiences must ultimately determine our understanding of life. We know instinctively that if we grow contemptuous of our fellows, and consciously limit our intercourse to certain kinds of people whom we have previously decided to respect, we not only tremendously circumscribe our range of life, but limit the scope of our ethics.

¶16 We can recall among the selfish people of our acquaintance at least one common characteristic,—the conviction that they are different from other men and women, that they need peculiar consideration because they are more sensitive or more refined. Such people “refuse to be bound by any relation save the personally luxurious ones of love and admiration, or the identity of political opinion, or religious creed.” We have learned to recognize them as selfish, although we blame them not for the will which chooses to be selfish, but for a narrowness of interest which deliberately selects its experience within a limited sphere, and we say that they illustrate the danger of concentrating the mind on narrow and unprogressive issues.

¶17 We know, at last, that we can only discover truth by a rational and democratic interest in life, and to give truth complete social expression is the endeavor upon which we are entering. Thus the identification with the common lot which is the essential idea of Democracy becomes the source and expression of social ethics. It is as though we thirsted to drink

at the great wells of human experience, because we knew that a daintier or less potent draught would not carry us to the end of the journey, going forward as we must in the heat and jostle of the crowd.

¶18 The six following chapters are studies of various types and groups who are being impelled by the newer conception of Democracy to an acceptance of social obligations involving in each instance a new line of conduct. No at-

tempt is made to reach a conclusion, nor to offer advice beyond the assumption that the cure for the ills of Democracy is more Democracy, but the quite unlooked-for result of the studies would seem to indicate that while the strain and perplexity of the situation is felt most keenly by the educated and self-conscious members of the community, the tentative and actual attempts at adjustment are largely coming through those who are simpler and less analytical.

II. Charitable Effort

¶1 All those hints and glimpses of a larger and more satisfying democracy, which literature and our own hopes supply, have a tendency to slip away from us and to leave us sadly unguided and perplexed when we attempt to act upon them.

¶2 Our conceptions of morality, as all our other ideas, pass through a course of development; the difficulty comes in adjusting our conduct, which has become hardened into customs and habits, to these changing moral conceptions. When this adjustment is not made, we suffer from the strain and indecision of believing one hypothesis and acting upon another.

¶3 Probably there is no relation in life which our democracy is changing more rapidly than the charitable relation—that relation which obtains between benefactor and beneficiary; at the same time there is no point of contact in our modern experience which reveals so clearly the lack of that equality which democracy implies. We have reached the moment when democracy has made such inroads upon this relationship, that the complacency of the old-fashioned charitable man is gone forever; while, at the same time, the very need and existence of charity, denies us the consolation and freedom which democracy will at last give.

¶4 It is quite obvious that the ethics of none of us are clearly defined, and we are continually

obliged to act in circles of habit, based upon convictions which we no longer hold. Thus our estimate of the effect of environment and social conditions has doubtless shifted faster than our methods of administering charity have changed. Formerly when it was believed that poverty was synonymous with vice and laziness, and that the prosperous man was the righteous man, charity was administered harshly with a good conscience; for the charitable agent really blamed the individual for his poverty, and the very fact of his own superior prosperity gave him a certain consciousness of superior morality. We have learned since that time to measure by other standards, and have ceased to accord to the money-earning capacity exclusive respect; while it is still rewarded out of all proportion to any other, its possession is by no means assumed to imply the possession of the highest moral qualities. We have learned to judge men by their social virtues as well as by their business capacity, by their devotion to intellectual and disinterested aims, and by their public spirit, and we naturally resent being obliged to judge poor people so solely upon the industrial side. Our democratic instinct instantly takes alarm. It is largely in this modern tendency to judge all men by one democratic standard, while the old charitable attitude commonly allowed the use of two standards, that much of the difficulty adheres. We know that unceasing bodily toil becomes wearing and brutalizing, and our position is totally untenable if we

judge large numbers of our fellows solely upon their success in maintaining it.

¶5 The daintily clad charitable visitor who steps into the little house made untidy by the vigorous efforts of her hostess, the washerwoman, is no longer sure of her superiority to the latter; she recognizes that her hostess after all represents social value and industrial use, as over against her own parasitic cleanliness and a social standing attained only through status.

¶6 The only families who apply for aid to the charitable agencies are those who have come to grief on the industrial side; it may be through sickness, through loss of work, or for other guiltless and inevitable reasons; but the fact remains that they are industrially ailing, and must be bolstered and helped into industrial health. The charity visitor, let us assume, is a young college woman, well-bred and open-minded; when she visits the family assigned to her, she is often embarrassed to find herself obliged to lay all the stress of her teaching and advice upon the industrial virtues, and to treat the members of the family almost exclusively as factors in the industrial system. She insists that they must work and be self-supporting, that the most dangerous of all situations is idleness, that seeking one's own pleasure, while ignoring claims and responsibilities, is the most ignoble of actions. The members of her assigned family may have other charms and virtues—they may possibly be kind and considerate of each other, generous to their friends, but it is her business to stick to the industrial side. As she daily holds up these standards, it often occurs to the mind of the sensitive visitor, whose conscience has been made tender by much talk of brotherhood and equality, that she has no right to say these things; that her untrained hands are no more fitted to cope with actual conditions than those of her broken-down family.

¶7 The grandmother of the charity visitor could have done the industrial preaching very well, because she did have the industrial virtues and housewifely training. In a generation our

experiences have changed, and our views with them; but we still keep on in the old methods, which could be applied when our consciences were in line with them, but which are daily becoming more difficult as we divide up into people who work with their hands and those who do not. The charity visitor belonging to the latter class is perplexed by recognitions and suggestions which the situation forces upon her. Our democracy has taught us to apply our moral teaching all around, and the moralist is rapidly becoming so sensitive that when his life does not exemplify his ethical convictions, he finds it difficult to preach.

¶8 Added to this is a consciousness, in the mind of the visitor, of a genuine misunderstanding of her motives by the recipients of her charity, and by their neighbors. Let us take a neighborhood of poor people, and test their ethical standards by those of the charity visitor, who comes with the best desire in the world to help them out of their distress. A most striking incongruity, at once apparent, is the difference between the emotional kindness with which relief is given by one poor neighbor to another poor neighbor, and the guarded care with which relief is given by a charity visitor to a charity recipient. The neighborhood mind is at once confronted not only by the difference of method, but by an absolute clashing of two ethical standards.

¶9 A very little familiarity with the poor districts of any city is sufficient to show how primitive and genuine are the neighborly relations. There is the greatest willingness to lend or borrow anything, and all the residents of the given tenement know the most intimate family affairs of all the others. The fact that the economic condition of all alike is on a most precarious level makes the ready outflow of sympathy and material assistance the most natural thing in the world. There are numberless instances of self-sacrifice quite unknown in the circles where greater economic advantages make that kind of intimate knowledge of one's neighbors impossible. An Irish family in which the man has

lost his place, and the woman is struggling to eke out the scanty savings by day's work, will take in the widow and her five children who have been turned into the street, without a moment's reflection upon the physical discomforts involved. The most maligned landlady who lives in the house with her tenants is usually ready to lend a scuttle full of coal to one of them who may be out of work, or to share her supper. A woman for whom the writer had long tried in vain to find work failed to appear at the appointed time when employment was secured at last. Upon investigation it transpired that a neighbor further down the street was taken ill, that the children ran for the family friend, who went of course, saying simply when reasons for her non-appearance were demanded, "It broke me heart to leave the place, but what could I do?" A woman whose husband was sent up to the city prison for the maximum term, just three months, before the birth of her child found herself penniless at the end of that time, having gradually sold her supply of household furniture. She took refuge with a friend whom she supposed to be living in three rooms in another part of town. When she arrived, however, she discovered that her friend's husband had been out of work so long that they had been reduced to living in one room. The friend, however, took her in, and the friend's husband was obliged to sleep upon a bench in the park every night for a week, which he did uncomplainingly if not cheerfully. Fortunately it was summer, "and it only rained one night." The writer could not discover from the young mother that she had any special claim upon the "friend" beyond the fact that they had formerly worked together in the same factory. The husband she had never seen until the night of her arrival, when he at once went forth in search of a midwife who would consent to come upon his promise of future payment.

¶10 The evolutionists tell us that the instinct to pity, the impulse to aid his fellows, served man at a very early period, as a rude rule of right and wrong. There is no doubt that this rude rule still holds among many people with

whom charitable agencies are brought into contact, and that their ideas of right and wrong are quite honestly outraged by the methods of these agencies. When they see the delay and caution with which relief is given, it does not appear to them a conscientious scruple, but as the cold and calculating action of a selfish man. It is not the aid that they are accustomed to receive from their neighbors, and they do not understand why the impulse which drives people to "be good to the poor" should be so severely supervised. They feel, remotely, that the charity visitor is moved by motives that are alien and unreal. They may be superior motives, but they are different, and they are "agin nature." They cannot comprehend why a person whose intellectual perceptions are stronger than his natural impulses, should go into charity work at all. The only man they are accustomed to see whose intellectual perceptions are stronger than his tenderness of heart, is the selfish and avaricious man who is frankly "on the make." If the charity visitor is such a person, why does she pretend to like the poor? Why does she not go into business at once?

¶11 We may say, of course, that it is a primitive view of life, which thus confuses intellectuality and business ability; but it is a view quite honestly held by many poor people who are obliged to receive charity from time to time. In moments of indignation the poor have been known to say: "What do you want, anyway? If you have nothing to give us, why not let us alone and stop your questionings and investigations?" "They investigated me for three weeks, and in the end gave me nothing but a black character," a little woman has been heard to assert. This indignation, which is for the most part taciturn, and a certain kindly contempt for her abilities, often puzzles the charity visitor. The latter may be explained by the standard of worldly success which the visited families hold. Success does not ordinarily go, in the minds of the poor, with charity and kind-heartedness, but rather with the opposite qualities. The rich landlord is he who collects with sternness, who accepts no excuse, and will have his own. There are moments

of irritation and of real bitterness against him, but there is still admiration, because he is rich and successful. The good-natured landlord, he who pities and spares his poverty-pressed tenants, is seldom rich. He often lives in the back of his house, which he has owned for a long time, perhaps has inherited; but he has been able to accumulate little. He commands the genuine love and devotion of many a poor soul, but he is treated with a certain lack of respect. In one sense he is a failure. The charity visitor, just because she is a person who concerns herself with the poor, receives a certain amount of this good-natured and kindly contempt, sometimes real affection, but little genuine respect. The poor are accustomed to help each other and to respond according to their kindness; but when it comes to worldly judgment, they use industrial success as the sole standard. In the case of the charity visitor who has neither natural kindness nor dazzling riches, they are deprived of both standards, and they find it of course utterly impossible to judge of the motive of organized charity.

¶12 Even those of us who feel most sorely the need of more order in altruistic effort and see the end to be desired, find something distasteful in the juxtaposition of the words “organized” and “charity.” We say in defence that we are striving to turn this emotion into a motive, that pity is capricious, and not to be depended on; that we mean to give it the dignity of conscious duty. But at bottom we distrust a little a scheme which substitutes a theory of social conduct for the natural promptings of the heart, even although we appreciate the complexity of the situation. The poor man who has fallen into distress, when he first asks aid, instinctively expects tenderness, consideration, and forgiveness. If it is the first time, it has taken him long to make up his mind to take the step. He comes somewhat bruised and battered, and instead of being met with warmth of heart and sympathy, he is at once chilled by an investigation and an intimation that he ought to work. He does not recognize the disciplinary aspect of the situation.

¶13 The only really popular charity is that of the visiting nurses, who by virtue of their professional training render services which may easily be interpreted into sympathy and kindness, ministering as they do to obvious needs which do not require investigation.

¶14 The state of mind which an investigation arouses on both sides is most unfortunate; but the perplexity and clashing of different standards, with the consequent misunderstandings, are not so bad as the moral deterioration which is almost sure to follow.

¶15 When the agent or visitor appears among the poor, and they discover that under certain conditions food and rent and medical aid are dispensed from some unknown source, every man, woman, and child is quick to learn what the conditions may be, and to follow them. Though in their eyes a glass of beer is quite right and proper when taken as any self-respecting man should take it; though they know that cleanliness is an expensive virtue which can be required of few; though they realize that saving is well-nigh impossible when but a few cents can be laid by at a time; though their feeling for the church may be something quite elusive of definition and quite apart from daily living: to the visitor they gravely laud temperance and cleanliness and thrift and religious observance. The deception in the first instances arises from a wondering inability to understand the ethical ideals which can require such impossible virtues, and from an innocent desire to please. It is easy to trace the development of the mental suggestions thus received. When A discovers that B, who is very little worse off than he, receives good things from an inexhaustible supply intended for the poor at large, he feels that he too has a claim for his share, and step by step there is developed the competitive spirit which so horrifies charity visitors when it shows itself in a tendency to “work” the relief-giving agencies.

¶16 The most serious effect upon the poor comes when dependence upon the charitable

society is substituted for the natural outgoing of human love and sympathy, which, happily, we all possess in some degree. The spontaneous impulse to sit up all night with the neighbor's sick child is turned into righteous indignation against the district nurse, because she goes home at six o'clock, and doesn't do it herself. Or the kindness which would have prompted the quick purchase of much needed medicine is transformed into a voluble scoring of the dispensary, because it gives prescriptions and not drugs; and "who can get well on a piece of paper?"

¶17 If a poor woman knows that her neighbor next door has no shoes, she is quite willing to lend her own, that her neighbor may go decently to mass, or to work; for she knows the smallest item about the scanty wardrobe, and cheerfully helps out. When the charity visitor comes in, all the neighbors are baffled as to what her circumstances may be. They know she does not need a new pair of shoes, and rather suspect that she has a dozen pairs at home; which, indeed, she sometimes has. They imagine untold stores which they may call upon, and her most generous gift is considered niggardly, compared with what she might do. She ought to get new shoes for the family all round, "she sees well enough that they need them." It is no more than the neighbor herself would do, has practically done, when she lent her own shoes. The charity visitor has broken through the natural rule of giving, which, in a primitive society, is bounded only by the need of the recipient and the resources of the giver; and she gets herself into untold trouble when she is judged by the ethics of that primitive society.

