

## When Pharaoh Ran Sweatshops

Striking Parallels Drawn Between Ancient and Modern Industrial Conditions.

Life of three million working people depended on whether one man "knew Joseph" (Exod., 1, 8). Autocracy can never be a reliable fountain of social justice. If it be true that "every business concern is a little monarchy," and that "the money power is now in the hands of a dozen men," then the very life of the millions still depends on whether the plutocrat of the hour happens to "know Joseph."

Nor does the parallel fail because Pharaoh was a political ruler. The "economic interpretation of history" shows that the political ruler is such only so far as he is also the economic ruler. Again, the economic ruler of a land is sure to be in effect, if not in name, the political ruler.

The churches of the land ought to sit in godly judgment on the modern Pharaoh's demand to conduct his private business as he pleases. President Wilson says well that "business is no longer in any sense a private matter." Big business, because big, is public business. Social justice, under God, must be the prerogative of society.

4. The degradation of manhood. The familiar aggravations of modern poverty are not lacking in the monuments and inscriptions of Egypt. Industrial accidents and diseases are there recorded, just as we annually record 30,000 deaths, half a million injuries and the needless diseases of modern industry. Egypt had her evil drugs and evil foods, deadly then as now, chiefly to the poor. Egypt sculpture and painted her horrors of convict labor; we permit them, but do not permit ourselves to think about them. The Egyptian pyramid is quite a symbol of our social structure; from its high and narrow top a wide and pleasing outlook, under its broad base the blood and bones of men.

Reading of Hebrews employed to oppress their brethren (Exod., 2, 13, and 5, 6), suggests strikingly the ways in which capitalism pits workingmen against each other, foreman against "hands," scab against unionist, immigrant against native, black and yellow against white, and the phenomenal "pace-maker" against everybody.

5. The destruction of childhood. The culminating atrocity of Pharaoh's system was the extermination of the Hebrew babes (Exod., 1, 22). Racial and economic competition occasioned this decree. Likewise modern competition eventuates in the immolation of childhood. The modern tragedy may be faintly indicated when we note that 800,000 child laborers are less than fourteen years old and 400,000 of these are in deleterious occupations. The evil appears at least doubled on consideration of the family break-up incident to the wage labor of mothers, and trebled with consideration of the disaster that falls on childhood through overwork and underpay of parents. Professor Nearing estimates that three-fourths of the children in the United States have less than a fair opportunity for a normal life.

Why did Pharaoh do it? "Lest they join unto our enemies and fight against us." Why do employers do it. "We have to do it in order to compete with other mills." Why do children do it? In 800 cases of child labor investigated 391 were due to industrial illness or injury of the father. Why do we permit it? For three reasons: "the products of child labor are cheap, the dividends large, and we don't care much anyhow."

6. The degradation of womanhood. In Pharaoh's decree of destruction the exception is made, "Every daughter ye shall save." In the vile custom of the East womanhood was saved from death for shame. The practice of the modern West is much the same. "We Christians of the twentieth century offer to an honest, hard-working girl \$6 a week, bad food, miserable lodgings and no recreation; but to a girl who is willing to sacrifice her virtue a splendid income for a time, with leisure, recreation and all that money can buy. What think you of a society that places such a choice before destitute women and undeveloped girls?"

We have been felicitating ourselves of late over investigations which show that only one in thirty of the fallen women has been "driven" to an evil life by low wages. The same investigations show, as do all indications, that our economic system multiplies the penalties of crime and the premiums of vice, discourages marriage, causes overcrowding and high rents, capitalizes and organizes sexual vice according to best effective commercial methods, and in consequence of all the rest, recruits the ranks of prostitution almost wholly from the daughters of the poor.

### Spiritual Demoralization.

Already it is evident that it is impossible to recount the economic apart from the spiritual degradation of a nation. Note further:

1. The demoralization of the ruling class through the exploitation of labor. Then and now, when labor demands leisure for the things of the spirit, the Pharaohs answer, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? I know not God, neither will I let Israel go." Arrogance toward humanity leads ever to impiety toward God. "Wealth places men and women in moral danger because it vastly increases the number of their inferiors. Only our equals are in a position to rebuff our conceit or rudeness and thus make our manhood grow staid." (Rauschenbusch.)
2. The demoralization of the laboring class. Read Exod., 16, 3. What

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pitiable servility! Whipped until manhood is whipped out of them they murmur, not against the oppressor who makes them slaves, but against Moses, who tries to make them men. Or read Exod., 32, 7. The economic wrongs that make the nation servile also make it corrupt. Much vulgar vice and irreligion in all times is the reaction of human nature against its inhuman limitations and oppressions.

3. The preoccupation of both classes against the things of the spirit. Pharaoh seems at first without malice against his laborers, but is preoccupied with resisting his competitors (Exod., 1, 10). He is hard-pressed by a certain Eastern firm which had formerly held a long monopoly, as well as a Southern firm with a big labor force of "niggers," which does in fact acquire the monopoly some years later. Under such circumstances "business is business and charity and religion cannot be mixed with it." Meantime the laboring class was so preoccupied with overwork that "they hearkened not unto Moses, for anguish of spirit and cruel bondage" (Exod., 6, 9). "What spirituality, what virtue, what tenderness can you expect from a man who is holding a wolf by the ears?" "Here is a young man stunted and anemic because of bad air, poor food and child labor. You may convert him all you please, you can never make a man of him." Those two quotations point to the awful and awfully neglected truths, that if we want men to be spiritual, we must give them a decent chance; that if it is worth while to save the wreck and remnant of a man, it is better to save the whole man from being wrecked.

We thus summarize the social situation preceding the Exodus: 1. The few controlled the labor of the many. 2. Luxury subsisted by the labor of poverty. 3. Wealth was preferred to humanity. "And the children of Israel sighed by reason of their bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage."

### WHAT BRITISH CENSORS REJECT.

Reports of Examination Shows 166 Films Suppressed in a Year.

Twenty-two films of 7488 submitted to the British board of film censors were entirely rejected during last year, according to the report of the board. Exception was taken to 166 films on various grounds, but many of them were eventually passed, after certain eliminations had been made. The grounds on which films were rejected included:

- Indecent or suggestive situations.
- Indecent dancing.
- Holding up a minister of religion to ridicule.
- Cruelty to animals.
- Indecent accessories in the staging.
- Judicial executions.
- Excessive drunkenness.
- Native customs in foreign lands abhorrent to British ideas.

### CRUELTY IN HUMAN RACE.

Those signs of evil which are commonly most manifest on the human features are roughly divisible into these four kinds: the signs of pride, of sensuality, of fear and of cruelty. \* \* \* Cruelty is of all passions the least human; for sensual desires there is a license to men, as necessity; and of vanity there is intellectual cause, so that when seen in a brute it is pleasant, and a sign of good wit; and of fear there is at times a necessity and excuse as being allowed for prevention of harm; but of cruelty there is no excuse or palliation, but it is pure essence of tiger and demon, and it casts on the human face the paleness alike of the horse of Death and the ashes of hell.—Ruskin.

Many a fellow has married for money without ever being able to collect.

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