

PART III.

SUGGESTIVE.

“The commonwealth is to take necessary measures for the protection of public health, and to secure society against whatever may be a public nuisance or a public peril.” — MULFORD: *The Nation*, p. 286.

I HAVE intimated that the exactions of distorted views of life, the consequent disarrangement of economic adjustments, and woman's own mistaken ambitions, have inflicted upon her a position in industrial toil foreign to the true intent of her being. In brief, she must now labor for bread in the same field with men, and, so doing, falls short of, is outside, her true and highest possibilities and privileges. What, then, are these ? and how may the designed condition,

so far as industry is concerned, be brought about? Says Maudsley : * —

“Could we in imagination trace mankind backward along the path stretching through the ages, on which it has gone forward to its present height and complexity of emotion, and suppose each new emotional element to be given off at the spot where it was acquired, we should view a road along which the fragments of our high, special, and complex feeling were scattered, and should reach a starting-point of the primitive instincts of self preservation and propagation.

“In the first place, a proper regard to the physical nature of women means attention given, in their training, to their peculiar functions, and to their fore-ordained work as mothers and nurses of children. Whatever aspirations of an intellectual kind they may have, they cannot be relieved from the performance of those offices so long as it is thought necessary that mankind should continue on earth.”

For woman is reserved, therefore, the distinctive glory and honor of the chief agency in the perpetuity, development, and training of her race. To a distinction so dignified, a

* Sex in Mind and Education, Henry Maudsley, M.D.

position so ennobling, the highest enthronement is fittingly to be accorded.

“Nothing,” says Gaskell,* “would tend more to elevate the moral condition of the population than the restoration of woman to her proper social rank; nothing would exercise greater influence upon the form and growth of her offspring than her devotion to those womanly occupations which would render her a denizen of home. No great step can be made till she is snatched from unremitting toil, and made what nature meant she should be, — the centre of a system of social delights. Domestic avocations are those of her peculiar lot. The poor man who suffers his wife to work, separated from him and from home, is a bad calculator.”

To bring woman to the position she should hold in the world's work, is hence but to recognize her, in the fullest sense, as the custodian and exponent of powers and principles of paramount importance, not only to the well-being, but to the very existence of the race. Sex, God-implanted, imperative for the very possibility of being, claims for

* *Op. cit.* p. 166.

itself more than ordinary recognition: it demands the most enlarged consideration. Woman, as we have seen, holds in industry a position inconsistent and incompatible with the coeval possession of her true plane.

To take things as they are, and without creating disaster in the machinery of society, to bring the female worker to the higher level of her intended vocation, is a problem not easy of solution, and yet is the one that it is all essential, if we are to retain our place and nation, should receive a not tardy demonstration. In the adaptation of educational systems to the physiological needs of the forming girl, the measures to be taken are few and obvious. To re-adjust industry on the same basis, and to the same ends, involves such an intricacy of detail, such an innovation of existing customs, and so entire an overthrow of the established order of things, that any movement in this direction must be exceedingly gradual, and attack only the edges of the great mass of error.

I may presume, therefore, only to offer a

few suggestions which aim at improvement of existing conditions in industry; hoping that in some degree I may have made bare, for the steel of more stalwart axemen, the roots and fibres that bind us to degeneracy and decay.

That for years to come, our girls of forming age will continue from necessity to enter the various lines of industry, there can be no doubt. And, so long as it is a necessity imposed by the duty of bearing the burden of self-support that else must fall unduly on others, the toil becomes a dignity; and, so long as it be honest, ennobles the laborer. Hence the dignity of labor is universal; and there is no rightful pride of superiority which one form may exercise over another, so long as the one engaged in is the best for which the individual is fitted, for the result to herself and society. The book-keeper trained to that employ has no right of superiority over the sewing-machine girl trained to that work, by virtue of the more distinctively mental character of her pursuit. But

there is a comparison that may rightfully be, and should be drawn, between these employments of women; and it is based solely on their respective effects on the health of the operative. It is to such a distinction, as affecting wages, hours, and the persistence of labor of employées, that we look for a measure of good to the working-girl. A scientific gradation of pursuits as to their salubrity or non-salubrity, their physiological effects, will sooner or later be effected, and govern, to a great degree, the participation therein of the forming female. The influences * affecting moral conditions in various

* While these last pages have been going through the press, I have received a letter from a widely-known physician in one of the large manufacturing cities of this State; in which, speaking of the evil effects of moral and physical disregard in the want of privies, or the bad location thereof, he says, "A trip to L— to examine the water-closets of the workshops of this place would pay, or, rather, to see the general lack of all convenience in the shops for women and girls. I am satisfied that a very large proportion of disease in our L— female population is due to the fact that so few facilities are afforded women to attend to calls of nature.

classes of employ, as inseparable from definite physical and physico-moral effects on those employed therein, will, also, undoubtedly come in for a much-needed share of consideration.