¶18 The neighborhood understands the selfish rich people who stay in their own part of town, where all their associates have shoes and other things. Such people don't bother themselves about the poor; they are like the rich landlords of the neighborhood experience. But this lady visitor, who pretends to be good to the poor, and certainly does talk as though she were kind-hearted, what does she come for, if she does not

intend to give them things which are so plainly needed?

¶19 The visitor says, sometimes, that in holding her poor family so hard to a standard of thrift she is really breaking down a rule of higher living which they formerly possessed; that saving, which seems quite commendable in a comfortable part of town, appears almost criminal in a poorer quarter where the next-door neighbor needs food, even if the children of the family do not.

¶20 She feels the sordidness of constantly being obliged to urge the industrial view of life. The benevolent individual of fifty years ago honestly believed that industry and self-denial in youth would result in comfortable possessions for old age. It was, indeed, the method he had practised in his own youth, and by which he had probably obtained whatever fortune he possessed. He therefore reproved the poor family for indulging their children, urged them to work long hours, and was utterly untouched by many scruples which afflict the contemporary charity visitor. She says sometimes, "Why must I talk always of getting work and saving money, the things I know nothing about? If it were anything else I had to urge, I could do it; anything like Latin prose, which I had worried through myself, it would not be so hard." But she finds it difficult to connect the experiences of her youth with the experiences of the visited family.

¶21 Because of this diversity in experience, the visitor is continually surprised to find that the safest platitude may be challenged. She refers quite naturally to the "horrors of the saloon," and discovers that the head of her visited family does not connect them with "horrors" at all. He remembers all the kindnesses he has received there, the free lunch and treating which goes on, even when a man is out of work and not able to pay up; the loan of five dollars he got there when the charity visitor was miles away and he was threatened with eviction. He may listen politely to her reference to "horrors," but considers it only "temperance talk."

¶22 The charity visitor may blame the women for lack of gentleness toward their children, for being hasty and rude to them, until she learns that the standard of breeding is not that of gentleness toward the children so much as the observance of certain conventions, such as the punctilious wearing of mourning garments after the death of a child. The standard of gentleness each mother has to work out largely by herself, assisted only by the occasional shame-faced remark of a neighbor, “That they do better when you are not too hard on them”; but the wearing of mourning garments is sustained by the definitely expressed sentiment of every woman in the street. The mother would have to bear social blame, a certain social ostracism, if she failed to comply with that requirement. It is not comfortable to outrage the conventions of those among whom we live, and, if our social life be a narrow one, it is still more difficult. The visitor may choke a little when she sees the lessened supply of food and the scanty clothing provided for the remaining children in order that one may be conventionally mourned, but she doesn’t talk so strongly against it as she would have done during her first month of experience with the family since bereaved.

¶23 The subject of clothes indeed perplexes the visitor constantly, and the result of her reflections may be summed up somewhat in this wise: The girl who has a definite social standing, who has been to a fashionable school or to a college, whose family live in a house seen and known by all her friends and associates, may afford to be very simple, or even shabby as to her clothes, if she likes. But the working girl, whose family lives in a tenement, or moves from one small apartment to another, who has little social standing and has to make her own place, knows full well how much habit and style of dress has to do with her position. Her income goes into her clothing, out of all proportion to the amount which she spends upon other things. But, if social advancement is her aim, it is the most sensible thing she can do. She is judged largely by her clothes. Her house furnishing, with its pitiful little decorations, her scanty sup-

ply of books, are never seen by the people whose social opinions she most values. Her clothes are her background, and from them she is largely judged. It is due to this fact that girls’ clubs succeed best in the business part of town, where “working girls” and “young ladies” meet upon an equal footing, and where the clothes superficially look very much alike. Bright and ambitious girls will come to these down-town clubs to eat lunch and rest at noon, to study all sorts of subjects and listen to lectures, when they might hesitate a long time before joining a club identified with their own neighborhood, where they would be judged not solely on their own merits and the unconscious social standing afforded by good clothes, but by other surroundings which are not nearly up to these. For the same reason, girls’ clubs are infinitely more difficult to organize in little towns and villages, where every one knows every one else, just how the front parlor is furnished, and the amount of mortgage there is upon the house. These facts get in the way of a clear and unbiassed judgment; they impede the democratic relationship and add to the self-consciousness of all concerned. Every one who has had to do with down-town girls’ clubs has had the experience of going into the home of some bright, well-dressed girl, to discover it uncomfortable and perhaps wretched, and to find the girl afterward carefully avoiding her, although the working girl may not have been at home when the call was made, and the visitor may have carried herself with the utmost courtesy throughout. In some very successful down-town clubs the home address is not given at all, and only the “business address” is required. Have we worked out our democracy further in regard to clothes than anything else?

¶24 The charity visitor has been rightly brought up to consider it vulgar to spend much money upon clothes, to care so much for “appearances.” She realizes dimly that the care for personal decoration over that for one’s home or habitat is in some way primitive and undeveloped; but she is silenced by its obvious need. She also catches a glimpse of the fact that the disproportionate expenditure of the poor in the

matter of clothes is largely due to the exclusiveness of the rich who hide from them the interior of their houses, and their more subtle pleasures, while of necessity exhibiting their street clothes and their street manners. Every one who goes shopping at the same time may see the clothes of the richest women in town, but only those invited to her receptions see the Corot on her walls or the bindings in her library. The poor naturally try to bridge the difference by reproducing the street clothes which they have seen. They are striving to conform to a common standard which their democratic training presupposes belongs to all of us. The charity visitor may regret that the Italian peasant woman has laid aside her picturesque kerchief and substituted a cheap street hat. But it is easy to recognize the first attempt toward democratic expression.

¶25 The charity visitor finds herself still more perplexed when she comes to consider such problems as those of early marriage and child labor; for she cannot deal with them according to economic theories, or according to the conventions which have regulated her own life. She finds both of these fairly upset by her intimate knowledge of the situation, and her sympathy for those into whose lives she has gained a curious insight. She discovers how incorrigibly bourgeois her standards have been, and it takes but a little time to reach the conclusion that she cannot insist so strenuously upon the conventions of her own class, which fail to fit the bigger, more emotional, and freer lives of working people. The charity visitor holds well-grounded views upon the imprudence of early marriages, quite naturally because she comes from a family and circle of professional and business people. A professional man is scarcely equipped and started in his profession before he is thirty. A business man, if he is on the road to success, is much nearer prosperity at thirty-five than twenty-five, and it is therefore wise for these men not to marry in the twenties; but this does not apply to the workingman. In many trades he is laid upon the shelf at thirty-five, and in nearly all trades he receives the largest wages in

his life between twenty and thirty. If the young workingman has all his wages to himself, he will probably establish habits of personal comfort, which he cannot keep up when he has to divide with a family—habits which he can, perhaps, never overcome.

¶26 The sense of prudence, the necessity for saving, can never come to a primitive, emotional man with the force of a conviction; but the necessity of providing for his children is a powerful incentive. He naturally regards his children as his savings-bank; he expects them to care for him when he gets old, and in some trades old age comes very early. A Jewish tailor was quite lately sent to the Cook County poorhouse, paralyzed beyond recovery at the age of thirty-five. Had his little boy of nine been but a few years older, he might have been spared this sorrow of public charity. He was, in fact, better able to well support a family when he was twenty than when he was thirty-five, for his wages had steadily grown less as the years went on. Another tailor whom I know, who is also a Socialist, always speaks of saving as a bourgeois virtue, one quite impossible to the genuine workingman. He supports a family consisting of himself, a wife and three children, and his two parents on eight dollars a week. He insists it would be criminal not to expend every penny of this amount upon food and shelter, and he expects his children later to care for him.

¶27 This economic pressure also accounts for the tendency to put children to work overyoung and thus cripple their chances for individual development and usefulness, and with the avaricious parent also leads to exploitation. “I have fed her for fourteen years, now she can help me pay my mortgage” is not an unusual reply when a hardworking father is expostulated with because he would take his bright daughter out of school and put her into a factory.

¶28 It has long been a common error for the charity visitor, who is strongly urging her “family” toward self-support, to suggest, or at least connive, that the children be put to work early,

although she has not the excuse that the parents have. It is so easy, after one has been taking the industrial view for a long time, to forget the larger and more social claim; to urge that the boy go to work and support his parents, who are receiving charitable aid. She does not realize what a cruel advantage the person who distributes charity has, when she gives advice.

¶29 The manager in a huge mercantile establishment employing many children was able to show during a child-labor investigation, that the only children under fourteen years of age in his employ were protgs who had been urged upon him by philanthropic ladies, not only acquaintances of his, but valued patrons of the establishment. It is not that the charity visitor is less wise than other people, but she has fixed her mind so long upon the industrial lameness of her family that she is eager to seize any crutch, however weak, which may enable them to get on.

¶30 She has failed to see that the boy who attempts to prematurely support his widowed mother may lower wages, add an illiterate member to the community, and arrest the development of a capable workingman. As she has failed to see that the rules which obtain in regard to the age of marriage in her own family may not apply to the workingman, so also she fails to understand that the present conditions of employment surrounding a factory child are totally unlike those which obtained during the energetic youth of her father.

¶31 The child who is prematurely put to work is constantly oppressed by this never ending question of the means of subsistence, and even little children are sometimes almost crushed with the cares of life through their affectionate sympathy. The writer knows a little Italian lad of six to whom the problems of food, clothing, and shelter have become so immediate and pressing that, although an imaginative child, he is unable to see life from any other standpoint. The goblin or bugaboo, feared by the more fortunate child, in his mind, has come

to be the need of coal which caused his father hysterical and demonstrative grief when it carried off his mother's inherited linen, the mosaic of St. Joseph, and, worst of all, his own rubber boots. He once came to a party at Hull-House, and was interested in nothing save a gas stove which he saw in the kitchen. He became excited over the discovery that fire could be produced without fuel. "I will tell my father of this stove. You buy no coal, you need only a match. Anybody will give you a match." He was taken to visit at a country-house and at once inquired how much rent was paid for it. On being told carelessly by his hostess that they paid no rent for that house, he came back quite wild with interest that the problem was solved. "Me and my father will go to the country. You get a big house, all warm, without rent." Nothing else in the country interested him but the subject of rent, and he talked of that with an exclusiveness worthy of a single taxpayer.

¶32 The struggle for existence, which is so much harsher among people near the edge of pauperism, sometimes leaves ugly marks on character, and the charity visitor finds these indirect results most mystifying. Parents who work hard and anticipate an old age when they can no longer earn, take care that their children shall expect to divide their wages with them from the very first. Such a parent, when successful, impresses the immature nervous system of the child thus tyrannically establishing habits of obedience, so that the nerves and will may not depart from this control when the child is older. The charity visitor, whose family relation is lifted quite out of this, does not in the least understand the industrial foundation for this family tyranny.

¶33 The head of a kindergarten training-class once addressed a club of working women, and spoke of the despotism which is often established over little children. She said that the so-called determination to break a child's will many times arose from a lust of dominion, and she urged the ideal relationship founded upon love and confidence. But many of the women

were puzzled. One of them remarked to the writer as she came out of the club room, "If you did not keep control over them from the time they were little, you would never get their wages when they are grown up." Another one said, "Ah, of course she (meaning the speaker) doesn't have to depend upon her children's wages. She can afford to be lax with them, because even if they don't give money to her, she can get along without it."

¶34 There are an impressive number of children who uncomplainingly and constantly hand over their weekly wages to their parents, sometimes receiving back ten cents or a quarter for spending-money, but quite as often nothing at all; and the writer knows one girl of twenty-five who for six years has received two cents a week from the constantly falling wages which she earns in a large factory. Is it habit or virtue which holds her steady in this course? If love and tenderness had been substituted for parental despotism, would the mother have had enough affection, enough power of expression to hold her daughter's sense of money obligation through all these years? This girl who spends her paltry two cents on chewing-gum and goes plainly clad in clothes of her mother's choosing, while many of her friends spend their entire wages on those clothes which factory girls love so well, must be held by some powerful force.

¶35 The charity visitor finds these subtle and elusive problems most harrowing. The head of a family she is visiting is a man who has become black-listed in a strike. He is not a very good workman, and this, added to his agitator's reputation, keeps him out of work for a long time. The fatal result of being long out of work follows: he becomes less and less eager for it, and gets a "job" less and less frequently. In order to keep up his self-respect, and still more to keep his wife's respect for him, he yields to the little self-deception that this prolonged idleness follows because he was once blacklisted, and he gradually becomes a martyr. Deep down in his heart perhaps—but who knows what may be deep down in his heart? Whatever may be

in his wife's, she does not show for an instant that she thinks he has grown lazy, and accustomed to see her earn, by sewing and cleaning, most of the scanty income for the family. The charity visitor, however, does see this, and she also sees that the other men who were in the strike have gone back to work. She further knows by inquiry and a little experience that the man is not skilful. She cannot, however, call him lazy and good-for-nothing, and denounce him as worthless as her grandmother might have done, because of certain intellectual conceptions at which she has arrived. She sees other workmen come to him for shrewd advice; she knows that he spends many more hours in the public library reading good books than the average workman has time to do. He has formed no bad habits and has yielded only to those subtle temptations toward a life of leisure which come to the intellectual man. He lacks the qualifications which would induce his union to engage him as a secretary or organizer, but he is a constant speaker at workingmen's meetings, and takes a high moral attitude on the questions discussed there. He contributes a certain intellectuality to his friends, and he has undoubted social value. The neighboring women confide to the charity visitor their sympathy with his wife, because she has to work so hard, and because her husband does not "provide." Their remarks are sharpened by a certain resentment toward the superiority of the husband's education and gentle manners. The charity visitor is ashamed to take this point of view, for she knows that it is not altogether fair. She is reminded of a college friend of hers, who told her that she was not going to allow her literary husband to write unworthy potboilers for the sake of earning a living. "I insist that we shall live within my own income; that he shall not publish until he is ready, and can give his genuine message." The charity visitor recalls what she has heard of another acquaintance, who urged her husband to decline a lucrative position as a railroad attorney, because she wished him to be free to take municipal positions, and handle public questions without the inevitable suspi-

cion which unaccountably attaches itself in a corrupt city to a corporation attorney. The action of these two women seemed noble to her, but in their cases they merely lived on a lesser income. In the case of the workingman's wife, she faced living on no income at all, or on the precarious one which she might be able to get together.

