

SOCIALISM AND BIRTHS.

BY AUSTIN BIERBOWER.

THOSE proposing social remedies commonly ignore one factor which threatens to defeat all their measures, and that is the law of births. The labor question is not merely how the poor may be made more comfortable, and the rich required to divide their possessions, but how the people may be maintained in their new equality when attained. If all were rendered comfortable in some socialistic community, and none had to provide for the future of self or family, there would be a thoughtless propagation of human beings which would soon overthrow the community. People are now restrained from the maximum increase by the question of support. Were that removed, the less considerate would win in a race of reproduction. The worthless generally reproduce fastest. The low and idle, being most given to licentiousness, and having least restraint, would, if not controlled by considerations of support, soon crowd out the more intellectual and moral classes. There would be too many children if all could produce them without individual responsibility, and over-population would destroy the prosperity of the community. In improving the condition of the poor, we should consider why there are so many poor, and how far the relief of the poor tends to multiply the poor. The improvement of their condition should go along with expedients to prevent their undue multiplication. The lower classes ought not to disproportionately populate the earth. The better element should perpetuate itself instead of the worst. And while the poor are often morally and physically better than the rich, a large proportion are poor through indolence, drunkenness, or crime, and these do more than their share in reproduction. The question of bettering the condition of the people must, therefore, be considered in connexion with the increase of the people. Removing the present

obstacles to over-population would not permanently benefit the people. To relieve the poor, and by the same measure multiply the poor—to make it easier to get support for their families and to raise still larger families—is not to permanently solve the labor problem. Were all provided for, the most reckless would have the advantage and soon throw the system out of proportion again. One with twenty children would have no more work to support them than one with two; and in a world with too many people it is not a policy of relief to confer on the most worthless the greatest power of increase. Were our country newer, and greater numbers needed to till the soil, the greatest producer of children might be the greatest benefactor; but when laborers are complaining of excessive competition, large families become a burden on the community.

The question is, What shall we do about the production of human beings? Shall the negro, the pauper, the immigrant, the ignorant, and the morally low be permitted to put upon society as many of their kind as they can? And will society undertake to care for them all? Men believe themselves intended for something else than to support other people's children as fast as they can be produced, and they do not like to toil for the benefit of the worthless.

Men get rich, and keep rich, by moderating their desires, and were all equal in children they would be more equal in wealth. But to have one class produce the wealth, and another the consumers of wealth, is to make a condition of necessary conflict.

The question, then, for labor reformers is, What shall be done to regulate the population when all are provided for? A better distribution of wealth would not remedy general poverty, since the number of those who have much is small, and their possessions, however distributed, would not make all comfortable. The poor embrace nearly all the population; and the more people there are, the poorer must be the average. To be well-to-do, men must be few. In some countries, as China, the soil cannot support the entire population. As we learn to live more easily, more come into the world to live, the supply being according to the facility of birth and support, and not according to demand. Men are increasing too fast, and the supply throws our social and business system out of order. The regulation of men is as important as the regulation of any other interest.