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### THE DOMINANT NOTE OF THE MODERN PHILANTHROPY

Address as President of the Thirty-third National Conference of Charities and Correction, which met in Philadelphia in May, 1906.



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**T**HE dominant note of the modern philanthropy is one which relates the work of charitable relief and reformatory discipline to the all-absorbing social problem. This idea is not that of compassion—though sympathy lies at its root; nor that of justice—though justice, to change the figure, is its corner stone. The doctrine that the state must prevent starvation lest starving men become dangerous is so little the keynote of our charity that it sounds strange in our ears; and equally inadequate, as an expression of the modern philanthropy, is the injunction to withhold alms lest by giving we pauperize. To these ideas we may give grudging assent, or we

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may indignantly, if illogically, repudiate them altogether, but in either event we demand something more and something different. Again, we are not content to give alms merely for the sake of our own spiritual welfare, even according to the most approved canons of secrecy and humility.

The ancient Jewish ideal of not withholding the hand from the poor and the needy, primarily because of a sense of duty and of personal dignity, a sense of what is due to oneself; and the Christian ideal of infinite compassion, of giving twice what is asked, of selling all that one has and giving to the poor, of going two miles when the service of a mile's journey is required, of non-resistance even to malicious demands,—these are indeed noble ideals and they have each their part in lighting our path. It is all very well to feel compassion for the poor, and to act under the guidance of the compassionate impulse. It is all very well not to withhold the hand from the poor if the unfortunate whom we would succor can be made to stand by our friendly service. There is abundant opportunity today in every community, as there has

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been in the past, for charity, for consecrated personal service of these kinds.

The modern philanthropy, reverently recognizing all this, is still unsatisfied. Some with the blind passion of outraged humanity, and some with the patient insistence of the scientific spirit, are giving evidence of a desire to ascertain why it is that people come into our public and private charitable institutions, from foundling hospital to pauper grave, and into our insane asylums, prisons, reformatories, and probation schemes, faster than all our educational processes, our relief funds, and even our consecrated personal service have thus far been able to put the dependents and the delinquents again upon their feet; and why it is that out just beyond the recognized social debtors whom we support there is so large a number whose standards of living are intolerably low, giving constant menace to the health and safety of their children and their neighbors, sources of possible moral and physical infection to all with whom they come into any kind of social or industrial contact.

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If I have rightly conceived the dominant idea of the modern philanthropy it is embodied in a determination *to seek out and to strike effectively at those organized forces of evil, at those particular causes of dependence and intolerable living conditions which are beyond the control of the individuals whom they injure and whom they too often destroy.*

Other tasks for other ages. This be the glory of ours, that the social causes of dependence shall be destroyed. Other work for other agencies. This be the chosen field of philanthropy, that relief shall come at last to those who in the very nature of the case—the child, the sick, the weak—cannot help themselves.

No doubt there are individual as well as social causes of dependence. No doubt the poor, like the rich, have their faults and weaknesses, the consequences of which recoil upon themselves. The moral and religious teachers of the nation, from pulpit, schoolroom, public press and fireside, have their responsibilities for opening the eyes that are blind, for inculcating good habits and preaching the sermons for which there are every-

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where such obvious texts. But since such faults and follies, such weaknesses and sins, are peculiar to no one class, since they are quite as abundant among those who give as among those who receive aid, may we not profitably turn to this other group of evils, evils from which the poor suffer grievously but against which they cannot effectively protect themselves?

I ask your attention to the common element in alcoholism as encouraged by the liquor trust; the cigarette evil as fostered by the tobacco trust; broken health and exhausted resources directly due to poisonous and fraudulent proprietary medicines; other injuries of a similar kind for which manufacturers and sellers of adulterated foods are responsible; the manufacture of sweated goods, with a sharing of the profit between dealer and consumer; the destruction of the health and the sacrifice of the lives of little children in cotton factories, coal mines, glass factories, and tene-ment house industries, for the sake of their employers' profits, although in some instances also for their parents' greed; the sending of messenger

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boys of tender years to brothels and hotels, to their great moral injury, that the difference between their wages and the wages of men may go to swell the dividends of a great corporation; the abduction of innocent country girls at hotels and railway stations as a systematic industry, not merely to gratify the evil passions of individuals but also in order that the owners of houses in which prostitution is carried on may receive larger rents, and the renter more substantial profits; the payment of less than a living wage to girls in stores and factories, with sickening indifference to the methods by which the remainder is secured; the organized gambling schemes at race track and in pool room which hold their own in the Empire State by open and shameless bribe to the county fairs;\* the erection and management of dwellings which are dark, unsanitary, and indecent, because they are among the gilt-edged investments, yielding not five or six but ten and twenty-five per cent on the capital risked by the speculative builder,

\*Race track gambling has been at last prohibited in New York by a law enacted in 1908.