¶36 She sees that this third woman has made the greatest sacrifice, and she is utterly unwilling to condemn her while praising the friends of her own social position. She realizes, of course, that the situation is changed by the fact that the third family needs charity, while the other two do not; but, after all, they have not asked for it, and their plight was only discovered through an accident to one of the children. The charity visitor has been taught that her mission is to preserve the finest traits to be found in her visited family, and she shrinks from the thought of convincing the wife that her husband is worthless and she suspects that she might turn all this beautiful devotion into complaining drudgery. To be sure, she could give up visiting the family altogether, but she has become much interested in the progress of the crippled child who eagerly anticipates her visits, and she also suspects that she will never know many finer women than the mother. She is unwilling, therefore, to give up the friendship, and goes on bearing her perplexities as best she may.

¶37 The first impulse of our charity visitor is to be somewhat severe with her shiftless family for spending money on pleasures and indulging their children out of all proportion to their means. The poor family which receives beans and coal from the county, and pays for a bicycle on the instalment plan, is not unknown to any of us. But as the growth of juvenile crime becomes gradually understood, and as the danger of giving no legitimate and organized pleasure to the child becomes clearer, we remember that primitive man had games long before he cared for a house or regular meals.

¶38 There are certain boys in many city neighborhoods who form themselves into little gangs with a leader who is somewhat more intrepid than the rest. Their favorite performance is to break into an untenanted house, to knock off the faucets, and cut the lead pipe, which they sell to the nearest junk dealer. With the money thus procured they buy beer and drink it in little free-booter's groups sitting in the alley. From beginning to end they have the excitement of knowing that they may be seen and caught by the "coppers," and are at times quite breathless with suspense. It is not the least unlike, in motive and execution, the practice of country boys who go forth in squads to set traps for rabbits or to round up a coon.

¶39 It is characterized by a pure spirit for adventure, and the vicious training really begins when they are arrested, or when an older boy undertakes to guide them into further excitements. From the very beginning the most enticing and exciting experiences which they have seen have been connected with crime. The policeman embodies all the majesty of successful law and established government in his brass buttons and dazzlingly equipped patrol wagon.

¶40 The boy who has been arrested comes back more or less a hero with a tale to tell of the interior recesses of the mysterious police station. The earliest public excitement the child remembers is divided between the rattling fire engines, "the time there was a fire in the next block," and all the tense interest of the patrol wagon "the time the drunkest lady in our street was arrested."

¶41 In the first year of their settlement the Hull-House residents took fifty kindergarten children to Lincoln Park, only to be grieved by their apathetic interest in trees and flowers. As they came back with an omnibus full of tired and sleepy children, they were surprised to find them galvanized into sudden life because a patrol wagon rattled by. Their eager little heads popped out of the windows full of questioning:

“Was it a man or a woman?” “How many policemen inside?” and eager little tongues began to tell experiences of arrests which baby eyes had witnessed.

¶42 The excitement of a chase, the chances of competition, and the love of a fight are all centred in the outward display of crime. The parent who receives charitable aid and yet provides pleasure for his child, and is willing to indulge him in his play, is blindly doing one of the wisest things possible; and no one is more eager for playgrounds and vacation schools than the conscientious charity visitor.

¶43 This very imaginative impulse and attempt to live in a pictured world of their own, which seems the simplest prerogative of childhood, often leads the boys into difficulty. Three boys aged seven, nine, and ten were once brought into a neighboring police station under the charge of pilfering and destroying property. They had dug a cave under a railroad viaduct in which they had spent many days and nights of the summer vacation. They had “swiped” potatoes and other vegetables from hucksters’ carts, which they had cooked and eaten in true brigand fashion; they had decorated the interior of the excavation with stolen junk, representing swords and firearms, to their romantic imaginations. The father of the ringleader was a janitor living in a building five miles away in a prosperous portion of the city. The landlord did not want an active boy in the building, and his mother was dead; the janitor paid for the boy’s board and lodging to a needy woman living near the viaduct. She conscientiously gave him his breakfast and supper, and left something in the house for his dinner every morning when she went to work in a neighboring factory; but was too tired by night to challenge his statement that he “would rather sleep outdoors in the summer,” or to investigate what he did during the day. In the meantime the three boys lived in a world of their own, made up from the reading of adventurous stories and their vivid imaginations, steadily pilfering more and more as the days went by, and actually imperilling

the safety of the traffic passing over the street on the top of the viaduct. In spite of vigorous exertions on their behalf, one of the boys was sent to the Reform School, comforting himself with the conclusive remark, “Well, we had fun anyway, and maybe they will let us dig a cave at the School; it is in the country, where we can’t hurt anything.”

¶44 In addition to books of adventure, or even reading of any sort, the scenes and ideals of the theatre largely form the manners and morals of the young people. “Going to the theatre” is indeed the most common and satisfactory form of recreation. Many boys who conscientiously give all their wages to their mothers have returned each week ten cents to pay for a seat in the gallery of a theatre on Sunday afternoon. It is their one satisfactory glimpse of life—the moment when they “issue forth from themselves” and are stirred and thoroughly interested. They quite simply adopt as their own, and imitate as best they can, all that they see there. In moments of genuine grief and excitement the words and the gestures they employ are those copied from the stage, and the tawdry expression often conflicts hideously with the fine and genuine emotion of which it is the inadequate and vulgar vehicle.

¶45 As in the matter of dress, more refined and simpler manners and mode of expressions are unseen by them, and they must perforce copy what they know.

¶46 If we agree with a recent definition of Art, as that which causes the spectator to lose his sense of isolation, there is no doubt that the popular theatre, with all its faults, more nearly fulfils the function of art for the multitude of working people than all the “free galleries” and picture exhibits combined.

¶47 The greatest difficulty is experienced when the two standards come sharply together, and when both sides make an attempt at understanding and explanation. The difficulty of making clear one’s own ethical standpoint

is at times insurmountable. A woman who had bought and sold school books stolen from the school fund,—books which are all plainly marked with a red stamp,—came to Hull House one morning in great distress because she had been arrested, and begged a resident “to speak to the judge.” She gave as a reason the fact that the House had known her for six years, and had once been very good to her when her little girl was buried. The resident more than suspected that her visitor knew the school books were stolen when buying them, and any attempt to talk upon that subject was evidently considered very rude. The visitor wished to get out of her trial, and evidently saw no reason why the House should not help her. The alderman was out of town, so she could not go to him. After a long conversation the visitor entirely failed to get another point of view and went away grieved and disappointed at a refusal, thinking the resident simply disobliging; wondering, no doubt, why such a mean woman had once been good to her; leaving the resident, on the other hand, utterly baffled and in the state of mind she would have been in, had she brutally insisted that a little child should lift weights too heavy for its undeveloped muscles.

¶48 Such a situation brings out the impossibility of substituting a higher ethical standard for a lower one without similarity of experience, but it is not as painful as that illustrated by the following example, in which the highest ethical standard yet attained by the charity recipient is broken down, and the substituted one not in the least understood:—

¶49 A certain charity visitor is peculiarly appealed to by the weakness and pathos of forlorn old age. She is responsible for the well-being of perhaps a dozen old women to whom she sustains a sincerely affectionate and almost filial relation. Some of them learn to take her benefactions quite as if they came from their own relatives, grumbling at all she does, and scolding her with a family freedom. One of these poor old women was injured in a fire years ago. She has but the fragment of a hand left, and is

grievously crippled in her feet. Through years of pain she had become addicted to opium, and when she first came under the visitor’s care, was only held from the poorhouse by the awful thought that she would there perish without her drug. Five years of tender care have done wonders for her. She lives in two neat little rooms, where with her thumb and two fingers she makes innumerable quilts, which she sells and gives away with the greatest delight. Her opium is regulated to a set amount taken each day, and she has been drawn away from much drinking. She is a voracious reader, and has her head full of strange tales made up from books and her own imagination. At one time it seemed impossible to do anything for her in Chicago, and she was kept for two years in a suburb, where the family of the charity visitor lived, and where she was nursed through several hazardous illnesses. She now lives a better life than she did, but she is still far from being a model old woman. The neighbors are constantly shocked by the fact that she is supported and comforted by a “charity lady,” while at the same time she occasionally “rushes the growler,” scolding at the boys lest they jar her in her tottering walk. The care of her has broken through even that second standard, which the neighborhood had learned to recognize as the standard of charitable societies, that only the “worthy poor” are to be helped; that temperance and thrift are the virtues which receive the plums of benevolence. The old lady herself is conscious of this criticism. Indeed, irate neighbors tell her to her face that she doesn’t in the least deserve what she gets. In order to disarm them, and at the same time to explain what would otherwise seem loving-kindness so colossal as to be abnormal, she tells them that during her sojourn in the suburb she discovered an awful family secret,—a horrible scandal connected with the long-suffering charity visitor; that it is in order to prevent the divulgence of this that she constantly receives her ministrations. Some of her perplexed neighbors accept this explanation as simple and offering a solution of this vexed problem. Doubtless many of

them have a glimpse of the real state of affairs, of the love and patience which ministers to need irrespective of worth. But the standard is too high for most of them, and it sometimes seems unfortunate to break down the second standard, which holds that people who “rush the growler” are not worthy of charity, and that there is a certain justice attained when they go to the poor-house. It is certainly dangerous to break down the lower, unless the higher is made clear.

¶50 Just when our affection becomes large enough to care for the unworthy among the poor as we would care for the unworthy among our own kin, is certainly a perplexing question. To say that it should never be so, is a comment upon our democratic relations to them which few of us would be willing to make.

¶51 Of what use is all this striving and perplexity? Has the experience any value? It is certainly genuine, for it induces an occasional charity visitor to live in a tenement house as simply as the other tenants do. It drives others to give up visiting the poor altogether, because, they claim, it is quite impossible unless the individual becomes a member of a sisterhood, which requires, as some of the Roman Catholic sisterhoods do, that the member first take the vows of obedience and poverty, so that she can have nothing to give save as it is first given to her, and thus she is not harassed by a constant attempt at adjustment.

¶52 Both the tenement-house resident and the sister assume to have put themselves upon the industrial level of their neighbors, although they have left out the most awful element of poverty, that of imminent fear of starvation and a neglected old age.

¶53 The young charity visitor who goes from a family living upon a most precarious industrial level to her own home in a prosperous part of the city, if she is sensitive at all, is never free from perplexities which our growing democracy forces upon her.

¶54 We sometimes say that our charity is too scientific, but we would doubtless be much more correct in our estimate if we said that it is not scientific enough. We dislike the entire arrangement of cards alphabetically classified according to streets and names of families, with the unrelated and meaningless details attached to them. Our feeling of revolt is probably not unlike that which afflicted the students of botany and geology in the middle of the last century, when flowers were tabulated in alphabetical order, when geology was taught by colored charts and thin books. No doubt the students, wearied to death, many times said that it was all too scientific, and were much perplexed and worried when they found traces of structure and physiology which their so-called scientific principles were totally unable to account for. But all this happened before science had become evolutionary and scientific at all, before it had a principle of life from within. The very indications and discoveries which formerly perplexed, later illumined and made the study absorbing and vital.

¶55 We are singularly slow to apply this evolutionary principle to human affairs in general, although it is fast being applied to the education of children. We are at last learning to follow the development of the child; to expect certain traits under certain conditions; to adapt methods and matter to his growing mind. No “advanced educator” can allow himself to be so absorbed in the question of what a child ought to be as to exclude the discovery of what he is. But in our charitable efforts we think much more of what a man ought to be than of what he is or of what he may become; and we ruthlessly force our conventions and standards upon him, with a sternness which we would consider stupid indeed did an educator use it in forcing his mature intellectual convictions upon an undeveloped mind.

¶56 Let us take the example of a timid child, who cries when he is put to bed because he is afraid of the dark. The “soft-hearted” parent stays with him, simply because he is sorry for

him and wants to comfort him. The scientifically trained parent stays with him, because he realizes that the child is in a stage of development in which his imagination has the best of him, and in which it is impossible to reason him out of a belief in ghosts. These two parents, wide apart in point of view, after all act much alike, and both very differently from the pseudo-scientific parent, who acts from dogmatic conviction and is sure he is right. He talks of developing his child's self-respect and good sense, and leaves him to cry himself to sleep, demanding powers of self-control and development which the child does not possess. There is no doubt that our development of charity methods has reached this pseudo-scientific and stilted stage. We have learned to condemn unthinking, ill-regulated kind-heartedness, and we take great pride in mere repression much as the stern parent tells the visitor below how admirably he is rearing the child, who is hysterically crying upstairs and laying the foundation for future nervous disorders. The pseudo-scientific spirit, or rather, the undeveloped stage of our philanthropy, is perhaps most clearly revealed in our tendency to lay constant stress on negative action. "Don't give;" "don't break down self-respect," we are constantly told. We distrust the human impulse as well as the teachings of our own experience, and in their stead substitute dogmatic rules for conduct. We forget that the accumulation of knowledge and the holding of convictions must finally result in the application of that knowledge and those convictions to life itself; that the necessity for activity and a pull upon the sympathies is so severe, that all the knowledge in the possession of the visitor is constantly applied, and she has a reasonable chance for an ultimate intellectual comprehension. Indeed, part of the perplexity in the administration of charity comes from the fact that the type of person drawn to it is the one who insists that her convictions shall not be unrelated to action. Her moral concepts constantly tend to float away from her, unless they have a basis in the concrete relation of life. She is confronted with the task of reducing her scruples to action, and of converging many wills, so

as to unite the strength of all of them into one accomplishment, the value of which no one can foresee.

