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Atlanta, Ga., December----

There is a little village on the outskirts of Atlanta known as the "tent colony" and in it there sleep every night and live every day approximately 300 persons. The weather here recently has been extremely cold and for some time the thermometer has hovered around the 10-degree mark. It snowed the other night and the winds blew with a gale-like velocity.

For more than a week the rain has poured down incessantly at intervals and in a general way the weather has been much the same as that which Philadelphia experiences in mid-winter. For the "Sunny South" such conditions are unusual and the consequence is, that those who are exposed to it naturally feel its effect with a greater degree of suffering than would a "down easterner" accustomed to such biting winds.

And among the 300 residents in the batch of old Army tents that make up the village are approximately 100 children from three months to 15 years old. The men, the women and the children are ill-clad, many of them without shoes and stockings and most of them minus underclothing sufficient to keep them warm. They are virtually poverty-stricken, since there is no work for them and the only sustenance they obtain is doled out to them by the textile labor union and those whose hearts have been touched by the tales of hardships and poverty that emanate from the colony.

The inhabitants of the colony are mostly textile mill workers on strike. They quit their looms and carding machines and warping appliances in the Fulton Bag & Cotton Company's mills here because they would not submit to conditions which, they declare, were worse than those that existed in slavery days. And they are living in the open tents, not because they want to build up their health or for sanitary reasons, but because they were evicted from their little homes and, with their scant belongings, were thrown out into

the streets. They had no other place to go and it was indeed fortunate that they could get even the tents. Penniless and hungry, these poverty stricken fathers and mothers and their families; widows who must toil at heavy machinery day after day to eke out a mere existence for themselves and their dependents; and the helpless boys and girls who ought to be in school are within a stone's throw of one of the most prosperous cities in the South, yet they are virtually on the verge of hunger and there's no hope that any relief will come during the winter that is now on in full blast.

The Fulton Mill officials have declared that they will have "no union" mixing in their affairs and have repeatedly declined efforts of churchmen and business interests, Federal mediators and strike leaders to arbitrate the trouble between them and their employes. They say they have "nothing to arbitrate" and that since they have enough help at the plant to keep things running in good shape, they are not a bit worried about the strikers or their fight for the very essentials they must have to keep body and soul together. Twice the national government, through its Department of Labor, has sent mediators here to adjust the difficulties and twice they have gone back with the same report-- the mill owners will not listen to offers of mediation. If others shall come down from Washington the same story will be told them.

Backing the manufacturers are the National Association of Manufacturers and the Southern Cotton Manufacturers' Association. These organizations and the Fulton mill stockholders have at their back plenty of money with which to fight the handful of striking employes and they mean to hold out to the end if every one in the "tent colony" has to be forced into starvation. That's the situation that enlightended Atlanta has at its very doors.

When the operatives were working at the mills they were subjected to treatment which, in the eyes of the strike leaders, were worse than those that were the rule during the days of slavery. The physical and mental energies of emaciated fathers, mothers and children were fed to the machinery of the Fulton mills and spun in-

to big profits for the Company. Boys and girls, most of them ill-fed and improperly clothed, worked alongside and in-between the big machinery, and if, by chance, one of them got hurt in the work he was doing, he not only got no compensation from the firm, but it is asserted the

mill owners actually forced him to pay for the damage done the machinery!

(The mill had a contract which every employe must sign and which resembles very much the old peonage system. One week's pay of the operatives is always held back and unless the boy or gil or widowed mother or father give five days' notice of their intention to leave the company's service, no matter what the occasion for their discontinued services, their previous weeks' pay is not forthcoming. One operative recently was arrested for some minor cause and spent two months in jail. When he got out after paying the penalty for the misdemeanor, he not only found his job gone but he got no money for the full previous week that he had worked at the looms.

(All sorts of fines are imposed for minor breaches of rules and 20 per cent is assessed for "seconds" in every department. Workers in one department are paid for "spying" on those in another section and they are given bonuses for the detection of any bad work on the part of their fellow-workmen. It takes one to two weeks to inspect the work in a section and in the event that and employe left the mill or was discharged 25 per cent of his time was withheld until the examination had been completed and the firm was satisfied that the cloth turned out was "O.K." Deposits were required on all tools taken from the storeroom and unless ~~the~~ they are returned in good condition this deposit is not refunded. The strike leaders charge that Jacob Elsas, who is head of the mill, actually built an addition to his mill with the money collected from employes whose pay, for some reason, had been "held back". This Mr. Elsas denies.

(Last May the employes decided they had stood the Fulton system as long as they could and a strike was called. They wanted child labor eliminated from the mills; "abandonment of the present vicious contract system of employment and the elimination of the terrible docking system"; reduction of hours of labor to 54 hours a week and an increase of 15 per cent in wages. Most of the workers in the mill do "piece work"--they are paid for what work they actually do. The average wage paid at the mills is declared by the striking laborers to have approximated $6.90 a week; some earning as much as $12 and others as little as $3 and $4. One boy, 12 years old, is being held up as an example. He got 64 cents for two weeks' work.

