

WORKINGMEN AND THE CHURCHES.

One can have but little acquaintance with clergymen, if he shows an interest in labor questions yet is unfamiliar with the inquiry, Why do workingmen stay away from church? Though this inquiry may never trouble the minds of your luxurious Charles Honeyman's of the pulpit, hosts of clergymen with religious impulses propound it repeatedly and anxiously. It discloses what is to them a genuine and perplexing problem. But are they not mistaken in regarding this church problem as a labor problem? Isn't it rather a problem in human nature, which only seems to be a labor problem because, notwithstanding all our fine phrases about the dignity of work, we have in fact degraded manual labor? Let us see.

Habitual church-goers may be divided into three general classes—those who go because they profoundly believe in the divine mission of the churches, those who go from force of habit, and those who go because church going is respectable.

Now, workingmen who profoundly believe in churches are doubtless just as regular attendants as any other profound believers. Such, as stay away, therefore, must be of the class that goes either from force of habit or for respectability's sake.

But as church-going habits, unsupported by profound belief, are easily abandoned by men of every class, when less irksome recreation becomes reputable, there is nothing peculiar to the working class in relinquishing those habits. If all church-going were from force of habit only, there would soon be no attendance at all, in these galloping times when there is so little within the churches and so much without to interest the carnal mind.

But of the third church-going class, that which goes for respectability's sake, the falling off among workingmen is doubtless vastly disproportionate. Nevertheless, this also is attributable not to any peculiarity of workingmen, but to human nature. The only odor of respectability that workingmen can get from church attendance is that which may be described as "quite re-

spectable, for a common workingman." This puts workingmen in a similar category of respectability to that of "the good nigger" of old slavery days, and they resent it; not because they are workingmen, but because they are men.

To sum it all up, then, insofar as workingmen stay away from church for reasons peculiar to workingmen, they do so because they feel that the churches regard them as an inferior social class. One needn't be a workingman himself to appreciate this. It is enough to know something of human nature.

Nor is it alone to a hostile attitude that we may look to realize the tendency of churches to regard workingmen as of an inferior class. Patronage may be worse than open hostility. And from one or the other, what church organization is free?

Let any city clergyman,—excepting not even those who are conscious of a genuine spirit of brotherhood, unless, indeed, they be devoted missionaries—interrogate himself sharply and see if he does not harbor a spirit either of hostility or patronage to the workingman class. Would he dine with workingmen members of his congregation if there were any? Would they be invited to dine with him? Would their families visit his and his theirs, upon the same terms of respect and equality that characterize the social intercourse of his family with "the better element" among his parishioners? Would he go to their trade union halls in quite the same spirit in which he visits a club? A few questions like these, frankly answered, would not unlikely disclose ample cause for the feeling among workingmen, that instead of their having left the churches the churches have left them.

Let the churches go to the workingmen, not in the spirit of a haughty landlord's haughty or patronizing steward-going to the relief of menial dependents, but even as the old church went to him in the days of primitive Christianity, as to brethren and not to "inferiors," and the complaint that workingmen stay away from church would soon be heard no more. But the "superior" classes would drop away then, and that would make another problem.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF STRIKES.

A trades union is a labor trust. To "corner" the labor of an industry would be fully as disastrous to the people needing that industry as to corner the raw material or the finished product. A strike means a temporary curtailment or stoppage of the supply of labor, organized with the object of getting a high price or better conditions for labor than the existing market allows.

Now the price of labor, like the price of anything else that is exchanged, is governed in the long run by the ratio of supply and demand. Hence, if we want to raise the price of anything we must either increase the demand relative to the supply or decrease the supply relative to the demand. A strike is, while it lasts, a decrease in the supply of labor, and may amount to total stoppage; but as such decrease or stoppage is never permanent, the ratio between the supply and the demand will, in the end, assert itself, over and above any artificial settlements that may be reached.

The question: What is a fair wage? is only part of the general question, What is a fair price for anything. The fair price of anything we exchange is the largest measure of the product of other people's sacrifice which, under free conditions of production, transportation and exchange, we can obtain as an equivalent for a given measure of what we have to sell. So long as free conditions of production, transportation and exchange do not exist, so long will the fixing of a fair price, either of labor or commodities, be an impossibility. Denial of such free conditions means robbery to the workers in all industries; but in what proportion they are severally robbed, we are without any reliable criterion for forming a judgment.

When a strike takes place it is often ignorantly assumed by the parties of either side of the dispute that the public have little or no concern in the issues involved; that both employers and workmen have an absolute right, if either side think fit, to cease production until such time as they choose to come to an agreement. Undoubtedly if they produced for