¶57 On the other hand, the young woman who has succeeded in expressing her social compunction through charitable effort finds that the wider social activity, and the contact with the larger experience, not only increases her sense of social obligation but at the same time recasts her social ideals. She is chagrined to discover that in the actual task of reducing her social scruples to action, her humble beneficiaries are far in advance of her, not in charity or singleness of purpose, but in self-sacrificing action. She reaches the old-time virtue of humility by a social process, not in the old way, as the man who sits by the side of the road and puts dust upon his head, calling himself a contrite sinner, but she gets the dust upon her head because she has stumbled and fallen in the road through her efforts to push forward the mass, to march with her fellows. She has socialized her virtues not only through a social aim but by a social process.

¶58 The Hebrew prophet made three requirements from those who would join the great forward-moving procession led by Jehovah. "To love mercy" and at the same time "to do justly" is the difficult task; to fulfil the first requirement alone is to fall into the error of indiscriminate giving with all its disastrous results; to fulfil the second solely is to obtain the stern policy of withholding, and it results in such a dreary lack of sympathy and understanding that the establishment of justice is impossible. It may be that the combination of the two can never be attained save as we fulfil still the third requirement—"to walk humbly with God," which may mean to walk for many dreary miles beside the lowliest of His creatures, not even in that peace of mind which the company of the humble is popularly supposed to afford, but rather with the pangs and throes to which the poor human understanding is subjected whenever it attempts to comprehend the meaning of life.

V. Industrial Amelioration

¶1 There is no doubt that the great difficulty we experience in reducing to action our imperfect code of social ethics arises from the fact that we have not yet learned to act together, and find it far from easy even to fuse our principles and aims into a satisfactory statement. We have all been at times entertained by the futile efforts of half a dozen highly individualized people gathered together as a committee. Their aimless attempts to find a common method of action have recalled the wavering motion of a baby's arm before he has learned to coordinate his muscles.

¶2 If, as is many times stated, we are passing from an age of individualism to one of association, there is no doubt that for decisive and effective action the individual still has the best of it. He will secure efficient results while committees are still deliberating upon the best method of making a beginning. And yet, if the need of the times demand associated effort, it may easily be true that the action which appears ineffective, and yet is carried out upon the more highly developed line of associated effort, may represent a finer social quality and have a greater social value than the more effective individual action. It is possible that an individual may be successful, largely because he conserves all his powers for individual achievement and does not put any of his energy into the training which will give him the ability to act with others. The individual acts promptly, and we are dazzled by his success while only dimly conscious of the inadequacy of his code. Nowhere is this illustrated more clearly than in industrial relations, as existing between the owner of a large factory and his employees.

¶3 A growing conflict may be detected between the democratic ideal, which urges the workmen to demand representation in the administration of industry, and the accepted position, that the man who owns the capital and takes the risks has the exclusive right of management. It is in reality a clash between indi-

vidual or aristocratic management, and corporate or democratic management. A large and highly developed factory presents a sharp contrast between its socialized form and individualistic ends.

¶4 It is possible to illustrate this difference by a series of events which occurred in Chicago during the summer of 1894. These events epitomized and exaggerated, but at the same time challenged, the code of ethics which regulates much of our daily conduct, and clearly showed that so-called social relations are often resting upon the will of an individual, and are in reality regulated by a code of individual ethics.

¶5 As this situation illustrates a point of great difficulty to which we have arrived in our development of social ethics, it may be justifiable to discuss it at some length. Let us recall the facts, not as they have been investigated and printed, but as they remain in our memories.

¶6 A large manufacturing company had provided commodious workshops, and, at the instigation of its president, had built a model town for the use of its employees. After a series of years it was deemed necessary, during a financial depression, to reduce the wages of these employees by giving each workman less than full-time work "in order to keep the shops open." This reduction was not accepted by the men, who had become discontented with the factory management and the town regulations, and a strike ensued, followed by a complete shut-down of the works. Although these shops were non-union shops, the strikers were hastily organized and appealed for help to the American Railway Union, which at that moment was holding its biennial meeting in Chicago. After some days' discussion and some futile attempts at arbitration, a sympathetic strike was declared, which gradually involved railway men in all parts of the country, and orderly transportation was brought to a complete standstill. In the excitement which followed, cars were burned and

tracks torn up. The police of Chicago did not cope with the disorder, and the railway companies, apparently distrusting the Governor of the State, and in order to protect the United States mails, called upon the President of the United States for the federal troops, the federal courts further enjoined all persons against any form of interference with the property or operation of the railroads, and the situation gradually assumed the proportions of internecine warfare. During all of these events the president of the manufacturing company first involved, steadfastly refused to have the situation submitted to arbitration, and this attitude naturally provoked much discussion. The discussion was broadly divided between those who held that the long kindness of the president of the company had been most ungratefully received, and those who maintained that the situation was the inevitable outcome of the social consciousness developing among working people. The first defended the president of the company in his persistent refusal to arbitrate, maintaining that arbitration was impossible after the matter had been taken up by other than his own employees, and they declared that a man must be allowed to run his own business. They considered the firm stand of the president a service to the manufacturing interests of the entire country. The others claimed that a large manufacturing concern has ceased to be a private matter; that not only a number of workmen and stockholders are concerned in its management, but that the interests of the public are so involved that the officers of the company are in a real sense administering a public trust.

¶7 This prolonged strike clearly puts in a concrete form the ethics of an individual, in this case a benevolent employer, and the ethics of a mass of men, his employees, claiming what they believed to be their moral rights.

¶8 These events illustrate the difficulty of managing an industry which has become organized into a vast social operation, not with the cooperation of the workman thus socialized, but solely by the dictation of the individual

owning the capital. There is a sharp divergence between the social form and the individual aim, which becomes greater as the employees are more highly socialized and dependent. The president of the company under discussion went further than the usual employer does. He socialized not only the factory, but the form in which his workmen were living. He built, and in a great measure regulated, an entire town, without calling upon the workmen either for self-expression or self-government. He honestly believed that he knew better than they what was for their good, as he certainly knew better than they how to conduct his business. As his factory developed and increased, making money each year under his direction, he naturally expected the town to prosper in the same way.

¶9 He did not realize that the men submitted to the undemocratic conditions of the factory organization because the economic pressure in our industrial affairs is so great that they could not do otherwise. Under this pressure they could be successfully discouraged from organization, and systematically treated on the individual basis.

¶10 Social life, however, in spite of class distinctions, is much freer than industrial life, and the men resented the extension of industrial control to domestic and social arrangements. They felt the lack of democracy in the assumption that they should be taken care of in these matters, in which even the humblest workman has won his independence. The basic difficulty lay in the fact that an individual was directing the social affairs of many men without any consistent effort to find out their desires, and without any organization through which to give them social expression. The president of the company was, moreover, so confident of the righteousness of his aim that he had come to test the righteousness of the process by his own feelings and not by those of the men. He doubtless built the town from a sincere desire to give his employees the best surroundings. As it developed, he gradually took toward it the artist attitude toward his own creation, which has no

thought for the creation itself but is absorbed in the idea it stands for, and he ceased to measure the usefulness of the town by the standard of the men's needs. This process slowly darkened his glints of memory, which might have connected his experience with that of his men. It is possible to cultivate the impulses of the benefactor until the power of attaining a simple human relationship with the beneficiaries, that of frank equality with them, is gone, and there is left no mutual interest in a common cause. To perform too many good deeds may be to lose the power of recognizing good in others; to be too absorbed in carrying out a personal plan of improvement may be to fail to catch the great moral lesson which our times offer.

¶11 The president of this company fostered his employees for many years; he gave them sanitary houses and beautiful parks; but in their extreme need, when they were struggling with the most difficult situation which the times could present to them, he lost his touch and had nothing wherewith to help them. The employer's conception of goodness for his men had been cleanliness, decency of living, and, above all, thrift and temperance. Means had been provided for all this, and opportunities had also been given for recreation and improvement. But this employer suddenly found his town in the sweep of a world-wide moral impulse. A movement had been going on about him and among his working men, of which he had been unconscious, or concerning which he had heard only by rumor.

¶12 Outside the ken of philanthropists the proletariat had learned to say in many languages, that "the injury of one is the concern of all." Their watchwords were brotherhood, sacrifice, the subordination of individual and trade interests, to the good of the working classes, and they were moved by a determination to free that class from the untoward conditions under which they were laboring.

¶13 Compared to these watchwords, the old ones which this philanthropic employer had

given his town were negative and inadequate. He had believed strongly in temperance and steadiness of individual effort, but had failed to apprehend the greater movement of combined abstinence and concerted action. With all his fostering, the president had not attained to a conception of social morality for his men and had imagined that virtue for them largely meant absence of vice.

¶14 When the labor movement finally stirred his town, or, to speak more fairly, when, in their distress and perplexity, his own employees appealed to an organized manifestation of this movement, they were quite sure that simply because they were workmen in distress they would not be deserted by it. This loyalty on the part of a widely ramified and well-organized union toward the workmen in a "non-union shop," who had contributed nothing to its cause, was certainly a manifestation of moral power.

¶15 In none of his utterances or correspondence did the president for an instant recognize this touch of nobility, although one would imagine that he would gladly point out this bit of virtue, in what he must have considered the moral ruin about him. He stood throughout for the individual virtues, those which had distinguished the model workmen of his youth; those which had enabled him and so many of his contemporaries to rise in life, when "rising in life" was urged upon every promising boy as the goal of his efforts.

¶16 Of the code of social ethics he had caught absolutely nothing. The morals he had advocated in selecting and training his men did not fail them in the hour of confusion. They were self-controlled, and they themselves destroyed no property. They were sober and exhibited no drunkenness, even although obliged to hold their meetings in the saloon hall of a neighboring town. They repaid their employer in kind, but he had given them no rule for the life of association into which they were plunged.

¶17 The president of the company desired that his employees should possess the individual and family virtues, but did nothing to cherish in them the social virtues which express themselves in associated effort.

¶18 Day after day, during that horrible time of suspense, when the wires constantly reported the same message, “the President of the Company holds that there is nothing to arbitrate,” one was forced to feel that the ideal of one-man rule was being sustained in its baldest form. A demand from many parts of the country and from many people was being made for social adjustment, against which the commercial training and the individualistic point of view held its own successfully.

¶19 The majority of the stockholders, not only of this company but of similar companies, and many other citizens, who had had the same commercial experience, shared and sustained this position. It was quite impossible for them to catch the other point of view. They not only felt themselves right from the commercial standpoint, but had gradually accustomed themselves also to the philanthropic standpoint, until they had come to consider their motives beyond reproach. Habit held them persistent in this view of the case through all changing conditions.

¶20 A wise man has said that “the consent of men and your own conscience are two wings given you whereby you may rise to God.” It is so easy for the good and powerful to think that they can rise by following the dictates of conscience, by pursuing their own ideals, that they are prone to leave those ideals unconnected with the consent of their fellow-men. The president of the company thought out within his own mind a beautiful town. He had power with which to build this town, but he did not appeal to nor obtain the consent of the men who were living in it. The most unambitious reform, recognizing the necessity for this consent, makes for slow but sane and strenuous progress, while

the most ambitious of social plans and experiments, ignoring this, is prone to failure.

¶21 The man who insists upon consent, who moves with the people, is bound to consult the “feasible right” as well as the absolute right. He is often obliged to attain only Mr. Lincoln’s “best possible,” and then has the sickening sense of compromise with his best convictions. He has to move along with those whom he leads toward a goal that neither he nor they see very clearly till they come to it. He has to discover what people really want, and then “provide the channels in which the growing moral force of their lives shall flow.” What he does attain, however, is not the result of his individual striving, as a solitary mountain-climber beyond that of the valley multitude but it is sustained and upheld by the sentiments and aspirations of many others. Progress has been slower perpendicularly, but incomparably greater because lateral. He has not taught his contemporaries to climb mountains, but he has persuaded the villagers to move up a few feet higher; added to this, he has made secure his progress. A few months after the death of the promoter of this model town, a court decision made it obligatory upon the company to divest itself of the management of the town as involving a function beyond its corporate powers. The parks, flowers, and fountains of this far-famed industrial centre were dismantled, with scarcely a protest from the inhabitants themselves.

¶22 The man who disassociates his ambition, however disinterested, from the cooperation of his fellows, always takes this risk of ultimate failure. He does not take advantage of the great conservator and guarantee of his own permanent success which associated efforts afford. Genuine experiments toward higher social conditions must have a more democratic faith and practice than those which underlie private venture. Public parks and improvements, intended for the common use, are after all only safe in the hands of the public itself; and associated effort toward social progress, although much more awkward and stumbling than that same effort

managed by a capable individual, does yet enlist deeper forces and evoke higher social capacities.

¶23 The successful business man who is also the philanthropist is in more than the usual danger of getting widely separated from his employees. The men already have the American veneration for wealth and successful business capacity, and, added to this, they are dazzled by his good works. The workmen have the same kindly impulses as he, but while they organize their charity into mutual benefit associations and distribute their money in small amounts in relief for the widows and insurance for the injured, the employer may build model towns, erect college buildings, which are tangible and enduring, and thereby display his goodness in concentrated form.

¶24 By the very exigencies of business demands, the employer is too often cut off from the social ethics developing in regard to our larger social relationships, and from the great moral life springing from our common experiences. This is sure to happen when he is good “to” people rather than “with” them, when he allows himself to decide what is best for them instead of consulting them. He thus misses the rectifying influence of that fellowship which is so big that it leaves no room for sensitiveness or gratitude. Without this fellowship we may never know how great the divergence between ourselves and others may become, nor how cruel the misunderstandings.

¶25 During a recent strike of the employees of a large factory in Ohio, the president of the company expressed himself as bitterly disappointed by the results of his many kindnesses, and evidently considered the employees utterly unappreciative. His state of mind was the result of the fallacy of ministering to social needs from an individual impulse and expecting a socialized return of gratitude and loyalty. If the lunch-room was necessary, it was a necessity in order that the employees might have better food, and, when they had received the better food, the legitimate aim of the lunch-room was met.

