

The railroad worker, Volume 15

By American Federation of Railroad Workers

### **WHAT TO GET OUT OF LIFE.**

By STOUGHTON COOLEY.

It is probably true of life, as of everything else, one gets out of it according as one puts into it. The grouch who complains of everything meets a pretty grouchy world; while the laughing philosopher finds it immensely amusing. The selfish person sees nothing but other people looking out for themselves; while the generous one meets big hearts everywhere.

This is not to say it is an ideal world, or that every one gets his due; by no means; but it is to say that it is a plastic world, a world in flux, that may be moulded and shaped to human will; that it is, in fact, a world so moulded and shaped. Beau Brummel remarked how much better heaven had treated man than beasts. For, whereas the animals had been given fur and the birds feathers which they could not change, man had been sent into the world naked, in order that he might clothe his body to suit his fancy. That is the charm, the never-ending charm, of the world. It can be shaped to suit our fancy.

Granted that the world can be changed, that indeed it is changed by man, it is highly important how one exercises his powers. Each, of course, must choose for himself how he shall treat the world, but it is interesting to note how some have chosen.

On Murray Hill in the heart of New York City, just a block west of the bronze tablet that marks the site of the old Murray homestead where Mary Lindley Murray entertained the British officers while General Putnam made good his escape, is a brown, stone house in which lives a man who is quite widely known to the world. The son of a rich and well-known father, he has, during the present war, financed deals for the Entente Allies that made him a financier of the world.

Just what he has done aside from conducting large financial deals the general public does not know. It thinks he has done nothing for anybody but himself. This may or may not be true; it is the current thought. The world, thinks him a hard man; and it is reasonable to infer that he thinks it a hard world. That, at least, is his outward attitude. For, like the desperado who finds it necessary to go armed this man who lives in the center of one of the largest cities of the world feels himself unsafe in the presence of his fellows unless protected by arms.

And so it happens that an armed man may be seen on the sidewalk at any hour of the day or night, as though some prisoner in the house might escape. The man within is a prisoner in a sense; he is afraid some one will attack him. He was wounded, not very long ago, and some one may repeat the attempt on his life. He is very rich, and has great power; yet he sees in every stranger a possible enemy who would do him bodily harm. Considering his wealth and power he seems to be getting very little out of life.

Contrasted with the life of this man may be placed that of a woman who lives on the same street about the same distance east of the bronze tablet to the memory of Mary Lindley Murray. She also is reckoned

as among the rich. She may not be as rich as the man, but she probably spends a much larger proportion of her income. But there are no armed guards on the sidewalk before her house. Indeed, if you approach the door you will find a tiny brass plate on the inside of the door between the lace curtain and the glass bearing the words, "walk in."

Why should this rich man have armed men about his house to prevent any one from entering, and the rich woman have the invitation to walk in? Why should the man be so timid, and the woman be so fearless? Why should he repel the public, while she invites it?

The whole philosophy of life lies hidden in the answer to those questions. The man has given little to the world. He has scowled at his fellow men. He never goes out of his way to aid the people. He has indeed undone some of the things that his father did for the public. He has an art gallery built and stocked by his father with the rarest gems of the world, yet its doors are closed.

But the woman devotes all her time, energy and means to the service of her fellowmen. She also has gems in her house. But no one would think of breaking in to steal them, for one has but to ask and they will be given. The rich man has in his library examples of the printer's art that are worth more than their weight in gold. The rich woman has literary gems of far greater value that she gives freely to all who will read them. The man treasures a solitary copy that takes its value from the fact that no one else has a duplicate copy. The woman values hers in proportion to the number she can get people to read.

This looks as though there were truth in the statement that we lose what we keep, and gain what we give away. For the man, after getting as much out of the world as he can is afraid the world will take his life; while the woman who has devoted herself to the service of her fellowmen finds the world eager to do her homage. The great of the earth come to her house, and entertain her at theirs. Statesmen, lawyers, judges, artists, men and women prominent in all walks of life who have glimpsed the dawn of a new social day are glad to confer with her on matters of state and public policy. Yet the humblest seeker after truth, and the frailest worker in the cause of justice is equally welcome.

For be it understood it is not charity she doles out to relieve the misery of those who have been victimized by unjust social conditions. Charity she leaves to those who will do nothing more. All her strength and means go to cure the conditions that make charity necessary. Poverty she believes is an effect, and she has devoted herself to removing the cause. She is possessed of the idea that since all wealth is produced by human labor out of the natural elements the problem of poverty will be solved by setting up conditions that will give labor access to the natural elements. Believing that each individual should have what he produces; but that the earth itself belongs to all mankind, she is endeavoring to establish an economic condition in which government that serves all shall be supported by a tax on the common heritage of man, the earth, while the products of labor go untaxed.

It might be well for such girls and boys as are destined to riches and are wondering what can be got out of life, to consider the example of these two persons. And even those not destined to riches might well give them a thought; for the one who tries to get from the world a penny more than he contributes will receive scowls, while the humblest effort given to bettering human conditions will be appreciated.

It is scarcely necessary to add that the man who is guarded by private detectives is J. Pierpont Morgan. Nor will they fail to guess that the woman who is laboring so hard to establish economic justice is Mrs. Joseph Fels. Each is getting out of life in proportion to the contribution he or she has made.—The Labor Review.