REFORM THROUGH SOCIAL WORK.

SOME FORCES THAT TELL FOR DECENCY IN NEW YORK CITY.

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

ANY one who has a serious appreciation of the immensely complex problems of our present-day life, and of those kinds of benevolent effort which for lack of a better term we group under the name of philanthropy, must realize the infinite diversity there is in the field of social work. Each man can, of course, do best if he takes up that branch of work to which his tastes and his interests lead him, and the field is of such large size that there is more than ample room for every variety of workman. Of course there are certain attributes which must be possessed in common by all who want to do well. The worker must possess not only resolution, firmness of purpose, broad charity, and great-hearted sympathy, but he must also possess common-sense sanity, and a wholesome aversion alike to the merely sentimental and the merely spectacular. The soup-kitchen style of philanthropy is worse than useless, for in philanthropy as everywhere else in life almost as much harm is done by soft-headedness as by hard-headedness. The highest type of philanthropy is that which springs from the feeling of brotherhood, and which, therefore, rests on the self-respecting, healthy basis of mutual obligation and common effort. The best way to raise any one is to join with him in an effort whereby both you and he are raised by each helping the other. This is what has been done in those factories in Cleveland, Dayton, Pittsburg, and elsewhere, in which the betterment of working life has been aimed at, and partially achieved, through measures beneficial alike to employer and employed.

Any man who takes an active part in the varied, hurried, and interesting life of New York must be struck, not only by the number of the forces which tell for evil, but by the number of the forces which tell for good. Of course most of these are not, in the narrow sense of the term, philanthropic forces at all; but many of them are, and among these there is the widest variety.

In this paper it is only possible to touch upon a very few of the ways in which philanthropic work of worth is being done in New York City. It is necessary to speak of individuals, because otherwise it would be impossible to emphasize the widely different kinds of work which can thus be done. These individuals are mentioned simply as typifying certain phases, certain methods. There are countless others who could be mentioned; it merely happens that these particular men have occupied to advantage certain widely different parts of the great field of usefulness.

Much can be done in downright charitable work, and there are great fragments of our social life in which the work must be in part or in whole charitable. The charity workers do an amount of good which in some cases is literally inestimable. Yet, on the whole, it becomes ever increasingly evident that the largest opportunity for work along the lines of social and civic betterment lies with the independent classes of the community—the classes which have not yielded to the many kinds of downward pressure always so strong in city life. Sometimes this work may take the form of an organized effort to secure greater equality of opportunity. Sometimes the best way to work is the oldest and simplest; that is, by trying the effect of character upon character.

