

*Overland
See Bulletin A. 7.*

A new order -- for "master and man".

By Glen Buck.

At last -- democracy! And the labor problem solved!

Done in a quiet corner of the world, under the dome of a fair sky, by the power of one over-worked and tired work.

Justice!

In the city of Fort Wayne, Indiana, there has been in constant operation since 1871 the factory of the Packard Piano Company -- which now employs about three hundred men. In front of the group of its rather old-fashioned buildings there has been for a number of years a small and well-kept garden of flowers. Unexceptional enough was the institution otherwise. For the ordinary passerby it held nothing to indicate the modern miracle that was to take place there -- a wonder-event that must surely help to change the course of the world. But to those choice few who not only see things, but see thru things, the garden plot may possibly have been prophetic.

More than two years ago my duty took me up the walk beside the blooming salvias to the rather small and unpretentious office of the president. There were but two chairs in the room. An old-fashioned desk was piled high with papers and accumulated work. A window shade hung askew.

And there were things askew in the factory. Where ordinarily was thriving prosperity there was now scarcely a thrill or a throb. Only a part of the regular force was at work. The trouble-maker had been there -- and there had been a falling out between "master and man". For weeks the idle workers had been without wages and the company without an adequate product. The empty spaces of the factory were full of gloom, the machinery rattled and creaked and the faces everywhere were long and troubled.

Recently I was again called to this factory -- and arrived in a snow storm. What a change! I could scarcely believe my senses. Winter without -- summer within!

At an orderly desk, in a big and beautiful office, sat the smiling president. There were twenty-four armed and inviting chairs in the room -- all of which I was soon to see filled with the factory foremen, beaming with good-fellowship. And the window-shades all hung true!

I went thru the work-rooms and met happy, unhurried men everywhere. I have never seen a similar place so orderly and cleanly. I have never seen workmen who evidenced such a freedom from anxiety, coupled with an eager determination to do their utmost. Yet there was no strenuous labor -- no mistaking mere activity for accomplishment. I talked with many, but could find nowhere a disgruntled or even an unenthusiastic worker. It all seemed almost too good to be true.

And when I was told that these workmen were actually their own bosses and policy-makers -- that they were in fact conducting the business -- that they were hiring and discharging their own fellow workmen -- that they had reduced their daily working hours from ten down to eight, while they had increased the quantity of their output one-third, and the quality to an unestimable extent -- that the self-governed force had earned in wages and bonuses many thousand dollars more in the last twelve months than during the previous year -- and that the company had proportionately increased both its sales and its profits -- then I began to comprehend what it all meant.

Here was a new order of things. The highest sort of idealism had but been put to the test -- and had been found both practical and profitable. Of course, many of us knew that such would be the case when the time came. But the world didn't know it -- and the world needed to be shown.

And this was no experiment. For two progressing years it has been quietly and soundly developing -- understanding and enthusiasm growing with it. Today neither the executives nor the workers would even think of returning to the old order -- for neither could afford it.

It was that formidable word "justice" that did it all -- justice redeemed -- rejuvenated and put to work -- justice from and for the employer -- justice from and for the employed. A miracle word!

The men were called together -- this was at the beginning, some two years ago -- and were told that the old slate had been wiped clean -- that a new order of things was then and there to be inaugurated. And they were invited to become members of a new co-operative arrangement, by which all were to share in the management, responsibility and profits -- and all were to have a square deal.

This did not come as a favor -- but as a right. There was no patronizing assumption of authority. And the invitation was extended in the spirit of sincerest fellowship.

How quick the men were to recognize it -- this honest spirit of fellowship! They were shown that justice means not only a square deal for others, but most of all it means a square deal for one's self. They were made to see that the interests of employer and employed are identical -- that in literal fact every man works for himself -- and that the self-interest of the worker is better satisfied by better methods and better production.

And so they all went to school -- to themselves -- the executives as well as the workmen. Once a week the heads of departments are called together for general conference -- following which the legislative body of the organization meets in an attractive hall, which has been fitted up by the men working on their own time.