If baths were desirable, and the fifteen minutes of calisthenic exercise given the women in the middle of each half day brought a needed rest and change to their muscles, then the increased cleanliness and the increased bodily comfort of so many people should of themselves have justified the experiment.

¶26 To demand, as a further result, that there should be no strikes in the factory, no revolt against the will of the employer because the employees were filled with loyalty as the result of the kindness, was of course to take the experiment from an individual basis to a social one.

¶27 Large mining companies and manufacturing concerns are constantly appealing to their stockholders for funds, or for permission to take a percentage of the profits, in order that the money may be used for educational and social schemes designed for the benefit of the employees. The promoters of these schemes use as an argument and as an appeal, that better relations will be thus established, that strikes will be prevented, and that in the end the money returned to the stockholders will be increased. However praiseworthy this appeal may be in motive, it involves a distinct confusion of issues, and in theory deserves the failure it so often meets with in practice. In the clash which follows a strike, the employees are accused of an ingratitude, when there was no legitimate reason to expect gratitude; and useless bitterness, which has really a factitious basis, may be developed on both sides.

¶28 Indeed, unless the relation becomes a democratic one, the chances of misunderstanding are increased, when to the relation of employer and employees is added the relation of benefactor to beneficiaries, in so far as there is still another opportunity for acting upon the individual code of ethics.

¶29 There is no doubt that these efforts are to be commended, not only from the standpoint of their social value but because they have a marked industrial significance. Failing, as they

do, however, to touch the question of wages and hours, which are almost invariably the points of trades-union effort, the employers confuse the mind of the public when they urge the amelioration of conditions and the kindly relation existing between them and their men as a reason for the discontinuance of strikes and other trades-union tactics. The men have individually accepted the kindness of the employers as it was individually offered, but quite as the latter urges his inability to increase wages unless he has the cooperation of his competitors, so the men state that they are bound to the trades-union struggle for an increase in wages because it can only be undertaken by combinations of labor.

¶30 Even the much more democratic effort to divide a proportion of the profits at the end of the year among the employees, upon the basis of their wages and efficiency, is also exposed to a weakness, from the fact that the employing side has the power of determining to whom the benefit shall accrue.

¶31 Both individual acts of self-defence on the part of the wage earner and individual acts of benevolence on the part of the employer are most useful as they establish standards to which the average worker and employer may in time be legally compelled to conform. Progress must always come through the individual who varies from the type and has sufficient energy to express this variation. He first holds a higher conception than that held by the mass of his fellows of what is righteous under given conditions, and expresses this conviction in conduct, in many instances formulating a certain scruple which the others share, but have not yet defined even to themselves. Progress, however, is not secure until the mass has conformed to this new righteousness. This is equally true in regard to any advance made in the standard of living on the part of the trades-unionists or in the improved conditions of industry on the part of reforming employers. The mistake lies, not in overpraising the advance thus inaugurated by individual initiative, but in regarding the achievement as

complete in a social sense when it is still in the realm of individual action. No sane manufacturer regards his factory as the centre of the industrial system. He knows very well that the cost of material, wages, and selling prices are determined by industrial conditions completely beyond his control. Yet the same man may quite calmly regard himself and his own private principles as merely self-regarding, and expect results from casual philanthropy which can only be accomplished through those common rules of life and labor established by the community for the common good.

¶32 Outside of and surrounding these smaller and most significant efforts are the larger and irresistible movements operating toward combination. This movement must tend to decide upon social matters from the social standpoint. Until then it is difficult to keep our minds free from a confusion of issues. Such a confusion occurs when the gift of a large sum to the community for a public and philanthropic purpose, throws a certain glamour over all the earlier acts of a man, and makes it difficult for the community to see possible wrongs committed against it, in the accumulation of wealth so beneficently used. It is possible also that the resolve to be thus generous unconsciously influences the man himself in his methods of accumulation. He keeps to a certain individual rectitude, meaning to make an individual restitution by the old paths of generosity and kindness, whereas if he had in view social restitution on the newer lines of justice and opportunity, he would throughout his course doubtless be watchful of his industrial relationships and his social virtues.

¶33 The danger of professionally attaining to the power of the righteous man, of yielding to the ambition "for doing good" on a large scale, compared to which the ambition for politics, learning, or wealth, are vulgar and commonplace, ramifies through our modern life; and those most easily beset by this temptation are precisely the men best situated to experiment on the larger social lines, because they so easily dramatize their acts and lead public opinion.

Very often, too, they have in their hands the preservation and advancement of large vested interests, and often see clearly and truly that they are better able to administer the affairs of the community than the community itself: sometimes they see that if they do not administer them sharply and quickly, as only an individual can, certain interests of theirs dependent upon the community will go to ruin.

¶34 The model employer first considered, provided a large sum in his will with which to build and equip a polytechnic school, which will doubtless be of great public value. This again shows the advantage of individual management, in the spending as well as in the accumulating of wealth, but this school will attain its highest good, in so far as it incites the ambition to provide other schools from public funds. The town of Zurich possesses a magnificent polytechnic institute, secured by the vote of the entire people and supported from public taxes. Every man who voted for it is interested that his child should enjoy its benefits, and, of course, the voluntary attendance must be larger than in a school accepted as a gift to the community.

¶35 In the educational efforts of model employers, as in other attempts toward social amelioration, one man with the best of intentions is trying to do what the entire body of employees should have undertaken to do for themselves. The result of his efforts will only attain its highest value as it serves as an incentive to procure other results by the community as well as for the community.

¶36 There are doubtless many things which the public would never demand unless they were first supplied by individual initiative, both because the public lacks the imagination, and also the power of formulating their wants. Thus philanthropic effort supplies kindergartens, until they become so established in the popular affections that they are incorporated in the public school system. Churches and missions establish reading rooms, until at last the public library system dots the city with branch reading rooms

and libraries. For this willingness to take risks for the sake of an ideal, for those experiments which must be undertaken with vigor and boldness in order to secure didactic value in failure as well as in success, society must depend upon the individual possessed with money, and also distinguished by earnest and unselfish purpose. Such experiments enable the nation to use the Referendum method in its public affairs. Each social experiment is thus tested by a few people, given wide publicity, that it may be observed and discussed by the bulk of the citizens before the public prudently makes up its mind whether or not it is wise to incorporate it into the functions of government. If the decision is in its favor and it is so incorporated, it can then be carried on with confidence and enthusiasm.

¶37 But experience has shown that we can only depend upon successful men for a certain type of experiment in the line of industrial amelioration and social advancement. The list of those who found churches, educational institutions, libraries, and art galleries, is very long, as is again the list of those contributing to model dwellings, recreation halls, and athletic fields. At the present moment factory employers are doing much to promote "industrial betterment" in the way of sanitary surroundings, opportunities for bathing, lunch rooms provided with cheap and wholesome food, club rooms, and guild halls. But there is a line of social experiment involving social righteousness in its most advanced form, in which the number of employers and the "favored class" are so few that it is plain society cannot count upon them for continuous and valuable help. This lack is in the line of factory legislation and that sort of social advance implied in shorter hours and the regulation of wages; in short, all that organization and activity that is involved in such a maintenance and increase of wages as would prevent the lowering of the standard of life.

¶38 A large body of people feel keenly that the present industrial system is in a state of profound disorder, and that there is no guarantee that the pursuit of individual ethics will ever

right it. They claim that relief can only come through deliberate corporate effort inspired by social ideas and guided by the study of economic laws, and that the present industrial system thwarts our ethical demands, not only for social righteousness but for social order. Because they believe that each advance in ethics must be made fast by a corresponding advance in politics and legal enactment, they insist upon the right of state regulation and control. While many people representing all classes in a community would assent to this as to a general proposition, and would even admit it as a certain moral obligation, legislative enactments designed to control industrial conditions have largely been secured through the efforts of a few citizens, mostly those who constantly see the harsh conditions of labor and who are incited to activity by their sympathies as well as their convictions.

¶39 This may be illustrated by the series of legal enactments regulating the occupations in which children may be allowed to work, also the laws in regard to the hours of labor permitted in those occupations, and the minimum age below which children may not be employed. The first child labor laws were enacted in England through the efforts of those members of parliament whose hearts were wrung by the condition of the little parish apprentices bound out to the early textile manufacturers of the north; and through the long years required to build up the code of child labor legislation which England now possesses, knowledge of the conditions has always preceded effective legislation. The efforts of that small number in every community who believe in legislative control have always been reinforced by the efforts of trades-unionists rather than by the efforts of employers. Partly because the employment of workingmen in the factories brings them in contact with the children who tend to lower wages and demoralize their trades, and partly because workingmen have no money nor time to spend in alleviating philanthropy, and must perforce seize upon agitation and legal enactment as the only channel of redress which is open to them.

¶40 We may illustrate by imagining a row of people seated in a moving street-car, into which darts a boy of eight, calling out the details of the last murder, in the hope of selling an evening newspaper. A comfortable looking man buys a paper from him with no sense of moral shock; he may even be a trifle complacent that he has helped along the little fellow, who is making his way in the world. The philanthropic lady sitting next to him may perhaps reflect that it is a pity that such a bright boy is not in school. She may make up her mind in a moment of compunction to redouble her efforts for various newsboys' schools and homes, that this poor child may have better teaching, and perhaps a chance at manual training. She probably is convinced that he alone, by his unaided efforts, is supporting a widowed mother, and her heart is moved to do all she can for him. Next to her sits a workingman trained in trades-union methods. He knows that the boy's natural development is arrested, and that the abnormal activity of his body and mind uses up the force which should go into growth; moreover, that this premature use of his powers has but a momentary and specious value. He is forced to these conclusions because he has seen many a man, entering the factory at eighteen and twenty, so worn out by premature work that he was "laid on the shelf" within ten or fifteen years. He knows very well that he can do nothing in the way of ameliorating the lot of this particular boy; that his only possible chance is to agitate for proper child-labor laws; to regulate, and if possible prohibit, street-vending by children, in order that the child of the poorest may have his school time secured to him, and may have at least his short chance for growth.

¶41 These three people, sitting in the street car, are all honest and upright, and recognize a certain duty toward the forlorn children of the community. The self-made man is encouraging one boy's own efforts; the philanthropic lady is helping on a few boys; the workingman alone is obliged to include all the boys of his class. Workingmen, because of their feebleness in all but numbers, have been forced to appeal to the

state, in order to secure protection for themselves and for their children. They cannot all rise out of their class, as the occasionally successful man has done; some of them must be left to do the work in the factories and mines, and they have no money to spend in philanthropy.

¶42 Both public agitation and a social appeal to the conscience of the community is necessary in order to secure help from the state, and, curiously enough, child-labor laws once enacted and enforced are a matter of great pride, and even come to be regarded as a register of the community's humanity and enlightenment. If the method of public agitation could find quiet and orderly expression in legislative enactment, and if labor measures could be submitted to the examination and judgment of the whole without a sense of division or of warfare, we should have the ideal development of the democratic state.

¶43 But we judge labor organizations as we do other living institutions, not by their declaration of principles, which we seldom read, but by their blundering efforts to apply their principles to actual conditions, and by the oft-time failure of their representatives, when the individual finds himself too weak to become the organ of corporate action.

¶44 The very blunders and lack of organization too often characterizing a union, in marked contrast to the orderly management of a factory, often confuse us as to the real issues involved, and we find it hard to trust uncouth and unruly manifestations of social effort. The situation is made even more complicated by the fact that those who are formulating a code of associated action so often break through the established code of law and order. As society has a right to demand of the reforming individual that he be sternly held to his personal and domestic claims, so it has a right to insist that labor organizations shall keep to the hardy won standards of public law and order; and the community performs but its plain duty when it registers its protest every time law and order are subverted,

even in the interest of the so-called social effort. Yet in moments of industrial stress and strain the community is confronted by a moral perplexity which may arise from the mere fact that the good of yesterday is opposed to the good of today, and that which may appear as a choice between virtue and vice is really but a choice between virtue and virtue. In the disorder and confusion sometimes incident to growth and progress, the community may be unable to see anything but the unlovely struggle itself.

¶45 The writer recalls a conversation between two workingmen who were leaving a lecture on "Organic Evolution." The first was much puzzled, and anxiously inquired of the second "if evolution could mean that one animal turned into another." The challenged workman stopped in the rear of the hall, put his foot upon a chair, and expounded what he thought evolution did mean; and this, so nearly as the conversation can be recalled, is what he said: "You see a lot of fishes are living in a stream, which overflows in the spring and strands some of them upon the bank. The weak ones die up there, but others make a big effort to get back into the water. They dig their fins into the sand, breathe as much air as they can with their gills, and have a terrible time. But after a while their fins turn into legs and their gills into lungs, and they have become frogs. Of course they are further along than the sleek, comfortable fishes who sail up and down the stream waving their tails and despising the poor damaged things thrashing around on the bank. He—the lecturer—did not say anything about men, but it is easy enough to think of us poor devils on the dry bank, struggling without enough to live on, while the comfortable fellows sail along in the water with all they want and despise us because we thrash about." His listener did not reply, and was evidently dissatisfied both with the explanation and the application. Doubtless the illustration was bungling in more than its setting forth, but the story is suggestive.

¶46 At times of social disturbance the law-abiding citizen is naturally so anxious for peace

and order, his sympathies are so justly and inevitably on the side making for the restoration of law, that it is difficult for him to see the situation fairly. He becomes insensible to the unselfish impulse which may prompt a sympathetic strike in behalf of the workers in a non-union shop, because he allows his mind to dwell exclusively on the disorder which has become associated with the strike. He is completely side-tracked by the ugly phases of a great moral movement. It is always a temptation to assume that the side which has respectability, authority, and superior intelligence, has therefore righteousness as well, especially when the same side presents concrete results of individual effort as over against the less tangible results of associated effort.