Political and social conditions are often closely interwoven, and always tend to act and react upon one another. It is impossible to have a high standard of political life in a community sunk in sudden misery and ignorance; and where there is industrial well-being there is at least a chance of its going hand in hand with the moral and intellectual uplifting which will secure cleanliness and efficiency in the public service. Politics have been entered by a good many different men, but in New York City Mr. F. Norton Goddard is probably the only man who ever entered on the career of a district leader by the door of philanthropy. Mr. Goddard, feeling he ought to do something serious in life, chose a quarter on the East Side for his experiment, and he entered upon...
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it without the slightest thought of going into politics, simply taking a room in a tenement house with the idea of testing his own capacities and to find out if he was fit to do what has grown to be known as "settlement work." He speedily became very much interested in the men with whom he was thrown in contact, and also became convinced that he personally could do most by acting, not in connection with others, but for his own hand. After a few weeks he joined a small club which met at first in a single room. From this one room sprang in the course of a couple of years the Civic Club at 243 East Thirty-fourth Street, than which there exists in all New York no healthier center of energetic social and political effort. Very speedily Mr. Goddard found himself brought into hostile and embarrassing contact with that huge and highly organized system of corruption, tempered with what may be called malevolent charity, which we know as Tammany. Every foe of decency, from the policy player to the protected proprietor of a law-breaking saloon, had some connection with Tammany, and every move in any direction resulted in contact of some sort with a man or institution under Tammany's control. Mr. Goddard soon realized that organization must be met by organization; and, being a thoroughly practical man, he started in to organize the decent forces in such fashion as would enable him to check organized indecency. He made up his mind that the Republican party organization offered the best chance for the achievement of his object. As it then was, however, the Republican organization of the district in question served but little purpose save to deliver delegates in conventions, and was under the control of men who, although some degrees above the Tammany leaders, had no conception of running things on the plane which Goddard deemed necessary. There were three courses open to him: He could acquiesce helplessly; he could start an outside organization, in which case the chances were a thousand to one that it would amount to nothing; or he could make a determined effort to control for good purposes the existing Republican organization. He chose the latter alternative, and began a serious campaign to secure his object. There was at the time a fight in the Republican organization between two factions, both of which were headed by professional politicians. Both factions at the outset looked upon Goddard's methods with amused contempt, expecting that he would go the gait which they had seen so many other young men go, where they lacked either persistence or hard common sense. But Goddard was a practical man. He spent his days and evenings in perfecting his own organization, using the Civic Club as a center. He already had immense influence in the district, thanks to what he had done in the Civic Club, and at this, his first effort, he was able to make an organization which, while it could not have availed against the extraordinary drill and discipline of Tammany, was able overwhelmingly to beat the far feeble machine of the regular Republican politicians. At the primary he got more votes than both his antagonists put together. No man outside of politics can realize the paralyzed astonishment with which the result was viewed by the politicians in every other Assembly district. Here at last was a reformer whose aspirations took exceedingly efficient shape as deeds; who knew what could and what could not be done; who was never content with less than the possible best, but who never threw away that possible best because it was not the ideal best; who did not try to reform the universe, but merely his own
district; and who understood thoroughly that
dthough speeches and essays are good, down-
right hard work of the common-sense type
is infinitely better.

It is more difficult to preserve the fruits
of a victory than to win the victory. Mr.
Goddard did both. A year later, when the
old-school professional politicians attempted
to oust him from his party leadership in the
district association, he beat them more over-
whelmingly than before; and when the
Republican National Convention came
around he went still further afield, beat
out his opponents in the Congressional
district, and sent two
deleagates to Phila-
delphia. Nor was
his success confined
to the primary. In
both the years of his
leadership he has
enormously increased
the Republican vote
in his district, doing
touter relatively than
any other district
leader in the city.
He does this by
adopting the social
methods of Tam-
manny, only using
them along clean
lines. The Tammany
leader keeps his hold
by incessant watch-
fulness over every
element, and al-
mest every voter, in his district. Neither
his objects nor his methods are good; but
he does take a great deal of pains, and he
is obliged to do much charitable work; al-
though it is not benevolence of a healthy
kind. Mr. Goddard was already, through
the Civic Club, doing just this kind of work,
on a thoroughly healthy basis. Going into
politics had immensely helped with the club,
for it had given a great common interest to
all of the men. Of course Goddard could
have done nothing if he had not approached
his work in a genuine American spirit of en-
tire respect for himself and for those with
whom and for whom he labored. Any con-
descension, any patronizing spirit would have
spoiled everything. But the spirit which
excacts respect and yields it, which is anx-
ious always to help in a mood of simple
brotherhood, and which is glad to accept
help in return—this is the spirit which en-
ables men of every degree of wealth and of
widely varying social conditions to work to-
gether in heartiest good will, and to the im-
mense benefit of all. It is thus that Mr.
Goddard has worked. His house is in the
district and he is in close touch with every
one. If a man is sick with pneumonia, some
member of the Civic Club promptly comes
around to consult Goddard as to what
hospital he shall be
taken to. If another
man is down on his
luck, it is Goddard
who helps him along
through the hard
times. If a boy has
been wild and got
into trouble and
gone to the peniten-
tiary, it is Goddard
who is appealed to to
see whether anything
can be done for him.
The demands upon
his time and patience
are innumerable.
The reward, it is to
be supposed, must
come from the con-
sciousness of doing
well work which is
empathically well
worth doing. A very
shrewd politician
said the other day
that if there were
twenty such men as Goddard in twenty such
districts as his, New York City would be
saved from Tammany, and that in the process
the Republican machine would be made heart-
ily responsive to and representative of the
best sentiment of the Republicans of the
several districts.
The University Settlements do an enor-
mous amount of work. As has been well
said, they demand on the part of those who
work in them infinitely more than the sacri-
fice of almsgiving, for they demand a help-
ing hand in that progress which for the
comfort of all must be given to all; they
help people to help themselves, not only in
work and self-support, but in right thinking
and right living. It would be hard to men-
tion any form of civic effort for righteous-

