

Annual Banquet

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This for two reasons: First, Buffalo is proud to entertain so representative a body of people; secondly, Buffalo is a city that operates greatly along the lines that you are laying down, the conservation of life and health.

Curiously enough the Safety Movement came when it was most needed; perhaps that is destiny, perhaps that is the working out of the great inscrutable plan that none of us has ever been able to explain. With a world terribly torn and dismembered, the spectacle of earnest men and women trying to save the individual is a wholesome thing to look at.

Inconceivable as it may seem, your officers tell me that your efforts to conserve human life and health encounter both opposition and indifference. There are such people in the world, regrettably. Some people are upset by any attempt at a good and a human thing for their fellow-men.

Our first speaker tonight comes from the British Empire. He is one who has studied conservation of life and health from every conceivable standpoint. Ladies and gentlemen, I have great pleasure in presenting Sir Thomas Oliver.

SAFETY AND HEALTH IN INDUSTRY

SIR THOMAS OLIVER, NEWCASTLE-ON-THE-TYNE, ENGLAND.

I have always regarded safety as a movement of American origin, and in Great Britain, although we have followed, we have never yet over-reached you; but in the matter of health in industry, that movement began in Great Britain and you have wisely followed.

I need hardly remind you that health in industry is a movement that only dates back thirty or forty years. At that time there was in England a considerable outcry against a number of deaths of people in the factories. In the town from which I come, Newcastle-on-the-Tyne, there were several deaths every year from lead poisoning, particularly amongst the young women, and also amongst the children of the workers in the lead factories. As a physician I felt that something ought to be done to put an end to that state of matters. I addressed a meeting of the British Association of Science when it came to Newcastle, and I pleaded for the workers' education.

Mr. Asquith, who was then Home Secretary, appointed a small committee and asked me if I would act upon it as medical expert, just, of course, the very thing I was only too anxious to do. As the result of that inquiry we were astonished to find that there were so many deaths and so much suffering and that there was such an enormous loss of infantile life to Great Britain.

The first thing I asked the Home Office to do was to remove the women from the dangerous processes of lead making and to institute machine methods for what had been done by hand. The result, with other regulations as well, was an extremely satisfactory condition of things.

When I was here eleven years ago, a lead manufacturer told me that he had 53 cases of lead poisoning in his works at that particular time. I was through these works only ten days ago, and I was told that there are never more than two cases now in the year. That is the improvement of industry by regulations and by the introduction of mechanical means.

ELIMINATION OF PHOSPHORUS POISONING

One other illustration as to what preventive medicine has done is this: Just about the same time that our country was scandalized by the number of deaths that had taken place in the industries, there came out in London the knowledge of the fact that in one large plant or match factory alone there had been six cases resulting in death from what is known as phosphorus necrosis of the jaw. It is a very painful condition of things, and when it attacks the upper jaw it is rapidly fatal. Mr. Asquith appointed Sir Edward Thorpe and myself to go into this matter, and the result was that I traveled through Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and also I had been to Norway and Sweden, to see how they were conducting conditions and work in the factories. I found the same amount of sickness there as we had at home. It was clear, therefore, that something ought to be done, not only for own country but for others. I found that France had taken up the matter as seriously as the British Government had, and that it was carrying out many experiments as to whether a substitute for white phosphorous could be found. They did find a substitute known as the sesquisulphid of phosphorus, which is a harmless material, and matches are now made out of that.

What is the result? At the time I speak of there were many cases of death, accidental in the case of children, by their sucking the red tips of matches, women dying and suffering great pain from taking a box of matches and putting them into a tumbler of water and allowing them to soak there, and as the result of either being crossed in love or through some difficulty in the home, after drinking this they became jaundiced and died from phosphorus poisoning.

As the result of the introduction of the sesquisulphid of phosphorus there will never be another case of phosphorus poisoning, suicidal, or accidental in industry.

I, as a medical man ought to cure and not to destroy, and I have always felt, therefore, that wherever I came in contact with a dangerous industry it was not for me to recommend the abolition of the industry itself, as sometimes has been suggested, but rather to find out how that industry could be cleared of the poison and bad conditions behind it. I have maintained and always felt that a man's occupation should never be a cause of suffering or death.

It is many years since factory legislation began in England in regard to the hours of work that children and women should have, and we have, I think, rather satisfactory hours so far as our own country is concerned, and you, I think, have done the same.

Eleven years ago, as I have told you, I came to this country and visited several of the factories. You were just beginning to wake up then; you had been a few years awake, I admit, but you were beginning to take a keener interest than ever in the matter of improving your industries. Whatever you Americans take up you carry on with greater vigor and you carry on with better organization than we do, and the result is that you get really ahead of us. We don't begrudge you that position at all. As a nation you are alert and enthusiastic and you reach your points generally quicker than we do. We in our country are slower, we take life more leisurely and I think sometimes we really get more out of it, although I admit you put more into it.

UNEMPLOYMENT AS OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

I am sometimes asked about occupational diseases. My name has been associated with that, for some reason or another, and I think sometimes the greatest disease of occupation is to have no occupation at all. I mean that seriously, because in my own country at the present time we have not recovered from the effects of the war. There is still unrest. You may have your labor troubles here as every country has in its time, but you have nothing like the unemployment we have in our country. One million two hundred thousand people are still unemployed, and the government has spent 65 million pounds in trying to relieve the unemployment.

I have been pretty well through the States this time. I have been down as far as New Orleans, up through St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and I am now making my way to Boston to attend a meeting next week, and I cannot but admit how struck I have been by the air of prosperity which is present all through the states that I have visited. You are a prosperous people, you have much to be proud of, you have a territory that we all might envy, and you have, as a result of this, new industrial opportunities lying before you which I feel you will tackle as well as the problems coincident therewith and you will surmount them in the future as you have done in the past.

A HUMAN TOUCH

JACK ARMOUR, MCGRAW-HILL PUBLISHING COMPANY, NEW YORK

On an occasion of this kind in New York at the Astor Hotel about two weeks ago, with not so many people present, the toastmaster had introduced the first speaker when it came to the coffee. He had been on his feet about three minutes when one of the prominent members went to another and said, "Bill, would you chip in \$5 to kill that after-dinner speaker?"

"Yes, Bob, here's twenty-five dollars, kill five of them."

I was at the Hotel Blackstone in Chicago with 750 people in the audience and 20 people to speak, and when they introduced me I looked at my watch and it was twenty minutes of two in the morning. I had been talking 15 minutes when I had the temerity to look at the audience,