¶47 It is as yet most difficult for us to free ourselves from the individualistic point of view sufficiently to group events in their social relations and to judge fairly those who are endeavoring to produce a social result through all the difficulties of associated action. The philanthropist still finds his path much easier than do those who are attempting a social morality. In the first place, the public, anxious to praise what it recognizes as an undoubted moral effort often attended with real personal sacrifice, joyfully seizes upon this manifestation and overpraises it, recognizing the philanthropist as an old friend in the paths of righteousness, whereas the others are strangers and possibly to be distrusted as aliens. It is easy to confuse the re-

sponse to an abnormal number of individual claims with the response to the social claim. An exaggerated personal morality is often mistaken for a social morality, and until it attempts to minister to a social situation its total inadequacy is not discovered. To attempt to attain a social morality without a basis of democratic experience results in the loss of the only possible corrective and guide, and ends in an exaggerated individual morality but not in social morality at all. We see this from time to time in the care-worn and overworked philanthropist, who has taxed his individual will beyond the normal limits and has lost his clew to the situation among a bewildering number of cases. A man who takes the betterment of humanity for his aim and end must also take the daily experiences of humanity for the constant correction of his process. He must not only test and guide his achievement by human experience, but he must succeed or fail in proportion as he has incorporated that experience with his own. Otherwise his own achievements become his stumbling-block, and he comes to believe in his own goodness as something outside of himself. He makes an exception of himself, and thinks that he is different from the rank and file of his fellows. He forgets that it is necessary to know of the lives of our contemporaries, not only in order to believe in their integrity, which is after all but the first beginnings of social morality, but in order to attain to any mental or moral integrity for ourselves or any such hope for society.

VII. Political reform

¶1 Throughout this volume we have assumed that much of our ethical maladjustment in social affairs arises from the fact that we are acting upon a code of ethics adapted to individual relationships, but not to the larger social relationships to which it is bunglingly applied. In addition, however, to the consequent strain and difficulty, there is often an honest lack of perception as to what the situation demands.

¶2 Nowhere is this more obvious than in our political life as it manifests itself in certain quarters of every great city. It is most difficult to hold to our political democracy and to make it in any sense a social expression and not a mere governmental contrivance, unless we take pains to keep on common ground in our human experiences. Otherwise there is in various parts of the community an inevitable difference of ethical standards which becomes responsible

for much misunderstanding.

¶3 It is difficult both to interpret sympathetically the motives and ideals of those who have acquired rules of conduct in experience widely different from our own, and also to take enough care in guarding the gains already made, and in valuing highly enough the imperfect good so painfully acquired and, at the best, so mixed with evil. This wide difference in daily experience exhibits itself in two distinct attitudes toward politics. The well-to-do men of the community think of politics as something off by itself; they may conscientiously recognize political duty as part of good citizenship, but political effort is not the expression of their moral or social life. As a result of this detachment, “reform movements,” started by business men and the better element, are almost wholly occupied in the correction of political machinery and with a concern for the better method of administration, rather than with the ultimate purpose of securing the welfare of the people. They fix their attention so exclusively on methods that they fail to consider the final aims of city government. This accounts for the growing tendency to put more and more responsibility upon executive officers and appointed commissions at the expense of curtailing the power of the direct representatives of the voters. Reform movements tend to become negative and to lose their educational value for the mass of the people. The reformers take the role of the opposition. They give themselves largely to criticisms of the present state of affairs, to writing and talking of what the future must be and of certain results which should be obtained. In trying to better matters, however, they have in mind only political achievements which they detach in a curious way from the rest of life, and they speak and write of the purification of politics as of a thing set apart from daily life.

¶4 On the other hand, the real leaders of the people are part of the entire life of the community which they control, and so far as they are representative at all, are giving a social expression to democracy. They are often politically

corrupt, but in spite of this they are proceeding upon a sounder theory. Although they would be totally unable to give it abstract expression, they are really acting upon a formulation made by a shrewd English observer; namely, that, “after the enfranchisement of the masses, social ideals enter into political programmes, and they enter not as something which at best can be indirectly promoted by government, but as something which it is the chief business of government to advance directly.”

¶5 Men living near to the masses of voters, and knowing them intimately, recognize this and act upon it; they minister directly to life and to social needs. They realize that the people as a whole are clamoring for social results, and they hold their power because they respond to that demand. They are corrupt and often do their work badly; but they at least avoid the mistake of a certain type of business men who are frightened by democracy, and have lost their faith in the people. The two standards are similar to those seen at a popular exhibition of pictures where the cultivated people care most for the technique of a given painting, the moving mass for a subject that shall be domestic and human.

¶6 This difference may be illustrated by the writer’s experience in a certain ward of Chicago, during three campaigns, when efforts were made to dislodge an alderman who had represented the ward for many years. In this ward there are gathered together fifty thousand people, representing a score of nationalities; the newly emigrated Latin, Teuton, Celt, Greek, and Slav who live there have little in common save the basic experiences which come to men in all countries and under all conditions. In order to make fifty thousand people, so heterogeneous in nationality, religion, and customs, agree upon any demand, it must be founded upon universal experiences which are perforce individual and not social.

¶7 An instinctive recognition of this on the part of the alderman makes it possible to un-

derstand the individualistic basis of his political success, but it remains extremely difficult to ascertain the reasons for the extreme leniency of judgment concerning the political corruption of which he is constantly guilty.

¶8 This leniency is only to be explained on the ground that his constituents greatly admire individual virtues, and that they are at the same time unable to perceive social outrages which the alderman may be committing. They thus free the alderman from blame because his corruption is social, and they honestly admire him as a great man and hero, because his individual acts are on the whole kindly and generous.

¶9 In certain stages of moral evolution, a man is incapable of action unless the results will benefit himself or some one of his acquaintances, and it is a long step in moral progress to set the good of the many before the interest of the few, and to be concerned for the welfare of a community without hope of an individual return. How far the selfish politician befools his constituents into believing that their interests are identical with his own; how far he presumes upon their inability to distinguish between the individual and social virtues, an inability which he himself shares with them; and how far he dazzles them by the sense of his greatness, and a conviction that they participate therein, it is difficult to determine.

¶10 Morality certainly develops far earlier in the form of moral fact than in the form of moral ideas, and it is obvious that ideas only operate upon the popular mind through will and character, and must be dramatized before they reach the mass of men, even as the biography of the saints have been after all “the main guide to the stumbling feet of thousands of Christians to whom the Credo has been but mysterious words.”

¶11 Ethics as well as political opinions may be discussed and disseminated among the sophisticated by lectures and printed pages, but to the common people they can only come through

example—through a personality which seizes the popular imagination. The advantage of an unsophisticated neighborhood is, that the inhabitants do not keep their ideas as treasures—they are untouched by the notion of accumulating them, as they might knowledge or money, and they frankly act upon those they have. The personal example promptly rouses to emulation. In a neighborhood where political standards are plastic and undeveloped, and where there has been little previous experience in self-government, the office-holder himself sets the standard, and the ideas that cluster around him exercise a specific and permanent influence upon the political morality of his constituents.

¶12 Nothing is more certain than that the quality which a heterogeneous population, living in one of the less sophisticated wards, most admires is the quality of simple goodness; that the man who attracts them is the one whom they believe to be a good man. We all know that children long “to be good” with an intensity which they give to no other ambition. We can all remember that the earliest strivings of our childhood were in this direction, and that we venerated grown people because they had attained perfection.

¶13 Primitive people, such as the South Italian peasants, are still in this stage. They want to be good, and deep down in their hearts they admire nothing so much as the good man. Abstract virtues are too difficult for their untrained minds to apprehend, and many of them are still simple enough to believe that power and wealth come only to good people.

¶14 The successful candidate, then, must be a good man according to the morality of his constituents. He must not attempt to hold up too high a standard, nor must he attempt to reform or change their standards. His safety lies in doing on a large scale the good deeds which his constituents are able to do only on a small scale. If he believes what they believe and does what they are all cherishing a secret ambition to do, he will dazzle them by his success and

win their confidence. There is a certain wisdom in this course. There is a common sense in the mass of men which cannot be neglected with impunity, just as there is sure to be an eccentricity in the differing and reforming individual which it is perhaps well to challenge.

¶15 The constant kindness of the poor to each other was pointed out in a previous chapter, and that they unfailingly respond to the need and distresses of their poorer neighbors even when in danger of bankruptcy themselves. The kindness which a poor man shows his distressed neighbor is doubtless heightened by the consciousness that he himself may be in distress next week; he therefore stands by his friend when he gets too drunk to take care of himself, when he loses his wife or child, when he is evicted for non-payment of rent, when he is arrested for a petty crime. It seems to such a man entirely fitting that his alderman should do the same thing on a larger scale—that he should help a constituent out of trouble, merely because he is in trouble, irrespective of the justice involved.

¶16 The alderman therefore bails out his constituents when they are arrested, or says a good word to the police justice when they appear before him for trial, uses his pull with the magistrate when they are likely to be fined for a civil misdemeanor, or sees what he can do to “fix up matters” with the state’s attorney when the charge is really a serious one, and in doing this he follows the ethics held and practised by his constituents. All this conveys the impression to the simple-minded that law is not enforced, if the lawbreaker have a powerful friend. One may instance the alderman’s action in standing by an Italian padrone of the ward when he was indicted for violating the civil service regulations. The commissioners had sent out notices to certain Italian day-laborers who were upon the eligible list that they were to report for work at a given day and hour. One of the padrones intercepted these notifications and sold them to the men for five dollars apiece, making also the usual bargain for a share of their wages. The padrone’s entire arrangement followed the cus-

tom which had prevailed for years before the establishment of civil service laws. Ten of the laborers swore out warrants against the padrone, who was convicted and fined seventy-five dollars. This sum was promptly paid by the alderman, and the padrone, assured that he would be protected from any further trouble, returned uninjured to the colony. The simple Italians were much bewildered by this show of a power stronger than that of the civil service, which they had trusted as they did the one in Italy. The first violation of its authority was made, and various sinister acts have followed, until no Italian who is digging a sewer or sweeping a street for the city feels quite secure in holding his job unless he is backed by the friendship of the alderman. According to the civil service law, a laborer has no right to a trial; many are discharged by the foreman, and find that they can be reinstated only upon the aldermanic recommendation. He thus practically holds his old power over the laborers working for the city. The popular mind is convinced that an honest administration of civil service is impossible, and that it is but one more instrument in the hands of the powerful.

¶17 It will be difficult to establish genuine civil service among these men, who learn only by experience, since their experiences have been of such a nature that their unanimous vote would certainly be that “civil service” is “no good.”

¶18 As many of his constituents in this case are impressed with the fact that the aldermanic power is superior to that of government, so instances of actual lawbreaking might easily be cited. A young man may enter a saloon long after midnight, the legal closing hour, and seat himself at a gambling table, perfectly secure from interruption or arrest, because the place belongs to an alderman; but in order to secure this immunity the policeman on the beat must pretend not to see into the windows each time that he passes, and he knows, and the young man knows that he knows, that nothing would embarrass “Headquarters” more than to have

an arrest made on those premises. A certain contempt for the whole machinery of law and order is thus easily fostered.

¶19 Because of simple friendliness the alderman is expected to pay rent for the hard-pressed tenant when no rent is forthcoming, to find “jobs” when work is hard to get, to procure and divide among his constituents all the places which he can seize from the city hall. The alderman of the ward we are considering at one time could make the proud boast that he had twenty-six hundred people in his ward upon the public pay-roll. This, of course, included day laborers, but each one felt under distinct obligations to him for getting a position. When we reflect that this is one-third of the entire vote of the ward, we realize that it is very important to vote for the right man, since there is, at the least, one chance out of three for securing work.

¶20 If we recollect further that the franchise-seeking companies pay respectful heed to the applicants backed by the alderman, the question of voting for the successful man becomes as much an industrial one as a political one. An Italian laborer wants a “job” more than anything else, and quite simply votes for the man who promises him one. It is not so different from his relation to the padrone, and, indeed, the two strengthen each other.

¶21 The alderman may himself be quite sincere in his acts of kindness, for an office seeker may begin with the simple desire to alleviate suffering, and this may gradually change into the desire to put his constituents under obligations to him; but the action of such an individual becomes a demoralizing element in the community when kindly impulse is made a cloak for the satisfaction of personal ambition, and when the plastic morals of his constituents gradually conform to his own undeveloped standards.

¶22 The alderman gives presents at weddings and christenings. He seizes these days of family festivities for making friends. It is easiest

to reach them in the holiday mood of expansive good-will, but on their side it seems natural and kindly that he should do it. The alderman procures passes from the railroads when his constituents wish to visit friends or attend the funerals of distant relatives; he buys tickets galore for benefit entertainments given for a widow or a consumptive in peculiar distress; he contributes to prizes which are awarded to the handsomest lady or the most popular man. At a church bazaar, for instance, the alderman finds the stage all set for his dramatic performance. When others are spending pennies, he is spending dollars. When anxious relatives are canvassing to secure votes for the two most beautiful children who are being voted upon, he recklessly buys votes from both sides, and laughingly declines to say which one he likes best, buying off the young lady who is persistently determined to find out, with five dollars for the flower bazaar, the posies, of course, to be sent to the sick of the parish. The moral atmosphere of a bazaar suits him exactly. He murmurs many times, “Never mind, the money all goes to the poor; it is all straight enough if the church gets it, the poor won’t ask too many questions.” The oftener he can put such sentiments into the minds of his constituents, the better he is pleased. Nothing so rapidly prepares them to take his view of money getting and money spending. We see again the process disregarded, because the end itself is considered so praiseworthy.

¶23 There is something archaic in a community of simple people in their attitude toward death and burial. There is nothing so easy to collect money for as a funeral, and one involuntarily remembers that the early religious tithes were paid to ward off death and ghosts. At times one encounters almost the Greek feeling in regard to burial. If the alderman seizes upon times of festivities for expressions of his good-will, much more does he seize upon periods of sorrow. At a funeral he has the double advantage of ministering to a genuine craving for comfort and solace, and at the same time of assisting a bereaved constituent to express that curious

feeling of remorse, which is ever an accompaniment of quick sorrow, that desire to “make up” for past delinquencies, to show the world how much he loved the person who has just died, which is as natural as it is universal.

