

(November 29th.)

## Social Experiments in England.

BY J. BRUCE WALLACE, M.A.

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject of "Social Experiments in England," Mr. J. Bruce Wallace, M.A., said:—

*Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen.*—Since coming to Canada I have frequently heard reference to statements made concerning the condition of the people of England—the poorer people I mean—by distinguished members of your Club who have recently visited England. Some of these statements I understand have been met with protests in England, protests that may work for great good.

No one can possibly exaggerate the appalling condition in which a considerable section of English workers find themselves to-day. There are, I am glad to say, also a considerable section of artisans who are highly skilled and well paid, and who live well, but the researches and investigations of Sir Charles Booth, of London, and Mr. Rountree, of York, have shown that one-third of the population of the United Kingdom are living below the poverty line. If they never spend a penny on liquor, or tobacco, or a newspaper, or in amusement—and never put a copper on the collection plate on Sunday—still they have not enough to meet the bare physical necessities of life.

Let me explain what this terrible condition of affairs implies. One-third of the population of London have one guinea per family as the maximum weekly wage. That is the maximum, you note, it goes all the way down from that to starvation and nothing. But let us take the maximum of one guinea per week and work it out. One-third of this amount goes at once in payment for the miserable dwelling which they call home, leaving fifteen shillings as the maximum for all the requisites and necessities of civilization. Just think that over—and that, as I have said, is figuring on the maximum wage.

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Mr. J. Bruce Wallace was for some years Warden of Mansfield House University Settlement, London East, and more recently had been associated with the famous "Garden City" movement, to which he refers.

So there is confronting England a great social problem. The children of this large section of the community—the section to which I have alluded who are living below the poverty line—the children of these people are growing up under conditions where even physical, not to speak of intellectual and moral, efficiency is impossible. There cannot help but be deterioration. In London the problem is, of course, more acute, because of the immense population, but it is not confined to London. Other cities are confronted with like conditions.

I have been led to understand from some of you that there is some discontent in Canada over the general character of the immigrants you receive from England. I am not surprised that considerable discontent is experienced at the quality of some of the English immigrants. Think of the conditions from which this stock has sprung. During the first half of last century, the women were required to work sixteen and seventeen hours a day, sometimes to within a few days of their confinement. Then the child was sent out to work in the workshop or the factory at the age of seven or eight years. All this has deteriorated the English stock to some extent. It could not do otherwise. And the result is that a certain amount of the social wreckage cast up by bad land and economic conditions reaches Canada, and you find the serious—well-nigh impossible—obligation thrust upon you of transmuting that wreckage into worthy Canadian citizens.

But there have been some notable attempts on the part of certain British philanthropists and reformers to grapple with the great problem. One notable and successful social experiment was conducted in Wales, when Robert Owen established a model settlement at New Lanark. The firm of Robert Owen had the right idea. It aimed at business success, but it determined that making a fortune was not the primary business of life. It concluded that its duty and privilege demanded that it should look after humanity, at least such humanity as was contributing to the success and development of its business. Robert Owen started in the country and secured land, and built up a town. It was different from the ordinary English industrial town. In most industrial centres there are streets of sordid dwellings, unclean surroundings and cramped conditions. New Lanark was peopled by wholesome and beautiful homes. What was the result? For a whole generation there was no such thing as a Police Court case, and drunkenness was a thing unknown. The people

lived in happiness and content. The experiment began to attract the attention of the country. People were amazed at the results secured and the influential character of the community. But, unfortunately, attention was diverted from the great experiment to the theological heresies of Owen. His views did not please many of the evangelical people. He did not believe in total depravity and held that degeneration was caused by environment.

They called Owen an infidel, but he set them a noble example of loving his neighbor as himself. Yet he was denounced by eminent evangelical people because his work was social rather than evangelical.