ness which has not received efficient aid from
Mr. James B. Reynolds and his fellow-workers
in the University Settlement. They have
stood for the forces of good in politics, in
social life, in warring against crime, in in-
creasing the sum of material pleasures.
They work hand in hand, shoulder to shoul-
der, with those whom they seek to benefit,
and they themselves share in the benefit.
They make their house the center for all ro-
bust agencies for
social betterment.
They have consist-
ently endeavored to
work with, rather
than merely for, the
community; to coop-
erate in honorable
friendship with all
who are struggling
upward. Only those
who know the ap-
palling conditions of
life in the swarming
tenements that sur-
round the University
Settlement can ap-
preciate what it has
done. It has almost
inevitably gone into
politics now and
then, and whenever
it has done so has
exercised a thor-
oughly healthy in-
fluence. It has offered
to the people of the
neighborhood educa-
tional and social op-
opportunities ranging
from a dancing academy and musical classes,
to literary clubs, a library, and a children’s
bank—the clubs being administered on the
principle of self-management and self-gov-
ernment. It has diligently undertaken to
cooperate with all local organizations such as
trade unions, benefit societies, social clubs,
and the like, provided only that their pur-
poses were decent. The Settlement has al-
ways desired to cooperate with independent
forces rather than merely to lead or direct
the dependent forces of society. Its work
in cooperation with trade unions has been of
special value both in helping them where they
have done good work, and in endeavoring to
check any tendency to evil in any particular
union. It has, for instance, consistently
laboried to secure the settlement of strikes,
by consultation or arbitration, before the
bitterness has become so great as to prevent
any chance of a settlement. All this is aside
from its work of sociological investigation
and its active cooperation with those public
officials who, like the late Colonel Waring,
desired such aid.
Healthy political endeavor, of
course, be one form of social work. This
truth is not recognized as it should be. Per-
haps, also, there is some, though a far lesser,
failure to recognize
that a living church
organization should,
more than any other,
be a potent force in
social uplifting.
Churches are needed
for all sorts and con-
ditions of men under
every kind of circum-
stances; but surely
the largest field of
usefulness is open to
that church in which
the spirit of brother-
hood is a living and
vital force, and not
a cold formula; in
which the rich and
poor gather together
to aid one another
in work for a com-
mon end. Brother
can best help brother,
not by almsgiving,
but by joining with
him in an intelligent
and resolute effort
for the uplifting of
all. It is towards
this that St. George’s Church, under Dr. W.
S. Rainsford, has steadily worked. The mem-
bership of St. George’s Church is in a great
majority composed of working people—and
young working people at that. It is a free
church with a membership of over 4,000, most
of the members having come in by way of the
Sunday-school. Large sums of money are
raised, not from a few people, but from the
many. An honest effort has been made to
study the conditions of life in the neighbor-
hood, and through the church to remedy those
which were abnormal. One of the troubles
on the East Side is the lack of opportunity
for young people, boys and girls, to meet
save where the surroundings are unfavorable
to virtue. In St. George’s Church this need
is, so far as can be, met by meetings—de-
bating societies, clubs, social entertainments,
etc., in the large parish building. Years ago the dances needed to be policed by chosen ladies and gentlemen and clergymen. Now the whole standard of conduct has been so raised that the young people conduct their own entertainments as they see fit. There is a large athletic club and industrial school, a boys’ battalion and men’s club; there are sewing classes, cooking classes, and a gymnasium for working girls. Dr. Rainsford’s staff includes both men and women, the former living at the top of the parish house, the latter in the little deaconess-house opposite. Every effort is made to keep in close touch with wage-workers, and this not merely for their benefit, but quite as much for the benefit of those who are brought in touch with them.