¶24 In addition to this, there is, among the poor, who have few social occasions, a great desire for a well-arranged funeral, the grade of which almost determines their social standing in the neighborhood. The alderman saves the very poorest of his constituents from that awful horror of burial by the county; he provides carriages for the poor, who otherwise could not have them. It may be too much to say that all the relatives and friends who ride in the carriages provided by the alderman’s bounty vote for him, but they are certainly influenced by his kindness, and talk of his virtues during the long hours of the ride back and forth from the suburban cemetery. A man who would ask at such a time where all the money thus spent comes from would be considered sinister. The tendency to speak lightly of the faults of the dead and to judge them gently is transferred to the living, and many a man at such a time has formulated a lenient judgment of political corruption, and has heard kindly speeches which he has remembered on election day. “Ah, well, he has a big Irish heart. He is good to the widow and the fatherless.” “He knows the poor better than the big guns who are always talking about civil service and reform.”

¶25 Indeed, what headway can the notion of civic purity, of honesty of administration make against this big manifestation of human friendliness, this stalking survival of village kindness? The notions of the civic reformer are negative and impotent before it. Such an alderman will keep a standing account with an undertaker, and telephone every week, and sometimes more than once, the kind of funeral he wishes provided for a bereaved constituent, until the sum may roll up into “hundreds a year.” He understands what the people want, and ministers just as truly to a great human need as the musician or the artist. An attempt to substitute

what we might call a later standard was made at one time when a delicate little child was deserted in the Hull-House nursery. An investigation showed that it had been born ten days previously in the Cook County hospital, but no trace could be found of the unfortunate mother. The little child lived for several weeks, and then, in spite of every care, died. It was decided to have it buried by the county authorities, and the wagon was to arrive at eleven o’clock; about nine o’clock in the morning the rumor of this awful deed reached the neighbors. A half dozen of them came, in a very excited state of mind, to protest. They took up a collection out of their poverty with which to defray a funeral. The residents of Hull-House were then comparatively new in the neighborhood and did not realize that they were really shocking a genuine moral sentiment of the community. In their crudeness they instanced the care and tenderness which had been expended upon the little creature while it was alive; that it had had every attention from a skilled physician and a trained nurse, and even intimated that the excited members of the group had not taken part in this, and that it now lay with the nursery to decide that it should be buried as it had been born, at the county’s expense. It is doubtful if Hull-House has ever done anything which injured it so deeply in the minds of some of its neighbors. It was only forgiven by the most indulgent on the ground that the residents were spinsters, and could not know a mother’s heart. No one born and reared in the community could possibly have made a mistake like that. No one who had studied the ethical standards with any care could have bungled so completely.

¶26 We are constantly underestimating the amount of sentiment among simple people. The songs which are most popular among them are those of a reminiscent old age, in which the ripened soul calmly recounts and regrets the sins of his youth, songs in which the wayward daughter is forgiven by her loving parents, in which the lovers are magnanimous and faithful through all vicissitudes. The tendency is to condone and forgive, and not hold too rigidly

to a standard. In the theatres it is the magnanimous man, the kindly reckless villain who is always applauded. So shrewd an observer as Samuel Johnson once remarked that it was surprising to find how much more kindness than justice society contained.

¶27 On the same basis the alderman manages several saloons, one down town within easy access of the city hall, where he can catch the more important of his friends. Here again he has seized upon an old tradition and primitive custom, the good fellowship which has long been best expressed when men drink together. The saloons offer a common meeting ground, with stimulus enough to free the wits and tongues of the men who meet there.

¶28 He distributes each Christmas many tons of turkeys not only to voters, but to families who are represented by no vote. By a judicious management some families get three or four turkeys apiece; but what of that, the alderman has none of the nagging rules of the charitable societies, nor does he declare that because a man wants two turkeys for Christmas, he is a scoundrel who shall never be allowed to eat turkey again. As he does not distribute his Christmas favors from any hardly acquired philanthropic motive, there is no disposition to apply the carefully evolved rules of the charitable societies to his beneficiaries. Of course, there are those who suspect that the benevolence rests upon self-seeking motives, and feel themselves quite freed from any sense of gratitude; others go further and glory in the fact that they can thus “soak the alderman.” An example of this is the young man who fills his pockets with a handful of cigars, giving a sly wink at the others. But this freedom from any sense of obligation is often the first step downward to the position where he is willing to sell his vote to both parties, and then scratch his ticket as he pleases. The writer recalls a conversation with a man in which he complained quite openly, and with no sense of shame, that his vote had “sold for only two dollars this year,” and that he was “awfully disappointed.” The writer happened

to know that his income during the nine months previous had been but twenty-eight dollars, and that he was in debt thirty-two dollars, and she could well imagine the eagerness with which he had counted upon this source of revenue. After some years the selling of votes becomes a commonplace, and but little attempt is made upon the part of the buyer or seller to conceal the fact, if the transaction runs smoothly.

¶29 A certain lodging-house keeper at one time sold the votes of his entire house to a political party and was “well paid for it too”; but being of a grasping turn, he also sold the house for the same election to the rival party. Such an outrage could not be borne. The man was treated to a modern version of tar and feathers, and as a result of being held under a street hydrant in November, contracted pneumonia which resulted in his death. No official investigation took place, since the doctor’s certificate of pneumonia was sufficient for legal burial, and public sentiment sustained the action. In various conversations which the writer had concerning the entire transaction, she discovered great indignation concerning his duplicity and treachery, but none whatever for his original offence of selling out the votes of his house.

¶30 A club will be started for the express purpose of gaining a reputation for political power which may later be sold out. The president and executive committee of such a club, who will naturally receive the funds, promise to divide with “the boys” who swell the size of the membership. A reform movement is at first filled with recruits who are active and loud in their assertions of the number of votes they can “deliver.” The reformers are delighted with this display of zeal, and only gradually find out that many of the recruits are there for the express purpose of being bought by the other side; that they are most active in order to seem valuable, and thus raise the price of their allegiance when they are ready to sell. Reformers seeing them drop away one by one, talk of desertion from the ranks of reform, and of the power of money over well-meaning men, who are too weak to

withstand temptation; but in reality the men are not deserters because they have never actually been enrolled in the ranks. The money they take is neither a bribe nor the price of their loyalty, it is simply the consummation of a long-cherished plan and a well-earned reward. They came into the new movement for the purpose of being bought out of it, and have successfully accomplished that purpose.

¶31 Hull-House assisted in carrying on two unsuccessful campaigns against the same alderman. In the two years following the end of the first one, nearly every man who had been prominent in it had received an office from the relected alderman. A printer had been appointed to a clerkship in the city hall; a driver received a large salary for services in the police barns; the candidate himself, a bricklayer, held a position in the city construction department. At the beginning of the next campaign, the greatest difficulty was experienced in finding a candidate, and each one proposed, demanded time to consider the proposition. During this period he invariably became the recipient of the alderman's bounty. The first one, who was foreman of a large factory, was reported to have been bought off by the promise that the city institutions would use the product of his firm. The second one, a keeper of a grocery and family saloon, with large popularity, was promised the aldermanic nomination on the regular ticket at the expiration of the term of office held by the alderman's colleague, and it may be well to state in passing that he was thus nominated and successfully elected. The third proposed candidate received a place for his son in the office of the city attorney.

¶32 Not only are offices in his gift, but all smaller favors as well. Any requests to the council, or special licenses, must be presented by the alderman of the ward in which the person desiring the favor resides. There is thus constant opportunity for the alderman to put his constituents under obligations to him, to make it difficult for a constituent to withstand him, or for one with large interests to enter into polit-

ical action at all. From the Italian pedler who wants a license to peddle fruit in the street, to the large manufacturing company who desires to tunnel an alley for the sake of conveying pipes from one building to another, everybody is under obligations to his alderman, and is constantly made to feel it. In short, these very regulations for presenting requests to the council have been made, by the aldermen themselves, for the express purpose of increasing the dependence of their constituents, and thereby augmenting aldermanic power and prestige.

¶33 The alderman has also a very singular hold upon the property owners of his ward. The paving, both of the streets and sidewalks throughout his district, is disgraceful; and in the election speeches the reform side holds him responsible for this condition, and promises better paving under another regime. But the paving could not be made better without a special assessment upon the property owners of the vicinity, and paying more taxes is exactly what his constituents do not want to do. In reality, "getting them off," or at the worst postponing the time of the improvement, is one of the genuine favors which he performs. A movement to have the paving done from a general fund would doubtless be opposed by the property owners in other parts of the city who have already paid for the asphalt bordering their own possessions, but they have no conception of the struggle and possible bankruptcy which repaving may mean to the small property owner, nor how his chief concern may be to elect an alderman who cares more for the feelings and pocket-books of his constituents than he does for the repute and cleanliness of his city.

¶34 The alderman exhibited great wisdom in procuring from certain of his down-town friends the sum of three thousand dollars with which to uniform and equip a boys' temperance brigade which had been formed in one of the ward churches a few months before his campaign. Is it strange that the good leader, whose heart was filled with innocent pride as he looked upon these promising young scions of virtue, should

decline to enter into a reform campaign? Of what use to suggest that uniforms and bayonets for the purpose of promoting temperance, bought with money contributed by a man who was proprietor of a saloon and a gambling house, might perhaps confuse the ethics of the young soldiers? Why take the pains to urge that it was vain to lecture and march abstract virtues into them, so long as the “champion boodler” of the town was the man whom the boys recognized as a loyal and kindhearted friend, the public-spirited citizen, whom their fathers enthusiastically voted for, and their mothers called “the friend of the poor.” As long as the actual and tangible success is thus embodied, marching whether in kindergartens or brigades, talking whether in clubs or classes, does little to change the code of ethics.

¶35 The question of where does the money come from which is spent so successfully, does of course occur to many minds. The more primitive people accept the truthful statement of its sources without any shock to their moral sense. To their simple minds he gets it “from the rich” and, so long as he again gives it out to the poor as a true Robin Hood, with open hand, they have no objections to offer. Their ethics are quite honestly those of the merry-making foresters. The next less primitive people of the vicinage are quite willing to admit that he leads the “gang” in the city council, and sells out the city franchises; that he makes deals with the franchise-seeking companies; that he guarantees to steer dubious measures through the council, for which he demands liberal pay; that he is, in short, a successful “boodler.” When, however, there is intellect enough to get this point of view, there is also enough to make the contention that this is universally done, that all the aldermen do it more or less successfully, but that the alderman of this particular ward is unique in being so generous; that such a state of affairs is to be deplored, of course; but that that is the way business is run, and we are fortunate when a kind-hearted man who is close to the people gets a large share of the spoils; that he serves franchised companies who employ men

in the building and construction of their enterprises, and that they are bound in return to give work to his constituents. It is again the justification of stealing from the rich to give to the poor. Even when they are intelligent enough to complete the circle, and to see that the money comes, not from the pockets of the companies’ agents, but from the street-car fares of people like themselves, it almost seems as if they would rather pay two cents more each time they ride than to give up the consciousness that they have a big, warm-hearted friend at court who will stand by them in an emergency. The sense of just dealing comes apparently much later than the desire for protection and indulgence. On the whole, the gifts and favors are taken quite simply as an evidence of genuine loving-kindness. The alderman is really elected because he is a good friend and neighbor. He is corrupt, of course, but he is not elected because he is corrupt, but rather in spite of it. His standard suits his constituents. He exemplifies and exaggerates the popular type of a good man. He has attained what his constituents secretly long for.

¶36 At one end of the ward there is a street of good houses, familiarly called “Con Row.” The term is perhaps quite unjustly used, but it is nevertheless universally applied, because many of these houses are occupied by professional office holders. This row is supposed to form a happy hunting-ground of the successful politician, where he can live in prosperity, and still maintain his vote and influence in the ward. It would be difficult to justly estimate the influence which this group of successful, prominent men, including the alderman who lives there, have had upon the ideals of the youth in the vicinity. The path which leads to riches and success, to civic prominence and honor, is the path of political corruption. We might compare this to the path laid out by Benjamin Franklin, who also secured all of these things, but told young men that they could be obtained only by strenuous effort and frugal living, by the cultivation of the mind, and the holding fast to righteousness; or, again, we might compare it to the ideals which were held up to the American youth

fifty years ago, lower, to be sure, than the revolutionary ideal, but still fine and aspiring toward honorable dealing and careful living. They were told that the career of the self-made man was open to every American boy, if he worked hard and saved his money, improved his mind, and followed a steady ambition. The writer remembers that when she was ten years old, the village schoolmaster told his little flock, without any mitigating clauses, that Jay Gould had laid the foundation of his colossal fortune by always saving bits of string, and that, as a result, every child in the village assiduously collected party-colored balls of twine. A bright Chicago boy might well draw the inference that the path of the corrupt politician not only leads to civic honors, but to the glories of benevolence and philanthropy. This lowering of standards, this setting of an ideal, is perhaps the worst of the situation, for, as we said in the first chapter, we determine ideals by our daily actions and decisions not only for ourselves, but largely for each other.

¶37 We are all involved in this political corruption, and as members of the community stand indicted. This is the penalty of a democracy,—that we are bound to move forward or retrograde together. None of us can stand aside; our feet are mired in the same soil, and our lungs breathe the same air.

