WHAT SOCIAL SERVICE MEANS: A CLEARING HOUSE OF EXPERIENCE IN SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL BETTERMENT: BY JOSIAH STRONG, PRESIDENT AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SERVICE

INCE the organization, in 1898, of the American Institute of Social Service, the question has often been asked: What is its work and what does Social Service mean? Perhaps the best characterization of this Institute is that which describes it as a clearing-house of human experience. In this age of transition and progress, every civilized country is experimenting in legislation, in government, in sanitation, in philanthropy, in charity, in religion, in reform, in the reconciliation of capital and labor; in every department of human life and activity. Many of these experiments fail; some of them succeed. All results, whether positive or negative, cast some ray of light on the great problem of the readjustment of humanity to the changed and complex conditions of present-day civilization. The task of the Institute of Social Service is to gather from all countries facts which bear upon these results, to interpret them, and then to disseminate the knowledge so acquired in ways which will prove of the greatest practical benefit to other experimenters in social and industrial improvement.

Material civilization has changed more during the past hundred years than during all the preceding history of the race. The substitution of mechanical for muscular power by the introduction of machinery, the rise in the standard of living brought about by the increase of wealth, intelligence and culture, and discontent arising from the yet unsolved problem of the equitable distribution of that wealth, the creation and growth of the modern city and its social conditions, the organization of industry which divides labor and centralizes power and profit,—all have combined to create new and strange conditions which tend to make this a period of transition and of social readjustment.

For lack of readaptation to the changed conditions of the new civilization numberless business men have failed and many thousands of lives are yearly sacrificed in our cities. For lack of such readaptation we have bitter strife between capital and labor, strikes and lockouts, discontent and riot, anarchy, murder and suicide. A readjust-
WHAT SOCIAL SERVICE MEANS

ment is necessary, and when the process is blind and unintelligent, it is terribly costly in time, in money, in suffering and in life. The Institute of Social Service was organized to facilitate this process of re-adjustment. To quote from a letter written by President Roosevelt in 1903:

"This Institute is fitted to render a great and peculiar service, not merely to this country, but to all countries. Apparently it is proving to be the beginning of a world movement, and is being recognized by the best men of many different countries as a necessity in each and all of these countries in order to facilitate the readjustment of social relations to the new conditions created by the modern industrial revolution. In England, Russia, Italy, Japan and Sweden steps have been taken to organize Institutes along the lines of our own, while in France the Musée Social of Paris has been doing a great work along similar though not identical lines."

THE basic principle of the Institute of Social Service is the study of the science of life by the putting on file of all manner of human experience, so that everyone may know and profit by what others have thought and done. The celebrated Musée Social of Paris confines its work to industrial problems alone, but the American Institute of Social Service extends its researches to the whole social problem, with the definite object of social and industrial betterment in every phase of life. It is not sufficient, in gathering the evidences of social progress, that the facts be genuine; they must be sufficiently comprehensive in number and variety to throw light on all phases of the great social problem. The importance of this can scarcely be exaggerated. The tendency of to-day is toward extreme specialization; and this is well, but only when there has been laid for it an adequate foundation of general knowledge. A lung or heart specialist, a dentist or an oculist who had no knowledge of general anatomy and of the general practice of medicine would be only a quack. He who knows only one organ of the human body knows none at all, for while there are many organs and members there is but one body. There can never be a real science of social therapeutics until the oneness of society is recognized, and we appreciate the fact that the members of society are members one of another, and that its various organs are interdependent. The problem of philanthropy,
of charity, of economic progress, of housing, of hygiene, of sanitation, of temperance, of criminology, of divorce, of municipal reform and of labor reform are not separate and distinct questions which can be solved one by one. They are intimately and inseparably related, and must therefore be studied and solved together. Almost every form of human progress is hindered by half truths, by a partial recognition of the facts. To succeed in solving the new social problem, the whole life of man and the whole life of society must be considered.

The American Institute of Social Service is endeavoring to accomplish this comprehensive survey of social conditions by means of special commissions and trained investigators sent out from the home office, by collecting thousands of books, pamphlets, clippings and photographs bearing upon any subject under consideration as belonging to social advancement, and by the active co-operation of collaborating members in foreign countries. The knowledge thus gained is disseminated by correspondence, by the press, by making the archives of the Institute available both as a reference and a circulating library to all students of social problems, by directing personal study and research whenever requested to do so by an investigator and by putting into the field Social Secretaries and well-equipped lecturers on social conditions.

The Bureau of Information answers all inquiries concerning industrial and social betterment, municipal and village improvement, and a thousand kindred topics, placing at the disposal of the inquirer all the literature and photographs obtainable that deal with the topic under discussion, and lending expert aid in formulating plans of improvement. If a large manufacturer desires to try the experiment of prosperity-sharing by improving the conditions of his factory or by establishing an industrial village, he may learn exactly what has been done for industrial betterment by Krupp, the great German gunmaker, by Lever and Cadbury at the model industrial villages of Port Sunlight, near Liverpool, and Bournville, near Birmingham, in England; or he may be fully informed as to the model industrial conditions at Hopedale, Dayton, Pittsburgh and other places in our own country. He may judge for himself why certain experiments have succeeded and why others have failed, and may profit, if he will, by everything that has been done or attempted
WHAT SOCIAL SERVICE MEANS

in the line of action he contemplates. If a capitalist or philanthropist is interested in the erection of model tenements or the problem of housing the poor in great cities, he may study the practicability of great numbers of experiments tried here and in the older countries, and so save time, trouble and expense by starting with a knowledge of what to avoid as well as with a store of valuable ideas which have already been proven successful under given conditions, and which he may adapt to his own need as he deems best. The young American cities just awakening to the advantages of civic improvement may profit to the fullest extent by what has been done elsewhere. For instance, Glasgow has presented to the Department of Illustration some three hundred photographs illustrating her municipal housekeeping—her street cleaning, fire department, tenement house system, parks, playgrounds for children, public baths, open air gymnasias and the like, and has added a cash appropriation to put these photographs into lantern slides, so that if an American city wishes to study the methods of Glasgow it is not necessary to send over a committee for that purpose; we can send Glasgow here or there and throw it up on a screen.