It has not been difficult to discover and point out the errors and evils that attend upon the several forms of employ, and that operate against the health, happiness, and usefulness of women. To suggest the remedies for these is obviously a matter of no small moment, and not easy of accomplishment.

As there are basis principles of health, which are affected, as we have seen, by these conditions of employ, so are there basis prin-

“I am equally satisfied, from the fact, that in shops where a water-closet is so exposed that women must be seen by all the men when they enter, that that alone has a bad moral influence upon them. I *know* it; and in a conversation I had in my office to-day, with a girl of eighteen, who suffered severely from constipation, and inflammation of the bladder (that being her usual habit), she gave as a cause, that, in her shop, the men could see every girl that visited the closet, and that therefore none but the *bad* girls would go.”

ciples of error which lie at the root of all branches of wrong.

I believe that the grave mistakes of our labor system, as affecting the class of females considered, are, —

First, That we employ those therein whose years absolutely prohibit their being employed at labor *at all*.

Second, That their hours of labor are too long; and, —

Third, That we sadly neglect the measures that are adaptable to insure a correct sanitary condition of our operatives during their labor.

Under one or the other of these cardinal forms of error, all the specific evils of different occupations or circumstances will arrange themselves.

No child or young person of *either* sex, under the age of fifteen years, should ever be engaged in any form of industrial employ necessitating absence from school, or a draft on vital energy. The normal position of those of that age is in the work of educa-

tion ; and, until this is recognized, the nation and individuals must suffer present and future loss, — loss of bodily vigor, without which a nation must die ; loss of knowledge, which is power to upbuild, to keep, to develop ; loss in the higher values that belong to the nobler parts of our being, and that cannot expand in a soul or body dwarfed and exhausted by the gross demands of purely animal existence.

But it is objected, it can be clearly shown in this Commonwealth, that while it is true, that the money in savings banks, to a considerable extent, belongs to laboring people, little of it would be there if it were not for the labor of women and children, the wives and offspring of laboring men ; indeed, that, without their assisting labor, it is proved that the average laborer could not make the ends of the year meet. Granted ; and yet my proposition is nevertheless of full force, and for two reasons : —

First, Because it is plain that there is an error in that price and form of labor that will

not permit a man to support his family in comfort without drawing on the vital powers of those to whom we must look to make his place good, and to not only carry on, but improve upon, the work of society.

Second, Because we can never afford to set a price upon body and soul; and any barter of strength, happiness, and knowledge, for mere money-return, is an exchange that will surely rob us in the long-run.

Is it true, as scientists* tell us, that there is a progressive decline and deterioration in the mental vigor and physical stability of our people? We have to thank for it these errors that exhaust the life of the fathers and mothers of coming generations, to convert it

* "That there has been a decided change in female organization in New England, within fifty or a hundred years, there can be no question. Formerly there was more muscle, a larger frame, greater fulness of form, and a better development of all those organs that are classed under the sanguine and lymphatic temperaments. The brain and nervous system relatively were not especially predominant; neither were they taxed continuously or excessively above any other class of organs." — NATHAN ALLEN, M.D.: *Medical Problems of the Day*, p. 78.

by a base alchemy into present gold,—a gold that by and by, like that of the Phrygian king, will be all there is to offer as bread, as homes, as armies, as thought-power, and as happiness.

The hours of labor are too long,—not too long to earn a living in, for they barely suffice, as things now stand, for the purpose; but too long for the proper physical good, mental culture, and moral growth of those involved. The proper physical good is especially our concern. If the co-operative system of labor ever reaches a general result as favorable as that its individual successes would warrant a hope of, I believe there may then be both time and an inclination (not existing at its best in a worn body and tired mind) to regard those questions of personal cleanliness, diet, clothing, hygienic surroundings, and physical development, now so sadly disregarded by the working-classes, wherever found. An hour more in the morning for the young and forming female (and that is where it may be most advanta-

geously gained, as all labor investigators agree) would save the necessity of ill-cooked, hurriedly-eaten, badly-digested breakfasts (made on hurriedly-prepared food, in which tea holds a prominent place), unwashed faces, neglect of nature's calls, hurried passage to the place of employ, and a disturbed, dissatisfied, and fermenting body and mind, stomach and brain. Get a right conception and *adoption* of the true relation of these things into the mind and lives of working-people, and half the complaints that now arise, like those from the Israelites in the desert, will cease, as did theirs, with the right appreciation of the manna from heaven.

