

## Haves and Have-nots

“Claiming to be speculative in our profession, the weal or woe of our common country and its inhabitants, nay, of the whole human race, is a theme furnishing food for reflection to every thinking Mason. It is not necessary for me to draw upon imagination when I say, that within the length of a cable tow of the home of every Mason present there is to be found more or less suffering for the want of those things that make life bearable. Was there ever before a time in the history of this land when so great a percentage of its people were supported by charity? Was there ever before so great a percentage in the poor houses? or in the mad houses?”

We read with patriotic pride, statistics showing the accumulated wealth to an average number of dollars per capita of the population; we are told by the public prints, and by each succeeding census report, that the wealth of the country has increased a certain number of percents. Alleged pessimists tell us, and I think truthfully, that the great bulk of the accumulated wealth of the country is owned by a surprisingly small percentage of its inhabitants, the natural sequence being that a correspondingly large complement must be painfully short of the reputed average. The fact remains that, with granaries and storehouses never before so full, there never before was so much poverty, distress and crime.

Never before were the agricultural properties of the country so covered with mortgage liens, and the gnawing interest is no respecter of the winter season, nor of the night, nor even of the Sabbath.

Never before was corruption so flagrant and bold in the administration of public business.

How are we to account for these anomalous extremes? How can the tide of this state of affairs be turned? Temporarily providing by charity for the sustenance of life is no remedy for the growing evil, for a growing evil it is; it stares us in the face, and, like Banquo's ghost, will not down. It is the social problem of to-day. While we may be unable to suggest a remedy, or, if we could, to put it into practical operation, it is the duty of every thinker to contribute to that common stock of knowledge that will lead to its solution.

The most practical charity of all is that which helps others to help themselves, and therein must lie the solution. Is a solution possible under our present system of political economy?”

### **Sources:**

Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada at the annual convocation, 1890, report on Foreign Correspondence – MICHIGAN