

Auchmuty's schools are now assured of a future of large and constantly increasing usefulness, and ought to serve as a model for others in all the large cities of the land.

These schools, in fact, supply the only means by which American boys can become skilled workmen. The old apprentice system has gone, never to return. Both the spirit of the time and the changed conditions of trade are against it. Outside the large cities, in the so-called country districts, boys can still be taught a trade by the workers in it; but in the large cities, where skilled labor is in demand, this is no longer possible. The trade-unions in these cities are controlled by foreigners who seek to confine their industries to men of their own nationalities. They not only refuse to teach an American boy a trade, but they combine to prevent him from getting employment after he has succeeded in learning it in a trade school. This is a situation of affairs without parallel in any country in the world, and one which will not be tolerated in this country when once public opinion has been aroused to a full comprehension of it.

Colonel Auchmuty has shown from statistics that out of \$23,000,000 paid annually to mechanics in the building trades in New York city, less than \$6,000,000 goes to those born here. The number of new journeymen trained outside the cities in the trades themselves is not sufficient to fill vacancies, much less to supply the constantly increasing demand for larger forces. Thousands of foreign mechanics come here every year, some to remain, others to work through a busy season and return to Europe with their profits. These foreigners have no sympathy with Americans. They control the trade-unions, which in turn control the labor market, absolutely in their own interest. They seek to keep wages high by closing the doors of employment to all comers not of their own kind. The result is that in free America, sometimes called the paradise of working-men, the field of skilled labor is occupied almost exclusively by foreigners who declare that an American boy shall not enter, either to learn a

trade, or to find employment if he shall have been able to learn his trade elsewhere.

We present to the civilized world the astounding spectacle of a great nation, which boasts itself the freest on the globe, throwing open its vast and lucrative fields of skilled labor to the mechanics of all other nations, while closing them to its own sons. Was there ever a more incredible act of national folly! We have in America material from which to make the best and quickest mechanics in the world—that is the testimony of all competent authorities; yet we refuse either to train them or to give them work if trained. We deplore the existence of increasing numbers of idle and unoccupied young men in all our cities, and then accept conditions which compel a multiplication of the numbers. It is useless to put the blame upon the foreign laborers: they are merely improving their opportunity. The American people are responsible, and they must supply the remedy.

The first step toward the remedy is the multiplication of trade schools, and the second is the insistence upon the free exercise of every man's right to earn his living in his own way. It is surely not too much for the American people to say that their own sons shall not only be permitted to learn trades, but shall be permitted also to work at them after they have learned them. We advise any one who is desirous of seeing the kind of skilled working-man that the American boy makes, to visit Colonel Auchmuty's schools and look over a set of photographs of his graduates. He will find there a body of clear-browed, straight-eyed young fellows who will compare well with the graduates of our colleges. This is the stuff from which laborers are made who honor and dignify and elevate labor, not by agitating, but by being masters of their craft, faithful in its performance, and willing to share its toil with all comers, fearing honest competition from no quarter. Such men are at once true American laborers and true American citizens of the highest type, and the educational system which evolves them is a national benefaction of incalculable value.

## OPEN LETTERS.

### Camping Out for the Poor.

NEARLY twenty years ago I left New York late one afternoon toward the end of June to take my fortnight's vacation in a little hamlet a mile east of Moriches, on the south or ocean shore of Long Island, seventy miles away from New York. The day had been a particularly hot and exhausting one. The city literally panted for breath. As I walked down to the ferry I had to pass through some of the most miserable of the tenement-house districts on the east side, and for a few blocks I went along Cherry street, a most wretched thoroughfare blessed with a pretty name in grotesque contrast to the street's character. The slums were alive with people.

The shades of night seemed to bring no comfort to such streets as these. It would be morning before the heated masses of brick and stone cooled off, ready for another day's sun, for there was not a breath of air.

I could not help contrasting the scenes in which I should find myself twenty-four hours later with this squalid, heated misery, and it really seemed as if I had no right to run away while so much wretchedness remained behind, unable to escape. I suppose that most of my readers have experienced this feeling when about to get away from New York in summer, and then, as I have so often done, they have put the unpleasant thought away with the consoling reflection that what little they could do to alleviate such misery, even by the sacrifice of their own vacations, would be but a drop of honey in this ocean of gall. We have also the habit of saying to ourselves that the poor people who remain in town the year round do not suffer as we imagine they do—they are thicker-skinned, and they have never known anything better.

But upon this particular occasion, although I was not an over-sensitive young man, the scenes upon which I could not shut my eyes haunted me for days, and I

felt that I was running away from a problem which ought not to be put aside. I still remember one picture of an apparently motherless child, sitting on the lower step of a big double tenement—a little girl of ten or twelve years of age, who was trying to sing to sleep two younger children, one in her lap and the other pilowed against her arm. The child was pale and tired, but ready to sacrifice herself for the sick and peevish little brother and sister whom the noise and rattle of the street kept awake. The father was crouched on the same step, in a drunken stupor, but cared for by the child. As I stopped to look at the pitiful picture, too common for notice in all these tenement neighborhoods—the child mother—I again asked myself what right a strong fellow had to go in search of sea breezes and quiet while such weaklings as these remained behind? But I soothed my conscience by dropping some pennies in the child's lap, and hurried on to my boat.