¶38 That the alderman has much to do with setting the standard of life and desirable prosperity may be illustrated by the following incident: During one of the campaigns a clever cartoonist drew a poster representing the successful alderman in portraiture drinking champagne at a table loaded with pretentious dishes and surrounded by other revellers. In contradistinction was his opponent, a bricklayer, who sat upon a half-finished wall, eating a meagre dinner from a workingman's dinner-pail, and the passer-by was asked which type of representative he preferred, the presumption being that at least in a workingman's district the bricklayer would come out ahead. To the chagrin of the reformers, however, it was gradually discovered

that, in the popular mind, a man who laid bricks and wore overalls was not nearly so desirable for an alderman as the man who drank champagne and wore a diamond in his shirt front. The district wished its representative "to stand up with the best of them," and certainly some of the constituents would have been ashamed to have been represented by a bricklayer. It is part of that general desire to appear well, the optimistic and thoroughly American belief, that even if a man is working with his hands to-day, he and his children will quite likely be in a better position in the swift coming to-morrow, and there is no need of being too closely associated with common working people. There is an honest absence of class consciousness, and a naive belief that the kind of occupation quite largely determines social position. This is doubtless exaggerated in a neighborhood of foreign people by the fact that as each nationality becomes more adapted to American conditions, the scale of its occupation rises. Fifty years ago in America "a Dutchman" was used as a term of reproach, meaning a man whose language was not understood, and who performed menial tasks, digging sewers and building railroad embankments. Later the Irish did the same work in the community, but as quickly as possible handed it on to the Italians, to whom the name "dago" is said to cling as a result of the digging which the Irishman resigned to him. The Italian himself is at last waking up to this fact. In a political speech recently made by an Italian padrone, he bitterly reproached the alderman for giving the-four-dollars-a-day "jobs" of sitting in an office to Irishmen and the-dollar-and-a-half-a-day "jobs" of sweeping the streets to the Italians. This general struggle to rise in life, to be at least politically represented by one of the best, as to occupation and social status, has also its negative side. We must remember that the imitative impulse plays an important part in life, and that the loss of social estimation, keenly felt by all of us, is perhaps most dreaded by the humblest, among whom freedom of individual conduct, the power to give only just weight to the opinion of neighbors, is but feebly devel-

oped. A form of constraint, gentle, but powerful, is afforded by the simple desire to do what others do, in order to share with them the approval of the community. Of course, the larger the number of people among whom an habitual mode of conduct obtains, the greater the constraint it puts upon the individual will. Thus it is that the political corruption of the city presses most heavily where it can be least resisted, and is most likely to be imitated.

¶39 According to the same law, the positive evils of corrupt government are bound to fall heaviest upon the poorest and least capable. When the water of Chicago is foul, the prosperous buy water bottled at distant springs; the poor have no alternative but the typhoid fever which comes from using the city's supply. When the garbage contracts are not enforced, the well-to-do pay for private service; the poor suffer the discomfort and illness which are inevitable from a foul atmosphere. The prosperous business man has a certain choice as to whether he will treat with the "boss" politician or preserve his independence on a smaller income; but to an Italian day laborer it is a choice between obeying the commands of a political "boss" or practical starvation. Again, a more intelligent man may philosophize a little upon the present state of corruption, and reflect that it is but a phase of our commercialism, from which we are bound to emerge; at any rate, he may give himself the solace of literature and ideals in other directions, but the more ignorant man who lives only in the narrow present has no such resource; slowly the conviction enters his mind that politics is a matter of favors and positions, that self-government means pleasing the "boss" and standing in with the "gang." This slowly acquired knowledge he hands on to his family. During the month of February his boy may come home from school with rather incoherent tales about Washington and Lincoln, and the father may for the moment be fired to tell of Garibaldi, but such talk is only periodic, and the long year round the fortunes of the entire family, down to the opportunity to earn food and shelter, depend upon the "boss."

¶40 In a certain measure also, the opportunities for pleasure and recreation depend upon him. To use a former illustration, if a man happens to have a taste for gambling, if the slot machine affords him diversion, he goes to those houses which are protected by political influence. If he and his friends like to drop into a saloon after midnight, or even want to hear a little music while they drink together early in the evening, he is breaking the law when he indulges in either of them, and can only be exempt from arrest or fine because the great political machine is friendly to him and expects his allegiance in return.

¶41 During the campaign, when it was found hard to secure enough local speakers of the moral tone which was desired, orators were imported from other parts of the town, from the so-called "better element." Suddenly it was rumored on all sides that, while the money and speakers for the reform candidate were coming from the swells, the money which was backing the corrupt alderman also came from a swell source; that the president of a street-car combination, for whom he performed constant offices in the city council, was ready to back him to the extent of fifty thousand dollars; that this president, too, was a good man, and sat in high places; that he had recently given a large sum of money to an educational institution and was therefore as philanthropic, not to say good and upright, as any man in town; that the corrupt alderman had the sanction of the highest authorities, and that the lecturers who were talking against corruption, and the selling and buying of franchises, were only the cranks, and not the solid business men who had developed and built up Chicago.

¶42 All parts of the community are bound together in ethical development. If the so-called more enlightened members accept corporate gifts from the man who buys up the council, and the so-called less enlightened members accept individual gifts from the man who sells out the council, we surely must take our punishment together. There is the difference, of

course, that in the first case we act collectively, and in the second case individually; but is the punishment which follows the first any lighter or less far-reaching in its consequences than the more obvious one which follows the second?

¶43 Have our morals been so captured by commercialism, to use Mr. Chapman's generalization, that we do not see a moral dereliction when business or educational interests are served thereby, although we are still shocked when the saloon interest is thus served?

¶44 The street-car company which declares that it is impossible to do business without managing the city council, is on exactly the same moral level with the man who cannot retain political power unless he has a saloon, a large acquaintance with the semi-criminal class, and questionable money with which to debauch his constituents. Both sets of men assume that the only appeal possible is along the line of self-interest. They frankly acknowledge money getting as their own motive power, and they believe in the cupidity of all the men whom they encounter. No attempt in either case is made to put forward the claims of the public, or to find a moral basis for action. As the corrupt politician assumes that public morality is impossible, so many business men become convinced that to pay tribute to the corrupt aldermen is on the whole cheaper than to have taxes too high; that it is better to pay exorbitant rates for franchises, than to be made unwilling partners in transportation experiments. Such men come to regard political reformers as a sort of monomaniac, who are not reasonable enough to see the necessity of the present arrangement which has slowly been evolved and developed, and upon which business is safely conducted. A reformer who really knew the people and their great human needs, who believed that it was the business of government to serve them, and who further recognized the educative power of a sense of responsibility, would possess a clew by which he might analyze the situation. He would find out what needs, which the alderman supplies, are legitimate ones which the city itself could under-

take, in counter-distinction to those which pander to the lower instincts of the constituency. A mother who eats her Christmas turkey in a reverent spirit of thankfulness to the alderman who gave it to her, might be gradually brought to a genuine sense of appreciation and gratitude to the city which supplies her little children with a Kindergarten, or, to the Board of Health which properly placarded a case of scarlet-fever next door and spared her sleepless nights and wearing anxiety, as well as the money paid with such difficulty to the doctor and the druggist. The man who in his emotional gratitude almost kneels before his political friend who gets his boy out of jail, might be made to see the kindness and good sense of the city authorities who provided the boy with a playground and reading room, where he might spend his hours of idleness and restlessness, and through which his temptations to petty crime might be averted. A man who is grateful to the alderman who sees that his gambling and racing are not interfered with, might learn to feel loyal and responsible to the city which supplied him with a gymnasium and swimming tank where manly and well-conducted sports are possible. The voter who is eager to serve the alderman at all times, because the tenure of his job is dependent upon aldermanic favor, might find great relief and pleasure in working for the city in which his place was secured by a well-administered civil service law.

¶45 After all, what the corrupt alderman demands from his followers and largely depends upon is a sense of loyalty, a standing-by the man who is good to you, who understands you, and who gets you out of trouble. All the social life of the voter from the time he was a little boy and played "craps" with his "own push," and not with some other "push," has been founded on this sense of loyalty and of standing in with his friends. Now that he is a man, he likes the sense of being inside a political organization, of being trusted with political gossip, of belonging to a set of fellows who understand things, and whose interests are being cared for by a strong friend in the city council itself. All this is perfectly legitimate, and all in the line of the develop-

ment of a strong civic loyalty, if it were merely socialized and enlarged. Such a voter has already proceeded in the forward direction in so far as he has lost the sense of isolation, and has abandoned the conviction that city government does not touch his individual affairs. Even Mill claims that the social feelings of man, his desire to be at unity with his fellow-creatures, are the natural basis for morality, and he defines a man of high moral culture as one who thinks of himself, not as an isolated individual, but as a part in a social organism.

¶46 Upon this foundation it ought not to be difficult to build a structure of civic virtue. It is only necessary to make it clear to the voter that his individual needs are common needs, that is, public needs, and that they can only be legitimately supplied for him when they are supplied for all. If we believe that the individual struggle for life may widen into a struggle for the lives of all, surely the demand of an individual for decency and comfort, for a chance to work and obtain the fulness of life may be widened until it gradually embraces all the members of the community, and rises into a sense of the common weal.

¶47 In order, however, to give him a sense of conviction that his individual needs must be merged into the needs of the many, and are only important as they are thus merged, the appeal cannot be made along the line of self-interest. The demand should be universalized; in this process it would also become clarified, and the basis of our political organization become perforce social and ethical.

¶48 Would it be dangerous to conclude that the corrupt politician himself, because he is democratic in method, is on a more ethical line of social development than the reformer, who believes that the people must be made over by "good citizens" and governed by "experts"? The former at least are engaged in that great moral effort of getting the mass to express itself, and of adding this mass energy and wisdom to the community as a whole.

¶49 The wide divergence of experience makes it difficult for the good citizen to understand this point of view, and many things conspire to make it hard for him to act upon it. He is more or less a victim to that curious feeling so often possessed by the good man, that the righteous do not need to be agreeable, that their goodness alone is sufficient, and that they can leave the arts and wiles of securing popular favor to the self-seeking. This results in a certain repellent manner, commonly regarded as the apparel of righteousness, and is further responsible for the fatal mistake of making the surroundings of "good influences" singularly unattractive; a mistake which really deserves a reprimand quite as severe as the equally reprehensible deed of making the surroundings of "evil influences" so beguiling. Both are akin to that state of mind which narrows the entrance into a wider morality to the eye of a needle, and accounts for the fact that new moral movements have ever and again been inaugurated by those who have found themselves in revolt against the conventionalized good.

¶50 The success of the reforming politician who insists upon mere purity of administration and upon the control and suppression of the unruly elements in the community, may be the easy result of a narrowing and selfish process. For the painful condition of endeavoring to minister to genuine social needs, through the political machinery, and at the same time to remodel that machinery so that it shall be adequate to its new task, is to encounter the inevitable discomfort of a transition into a new type of democratic relation. The perplexing experiences of the actual administration, however, have a genuine value of their own. The economist who treats the individual cases as mere data, and the social reformer who labors to make such cases impossible, solely because of the appeal to his reason, may have to share these perplexities before they feel themselves within the grasp of a principle of growth, working outward from within; before they can gain the exhilaration and uplift which comes when the individual sympathy and intelligence is caught into the

forward intuitive movement of the mass. This general movement is not without its intellectual aspects, but it has to be transferred from the region of perception to that of emotion before it is really apprehended. The mass of men seldom move together without an emotional incentive. The man who chooses to stand aside, avoids much of the perplexity, but at the same time he loses contact with a great source of vitality.

¶51 Perhaps the last and greatest difficulty in the paths of those who are attempting to define and attain a social morality, is that which arises from the fact that they cannot adequately test the value of their efforts, cannot indeed be sure of their motives until their efforts are reduced to action and are presented in some workable form of social conduct or control. For action is indeed the sole medium of expression for ethics. We continually forget that the sphere of morals is the sphere of action, that speculation in regard to morality is but observation and must remain in the sphere of intellectual comment, that a situation does not really become moral until we are confronted with the question of what shall be done in a concrete case, and are obliged to act upon our theory. A stirring appeal has lately been made by a recognized ethical lecturer who has declared that "It is insanity to expect to receive the data of wisdom by looking on. We arrive at moral knowledge only by tentative and observant practice. We learn how to apply the new insight by having attempted to apply the old and having found it to fail."

¶52 This necessity of reducing the experiment to action throws out of the undertaking all timid and irresolute persons, more than that, all those who shrink before the need of striving forward shoulder to shoulder with the cruder men, whose sole virtue may be social effort, and even that not untainted by self-seeking, who are indeed pushing forward social morality, but who are doing it irrationally and emotionally, and often at the expense of the well-settled standards of morality.

¶53 The power to distinguish between the genuine effort and the adventitious mistakes is perhaps the most difficult test which comes to our fallible intelligence. In the range of individual morals, we have learned to distrust him who would reach spirituality by simply renouncing the world, or by merely speculating upon its evils. The result, as well as the process of virtues attained by repression, has become distasteful to us. When the entire moral energy of an individual goes into the cultivation of personal integrity, we all know how unlovely the result may become; the character is upright, of course, but too coated over with the result of its own endeavor to be attractive. In this effort toward a higher morality in our social relations, we must demand that the individual shall be willing to lose the sense of personal achievement, and shall be content to realize his activity only in connection with the activity of the many.

¶54 The cry of "Back to the people" is always heard at the same time, when we have the prophet's demand for repentance or the religious cry of "Back to Christ," as though we would seek refuge with our fellows and believe in our common experiences as a preparation for a new moral struggle.

¶55 As the acceptance of democracy brings a certain life-giving power, so it has its own sanctions and comforts. Perhaps the most obvious one is the curious sense which comes to us from time to time, that we belong to the whole, that a certain basic well being can never be taken away from us whatever the turn of fortune. Tolstoy has portrayed the experience in "Master and Man." The former saves his servant from freezing, by protecting him with the heat of his body, and his dying hours are filled with an ineffable sense of healing and well-being. Such experiences, of which we have all had glimpses, anticipate in our relation to the living that peace of mind which envelopes us when we meditate upon the great multitude of the dead. It is akin to the assurance that the dead understand, because they have entered into the Great Experience, and therefore must comprehend all lesser

ones; that all the misunderstandings we have in life are due to partial experience, and all life's fretting comes of our limited intelligence; when the last and Great Experience comes, it is, per-

force, attended by mercy and forgiveness. Consciously to accept Democracy and its manifold experiences is to anticipate that peace and freedom.