

to 1860 the mill began to pay special attention to the weaving of wide sheeting, developing a fabric with a carefully worked out organization of sley and pick, warp and woof—an organization and quality which has been sacredly maintained through the generations. Extensive and long-sustained tests made seventy years ago, and continued up to the present time, have demonstrated conclusively that this fabric, woven with 68 sley, 72 picks, average 22s yarn, of the proper cotton and of specially determined twist, is an exceedingly well-balanced sheeting. It weaves well and is easy to launder. As Pequot sheeting it has become a household word in millions of homes.

Many years ago the Naumkeag initiated the custom of supplying the housewives with bed linen made up ready to use. Now the integrity of its product and the prestige which the name has acquired through consistent national advertising have made Pequot sheets and pillow cases by far the most popular line in America.

Its Employees

There was always a sprinkling of trained spinners and weavers from England and Scotland to form a nucleus of operation at the Naumkeag mill but the original employes were mostly native born and residents of Salem. A good many of the girls came in from the country near Salem, glad enough to earn some real money in the days when there were few opportunities open to women.

The lives of the early operatives were under rather rigid control. They were expected to attend church on Sunday and the mill bell rang a curfew at nine o'clock each evening when everyone was supposed to be off the streets. The hours of labor were excessive and, judged by present standards, the pay was deplorably small. All manufacturing establishments were then woefully lacking in proper lighting, ventilation, locker rooms, medical attendance and all the things the present-day employe has learned to regard as a matter of course. The Naumkeag, however, even in those old days, was far in advance of the usual cotton factory.

It may be interesting to hear what Mrs. Robinson, who was herself a mill worker, wrote of living and working conditions in Lowell, eighty-five or ninety years ago.

"Except in rare instances, the rights of the early mill girls were secure. They were subject to no

extortion: if they did extra work they were always paid in full, and their own account of labor done by the piece was always accepted. They kept the figures and were paid accordingly.

"Their life in the factory was made pleasant for them. In those days there was no need of advocating the doctrine of the proper relation between employer and employed. Help was too valuable to be ill-treated.

"Their surroundings were pure, and the whole atmosphere of their boarding houses was as refined, as that of their homes.

"The health of the girls was good. The regularity, and simplicity of their lives and the plain and, substantial food provided for them, kept them free from illness."

It was not many years before this native help gradually left the mill. Their places were largely taken by Irish immigrants. They in turn entered other industries or occupations, and their places were taken by French Canadians who began to come to Salem in the 70s. In the 80s and 90s the so-called Polish people came in large numbers, so that at present our mill operatives are about half and half of these two nationalities. They are industrious, prudent, self-respecting, property owners, many of them naturalized. The children and grandchildren of many of our early foreign employes are now on the payroll.

Wages

Wages have always been fair, and of late years very much higher in rate than in any cotton mill in the same line of work. Two recent reductions in wages, of approximately 20 per cent, were not made effective at the Naumkeag, as the management believed an adequate profit could be earned on the old rate of wages at the time. Jobs have been so adjusted that a proper fatigue period has always been provided.

The management has consistently given its employes four things, which it believes of paramount importance to the efficiency and well-being of its help—continuity of employment, the best possible stock and working conditions, the best possible wage, and some provision for old age.

Industrial Relations

From the very first relations between the management and employes were friendly. In the early

days, in common with every other cotton factory, as has been stated already, there was a rather rigorous paternalism on the part of the corporation, which controlled not only working conditions but, to a certain extent, living conditions as well. However, as far as the mill in Salem is concerned, this paternalism was never offensive or dictatorial, and passed out almost entirely with the change in personnel from the original native born to the later mixture of several nationalities, with individual and race customs, prejudices and religious beliefs.

As is bound to happen in all human relations, so at the Naumkeag in the first seventy-five years there had been a few inevitable differences, of one sort or another. None of them was of any particular moment resulting in material losses in production and wages to the two parties at odds. It was not until the fall of 1919 that a real walk-out occurred—just eighty years after the establishment of the company.

This strike, precipitated by a demand for an increase in wages which the management could not then grant, lasted several weeks and was marked by a total absence of discord or disturbance. It was amicably settled to the satisfaction of all concerned after a number of conferences between the management and the representatives of the Union. With the resumption of work began a closer co-operation between employer and employe, and a united effort for quantity and quality production. Added to this was a sincere effort on both sides to eliminate, or at least alleviate, the causes of friction, misunderstanding, resentment, which are bound to occur in an industry employing two thousand five hundred hands, and obviously out of the individual control of the general manager. A punctilious regard for seniority rights was exercised which helped the morale tremendously.

A further extension of the co-operative spirit came about when the management and the Union, through their legally qualified officers, signed an agreement, the main object of which is the removal, as far as possible, of all causes for misunderstanding and friction, and the promotion to the greatest possible degree of a mutual helpfulness between the two organizations. This agreement will later be discussed in detail by Mr. O'Connell.

The agreement recognizes the desirability of the trade unions, the spirit of co-operation in promoting the continued and successful operation of the

mills; pledges the co-operation of employes in effecting such economies in manufacturing as may be brought about by the introduction of improved machinery; provides for a proper and orderly holding of conferences in the event of differences which may arise in the natural course of the operations of the mill and bleachery, and further provides for regular meetings between the management and the representatives of the Union—an eminently fair agreement which has worked out excellently.

The Present Problem

Some months ago the management brought to the attention of the Executive Committee of the Union the fact that the Naumkeag, due to the lower costs of its competitors, was put to most serious disadvantage in marketing its product, and that its cost of production must be brought to a figure comparable with mills making an identical line of goods. To this end the management, believing an industry can prosper and give employment to its workers only to the degree to which it is economically in balance with industry as a whole, presented a new schedule of labor and wages. This schedule provided for a rearrangement of work in every department, and inevitably predicated the elimination of a considerable number of operatives. On the other hand it provided that no wages would be reduced. In other words, this reapportioning of jobs in each case carried with it an increase in pay and stressed the further belief of the management that no employe who is doing a fair day's work should have any addition made to his task, without some commensurate improvement in working conditions. The schedule was worked out by the supervising executives from their intimate knowledge of the jobs, and not by factual tests.

Several conferences were held, as a result of which the Executive Committee of the Union realized the necessity for a reduction in costs. They hesitated to act in the matter, however, and it was here that they took, through Mr. O'Connell and the President of the Union, an unusual, and perhaps a unique, step. They visited one of your good members, Mr. Morris L. Cooke, at his home in Philadelphia and there lay before him their problem and asked his advice.

The result of this visit and of his counsel was the employment, by the Union, of another of your members, Mr. Francis Goodell, who, with the con-