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but yielding also a plentiful harvest of tuberculosis and other disease; yellow journalism avowedly pandering in the one class of journals to a feverish love for excitement, and in the other, usually sold at a higher price, to a morbid desire for salacious literature and suggestive advertisements, but both, as always, for pecuniary profit.

It is a long list, but it is by no means complete. Are not these, and other forces of a like kind, really responsible for the continual accession to the numbers of those who with their children come at last to require our help? And is there not a common element in all these agencies of the evil one, widely as they differ from one another and divergent as their origins and their natural history may seem to be? The love of money is their common root. And this root of these evils, and, as a higher authority has declared, of all evil, is not, at least so far as these evils are concerned, an abstraction, an impersonal devil. On the contrary, it is embodied capital appearing at legislative hearings, or quite as often in the legislature itself, pleading against reform the rights of prop-

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erty, the sacredness of vested interests, the burdensome cost of each measure for the public good, raising the dust of argument to conceal the heavy cost of inaction and neglect.

The plea is made in the name of the rights of property, in the name of legitimate business, but it is a false plea and no legitimate business stands upon so frail a foundation. There are broad-minded, warm-hearted, hard-headed business men to give the lie to the false plea in every branch of industry. If it were not so we should all become socialists at once and have done with an industrial order which must be carried on upon so low a level. Industrial progress has reached a point long since which makes the exploitation of the weak unnecessary. It was always a losing basis of industry when judged from the standpoint of the common good. With the progress in the arts and sciences, with the increased accumulations of capital, with a greater efficiency of labor, with a division of work and an organization of industry as wide as the earth, there remains not a shred of excuse for the employment of little

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children, for unsanitary tenements, for fraudulent food, or for any other phase of manufacture or commerce or living conditions which being interpreted means simply the exploitation of the weak. Legitimate business does not require it, and where it exists, as it does exist on every hand, its motive is predatory—pecuniary gain for an individual with absolutely no social utility to correspond.

Business enterprise invests in improved machinery; business exploitation prefers to use up the lives of children. Business enterprise assumes the cost of accidents and by assuming it learns how to avoid them; business exploitation throws the cost upon the widows and children of those who are sacrificed and pays of its surplus to commercial insurance companies which make their profits by fighting suits for damages instead of lessening accidents. Business exploitation preys upon the weaknesses of men; business enterprise develops their strength.

The reason why there is need in our day as never before for organized, concerted action

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against these serried forces of evil is that there is already organized aggressive action on the other side. It is the financial interest threatened in any reform which makes reform difficult or impossible. Housing reform might still be difficult even if there were not a strong pecuniary interest at stake in the building and renting of unreformed tenements. But it would be easier than it is. Child labor would come to an end in a twelve-month if there were not money to be made in the exploitation of child labor. The gigantic fraud of proprietary medicines would have been exposed and ended long since except for the advertising contracts. The Pure Food bill would have passed the Senate ten years earlier at least if the interests which are involved in the manufacture and sale of impure or dishonestly named foods had not appeared year after year in opposition to the health boards and the reformers.

The Consumers' League would have more success in its efforts if the love of a bargain ingrained in the purchaser were not reinforced by the margin of profit which remains in sweatshop

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products even after their price is fixed at a comparatively low level. The task of the temperance reformers would be enormously simplified if they had only to persuade the intemperate to mend their ways and to convince the young that abstinence is better for them than indulgence. I do not underestimate the difficulty of this positive and necessary work. But what we now have to do in addition, and what we are thus far succeeding very indifferently in doing, is to fight and overcome a powerful organized financial interest, which is behind the saloon, and which is responsible, if there is such a thing as the moral law, for a very large proportion of the alcoholics in our hospitals for the insane, of the "drunk-and-disorderlies" in our jails and prisons, of the non-support cases with which our charitable societies deal, of the dependent children whose parents are adjudged to be unfit guardians.

I have yet to find the reform movement or the philanthropic undertaking which does not at some point or other see its efforts thwarted by some organized opposition which has its root in pecuniary

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profit—unholy, obviously illegal profit, or it may be quite as often outwardly respectable profit, sanctioned by law, and sharing with church and philanthropy, but none the less at bottom anti-social, injurious to health or morals, worthy to be outlawed as soon as its evil nature is understood.