But the example of Owen has had its effect. Employers of labor are beginning to realize that they have duties to all who participate in the development of the business. Other efforts have followed that of Owen. Lever Brothers, the big soap manufacturers, have established outside of Birkenhead a large and improved community. All its inhabitants are well housed and well looked after, and facilities are provided for employees to develop all round.

But such social experiments do not go far. They can only expect to make a start. The fierce warfare of business has been going on for years. Manufactures have been engaged in squeezing out competition. Isn't it now time they were sharing the benefits accrued with those who helped to obtain them? As far as the example goes it is excellent. It quickens the conscience. It develops the highest and best in mankind. And it raises the scale of workmanship to a higher level.

Other important social experiments have been conducted by the cocoa and chocolate manufacturers in England. The Cadburys, the Rowntrees, and, in a lesser degree, the Frys have all done something. They have sought through their output to provide a wholesome substitute for alcoholic drinks. They have done much towards creating a new taste. They have built new factories in the agricultural land and have surrounded them with suitable dwellings for the workers. There is a park and a little plot of land for each family cottage. There is a doctor to prevent them getting ill. The young women are all provided with scientific training in domestic economy and preparation for motherhood. All are treated not as mere hands, but as brothers and sisters of the firm.

Then came the creation of Brownville, which was made into a national trust. Ground values rapidly increased and

the profits went into a fund to use for the extension of the town. The Garden City movement was launched based on Eben Howard's book "Garden Cities of To-morrow." It sought to escape the enormous tribute to ground landlords. In London alone the annual tribute to owners of the ground for allowing others to invest it with value is fifteen millions sterling, more than \$75,000,000. And yet in that selfsame city one-third of the population are below the poverty line. So, as I said, an organization was formed to promote Howard's ideal.

The whole project was investigated through agents and a first instalment paid upon the land. The enterprise was named Garden City, Limited. The profits were limited to five per cent. interest on the outlay, and all speculative profits were eliminated. The whole site was surveyed and experts put on the problem of making an ideal plan for the city. There was a garden for every cottage. The community was supplied with gas, electric power, good roads and other necessary factors of modern life. Such firms as W. H. Smith & Sons, J. M. Dent & Company, printers and book-binders, engineering works, iron works, tapestry and embroidery crafts and various other handicrafts have established themselves, and in the fifth year the city is such a success that others are springing up. There are now 6,000 there at work, each with his own house and garden. In the city local option in licenses prevails on the town site proper. Two votes have been taken and the people both times voted for no licenses on the town site. Thus liquor temptations are eliminated.

There may not yet have been time to work out all the details of organization, although if one Garden City can operate successfully with 35,000 population, there should not be any great difficulty in extending the movement to a great city of 6,000,000.

The movement is in the right direction. Its direction and object are to lessen existing evils and to develop the evolution of better social conditions. We appreciate the difficulties experienced in the overcrowded cities and believe that the remedy is to bring the people back close to the land. We cannot get land near London at agricultural prices, and even if the site there were paid for the increase of ground values would constitute a difficulty in making it a desirable place for the development of the movement.

There are several schemes arising out of the project. It is proposed to form a co-operative Garden City movement;

to build a second Garden City to be occupied by the workers in co-partnership shops, the whole to be co-partners in the social system. Whatever the result the social conscience has been awakened and the moral evolution is under way. We are doing something in England.

And what about Canadian conditions? You are not yet confronted with the problem that meets the old land with acuteness. In Canada if they start shoving and elbowing they don't shove one another into the sea. There is the far west to go to. In England you are elbowed out of existence. But before long at your present rate of growth and with the steady inflow of immigration your cities will have to face such problems as ours. You have every scope out here for the adoption of the principle of the Letchworth Garden City movement. Already the visitor notes the wild gambling in increment ground values which it is best to avoid.

I thank you very heartily for this privilege of addressing you. I trust the patriotic inspiration of such institutions as the Canadian Club may be adequate to deliver you from the worst features of our English mistakes, and that Canada will develop and progress until she becomes not alone the envy of the whole earth, but the admiration and example of the whole earth.

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