

TOO MUCH OF THE GOOD THING.

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not be innocent."

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Irish gardener when she taxed him with his ^ssinas. And he
said it in a tone which shewed that he washed his hands of *all*
a responsibility in the matter!

His "proclivities" were serious enough - an appar-
ently irresistible urge to throw down his hoe and seek the
shade of a friendly tree whenever he thought no one was
looking - an equally irresistible urge to slip away ever
so often for a spree of prolonged and prodigious propositions,
that my friend though many seasons had tolerated his lapses
was explained ^{her} on the magic with which he made garden bloom,
coupled with a palaver for which one with her humor would
gladly suffer long.

If there is a people on earth which should under-
stand Mike's predicament, it is ourselves. Our chronic
troubles, those that racked us yesterday, do today and
undoubtedly will tomorrow, are due, in the main, like
Mike's to undisciplined proclivities. High in the list
stands the National habit of overdoing whatever we touch.
It is in our industrial and financial set-ups that this
incorrigible propensity works the most mischief. We let
ourselves go in these fields with an abandon which frequently

is akin to lawlessness and we do it quite as much. I am convinced from sheer love of excitement as from greed of money and power.

"Let her gush" cries the oil prospector who has brought in a flowing well. He knows there is already above ground going to waste more oil than can be used. He knows that if he insists on opening his pool he will send the market crashing, but he has waited too long for his fun to care what indulging himself will do to others.

"It is our own fault" a great manufacturer with a long and creditable record behind him told me ^{lo}doefully. "We hustled in a lot of new labor-saving machinery, turned out ten times as much as we ever had done before, all without taking on a new man. we took it for granted that our selling force could keep up with the machinery. They said they could. What fools we were to expect a market which it had taken us fifty years to develop to absorb overnight ten times its proved capacity. Well, we're paying dear. For the first time in fifty years we are in the red and men who have ~~been~~ had steady work with the firm from the beginning are getting a short two days.

"The investigators who come around diagnosing our case call it "Technological Unemployment". I call it a mighty serious attack of what the Floridians in their late boom called "vision" - "seeing things" and capitalizing what they saw, while it was still an airy *nothing*. That market was our vision - not a reality.

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As far as I am concerned I am convicted of sin."

My friend's case is as old as the machine - those contrivances which take work out of men and women's hands leaving them idle until such time as other men and women have learned to use more of the things made and thus restore those ousted to labor - machine labor.

It is a process that has always scared the world. Three Hundred years ago nearly - an ingenious Pole set up in Danzig a loom which he claimed would weave a web without human hands and could be run night and day. The Polish Government promptly smashed the contrivance and doomed the maker. It has not been for lack of desire to kill, that a similar fate has not overtaken later inventors. "Stop the machine. It steals the workers' jobs," has greeted each step in what we "Mechanization of Industry." Not long ago I heard an excited economist arguing that unless something was done about it, the 5,000,000 men which he declared to be now unemployed because of the functioning of the machine would soon be 25,000,000. He saw the earth turned over to a race of Frankensteins, which, of course, would soon put an end to our American Plan.

Now there is no denying that to one who faces a modern mechanized industry for the first time, it is a terrifying experience. I have been looking at them for some years now whenever I had the chance and always I

ask myself with bewilderment what has become of the men who once did this work, how can the world use what these machines can make?

A dozen years ago out in Idaho I visited the electric power house controlling the water which irrigated a big territory. Great engines hummed and the walls were decorated with not a soul in sight. A telephone rang from a cottage, at the side came a trim little woman. The Lava Bed wanted water - she pushed a button, pulled a few levers, waited a few moments until the telephone called her back. The water had come and she went back to her housekeeping.