Remedy these ills, and thereby elevate the intrinsic character of working-girls, and a large part of the invidious social distinction made between brain-labor and hand-labor, against the latter, will die a natural death.

An advanced intelligence and humanity is yet to recognize, moreover, the adaptation not only of the right strength, but the right

hours of employ, at the various processes of labor. There are occupations at which a Hercules has no right to labor a full day, and they should be graded as such, and others in proportion; the hours of labor being adjusted for the labor, just as the strength of the individual should be adapted to it.

It is not sought to raise a nation of effeminate or *dilettanti*; nor do we wish, on the other hand, to make the land a hospital for worn-out, debilitated, dyspeptic, chlorotic, anæmic, unsexed men and women. Shorter hours of labor, better improved, on better systems of the divisions of profits, may be, to some degree at least, an antidote.

We sadly neglect the measures that are adaptable to insure a correct sanitary condition of our operatives during their labor. Of this the proof is in every workshop, salesroom, and office in the land. Every occupation proves it, and the diseases and mortality registers make it indisputable. What can be done to remedy this general

neglect, and what to meet, with special preventives, the specific dangers of definite occupations? There can be but two ways in which either the general or the detailed ills of this nature can be met. They are, the diffusion of sound intelligence bearing thereon, and the enactment and enforcement of efficient repressing law. The dissemination of intelligence to a degree that shall cause sex to be recognized in labor; a fitness of things in the apportionment of occupations, both as to strength and time; that shall convince legislators of the necessity of laws, and their enforcement in these directions; that shall demonstrate to the employer the certainty that every draft he makes upon the vital forces of by and by, must be paid out of his children's pockets and their lives, — *such* a dissemination is at once the most powerful and the slowest-growing of influences. Much of it, however, must exist before the second influence — legislation and its execution — can be established. So long as men are prone to consult their own selfish

interests, so long as the present is a greater reality than the future in the eyes of men ; the simple *existence*, in partial recognition, of principles which, however vital they may be, are found to be at variance with men's interests, or to deal largely with the future, will not be sufficient to command the respect they intrinsically demand. It becomes necessary that the minds that do recognize what other minds would recognize but for their blinds of self-interest and distance, must bring into operative force the principles that should prevail ; and this can be only through the medium of law. *

* Says Dr. Jarvis, "Can government aid in improving human life? Is there room here in the field of human life for governmental co-operation, as well as in the agricultural field of vegetable and animal life? It is powerful there: it is not powerless, and need not be ineffective, here. The power of government is threefold, and is executed in a triple way. It is mandatory, and says, Thou shalt, and thou shalt not. It is permissive, and grants privileges. It is advisory, instructive, and encouraging. It teaches the people their best interests, and points the way of gaining them." — *Polit. Econ. of Health*, Op. cit. p. 363.

It is hence essential, that such enactments should be made and prosecuted as shall best establish the condition of things that should be; and it is to such well-considered and efficient enactments that we must look for the prevention of much that now affects most unfavorably the condition of working-people, and especially women and children. Provision for the due inspection of, and inquiry into, the real conditions of labor, is naturally indicated as the initial desideratum of such law, and in this Commonwealth is especially necessary.

What is needed is the existence of inspectors of labor concomitants, with laws sufficiently regulative of those conditions, and power in the inspectors acting under those laws to maintain them as they should be. But inasmuch as the inspector, without law to establish what is evil and what good, is useless, though with it most potent, the *law* becomes the chief agent in the work of reform; and it is to the wise creation and the subsequent execution of these laws that we must look for an improvement.

Says Dr. Jarvis,* —

“In as far as human life is more important than all financial interests, and, even in the financial view, the creative power of human force is more valuable than all created capital, this cardinal interest of the people, individually and collectively, should take precedence of all other provisions in all legislation. Every law, grant, or privilege from the legislature should have this invariable condition: that human health, strength, or comfort should in no manner or degree be impaired or vitiated thereby.