This legislative body is absolutely democratic, and is made up of every member of the organization, from the highest to the lowest -- every man on an equal footing -- working in the spirit of that inspiring word "justice". They

speaking right out in meeting -- under Robert's Rules of Order. Harmony is obtained by absolute frankness. There are no secrets in this business. Everything that concerns the workman's welfare is his property. I heard discussions regarding the regulation of working hours, insurance, the election of a chairman from the ranks, sick funds, the extension, heating and ventilation of the factory, means for cutting costs and improving the product, the question of the resumption of monthly bonuses, all decided, or to be decided, by a majority vote.

And I saw that out of these discussions men were learning to use their better faculties -- their heads as well as their hands. The whole man was being put to work. It was a new order. It was education in the truest sense. It was the beginning of the University of the World.

"Since 1871 we have been building musical instruments down here" said Mr. Albert S. Bond, the "born-again" president of the company, "but we have discontinued that work now -- and are building men. And they are making better pianos than we ever knew how."

In the factory a big muscled man was having difficulty in getting an unruly strip of wood into place.

"Can you get it, Bill?" asked his bench-mate.

"You bet your boots I will -- and that right too," was the response, "I'm bossin' this job."

The employment committee had John Jones on the carpet.

"John, you'd better quit" said the chairman. "You're a knocker and you're not working in harmony with the organization. And what's more --".

"I didn't know I was a knocker" interrupted John. "I didn't mean to be. Why, Mr. Chairman, I've worked in this factory two years -- longer than I ever worked anywhere else in my life -- and like it a million times better."

"But that isn't the worst of it" continued the chairman. "You've been passing work over your saw that the factory is ashamed of -- that's had to be done over. We

" won't stand for that -- not for a second. If our work isn't as perfect as we can make it we injure ourselves even more than we injure the good name of the thing we are making. No, John, we won't stand for hurried work here."

But John was repentant -- and so full of good promises that he was allowed to return to his saw.

In the stringing room I asked what would happen if another trouble-making agitator should appear.

"Let him put his head in here," was the response, "and either one of two things would happen. Quick, he'd get a good coat of tar and feathers -- or we'd soon have him contentedly at work at a bench and one of us."

"We have a building full of inventors here" said my companion. And in almost every part of the factory he showed me tools, equipment and means for cutting the corners, for reducing labor, for improving the product -- all invented by the men themselves, often working on their own time.

Liberated labor! A building full of inventors!

I wondered if the salvias weren't blooming out there in the little garden plot -- under the snow.

And I thought how paltry and mean and selfish my own little work was. A new goal loomed thru the fog -- and the way to it led in a new direction.

Would the world see that here was something bigger and better than the mere making of livlihoods, the piling of dollars, the settling of labor difficulties, or the building of successes?

But what of the leaders? Both young men they are -- with gray hair. Mr. Bond's chief co-worker is Mr. Albert J. Leitch, who looks like Sherlock Holmes and acts like a righteous Wall Street Broker -- if there is such an anomaly. He might be called

the factory school-teacher. But I surmise that he likes best his title of "Business Engineer No. 268", which he shares, by only a change of number, with all the other workers of the Packard factory, who are rapidly bringing themselves to realize that they are in every truth an aggregation of engineers.

To my mind this keen, clear-eyed, long-limbed man Leitch, is the most successful "strike-breaker" the world has ever seen. He has brought ideals down to earth. He has put philosophy to work. He has pulled the "high-brow stuff", if you please, down to the "low-brow" -- and has made of it an impelling, elevating life-force. But best of all he has made ridiculous forevermore that hard phrase "master and man". I know of no better work -- or no better worker -- anywhere.

As I went up the steps of the assembly hall I somehow felt that here at last in the new world was being born a spirit that should compensate for the awful failure of the old. As I went up the steps of the assembly hall I suddenly realized that I scarcely knew the old acquaintance beside me. A kindly, thoughtful man always, I found now a re-energized, aboundingly happy individual whose entrance called forth a spontaneous burst of applause --with the ring of the heart in it. The president of the company -- with that live, pulsating word "justice" -- was among his fellow-workmen.

The prophecy of the garden had been fulfilled.