Down in Alabama I ~~was invited~~ to visit a deep coal mine. I put on my old clothes for I had been there before, but this was a modern electrically equipped mine. I never left the engine room on the mountain side. There in a comfortable chair, facing a dial board literally as big as the side of a house, I saw a train of coal cars started by the pulling of a lever, saw it disappear into the black opening, heard a bell announce that it had arrived where it was wanted, saw a lever pulled which they told me would start the automatic shovels filling the cars, heard the signal announcing the cars were loaded - saw a lever pulled, and a few minutes later saw the cars high with coal emerge and apparently on their own volition travel to the proper spot and dump their loads. Not a man - not

mule - only that leisurely figure in an immaculate white suit psuhing buttons and pulling levers.

In a nearby steel mill I walked the length of at least a dozen city blocks among the great furnaces. It was as deserted as Wall Street on Sunday. The monsters feed themselves, ore, coal, lime, in proper proportion. They ran the white hot masses into moulds at the exact moment - they turned the moulders into structural steel and only now and then a quiet figure passed by. It was fearsome, ghastly.

Out in the wheat field of the West gigantic - a man at the helm does the work of the perpeletic hundreds that once travelled from Mexico to Saskatchewan reaping, threshing as they went - where are they now?

I could go on - an electric railway which runs itself - a ship with self-directing engine room - and all of these mysterious mechanizations with the uncanny ability to stop themselves when they get into trouble and ring a bell for help, for we are still one lap ahead of the machine - we humans. It can't help itself in an emergency! It is a system which fills the land with things - a riot of production. Given a riot of consumption and the process balances, but slow up ~~the~~ consumption - make things faster than you open new markets, create new buyers! Why then the mysterious processes called absorpction through which the men

thrown out at one point of their strange evolution are taken on in another is checked. It is a case of arrested digestion.

Did the Polish authorities three hundred years foresee the glute and famine of mechanization and so deliberately do their part to end it at the beginning? Ifso were they entirely mad - was there not perhaps wisdom in their madness?

When I am troubled by a problem touching men who make things, I slip up to a certain New England manufacturing town to talk it over with my friends the Clahertys, for the Clahertys being at the machine end of the problem, operating in one industry or another for generations, give me a practical experience with a background.

With them in mind I can weigh better what the economists tell me, better understand what the employer does or will do - gauge the wisdom of law makers who try with their palliative and their to cure the evil they believe, or suspect, to be in the situation.

I first met Tom Claherty, the present head of the family nearly twenty years ago when tramping up and down the mills and factories and mines of the country, trying to discern what effort, if any, were making at the source to correct conditions of which the public were rightfully complaining. I believed then as I do now that the foundation of any thorough going correction of things that work out

In a certain cotton mill I asked an overseer, who had been especially tolerant of my inquiries, to introduce me to a suitable and experienced spinner or weaver. He looked about.

A weave room is a pandemonium. "Can't hear your-
self think!" said Tom when my efforts to catch his words
failed. "If it ain't presumin', maybe you'd come out to
supper with Molly and me."

We took a train. Tom takes you out now-a-days in a neat little car but not to the factory quarter as I had expected. We left the town behind and on its outskirts, stopped at a rambling old farm house - trees - lilacs in bloom - a big garden - a cow in a lot - also children and children!

We hear so much talk of the irregularity of rule
in this country of big due to one or more of
the diseases which afflict our individual life, it is
hard to believe there are workers who have lived literally

for generations in or near the center of their trade, refusing to be uprooted whatever the conditions. But it is true, indeed I am convinced that workers are more tenacious of home, a birth place than those who have money to roam.

The Clahertys are an example. Eighty years ago, early in the 50's they had landed in Boston, from Ireland. Tom and Molly first, with weavers, and ~~they had~~ ten children. They had seasonal occupation and found work in the very town and with the very firm where I found their grandson and his wife. But they didn't like living in a rented house. America meant not merely working at their trade. It meant a "bit of land" of their own and Mollie wanted "a cow and a hen" - Tom "a pig and a smoke on the hearth" so before the end of their first year in this country they had begun to put their savings into the very home where I first found their grandson and his wife.