It happened that about twenty-four hours later I had occasion to study another family group. We had been fishing all day, and were on our way back to Moriches when our boat grounded upon the flats which fill these bays; and, there being no moon, we decided to sleep on board. One of our party descried a light on the shore a few hundred feet from us, and we pushed our sharpie off in that direction, hoping to find some natives who would pilot us to deep water. On the south side of a giant rick of salt grass we discovered a camp-fire, around which were grouped a father, mother, and five children. The man told us that he was a New York shoemaker, and knew nothing of the channels. They were on an island on the south side of the bay, and their only means of communication with the mainland was an old row-boat for which the man paid one dollar a month.

They had a tent, which was used apparently only to sleep in, and when I made the party a call some days later, I found the man working at a box of shoes he had brought with him from New York, to finish. The whole family looked like gipsies, they were so browned and hearty. The man told me that he liked that sort of life in hot weather, and had camped out for several summers. He did enough work to earn the very few dollars their supplies cost them, and in September they would go back to New York—he to the shop he worked in, and the children to school.

While these two pictures, both met with at about the same hour in the evening,—the one in the squalid, reeking, murky Cherry street, in which figured those little prisoners of poverty, and the other of island life and cool air,—impressed me deeply at the time, it was long before I drew any particular lesson from them.

It was not until years later that I began to ask myself why the poor people who suffer every summer in New York, and whose children die from heat, do not join my shoemaker on his island in Moriches Bay. Now, however, it is one of my hobbies that the New York mechanic and clerk can afford a far better outing in summer than he dreams is possible.

In the case of clerks or assistants in small business houses, such a course as I have to propose would not be possible, and in some trades, such as those connected with building, the hot months are the busiest and the men cannot get away. But in a large number of shops and factories the dull season comes in the hot months. I have not the slightest doubt but that the proprietors of thousands of large retail shops in all our large cities

would be only too glad to give their clerks a ten-weeks' vacation provided salaries stopped during those ten weeks; and the same is true of the thousands of factories which are kept open on half time and often at a loss to the proprietor, who wishes to keep his men together. The tendency of late years, especially since the shorter hours of labor have prevailed, is to pay all workmen by the piece in factories and wherever such a course is possible. In many trades, such as the making of cheap clothing, cigars, etc., in which the work is done at home, it may be done in one place as well as another, allowing a small amount for getting the bundles of goods in and out of New York. I suppose that if the taste prevailed for such a life as seems to me desirable for the poor city family during the ten hot weeks of the year, when the city bakes and the children die of heat and bad air, at least half of the workers who live in the tenements might escape.

I am well aware that something of the same kind, but upon a more permanent scale, has recently been attempted without success. One of the benevolent societies connected with Mr. Adler's Society for Ethical Culture subscribed enough money to build a dozen comfortable cottages in a pleasant spot some twenty miles out on Long Island, and induced some poor families of Polish Jews who worked on cheap clothing to make the experiment of living there, the society making the rent almost nominal and also paying the express charges upon the packages of clothing sent in and out from the large shops which gave these people employment. It was hoped that the advantages of a country life, of pure air for the children, of lower rents than in their dirty, miserable tenements, of the possibility of a garden, chickens, etc., would encourage others to join such a colony. The result was disappointment, and after a year the experiment was abandoned. The people, especially the women, wanted to get back to the city; they complained that it was lonely. They wanted society—the noise and squabbles, the fights, the dirt, and the crowds of the tenements. This result showed that if these people were to be taught the value of fresh air and quiet, the process must begin with the children. Their elders were like the life prisoners who, when released from the dark dungeons of the Bastille, begged to be taken back—they had lived so long in the dark as to dread the light.

In such an experiment as I now propose, I wish simply to get such people out of New York during the heat of summer, when the death-rate is largely made up of infants and small children. The system under which such people rent their small tenements makes it possible for them to give up their few rooms at a week's notice. They can store their goods at small expense, and save enough on the rent to pay for their food during the weeks they are away. The rents paid by even the most miserable of these workers average \$10 a month for two or three rooms. The "boss" who employs them cares nothing as to where their work is done.

Take the typical family of slop-shop clothing-makers. The mother and father sew all day, and the children live or die according to their constitutions. What is to prevent such a family from pitching its tent on some of the beaches which stretch out for more than one hundred miles along the south shore of Long Island, or in the Jersey pines? The spots along the south

shore of Long Island which are inhabited and valuable are as nothing compared to the wastes of equally pleasant land upon which a poor family may "squat" during hot weather, either free of rent or for a trifling payment to the owner of the land. If all the poor of New York wanted to "squat" on the Long Island beach, there might be objections raised; but of that there is no danger. The man who can get out of town must have at least a few dollars in his pocket, and every one who has worked among our city poor knows that the majority of these people live from hand to mouth; they are chained by the hardest of poverty to the great city. Fortunately, the average sober mechanic needs but a very few dollars to make such an experiment possible.