The alert Japanese, who have made their country the modern world-wonder by carrying out to its fullest extent this idea of profiting by the experience of others, have not been slow in availing themselves of the service of this Institute, and are now organizing an Institute of their own, modeled on the American original. Not long ago, the Mayor of Kyoto sent a request for information concerning soldiers' homes, as he had collected a fund of one million five hundred thousand yen for the protection of the disabled soldiers of Japan. The Institute forwarded him about four hundred and sixty photographs and photogravures, and over eighty pamphlets and documents containing specialized information concerning this subject in America, France and Germany. And so the instances might be multiplied indefinitely. In addition to photographs, documents and literature on any given subject, outlines of work in all branches of social and industrial improvement are constantly being drawn up and sent out in response to requests. Inquiries come to us, not only from nearly every State in the Union and from Canada, but also from England, Scotland, Russia, Sweden, Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Belgium, Australia, Japan, South Africa, Syria and Siam,
WHAT SOCIAL SERVICE MEANS

showing the world-wide scope of the movement in the direction of social and industrial betterment.

John Burns, the only workingman ever appointed to a cabinet position in England and just now so prominent in public affairs, is one of our most active collaborators abroad. These number about ninety, prominent men in nearly all civilized countries, who are interested in social conditions and are doing good work along the lines of the general advance.

ONE very important contribution made by the Institute toward the solution of the industrial problem is the idea of the Social Secretary, a new profession which has been made necessary by the changed conditions of modern industry. The Social Secretary serves as a point of contact between master and man. In simpler times, the master knew his apprentices and workmen personally, and they all knew him. Differences and grievances were either frankly fought out as between man and man, or adjusted on the same direct basis. Under present conditions, where the master is often a corporation and the workmen number hundreds and even thousands, such personal association is of course impossible. Here lies the work of the Social Secretary. It is his—or her—business to know the employees personally as their employer cannot know them, to know whether the conditions under which they work are wholesome, physically, mentally and morally, and to know how to improve them, if they are not what they ought to be. The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, which employs seventeen thousand people in mines extending over three states, depends largely upon a Social Secretary to Americanize its men and to see that the conditions under which they live and work are as favorable as it is possible to make them. All complaints are heard and the matter adjusted, if possible, through this representative of the workmen, and unceasing efforts are made to maintain a good understanding and fair dealing between employers and employees. A letter of suggestion each week from the Institute of Social Service keeps this Secretary informed of what is being done for social and industrial betterment in various countries, so that all possible profit may be had from the experience of others.

A department lately instituted, and one which promises to be of much value in places far removed from the great centers, is the send-
THE "TRIANGLE" AT BOURNVILLE, ENGLAND

VIEW OF INDUSTRIAL VILLAGE AT HOPEDALE, MASS.
SCREEN OF SHRUBS AND TREES HIDING BACKYARDS AT HOPEDALE

VIEW OF BACKYARDS AT HOPEDALE BEFORE VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTED SCREENS
WORKMAN’S COTTAGE AND GARDEN AT PORT SUNLIGHT, NEAR LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

Courtesy of American Institute of Social Service
THE LACEMAKERS OF MURANO, ITALY, PHOTOGRAPHED BY SPECIAL COMMISSION STUDYING LABOR CONDITIONS ABROAD
ROOF GARDEN ON AN AMERICAN FACTORY WHERE MODEL INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS PREVAIL

Courtesy of American Institute of Social Service
JOHN BURNS, NEWLY APPOINTED A MEMBER OF THE ENGLISH CABINET, AND THE CHILDREN OF HIS EMPLOYEES

Courtesy of American Institute of Social Service
A FACTORY LUNCHEON UNDER OLD CONDITIONS

FACTORY LUNCHEON AS IT IS NOW IN SAME ESTABLISHMENT
TOTAL COST OF EQUIPMENT, $11.25 FOR EIGHT WOMEN

Courtesy of American Institute of Social Service
WHAT SOCIAL SERVICE MEANS

ing out to village clubs, churches, social organizations, etc., reading lectures on subjects of social improvement, illustrated with lantern slides made from photographs selected from the thousands at the Institute. Very often these small societies cannot afford to have a lecturer visit them, and yet are most anxious and interested to obtain all the information possible on subjects which are to them of vital importance. Any member of the club with this aid from the Institute can deliver a reading lecture on the subject concerning which information is desired. As the Institute of Social Service is a philanthropic and not a business enterprise, supported by contributions instead of profits, its ability to place its resources at the service of all who need them, in this or other countries, is limited only by the amount of funds at its disposal.

As soon as means are provided, the Institute will organize a Museum of Security and a department of Comparative Legislation, each of which offers almost limitless opportunity for additional usefulness.