"The Clahertys were never great for movin'" explained my host when I began to ask questions. "There's a lot of 'em now and it's good for 'em to have a place to come when times is bad." How the story I pieced together backs up Henry Ford's belief in the natural and essential relationship of the land and the factory. The factory can never go on steadily week in and week out even on a 5-day week and an annual shut down, nor is it good for men and women that their experience of life be limited to the machine. Nothing educates to reality - nothing

brings one to consent to these processes of growth which are back of all solid achievement like contact with the soil. And what a refuge it is when the cataclysm and changes which with nature and man force, bring slumps or chaos. In the case of the Claherty s, dozens of them had at different times weathered troubles, plowing and planting and harvesting at the "old home." They cut wood - mended fences - picked apples, canned, dug themselves in until times were good when they scattered to their various trades and to the location in which they had planted themselves. There was very little that had gone on in the country's industrial life since 1850 that the Clahertys did not know something about first hand.

So you see why now I should have wanted Tom Claherty's experiences and traditions - wanted to know if he was as badly scared by technological unemployment as my economy friend with his 25,000,000 soon to be displaced, if we didn't "do something."

"25,000,000" said Tom. "Well, I guess he never had a trade, did he? Never followed it long if he did - I used to think the same about new machines - scared me - and many's the time I've fought 'em - gone on strike because of 'em - but you find out things; after a while I went with our mill to learn my trade when I was ten - I'm sixty-five now, so you see I've seen how things work in cotton - I've been laid off because of a new machine, but I was always taken on again. I used to worry about what the children

would do. You see I started out thinkin' all Clahertys should be weavers or spinners - that's what my grandad thought - the trade and a bit of land was what he taught me. But there ain't one Claherty out of twenty that's a weaver or spinner now and they're all workers, and most are doin' things never heard of when I was a boy. I never heard of a building with a steel frame when I was a boy - made 'em of wood - look at our plant now - not a wood frame on the lot and I've got a nephew who feels safer riveting girders on the top of a New York skyscraper than he does walkin' along Broadway, so he says.

"There's another Claherty making flying machines and one a U. S. aviator - What would grandad of said back in the x 50's if you'd told him that he'd have a great grandson flying in the sky!

The machines kept Clahertys out of the cotton mill when we thought we ought to be in, but it gave us our choice of things to do in many another way that nobody ever heard of.

"Then you got to remember that the change ain't so quick as it sounds. Takes a lot of time to get a new look that will do better than the old one - a lot of experimentin' and while they're changin' men change too - git old - tired out - give up work, go back to Ireland, die. Looks like nature was lookin' after the men the machine has thrown out.

"What's troubled me most at first was seein' how

much more they turned out than we'd been doing. It looked to me as if they were gettin' it so they would want fewer and fewer of us. But you know what's happened. The more the mill turned out the more people wanted. They'd use all the mill could make and want more. I can remember when Molly didn't change the sheets on our beds but once a month. That's the way it is in Ireland today, but look at us now. We have to have one clean sheet on our bed every week and if there's company two clean sheets. Takes a lot more cotton cloth to the Clahertys than it did forty years ago when Molly and me set up housekeepin'. That's more work for the mill.

And look at the new kinds of cotton. Why I can remember when there wasn't anything but callico for the children's summer dresses. Mollie used to buy a web of pink callico at the factory and all the girls got one new Sunday dress. They looked like a bed of peonies when they went to mass. couldn't get that on 'em now. The mills make twenty kinds more than they used to make and the women buy 'em, no two alike."

"Changin' machines don't make any where near so much trouble as the women changin' styles. up Aunt Susie the one spinster I had ever heard of among the Clahertys - "Look at me when I was a girl and made hoap skirts - good trade and steady but they keep changin' makin' 'em smaller, finally got so they went only half

around - down the back and then kept that half
hoop - changed it to a bustle and finally gave that up
and our factory closed down.

"What did I do? learned to make corsets - good
work - good pay - but what did they do to corsets, kept
me changing and changing 'em, less whalebones - less cloth-
bess steeling - now they've laid 'em off and took to

I couldn't stand it any longer - women not knowing
their own minds so I've quit and come home. One thing
that don't change is chickens and I'm raisin' 'em for
T. and M. Like it - always the same."

