

Cooperation

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As the years succeed each other with never-varying regularity, so men come upon the earth, take the place assigned them by fate or destiny and begin the struggle for life.

It is a strife from the Cradle to the Grave, each endeavoring to advance himself and those whom ties of kindred and affection have united with him. And what has been the result?

War, the word that expresses to us more of Cruelty, more of sorrow, more of bitter heart anguish than any word in human vocabulary, has been participated in by every nation in every age.

In our Social relations we call this hand to hand struggle another name, Competition. This conflict may not be carried on by means of booming Cannon, dealing volleys of shot and shell upon the forces arrayed against it; Scenes of Carnage on battle-fields may not arouse our souls to its awful effects; The groans of wounded and

dying may not ascend from the creature prostrated by its action; but instead of the wounded soldier on the battle field crying for water we may hear the voice of the victim of Competition crying for bread.

We may say that was with its glorious conquests its poets who have aroused men with the theme of which they sung; its heroic memories that have kindled the flame of patriotism in the hearts of succeeding generations has been an important element in developing our civilization, but we must all admit that there has been murder in its onward march.

Now Competition is but a form of organized warfare and as a developing agent we may consider that it has played a part in the world's history, but are we to be satisfied with the work it has done? "The finger of nature points forward, not backward." It is from the brute upward we move. Nature

may have begun in war, but she is not satisfied with war, Society may have advanced under the reign of Competition, but the Spirit of Progress is calling for united effort.

Whatever working together is animated by the principle of a desire "to do as we would be done by" is the true co-operative spirit.

We want peace! we want to close forever the door of the Arsenal; to give to the powder, nitro glycerin and dynamite the work of rending the earth that she may yield her natural treasures into the store houses of men. We want the sound of the booming cannon to be heard only on our national holidays, reminders to the world that peace has come out of strife, and that bondage has given place to liberty.

And the same spirit which prompts us to forever banish war, asks us to let competition be known no more among men. It asks Russia, France, England, Germany and Austria to

Cease struggling for the balance of power but to unite their efforts in one grand attempt to banish hunger and poverty forever from their lands. It asks humanity to become united so that Turkey Crying for bread will not look in vain for the ships from other lands loaded with the treasure possessed by them so abundantly.

We say the spirit of progress demands this change. Are we going to meet it, are we willing to respond?

Great minds have been, and are pondering it deeply. Pioneer spirits have been active in the wilderness preparing the soil for the good seed which it has been hoped will produce the desired harvest and one conclusion seems evident, that the only way in which the world may be rescued from its present selfish condition is by united unselfish effort. And by this we mean some system of co-operation which will make it possible for an era of peace and brotherhood

Among men to draw upon the world where starvation will not be possible in a land complaining of over production, where children shall not perish for shelter from the winter snows while capacious edifices remain untenanted.

Looking upon the social condition of the world as it is today with the inequality everywhere so plainly evident among its population. with gilded palaces upon the one hand and wretched huts upon the other, Culture and refinement the possession of Capital. illiteracy and degradation the heritage of the laborer with strikes their only weapon of defense, Starvation the means by which the Capitalist reduces them to subjection, do we wonder that the question should present itself to our minds, Can it be that Christ came to the world over eighteen hundred years ago and taught men that "peace and good will" should

exist among them, when it seems evident that with the advance of our civilization each has striven to pass the other in an effort to amass fortunes, until now, the tendency to compete, to think only of self - has become a natural characteristic, inherited from generation to generation at the expense of noble qualities which should make of us men and women. We jostle each other in our feverish desire to gain riches with no intelligible reason why we should be their possessor, and with no thought, that after this short flitting life is over we must leave them to go empty handed into the great unknown.

Can it be that mankind has realized the part he plays in robbing by competition his brother, or is the world sleeping?