The church is, of all places, that in which men should meet on the basis of their common humanity under conditions of sympathy and mutual self-respect. All must work alike in the church in order to get the full benefit from it; but it is not the less true that we have a peculiar right to expect systematic effort from men and women of education and leisure. Such people should justify by their work the conditions of society which have rendered possible their leisure, their education, and their wealth. Money can never take the place of service, and though here and there it is absolutely necessary to have the paid worker, yet normally he is not an adequate substitute for the volunteer.

Of course St. George’s Church has not solved all the social problems in the immediate neighborhood which is the field of its special effort. But it has earnestly tried to solve some at least, and it has achieved a very substantial measure of success towards their solution. Perhaps, after all, the best work done has been in connection with the development of the social side of the church organization. Reasonable opportunities for social intercourse are an immense moral safeguard, and young people of good character and steady habits should be encouraged to meet under conditions which are pleasant and which also tell for decency. The work of a down-town church in New York City presents difficulties that are unique, but it also presents opportunities that are unique. In the case of St. George’s Church it is only fair to say that the difficulties have been overcome, and the opportunities taken advantage of, to the utmost.

Aside from the various kinds of work outlined above, where the main element is the coming together of people for the purpose of helping another to rise higher, there is, of course, a very large field for charitable work proper. For such work there must be a thorough organization of the kind supplied, for instance, by the State Charities Aid Association. Here, again, the average outsider would be simply astounded to learn of the amount actually accomplished every year by the association.

A peculiar and exceedingly desirable form of work, originally purely charitable, although not now as exclusively so, is that of the Legal Aid Society, founded by Arthur von Briesen. It was founded to try to remedy the colossal injustice which was so often encountered by the poorest and most ignorant immigrants; it has been extended to shield every class, native and foreign. There are always among the poor and needy thousands of helpless individuals who are preyed upon by sharpers of different degrees. If very poor, they may have no means whatever of obtaining redress; and, especially if they are foreigners ignorant of the language, they may also be absolutely ignorant as to what steps should be taken in order to right the wrong that has been done them. The injuries that are done may seem trivial; but they are not trivial to the sufferers, and the aggregate amount of misery caused is enormous. The Legal Aid Society has made it its business to take up these cases and secure justice. Every conceivable variety of case is attended to. The woman who has been deserted or maltreated by her husband, the poor serving-maid who has been swindled out of her wages, the ignorant immigrant who has fallen a victim to some sharper, the man of no knowledge of our language or laws who has been arrested for doing something which he supposed was entirely proper—all these and countless others like them apply for relief, and have it granted in tens of thousands of cases every year. It should be remembered that the good done is not merely to the sufferers themselves, it is also a good done to society, for it leaves in the mind of the newcomer to our shores, not the ranking memory of wrong and injustice, but the feeling that, after all, here in the New World, where he has come to seek his fortune, there are disinterested men who endeavor to see that the right prevails.

Some men can do their best work in an organization. Some, though they occasionally work in an organization, can do best by themselves. Recently a man, well qualified to pass judgment, alluded to Mr. Jacob A.
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Riis as "the most useful citizen of New York." Those fellow-citizens of Mr. Riis who best know his work will be most apt to agree with this statement. The countless evils which lurk in the dark corners of our civic institutions, which stalk abroad in the slums, and have their permanent abode in the crowded tenement houses, have met in Mr. Riis the most formidable opponent ever encountered by them in New York City.