"We've got to remember it ain't only the folks
that work on the machines that feel the change" said Tom.
"I knew the man who used to run the hoop skirt factory where
Susie worked. Closing that down busted him and he didn't
have a farm to come to like she has. I never knew a change
on style yet that somebody didn't get caught. Women don't
think much about that - I guess."

"What I see now is changes are bound to come and
generally they've worked out for something better than we
had. A weave room is a lot better place to work in than
it once was - cost a lot for everybody to make it so, but
it's better. I guess even Susie here wouldn't want women
wearin' hoop skirts even if givin' 'em up did throw her
out of a job. She's always found another."

"Changes are sure, you can't stop 'em. But they

The strength and the hope of the American Plan is that any problem is everybody's problem. While are of us who do little but talk loudly and emphatically about what should be done - devise

plans which we can prove by figures will settle the matter - back laws which we claim will put an end once and for all to our perplexities, there are all over the land hundreds who settle down to think out, work out this or that angle of the problem.

It is Democracy in the laboratory ^{tackling} ~~tackling~~ the trouble at the bottom ~~and~~ talking little, advertising not at all until the case is proved.

Now luckily for us there are those who study what is doing, bring together the ~~and~~ and the into a whole, and show the result in their survey.

It is heartening to know that much of the assembly of things proved experiments making-conclusion reached is carried on by the teachers in our colleges - heartening because the student of a man who is himself a student, is a researcher unless in our will at least have the chance to learn that he could "guess off" the matters which trouble him - that ~~that~~ investigation is not a slumming party or correction to be by them alone.

Take what has recently been done under the aegis of Swarthmore College - a survey by Paul Douglas and Aaron Director, two members of the Economic Dept. of the University of Chicago of the whole matter of Unemployment.

Here you have Democracy showing what it can do at getting at the root of things for D. and D. bring together the practical attempts to cure certain proved causes of

of Unemployment as we see it today and one of the causes which they steady in their merchandizing of Industry their technological unemployment even as I set down these words I hear of an ex-service man selling ^{The Cosmopolitan} magazines/at 5 cents a copy comes to my study door, asked of his plight - "once if you was down and out" he says, "you could get a job shovelling, but men don't do the shovelling now - its the machines. Go up to the Radio Center, where once fifty men would have been workin' today, there's a man in a derrick running a scoop."

It's true and how do D. and D. feel about it after looking long at what the machine is doing, very much like T. C. only they state their conclusion in the clear and precise language of the scholar:

"The net result of these technological improvements is, not permanent unemployment, as at first seemed to be the case, but rather a transfer of labor from some lines to others. This tendency has been at work throughout the last decade. While agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, and mining have been on the wane so far as numbers are employed, the number of filing station operatives, hotel workers, entertainers, insurance salesmen, school teachers, etc. have been appreciably increasing. Young men who otherwise would have been farmers or clothing workers have in fact become movie ushers, saxophone players, and house-to-house canvassers.

"If the demand is elastic, or if the quantity demanded increases in a greater proportion than the increase in individual production and ~~proportions~~ the ~~therefore~~ fall in unit price, then actually more money will be spent on the industry than before, and more workers will have to be employed. There will then be a shift of labor from other industries to the one in question. If the demand is inelastic, or if the quantity demanded does not increase in as great a proportion as that by which individual efficiency rises and prices fall, then while some men will be squeezed out of this particular industry, an equal number of employment opportunities will be built up elsewhere from the transfer of purchasing power.

"Improvements in industrial processes, like changes in demand, will produce, therefore, a shifting of labor and capital within the economy as workers and investors transfer themselves from industries where their return in terms of exchange value is less than the average to industries where the return is above or approaching the average.

"These shifts are inevitable in a progressive society where there is a tendency towards an equalization of return. Those thrown out of work will not, however, be permanently unemployed, and to this degree, therefore, the fears of permanent technological unemployment have been greatly exaggerated."