Edward Bellamy dreamed a dream. He saw a new earth in the place of our old war-scarred place of abode. Peace had come

And spread her white wings above
 A land before torn by strife and
 conflict; Poverty and hunger, giant
 eyed had retreated before the approach
 of this white winged angel, never
 again to return to the renewed, smil-
 ing earth. Palaces then were many
 but not the abodes of a few favor-
 ed children, Cringing and servitude
 were obsolete conditions and it
 would seem that the promised
 millennium had dawned. How had
 this grand change been accomplished?

By Cooperation. Humanity had simpl-
 ly united for the common welfare.

We read the dream and are
 aroused with him to our present
 condition; we mingle with his
 friends in the year 2000; we enjoy
 their music, their libraries, their
 methods of business, their industrial
 and governmental systems and
 when the book is closed and
 we must awaken and go forth
 and meet the old order of things
 as they actually exist, when our

Newspapers are filled with accounts of Strikes and of our "Nineteenth Century Industrial Army" tramping toward Washington, begging for bread and footsore, dissatisfied, knocking upon the doors of our Capital demanding legislation that will furnish them work and food. While the government arrays its Police forces to keep them in subjection, and Charity opens her hands to keep them from starvation.

But after all we say it was only a dream. Such a social condition as Bellamy has pictured could never really exist, ^{when} we recognize the fact that the personality of every individual will assert itself and that as long as human nature remains unchanged there can never be a cooperative scheme put into operation that will make each man the equal of his fellow. But can we not devise some plan which by taking the unsatisfactory condition of the world as it is today

gradually, step by step bring up the lower social classes to a higher plane. So that Capital and Labor may not be the great Sphinx riddle which the world will continue to endeavor to solve?

And it is just such a plan as this that many social philosophers are trying in many nations to encourage. And our hope is that by these small beginnings the world may advance until even Bellamy's dream may to future generations prove a living reality.

Many have objected to these proposed forms of cooperation fearing they tended toward Socialism. But such is not the case. Socialism is a discontent with the world as it now is, and makes a demand upon the people of the several nations for both social and political reform. But reform in this way comes slowly because it is difficult to discover just where the roots of the evil are imbedded that the axe may be

be applied. Cooperation, as we are trying to establish it today takes things as they are and endeavors to shape them for the common good. Not by revolutionary measures, but by peaceful quiet endeavor. Socialism is based upon despair; Cooperation has hope for a new foundation. Socialism does not favor Cooperation, for revolt and discontent can never be represented by united effort.

It is not essential to the practical form of Cooperation that the participants be extremists or radical reformers. It can take men and women as society has made them and by the exercise of mutual interest, tact and forbearance unite them in effective work that cannot fail in lifting them upward toward a higher plane.

It is not a new plan in the world's development. Ancient history mentions nations who held the land in common and divided the produce among the inhabitants.

but the early period of our modern Cooperation dates back to the year 1791. when Robert Owen a Welsh manufacturer became conscious of the Condition of the working Classes in the factories and devised a Scheme by which educational advantages were given, and Sanitary provisions introduced for the good of the laborers. His plan was one of Profit Sharing, and gave a marked impulse to the work in this direction. It attracted much attention at home and abroad and was visited by every illustrious traveller which came to the Country. Not satisfied with local success Owen wanted to organize the world, and tried several experimental Colonies in other Countries. From Productive Cooperation the thought of Cooperating in the distribution of Commodities grew, and in a wave of enthusiasm many stores were established throughout England, but they failed to comprehend the true principle of the Cooperator and

with Owens death were abandoned. And for a time his great humanity Scheme seemed to slumber in the hearts of men. but the thought we he had put into mens minds was not dead and the Cooperators who took up the work later were in a sense his disciples.