Many earnest men and earnest women have been stirred to the depths by the want and misery and foul crime which are bred in the crowded blocks of tenement rookeries. These men and women have planned and worked, intelligently and resolutely, to overcome the evils. But to Mr. Riis was given, in addition to earnestness and zeal, the great gift of expression, the great gift of making others see what he saw and feel what he felt. His book, "How the Other Half Lives," did really go a long way toward removing the ignorance in which one-half of the world of New York dwelt concerning the life of the other half. Moreover, Mr. Riis possessed the further great advantage of having himself passed through not a few of the experiences of which he had to tell. Landing here, a young Danish lad, he had for years gone through the hard struggle that so often attends even the bravest and best when they go out without money to seek their fortunes in a strange and alien land. The horror of the police lodging-houses struck deep in his soul, for he himself had lodged in them. The brutality of some of the police he had himself experienced. He had been mishandled; and had seen the stray dog which was his only friend killed for trying, in dumb friendship, to take his part. He had known what it was to sleep in door-steps and go days in succession without food. All these things he remembered, and his work as a reporter on the New York "Sun" has enabled him in the exercise of his profession to add to his knowledge. There are certain qualities the reformer must have if he is to be a real reformer and not merely a faddist; for of course every reformer is in continual danger of slipping into the mass of well-meaning people who in their advocacy of the impracticable do more harm than good. He must possess high courage, disinterested desire to do good, and sane, wholesome common sense. These qualities he must have; and it is furthermore much to his benefit if he also possesses a sound sense of humor. All four traits are possessed by Jacob Riis. No rebuff, no seeming failure, has ever caused him to lose faith. The memory of his own trials never soured him. His keen sense of the sufferings of others never clouded his judgment, never led him into hysterical or sentimental excess, the pit into which not a few men are drawn by the very keenness of their sympathies; and which some other men avoid, not because they are wise, but because they are cold-hearted. He ever advocates mercy, but he ever recognizes the need of justice. The mob leader, the bomb-thrower have no sympathy from him. No man has ever insisted more on the danger which comes to the community from the lawbreaker. He sets himself to kill the living evil, and small is his kinship with the dreamers who seek the impossible, the men who talk of reconstituting the entire social order, but who do not work to lighten the burden of mankind by so much as a feather's weight. Every man who strives, be it ever so feebly, to do good according to the light that is in him, can count on the aid of Jacob Riis if the chance comes. Whether the man is a public official, like Colonel Waring, seeking to raise some one
branch of the city government; whether he is interested in a boys' club up in the country; or in a scheme for creating small parks in the city; or in an effort to better the conditions of tenement-house life—no matter what his work is, so long as his work is useful, he can count on the aid of the man who perhaps more than any other knows the needs of the varied people who make up the great bulk of New York's population.

Half a dozen men have been mentioned, each only as a type of those who in the seething life of the great city do, in their several ways and according to their strength and varying capacities, strive to do their duty to their neighbor. No hard-and-fast rule can be laid down as to the way in which such work must be done; but most certainly every man, whatever his position, should strive to do it in some way and to some degree. If he strives earnestly he will benefit himself probably quite as much as he benefits others, and he will inevitably learn a great deal. At first it may be an effort to him to cast off certain rigid conventions, but real work of any kind is a great educator, and soon helps any man to single out the important from the unimportant. If such a worker has the right stuff in him he soon grows to accept without effort each man on his worth as a man, and to disregard his means, and what is called his social position; to care little whether he is a Catholic or Protestant, a Jew or a Gentile; to be utterly indifferent whether he was born here or in Ireland, in Germany or in Scandinavia; provided only that he has in him the spirit of sturdy common sense and the resolute purpose to strive after the light as it is given him to see the light.

THE GOLDEN DAYS.

BY JOSEPHINE DODGE DASKAM.

I wonder where the Fairy-book can be,
The book from which she read to you and me,
While the warm sunlight shifted down the tree?

And the brown eyes turned downward to the leaf,
Tear-spotted by two tiny people's grief,
When Death bound one more princess in his sheaf.

I wonder where the Rocking-horse has run
Who carried us before the day was done,
To all the lands that lie beneath the sun?

And the dear lips of her we loved so well
Kissed us more sweetly than our tongue could tell,
When the too daring riders swayed and fell.

I wonder where the crimson peaches grow
We caught together when she threw them, so,
And ran with her to hide them, laughing low?

And her light feet were swifter yet than ours,
And her soft cheeks were like two rosy flowers—
Ah, Time and Death, ye too malignant powers!