In some figures I gave in the course of an article published on this question I estimated, judging by what such outings in the past have cost me, that a poor family of six persons — two adults and four children — would be able to spend ten weeks out of New York at an average weekly expense of not more than \$5. A tent, an oil-stove, some cots, and a few boxes of bedding and stores would complete the whole outfit. Even the oil-stove would not be needed every day if the family "squatted" on the ocean beach, for the beach is strewn with kindling-wood. I leave out of the calculation the cost of getting from and back to New York, as that depends upon the distance. Our typical family could go fifty miles and back for \$10. The cost of getting a big bundle of clothing from New York once a week by express would not be more than a dollar. In case steady work was carried on, there would also be a sewing-machine to take. The oil-stove, the cots, the sewing-machine, are already owned by most of these poor families. The tent would cost from \$15 to \$25, according to size, and would last for years. The food would certainly cost less than in New York, for in most places along the Long Island shore there are clams, oysters, crabs, and fish, which the children can get with little trouble.

Now consider the drawbacks and advantages of such a life. Upon one side we place the isolation which seems to have such terrors for the tenement-bred poor; but if two or three families made the experiment together, this would disappear. There would be rainy days and the various unpleasant features and hardships of camping out. There would be no corner liquor-store for the man, nor corner gossip for the woman. The daily toil might be even a trifle harder, owing to lack of conveniences. Meat would be difficult to get and to keep. But look at the other side of the picture. First of all, while New York baked night and day, there would be clear, cool air for the little ones, worth all the medicines in the world. The children could run barefoot on the beach, could bathe in the surf and play in the sand; and what more, after all, can the millionaire give his children during these hot weeks?

If the man and his wife are above the common herd and are able to appreciate the quiet and beauty of the ocean beach in summer, the glorious rising and setting of the sun, a series of pictures beyond the power of any artist to copy, they will find more than repayment for any personal sacrifice they may make for the children's sake. I should imagine that most men not wholly unfitted for decent things and depraved by the corner grogshop would find in the majesty, the quiet, and the beauty of a summer evening on the ocean beach a comfort beyond words. Think of smoking a pipe after a

day's labor, and watching the flame of a driftwood fire rising against a background made up of ocean and bay!

I should like to see some society undertake to teach poor people the possibility and value of such an outing as I have in mind. It would virtually be camping out for the hot months, a pastime commonly considered as within the reach of the rich or the well-to-do only. The proprietors of many large shops and factories ought to be members of such a society, for they can arrange to do without half their force in summer and save money by so doing. Employer and employed ought to cooperate in such a scheme. The employer will not be afraid of losing good clerks and salesmen; the employed will not fear loss of position, and will return in September better fitted for ten months of work than if he had lounged the summer away behind a counter. The tremendous waste of time in summer is recognized by every business man. If work of every description could stop from the first of July to the first of September, our mechanics would certainly have more to do when they returned to their shops, and they would be in better trim to do it, provided their eight weeks of vacation had been wisely spent.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle in the way of a wholesale realization of a scheme upon this plan is the fact that so few poor people have even the small number of dollars necessary to it. A man cannot stop work or stop looking for work if there is no bread in the house. Upon the other hand, it may be said that persons and families likely to enjoy and appreciate camping out in July and August are usually fairly provident. What might be done by a Camping-out Society would be to tell poor people where and how they might camp out, the advantages and disadvantages of the life, its cost, its ways and means. I should like to hear camping-out lectures in which people who had camped out would give their experiences for and against the life.

I should like to say to such of my conservative friends as scent socialism and vicious idleness in this idea, that if one per cent. of the tenement-house population is induced by a vigorous advocacy of the camping-out idea to make the experiment, I shall be amazed. One poor man whom I urged to make the experiment and take his sickly children to a bit of beach I knew, told me that the noise of the "bloomin'" ocean made him "blasted" tired. There are too many people who cannot see the trees for the forest. They have been in the Bastille of vile air, dirt, and death too long to realize what a world of content lies beyond the grimy tenement. But even if one family in every thousand could be induced to camp out next summer, the experiment would be worth making. I have been accused of fanaticism in my detestation of city life,<sup>1</sup> especially in summer, and I have advised people to try the country even if at some sacrifice of dollars and personal comfort. But in this instance I merely advise a better use of time that is now nearly or wholly wasted.

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#### A Search for Shelley's American Ancestor.

THE tradition that the grandfather of the poet Shelley was born at Newark, in America, of an American mother, was the scent which led me off upon a two-

<sup>1</sup> "Liberty and a Living," Putnam's Sons, New York.