In 1844 the Successful principle in Cooperation it seemed was discovered, Viz:- The feeding of Cooperation on its own profits. The beginning is known as the Rochdale Pioneers, a very small store whose business Capital at first did not exceed twenty eight pounds. Now this beginning in a reed-roofed Cabin, year by year patiently it has worked its way over brook and field, - over continents and sea, growing in numbers in strength in wealth and useful ness. The Pioneer people were thus able to make and to save, and progress although at first slow has been steady, the development of the system reading like a romance in connection with which

Some one has said that "Cooperation has risen from the banks of the Rocher As Rome rose from the banks of the Tiber", - for the twenty eight Found Capital store had reached in 1890 the great sum of \$1. 811. 790. with a membership of 11, 352. They spared no effort to spread abroad their principles and methods and their example was quickly imitated in other parts of England. The Cooperators meet in Annual Congress to exchange views for their further progress and thus a great working class have been united not only from a business stand point but socially.

As the Cooperative retail stores increased in number the great need was felt for a controlling agency through which the local stores might buy their goods. the result was the English Wholesale Cooperative Society organized in 1863, Accounts of which make the reader think of Bellamy's Nation's store house. It acted first upon a Commission

basis but soon adopted the plan of buying at one price and selling at another and dividing the product among the societies as dividends.

This store has had a wonderful growth having at the present time sub-branched at Leeds, Bristol and various parts of the Kingdom, as well as at New York, Copenhagen, and Hamburg. It runs six steamers for the direct transportation of its goods between England and the Continent.

The Rochdale System is managed by working men with working men's money. In some parts of England the members of these associations make up 30% of the population.

Each store begins with a cash capital paid by the stock holders who buy from it at ordinary retail prices the products being divided among the stock-holders as a dividend. The doings of the association are reported in full to the

Stock holders at quarterly meetings these reports accounting for every penny spent.

The original society established the precedent of setting aside $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ of its annual profits for an educational fund, and most of the societies have followed the example.

They now own valuable real estate buildings, steam boats, stores and maintain numerous lectures courses, reading rooms, libraries and classes. So successful have they been financially that the question of how they can make the best use of their surplus capital has become a problem.

Now let us see what effect this combined effort has had upon the English people as a humble working class. That they are better off financially has been demonstrated by the progress they have made in half a century. But not only is the change evident in private life, it is felt publicly. With

this unity of purpose has come
a capacity for self government
which makes the tendency toward
a democracy not so serious a matter
as would be felt, had the people not
shown in this manner an ability
to govern themselves. And we might
ask is not this tendency toward
democracy due in itself to this
very principle of Cooperation that can
not fail to reach upward toward
liberty and independence? In the
great towns of England there is now
a safeguard in the solid back-
bone of the working classes which
has been developed through asso-
ciation work and practices of self
government. The educational feature
is one of the greatest in importance
the libraries, reading rooms, and
lectures as much enjoyed by these
classes as the student furnished
with all these advantages and
the result has been that an intelli-
gent prosperous people has been evolved
from an ignorant poverty-stricken class.

Cooperation in the United States began in 1842 with the attempt to form a Cooperative Commonwealth at Brook Farm near Boston. It had for its object the establishment of a system for social amelioration and attracted the brightest minds of America who were at that time in the Transcendental movement. George Ripley was the leading spirit, a Unitarian minister who resigned his pulpit to go into the work.

Chas. A. Dana, the great Journalist left his desk to engage actively in the enterprise. Margaret Fuller the bright light among women of literature in America enlisted in the cause. Nathaniel Hawthorne "The sky dreamer" saw in it the emancipation of the laboring classes. It was a queer mixture of Culture and Agriculture by which they wished to establish the fact that manual labor was dignified and ennobling.

But they failed for the Cooperators were unfitted for the work they

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attempted and the system was not a practical one.

This was followed by the "Working Men's Protective Union" established in 1850. This movement was especially in New England and particularly in Mass. Through it the members purchased their supplies at the lowest possible prices. In a very few years there were as many as seven hundred stores through out New England and the middle states, but they were not incorporated and not being fed upon their own profits, they failed when the uncertain period of the civil war began.

Next followed the Patrons of the Industry founded in 1866 which is for the most part a farmers organization.

They soon established many co-operative stores through out the country but as the goods were for the most part sold at wholesale prices many failures resulted. Those which were founded upon the Rock

dale system survived, the most successful of which are now found in Texas and Kansas. The most notable success in Kansas is that of the Johnson Co. Cooperative Association with head quarters at Olatche. It was organized in June 1876 with a Cash Capital of \$800 paid by sixty members.

