

MR. CHARLES STELZLE AND HIS JOB

Closing the gap between the church and the alienated workingman is one of the stiff problems that has been facing organized Christianity for many years—some say the stiffest. It has pressed on Stelzle all his life, insisting on recognition as his particular job. Seven years ago the Presbyterian church saw that something ought to be done, created a department of church and labor under its home mission board, and passed it up to Stelzle.

Stelzle not only carried his heart over into the job, but put plenty of sense in it besides. He knows the workingman pretty well. He spent the first twenty-five years of his life in the lower East Side (he is now forty-two years old). When he was eight years old he left off school and went to work in a tobacco factory in the basement of a tenement house. Then he took to selling papers farther downtown. From sixteen to twenty-four he was a machinist with the Hoe Manufacturing Co.—a good machinist, too. His diploma from the Hoe concern now hangs over his desk in the Presbyterian Building, attesting his degree of skilled laborer. He is a union workman in good standing and carries his card in his pocket.

Having learned what men were like in the streets and shops, he became a minister and learned what they were like in church on Sundays. He had some trouble in qualifying for his theological studies. One seminary, whose sense of humor must have been a little rusty, rejected his application because he did not have enough book learning. His English was poor. Stelzle declined to be discouraged, squeezed into another school, and very soon, perversely enough, began to write. He published half a dozen books in rapid succession and managed to get himself accepted at once as an authority. Every week he has syndicated an article into three hundred and fifty labor papers which eight or ten million people read.

Stelzle left his big institutional church in the middle west to become superintendent of the new bureau, and from that time on he has had to be about seven kinds of a man at once. The bureau was brand new and without precedent and the board of home missions simply showed him the splendid vista of all outdoors to work in. bade him welcome to all the interest he might be able to stir up, gave him \$3,000 to cover all the first year's expenses and told him to go ahead. Since then Stelzle has stood as delegate to all kinds of meetings, been on every forum from pulpit to soap box, written, traveled, and been a kind of tireless human kaleidoscope. By quick turns he has been inspirational, institutional, devotional, educational, and at all times sensible. The appropriations have increased annually until last year the board invested as much as \$9,000 in

the work of the bureau. It got its money's worth.

No doubt Stelzle has done a great deal for the workingman, but his great achievement, after all, has been to educate the rich and powerful Presbyterian church to a sense of something more than a vague, theoretical responsibility for standing on terms of brotherhood with the unprivileged. He is getting it into the heart of decorous Christians that the workingman is human and just like anybody else. He is putting the Christian church under conviction of sin in the matter of the unchristian conditions that surround labor and exploit it. He sets us wondering what we ought to do about a civilization that puts infants eight years old stripping tobacco in a reeking basement; he sets us thinking of the workingman as a creature who will bleed if he is pricked, who has emotions, aspirations, affections, and weaknesses like our own; who has self-respect and hates patronage, and has the same contempt for religious patronage especially, that anyone else would have.

Quite a number of self-revelations in the same line this quiet German is plowing out of the Christian conscience of this country; and so we of any creed or no creed at all may do well to hold up both hands for Stelzle.

Following is "An Every-Day Creed," written by Stelzle and widely circulated. It gives an idea of the man's spirit and of his style as a writer:

"I BELIEVE IN MY JOB. It may not be a very important job, but it is MINE. Furthermore, it is God's job for me, if I am honestly trying to do His will. He has a purpose in my life with reference to His plan for the world's progress. No other fellow can take my place. It isn't a big place, to be sure, but for years I have been molded in a peculiar way to fill a peculiar niche in the world's work. I could take no other man's place. He has the same claim as a specialist that I make for myself. Yes, I believe in my job. May I be kept true to the task which lies before me—true to myself and to God, who intrusted me with it.

"I BELIEVE IN MY FELLOW MAN. He may not always agree with me. I'd feel sorry for him if he did, because I myself do not believe some of the things that were absolutely sure in my own mind a dozen years ago. May he never lose faith in himself, because if he does, he may lose faith in me, and that would hurt him more than the former, and it would really hurt him more than it would hurt me.

"I BELIEVE IN MY COUNTRY. I believe in it because it is made up of my fellow men—and myself. I can't go back on either of us and be true to my creed. If it isn't the best country in the world, it is

partly because I am not the kind of a man that I should be.

"I BELIEVE IN MY HOME. It isn't a rich home. It wouldn't satisfy some folks, but it contains jewels which cannot be purchased in the markets of the world. When I enter its secret chambers and shut out the world with its care, I am a lord. Its motto is service, its reward is love. There is no other place in all the world which fills its place, and heaven can be only a larger home, with a father who is all-wise and patient and tender.

"I BELIEVE IN TODAY. It is all that I possess. The past is of value only as it can make the life of today fuller and freer. There is no assurance of tomorrow. I must make good today."—From the American Magazine for September.

OPPORTUNITY EVERYWHERE

One day this week a young man applied for a marriage license at the Lancaster court house, and in reply to one of the usual questions stated that he lived at Opportunity, Nebraska. Courthouse attaches expressed ignorance as to the whereabouts of Opportunity. This merely emphasizes the ignorance of some people. Opportunity, Nebraska, is everywhere. In fact, no state in the union has so many Opportunities as Nebraska. They exist in every village, town and city; in every township and county. And all that is necessary for a man to do is to seize it wherever he finds it. There is Opportunity to get larger and better returns from the soil of Nebraska than from the soil of any other state, because Nebraska soil is the best in the world. There is Opportunity to invest with more profit in industrial enterprises, because Nebraska raises the raw product that enters into the manufactured articles that the world must have. There is Opportunity to engage in dairying with the certainty of success if intelligence is used. There is Opportunity to engage in profitable business, because the state is growing in population and wealth. There is Opportunity for the young man, the middle-aged man and the elderly man, for the climate of Nebraska is conducive of longevity and the very air is surcharged with energy.

Not know where Opportunity, Nebraska, is? Such ignorance, in view of all the self-evident facts, is truly appalling. We suggest a night school for the courthouse attaches.

Lincoln people are not so much interested in the kind of a pump to be bought for the water department, or where a new well is to be bored, as they are in buying some kind of a pump and adding to the water supply.

It is a pleasure as well as a duty to continually boost for Nebraska.