To frame laws to meet the demands of the principles I have recognized, under all their varying conditions, is not a task for this space, or one to be readily accomplished; but we may fairly consider, in brief, some of the ends it is specially desirable should receive the appreciation of the public in general, and the employer in particular, and, it is to be hoped, will eventually find their recognition in law. It is believed, —

That the employment at labor of any girl

* Op. cit. p. 371.

under fifteen years of age should not be allowed.*

That the employment of girls of other ages — and women generally — at employments unsuited to their sex should not be suffered (such employments being determined by a council of salubrity, in France, composed of those most eminently fit for their high commission).†

That, in such employments as women should be admitted to, they should be permitted a “periodical absence,” without pecuniary loss, for such time as might be just and necessary.

That in employments where women should be admitted, and which require high degrees of mental concentration, with physical energy, additional vacations of sufficient extent should be the right of the employée.

* Prof. Clarke has summed it up tersely when he says, “If excessive labor, either mental or physical, is imposed upon children, male or female, their development will in some way be checked.” — *Op. cit.* p. 41.

† See appendix.

That, in all employments, it should be obligatory upon the employer to conduct the processes of the occupation under the most advantageous conditions to health, and to secure all improvements in this regard that may become approved.

That in all larger manufactories (of over certain numbers of employées) there should be special sanitary supervision at the expense of the proprietors.

That there should be a well-established examination and certification of all employés, male and female, proposing to engage in any deleterious or burdensome employ,—only those being certified who are found in the possession of health not to be unduly impaired thereby, and only such to be employed as are certified.

To the clause which provides, that in all employments it should be obligatory upon the employer to conduct the processes of the occupation under the most advantageous conditions to health, etc., I desire to direct attention. To improve is the possibility of

the present; to re-establish may be the work of centuries. We may and should, therefore, prosecute the improvement at once and assiduously. Dr. Clarke has suggested, that "the keen eye and rapid hand of gain, of what Jouffroy calls self-interest well understood, is sometimes quicker than the brain and will of philanthropy to discern and inaugurate reform." He says, —

"There is an establishment in Boston, owned and carried on by a man, in which ten or a dozen girls are constantly employed. Each of them is given, and is required to take, a vacation of three days every fourth week. It is scarcely necessary to say, that their sanitary condition is exceptionally good, and that the aggregate yearly amount of work which the owner obtains is greater than when persistent attendance and labor was required."

Unfortunately for woman and the race, few such cases of wise regard exist with employers; but it is precisely this condition of things that ought to exist, and become not the exception, but the unvarying custom. If the same consideration for employées were

everywhere exhibited as that shown by the Blackstone Mill at Blackstone, which has provided bath-rooms for its operatives, or the Hamilton Mills at Lowell, which have put in operation a new form of shuttle, by which the dangers incident to the old way of sucking the thread through in filling the shuttle are removed, the employers, woman, and the race, would be greatly the gainers.

Improved apparatus and less injurious processes, ventilation, the instant removal of dust from dust-producing machinery, the utilization of steam (now injuriously wasted in "weave-rooms") in heating water for baths, proper kinds, conditions, and seclusion of privies, warm dressing-rooms for girls at mills, etc., where wet clothing, may be changed, alternation of labors when processes are specially exacting, seats for girls in stores, and better opportunities for food, such as are to be obtained through "cooking-depots," "Holly-tree inns," — etc., all are agencies, which, with many others that

might yet be enumerated, will powerfully act for the amelioration of the condition of the working female of whatever age, but have especial powers of good for the forming girl.

The walls of the factories at Wakefield and other places, blackened by the foul vapors escaping from their privies, attest the character of the atmosphere the operatives breathe. The foul condition and exposed location of these privies have been already shown. Wet floors, draughty rooms, and severe toil, so widely the rule in manufacturing establishments, have forced upon many a working girl an overthrow of her special forces, that ended in clouded intellect, broken health, and early death.

It behooves the state, therefore, to stand, *first*, as the legal protector of its most weighty interests, its perpetuity and progress; and, *second*, as the patron and promoter of whatever will aid therein. It has been deemed wise to stimulate, from time to time, special thought and inventive genius in

aid of agricultural* or commercial interests, by the promise of large pecuniary rewards. What more legitimate, or more desirable, than that the commonwealth should use every spur to bring to the lives and health of its inhabitants every device by which they may be additionally secured or promoted? If it be advisable to offer large rewards to him who shall discover the prevention of rot in the potato (an article of food of comparatively small value, physiologically considered), and to bestow a prize of due proportion for "the

* "It is shown by the statistical tables of Continental Europe, that the annual human increase depends upon the agricultural product of it; and so well is this established, that, in countries where the army is made up by the conscription of a certain proportion of the population, it has been found, that not only the number to be had can, with a fair chance of accuracy, be estimated from the state of the market eighteen to twenty years previously, but even the average standard height of the men furnished." — KREPP: *The Sewage Question*, p. 9.