The Capital has now reached One Hundred Thousand Dollars kept by seven hundred members. Now its beginning full retail prices have been maintained, the same price being charged all customers. Purchases are kept account of by issuing metallic checks in denominations of five, ten, twenty five and fifty cents. And one, two, five, ten and twenty dollar coupons. Dividends are declared each quarter. A part being retained for building funds.

Several branch store have been established throughout the County for the convenience of its Patrons. Controlled by the same regulations as the General store. At the be-

-gunning they occupied a small rented room, but they now own a magnificent building built at a cost of \$50,000. They have also established a Newspaper. A Bank for the reduction of rates of interest and accommodation of farmers. A visit to this section of the Country will show how the farmers have prospered, evidence of thrift, intelligence and enterprise are noted among the members. They have increased the wealth of the state \$150,000 and at the same time have assigned it to a worthy deserving people.

Many more examples might be given, but they are essentially the same both in workings and results all testifying what united effort can and will accomplish when undertaken in a systematic intelligent manner.

The Causes of failure in Cooperation are many. Credit to customers is one of the great combined with the one already mentioned of

Selling at Wholesale prices. The employment of incompetent persons to transact the business is another great cause of failure. Unreasonableness of expenses resulting in discord has often led to the abandonment of what appeared to be a bright venture. And the failure in many cases to gain the protection and security of the law has ended disastrously. The unsettled condition of the population has been another great drawback to the system as some degree of fixity in the population is necessary. When a population is a moving one, each man interested not remaining long enough to reap a financial harvest from his venture. it has been pronounced a failure. But the greatest of all causes which have led to failure in this movement has been the incapacity of the working classes to manage the business they had assumed but with a few leading spirits

who are capable in the beginning
And education a part of the sys-
tem - this objection can in time be
met.

It may have been noticed ^{that} in
the successful Cooperative enter-
prises which have been alluded
to that not one Productive Assoc-
iation has been mentioned. This
Class of Cooperation has not yet
been successfully put into oper-
ation because of the Master
workman which of necessity must
be the controlling spirit. When
Cooperators have united in a
productive enterprise Jealousies have
arisen at the advance which some
members must naturally make
in the management and
this has resulted in strife which
has in most cases proved dis-
astrous. The nearest approach to
success in Productive Cooperation
perhaps could we consider the
Profit Sharing successfully institu-
ed in many Manufacturing industries

We should not consider the
 objects of Cooperation entirely from
 a financial stand point although
 of course his financial condition affects
 all other conditions. but Cooperation
 has a far weightier problem to solve
 than the relieving of poverty viz: to pre-
 vent it. Philanthropists may devise
 means by which men and women shall
 be fed and clothed, but Charity will
 not raise the level of the social Con-
 dition. Cooperation makes it possible
 that Charity among men shall be scorned
 why should a man receive gift of
 food and clothing when he is willing
 and able to earn them honestly by
 work. Social Advantages have resulted
 from unity of purpose vanishing to a
 Great degree friction in society and
 from social intercourse beauty has
 entered into the home of the working
 man and instead of the dark miser-
 able huts used only as a place to stay
 the vine-wreathed cottage may be seen
 a witness to the success of Cooperation

So many it has given their first real notions of Christian teachings And we may therefore consider it as one of the expressions of applied Christianity.

In the light of the success of these experiments which show what can be done to advance the interests of the laboring man, supported by the doctrine taught by the Christian religion, with a press that is advocating unity of purpose, with millions of people longing, hoping and praying for a peaceful settlement of the labor question, may we not look hopefully forward as Bellamy has done into the future when he speaks of the "two fold return of man to God." The return of the individual by death, and the return of the race by the fulfillment of evolution. "With a tear for the dark past, and the troubled present turn we to the future when the song sung by angels to the Shepherd of Judea will be the spoken language of every human heart."