(The mills operate "shacks" in which the operatives live, the mill

owners collecting rent for the privilege. When the strike was called notice was sent the "shack-dwellers" that they must vacate if they couldn't

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pay their rent. Naturally, being without money, they could not pay. The Georgia law says a family must have three days notice before it can be dispossessed. The notice was given and at the end of the time limit those who had not removed were put out into the streets. Negroes under the command of a marshal carried out the possessions of the "shack-dwellers" and threw them into the streets, There is record of more than one person, ill and unable to move, being carried out into the streets and left there to the mercies of the elements.

(Minnie B. Ware, 18 years old, who worked at the mills and who had supported her widowed mother since she was 10 years old, gave birth to a child. Within eight days after the little one's birth, at a time when the attending physician declared she was too ill to be removed and her mother and the child were evicted by negroes and their little belongings were thrown into the streets.

(Conditions in the shacks were not of the best since the Atlanta Board of Health, after an investigation forced upon it, directed changes in the sanitary arrangements which cost the mills many thousands of dollars. Nineteen cases of pellagra developed among persons living and working in the mill settlements.

(John Golden, head of the national testile workers, is here trying to affect a settlement of the strike. But the mill owners insist there is no strike and chances are the workers in the "Tent colony"will have to stick it out as best they can during the winter. They do their own cooking in the camp and oil stoves have been placed in the tents to keep the children warm. But there is no work. There is no money in the camp -- only a meal when the workers can get it and a place to live and sleep that is "hard pickin'" in these winter days of biting cold and strong winds that blow incessantly through the open tents.

(Here's the way John Golden looks at the situation:

("The Fulton Bag & Cotton Company is resorting to the cruelist tactics in their efforts to break the strike. It has been a rule of this company to hold a week's wage and when the workers struck they had coming to them a week to nine days' back pay. This money the Company declared forfeited on the ground that the strikers left without notice.

(Credit was cut off at the stores, and starvation was immediately upon them. They were evicted from the mill shacks and are blacklisted at the mills and intimidated in every possible way. Neither tongue or pen can describe the abject poverty and awful wretchedness of the condition of the strikers. Children are in a chronic state of poverty and are held on the border of starvation from their childhood to the grave.

("Working in the company's mills, dwelling in the company shacks, bound by a vicious contract and owned body, soul and boots by the corporation, the workers have been robbed and exploited to the limit."

(Oscar Elsas, son of the founder of the mills, who, with his father and a brother now operate the plant, insisted today there is no strike and that there will be no arbitration. He knows of the pitiful conditions of the workers living in the tents but he insists the firm will take none of them back and that he intends to fight to the end as a matter of principle." He admitted it's cold in the tents; admitted the evictions; admitted the existence of the fine and spy systems but justified their existence by saying that it is in the interest of scientific efficiency". He says he isn't worrying about Federal mediators or church arbitrators and that he's going to stick to his original position in the matter "no matter what happens."

(And within short distance of the mills are housed in tents his former employees--cold and hungry and without money and with no prospects for the winter. And a cold winter it will be, in the weatherman's opinion.

(In discussing the "fine" system at the mills, Mr. Elsas has this to say:

("Our method of fining is brougt about only be the necessity for discipline, and not from the desire on our part to collect money from our employees. Records kept covering a period from January 1, 1913 to May 2, 1914, show a total amount of miscellaneous fines of $309.76; fines for defective work, $1249.23. Proportion of fines given to employees for discovery of defective work--which, in other words was a refund to those who helped us find defective work, $871.03. This, therefore, shows a net collection on our part of $687.96 or, roughly speaking, $44.00 per month.

("The object of the fines is to minimize defective work. The essential feature of our contract with the workers is to demand one week's notice of their intention to quit and the penalty, if they fail to do so, is that they shall forfeit one week's time. We do not even hold them to the full week, but permit them to draw their week's earnings if they give us five days' notice. That's a concession we voluntarily permit."

(The strikers are wrong in one of their contentions. They say the workers were evicted by negroes employed in the bagging department of the mill. This is not true. The negroes, said Mr. Elsas, were the hired hands of the marshal in whose hands were placed the dispossessment warrents and "we had nothing to do with the actual work of eviction," said Mr. Elsas.

(The firm has a welfare house, where the mothers at work in the mills may "check" their children during working hours at so much a week. There were more than a dozen such children--hardy looking, but improperly clothed,- playing in the kindergarten rooms yesterday and huddling about a stove. On the lap of one of the youngsters was a baby not more than a few months old. Its mother was at one of the mill machines eking out a living and the "big boy" in the family had to mind the baby 'till the whistle blew and its mother was permitted to go through the locked gates. In one of the stock rooms was a woman at work who must have been all of 70 years old and possibly 75. She was bent and emaciated, but she kept at the work the best she could. with thoughts, possibly, of the much more poverty-stricken condition of some of her former operatives living out in the open tents nearby.