If this be so, is it not a rational thing, that powers fully as depletory and devitalizing as scarcity of food, viz., the inimical forces against the health of woman, should have an equally untoward effect against the vigor and numbers of a nation?

best essay on the building of roads," how much more so for the creation of agencies that shall lessen the dangers of dust in factories, of injury from machinery, of fatiguing labor at the sewing-machine, the telegraph-instrument, and the type-case, and free from their baleful force the foul vapors of our noxious trades! In nothing can the state more surely seek its riches; for he who thinks must accept the precept of Emerson, that "the first wealth is health."

That the worker herself may, by the exercise of recognized precautions, by personal attention to, or avoidance of, conditions unfavorable to health, and the cultivation of personal habits that aid the promotion thereof, do much to lessen the evil influences of labor, there can be no doubt.

So far as she sympathizes in, and gives aid to, the effort that a comparatively few of her sex have for some years persistently urged with a zeal worthy of a better cause, — for the *competitive* relation as between her and man in industry, — she countenances an

error. It is an error whose one certain effect is, to keep her in an abnormal condition, *beneath* her rights, and *under* her opportunities. The thoughtful ones of her sex recognize this. Says Dr. Frances Emily White,* —

“ When we look around upon the great industries of life, — mining, engineering, manufacturing, commerce, and the rest, — and consider how little direct agency woman has had in bringing them to their present stage of progress, we are compelled to believe, that she must not look toward direct competition with man for the best unfolding of her powers; but rather, while continuing to supplement him, as he does her, in the varied interests of their common life, that her future progress, as in the past, will consist mainly in the development of a higher character of womanhood, through the selection and consequent intension of those traits peculiar to her own sex.”

Says Van de Warker, † —

“ This effort of woman to invade all the higher forms of labor is a force battling with the established order of sexual relation.”

* FRANCES E. WHITE, M.D.: *Woman's Place in Nature*, *Popular Science Monthly*, January, 1875, p. 301.

† Op. cit. p. 470.

Dr. Allen has said,* —

“In all the situations and pursuits of life, the Almighty has established bounds or limitations beyond which woman cannot go without defeating the primary objects of her creation : maternity is the primary law of her creation.”

Says Dr. Maudsley,† —

“When we thus look the matter honestly in the face, it would seem plain, that women are marked out by nature for very different offices in life from those of men, and that the healthy performance of her special functions renders it improbable she will succeed, and unwise for her to persevere, in running over the same course at the same pace with him. For such a race she is certainly weighted unfairly. Nor is it a sufficient reply to this argument, to allege, as is sometimes done, that there are many women who have not the opportunity of getting married, or who do not aspire to bear children; for whether they care to be mothers, or not, they cannot dispense with those physiological functions of their nature that have reference to that aim, however much they might wish it; and they cannot disregard them in the labor of life without injury to their health.”

* Nathan Allen, M.D., op. cit. p. 41.

† Sex in Mind and Education, p. 30.

The weight of evidence that may be presumed to be worthy of confidence and consideration would seem to leave no doubt that the normal, the God-appointed work of woman, wherein lie her full equality, her peerage, her glory, and her power, is that of the home and the mother, the rearer, the trainer, the blessing of man.

To the "noble army of martyrs," the tens of thousands of working-women, of all ages, in America to-day, who patiently and hopefully toil on year by year, under the abnormal burdens a disjointed and unreflective society imposes, I pay the tribute of my earnest sympathy, my admiration, and my humble effort. I am assured, that, out of the labyrinth of perplexity that has entangled the question of woman's rights, there will sooner or later be evolved this certainty: that the highest moral and physical well-being of a race demands that there shall be nothing in its conditions of life and labor that shall injure the richness and purity of the chief source whence its existence and its best influences come.

When a senator of one of the most rugged States of our cold north-east was asked the most valuable product of his section, he replied with unction, "Men, sir, men!" Cornelia's jewels are still the wealth of a woman and a state. The significance of Penelope's virtue is yet vital. For her right to rise from the ills that assail her sex in industry, her right to retain, through present enforced toil, her titles to future dignity and happiness, I make this plea for the working-girl.

For woman's best is unbegun, her advent yet to come.

