

nisms be allayed because of all having a common interest, definite, practical, and easily appreciated? And might we not hope that with the subsidence of the war spirit between capital and labor, the divine truth and practical working value of Christ's second great

commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," would be recognized, and so lead men to accept both the second and the first of his commands as their rule of life? The way is long; progress will be slow; but it is on such lines alone that there is hope.

Edward L. Day.

COÖPERATION.

BY A NEW YORK MASTER-PRINTER.

ABOUT twenty years ago some journeymen of an important trade in this city formed a coöperative association with the intent, as they said, to be their own employers. Most of them were good workmen. Their joint contribution of money gave them enough of capital to equip a respectable workshop. All had been members of a large trades-union, and had the sympathy of that union and the active good-will of the unions of other trades. They began business with hopeful prospects, with very little debt, and with assurances of excellent custom.

At the outset the association had all the work it could do. The receipts of the first quarter were larger than had been expected. Success seemed beyond all doubt. But this apparent success made changes in the habits of a few of the coöperators. Their industry slackened. Men who were earning, or thought they were earning, eight days' pay for six days' work, felt justified in coming later and going earlier every day, or in absenting themselves for an occasional entire day. To other coöperators who worked steadily, this irregularity was offensive. Quarreling followed, production fell off.

The balance-sheet of the first year's business did not show the large profits expected. Then came dissatisfaction with the management. Every coöperator was sure, if he were manager, that he would stop many useless expenses, and compel his fellows to do more work. The business meetings of the association were made inharmonious by trivial complaints and impracticable suggestions. The inability of the manager to always get the extreme high rates of the trade, or to compel customers to accept inferior work at ordinary price, was a frequent cause of complaint.

The second year's business showed no real profit. What was worse, the tools and materials were wearing out, and the custom of the association was not increasing. The manager said truly enough that custom would diminish if the association did not furnish buyers with the better workmanship that

could be had from better machines. He recommended the purchase of improved machinery and severer penalties against indolence or neglect. A majority opposed the buying of new machinery — opposed any policy which postponed a present profit for a future benefit. Most of the members voted not to wait; they wanted results and profits at once.

Under these restrictions the business became entirely unprofitable, and the association broke up. All the coöperators returned to the older method of working weekly for fixed wages. To this day the failing coöperators attribute their failure, not to neglect and want of enterprise, but to internal dissensions and insufficiency of capital. There were other reasons which were not apparent to them then or now, and which will always have an influence on similar enterprises.

Not one of the coöperators had any training in the counting-room or at book-keeping, or knew the proper methods for managing a large business. Taught their trades in a workshop, they had no opportunity. They underrated expenses and overrated profits. As journeymen under the influence of the trades-union spirit, they had regarded capital as antagonistic to labor; as coöperators they could not divest themselves of the old opposition: but the capital to be opposed by them as an association was the capital represented by their friends the customers, who were often treated as old employers had been treated — not as friends to be conciliated, but as antagonists to be coerced or brought to terms. It was a more difficult task.

The greatest obstacle to the success of manufacturing coöperations of journeymen is their imperfect knowledge of the expenses of business, and of the smallness of the profit made from each workman. To illustrate. A factory that employs one hundred workmen and pays a net profit of \$10,000 a year does a thriving business. Few journeymen can see that this profit of \$10,000 a year, if paid to them, would give each only about two dollars more a week. The average workman is not

content with the risk and responsibility of a copartner for so small a return.

The intent of trades-unions is to secure uniformity of wages, with slight regard to conditions of business or to the unequal production of different workmen. The spirit of the coöperative method is the readjustment of the returns of labor in true proportion with the profits of the business and the true production of each coöperator. The two policies are in direct opposition. Men who have been educated to believe in the wisdom of the first policy will not cheerfully accept the second. To many, coöperation would be a disappointment. If every factory were organized under the co-operative method, there would be great inequality in the earnings of workmen in the same factory, and still greater inequality in the earnings of men in different factories. In some shops men would receive large dividends; in others, equally good and perhaps better workmen would get nothing. In other shops good workmen as well as poor might be debited on their weekly wages with the losses of an unprofitable year. That there might be more of the latter than of the former class is plain enough to any one who has consulted the statistics of manufacturing industries. Few succeed where many fail. The discontent of a superior workman who has been so unfortunate as to work in a shop that has made no profits, when he contrasted his scant earnings with the liberal returns made to another workman, perhaps his inferior in skill, who had been engaged in a lucrative business, would soon make him rebel at the apparent injustice of the coöperative method.

Manufacturing coöperations formed by employers of established responsibility with their foremen and leading workmen, who have a proper knowledge of the expenses of conducting business, and full trust in their employers' sagacity, have been of advantage to the co-operators. So far as I know these are the only ones that have been successful. They would be more numerous if employers could be assured that the journeymen who wish to be coöperators would take all the duties as well as all the privileges of the new position.

A cautious employer fears to propose co-operation when he considers the prejudices

against unequal pay, and the peculiar notions about rights and duties which are held by many journeymen. Men who base their claim for full wages, not so much on their efficiency as producers, as on the prescriptive rights they have earned, or fancy they have earned, by serving apprenticeship, or from membership in a trade society—men who habitually evade the more disagreeable duties of their business, never doing more than is required of them—cannot be desired as good helpers in any co-operative enterprise. They may hinder it more as partners than as journeymen. They cannot help it.

The larger part of the world's work is now done, as it has been, for fixed wages. That some of this work is inequitably paid for may be freely admitted; but with all its evils, the preference of the great army of the employed is for fixed wages, the content which comes from present security, and full release from all risk and responsibility. When a larger share of the employed will accept their fair share of responsibility, one may begin experiments in coöperation with more hope of success.

This time should not be far off. Recent events must have shown to thinking mechanics what coöperation in trades-unions can do and what it cannot do in the matter of wages. A year or two more of experience may be needed to complete the demonstration, and prove that the strength of any association, whether it be a trade-union or a coöperative factory, is not in proportion to the number, but the quality of its membership—not in its large balance in bank, nor in its prescriptive rights, nor its ability to get gifts or loans, but in the skill, efficiency, and fair dealing of its individual members. The thoughtful workman must see that there are rewards for labor which no society can get for him—rewards to be earned by the discharge of duties which he must do himself; that it is better for him to be expert and active at his trade, trying to do more rather than less than is required of him, making himself more and more useful to his employer and to society, than it is to lean on any association for support or protection. It will be from the ranks of these men, and these men only, that the successful coöperative societies of the future will be formed.

Theodore L. De Vinne.