In this warfare against the active pernicious forces of evil in our modern communities the first need is for information. We are all culpably, incredibly ignorant of the very things which it would be most to our advantage and most to our credit to know. I deliberately charge the temperance reformers in this Conference, and there are not so many here as there should be, with complete ignorance as to the reasons for the existence of inebriates. We are wandering in the wilderness of the prejudices and traditions of the temperance crusade. We think men drink because they have not taken a pledge, or because they have not been taught from certain elementary text-books of physiology, or because saloons are licensed, or licensed for too small a sum; but of the far more powerful influences which have their roots in

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greed we hear nothing at all, or only such vague denunciations as are evidently without solid foundations in fearless and exhaustive inquiry.

I charge the managers and officers of institutions for the care of children with ignorance of the causes which have led to the orphanage or the neglect of their wards. Are they on our hands because of essential vices and weaknesses of their parents, or because they were the victims of needless accidents, preventable disease, or industrial exploitation? I have yet to find the report of an asylum or reformatory that deals intelligently and fearlessly with these questions.

I charge the hospitals—directors, superintendents, and physicians alike—with equal indifference or neglect. If things are taken down in the patients' statements on admission to be filed away in the office, if they are guessed at by wise physicians, or told to the nurses in the confidences of convalescence, they are at least not tabulated and set forth in order by the hospitals so that we may shape legislation and social policies upon them. What we get instead is an appeal for funds to build

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and equip new wards, or at most a technical classification of diseases of which the economic and social significance is not at all understood.

Most of all I am constrained to charge my brethren in the charity organization movement itself, which stands pre-eminently for analysis of causes and thorough investigation, with not having at all appreciated the importance of the environmental causes of distress; with having fixed their attention far too much upon personal weaknesses and accidents and having too little sought for the evils which might yield to social treatment and for the anti-social actions of other men for which our families are paying the penalty.

It has been natural when we have seen an indigent consumptive with his hollow cheeks, or a worthless beggar with no signs of manhood left, or a little, prematurely old man of fourteen whose life is apparently done, the fires of his energy all burned out before his time, to ask ourselves what was the personal weakness of this poor fellow, or what was his peculiar misfortune that he has thus been beaten in his struggle with life. Has he



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sinned or his parents that he has thus pitifully lost his chance? There was a place for that inquiry and it did credit to our sense of justice. But would it not be more profitable for us to ask a different question? Will it not be more natural for us to ask, in the spirit of the modern philanthropy, not what is his weakness, but who has exploited him for personal profit? The two inquiries, to be sure, often come nearly to the same thing, for it is of course on the side of our personal weakness that we are most easily exploited, but it may be that the economic inquiry will lead us to a fuller understanding of what has happened, and to some more rational course of action for the protection of others, than the moral inquiry which does not go beyond the personal character of the individual victim.

We have long recognized that the process of pauperization requires a conjunction of moral weakness in the recipient with unwise alms on the part of the donor. Is it not time to recognize that practically all the other forms of degeneracy and dependence require at some stage or other a con-

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junction of some inherited or acquired weakness in the individual and an overt temptation or an unfavorable condition external to him which would ordinarily not be presented at all if it were not to the advantage, apparently, of another party to the transaction? *The most profitable task of modern philanthropy is to find this other party and to deal by radical methods with him.*

My friends, I cannot pretend that this is an easy task. But if we look about we must, I think, admit with profound conviction that the alternative of continuing to care for the fallen and the helpless is also no easy task. The insane and imbecile, the sick and disabled, the widow and the orphan, the immigrant and the unemployed, the intemperate, the delinquent—the social wreckage of every description—would it not be better if we could by any means lessen its amount? The financial burden of the dependence which we now have we measure in part, but the whole extent of it no man knows, and the crushing weight of it is heaviest upon the poor who are themselves upon the margin of dependence.

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If we accept the alternative, that we will throw our energies, so far as our present actual responsibility for the relief of distress will permit, into concerted, organized action against those forces, organized and alert as they are, which flourish by exploiting the weakness of the poor—or of rich and poor alike—we shall find, I repeat, discouraging aspects in the position of our adversaries. The ablest lawyers are retained in their service. Vested interests will appeal, not without just grounds in some instances, to the conservatism of the courts. Inertia, indifference, ignorance, prejudice, and a thousand complications will rise like stone walls before us, and the walls may be covered, as some modern military defenses have been, with barbed wire to lacerate and annoy us.

Against all these obstacles we shall have on our side the spirit of the modern philanthropy. But it is enough; for it comprehends justice. Its aim is conservative: to re-establish the principle of individual responsibility upon the more sure basis of a nearer approach to equality of opportunity. Its method is radical: to strike hard with every

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**weapon which is at hand against the organized forces of corruption and injustice and predatory greed.**