

Men of Mark in Connecticut

IDEALS OF AMERICAN LIFE TOLD IN BIOGRAPHIES AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF EMINENT LIVING AMERICANS

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DIETRICH EDWARD LOEWE.

LOEWE, DIETRICH EDWARD, one of Danbury's foremost manufacturers and leading public men, is well known to the industrial history of the state for his unique success in enforcing the law against boycotts and in defeating the unions of hatters so effectively that his own "open shop" for the manufacture of hats is one of the best and most prosperous in the country.

Germany was Dietrich E. Loewe's native land and his birthplace was Greste, the date of his birth being June 21st, 1852. His parents were Adolph and Charlotte Shalh Loewe, who maintained a farm that had been in the family for several hundred years. Adolph Loewe was town councillor, road commissioner, and poor law guardian up to the time of his death in 1866. The boy Dietrich spent his summers at work on the home farm and his winters at school in a near-by city. His home influences were strongly for his good, as his mother was a sincere Christian with a sweet disposition and true family devotion. Her sons grew up to be very manly and strong under her guidance. Though not a great reader, Dietrich was thoughtful and earnest in his school work and had a great love for the beauties of nature. When he reached the age of fourteen and had completed the district school course, he entered the agricultural college at Hupen, near Bielefeld, but as that college was closed after his first term he soon entered the Bielefeld institution and specialized in higher mathematics and civil engineering. His plans were defeated by ill health and he went home to build up his constitution on the farm. At the age of eighteen, as soon as he had fully regained his health, he and his brother Ernest came to America to fulfill their ambition for being citizens of the United States. They arrived in New York, June 30th, 1870. After many discouragements, Dietrich secured employment on a railroad at Middletown, New York, where a construction company was digging a bed-way. The following winter he worked for a business concern on Long Island and during the subsequent summer he was engaged as shipping clerk for a wholesale grocery firm in New York City.

In November, 1871, Mr. Loewe located in Danbury and set about

learning the hatting trade. He devoted the following three years to the making of fur hats and during the dull summer season busied himself with painting. In 1876 he became foreman of a Danbury hat factory and in 1879 he embarked for himself under the firm name of D. E. Loewe and Company. The business is still so styled. He ran successfully as an open shop until 1885, when the various hat manufacturers of Danbury entered into a trade union agreement which provided a mode for settling disputes without strike. In 1893 a refusal of the union to modify union rules brought about a conference which terminated in the closing of all factories in November of that year. The following February two-thirds of the factories re-opened as independent or open factories and D. E. Loewe and Company was among them. By 1900 all but three of these had been unionized, but in Mr. Loewe's factory union and non-union men worked harmoniously side by side. Though threatened with coercion, Mr. Loewe refused to cancel his contract with his many faithful and capable non-union employees, and in April, 1901, he formally issued his well-known declaration of independence, in which he clearly stated his convictions that his open policy was for the best interest of all and the assurance that his factory would not be unionized and would use all lawful means of protection. The following spring and fall the union ordered Mr. Loewe's union men to other factories, but they got back to Mr. Loewe as soon as they could. In June, 1902, by threats of bodily violence and social ostracism, all but eight men were driven from the Loewe factory and union agents systematized a boycott of the Loewe products all over the country. Mr. Loewe and his supporters then organized the American Anti-Boycott Association, which undertook to finance the enforcing of the law against boycotts. The procedure consisted of the Loewe suits, one in the Superior Court of Fairfield County and one in the United States District Court in 1903 against the two hundred United Hatters of North America in Danbury, Bethel, and South Norwalk. Real estate and bank accounts to the amount of \$202,000 were attached. The officers of the American Federation of Labor were named as defendants and their counsel claimed the suits had no standing in the courts and the boycott was pushed with renewed force in California, where it was directed against one of Mr. Loewe's largest customers. Mr. Loewe's ruin seemed imminent and would have happened but that he suddenly appeared in California and applied for a temporary restraining order in the United States Circuit Court of

that district. Upon due hearing this injunction was not only obtained but made permanent. This finished the affair and the boycott soon ceased. Mr. Loewe's customers gladly returned and his business resumed and steadily increased. After a slow progress the suits were heard in the United States Supreme Court in February, 1908, and the famous decision was rendered which declared the United Hatters and the American Federation of Labor guilty of a boycott that was "*illegal and in restraint of interstate trade.*" This was an important step in national industrial progress, for it established the principle that "labor unions and their officers are personally liable for damage inflicted by boycott and the victim may sue and recover three-fold the loss actually sustained." After six weeks' trial in the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, before Judge James P. Platt, they obtained a judgment of \$225,000.

Outside of his great part in industrial affairs, Mr. Loewe is prominent in many ways. He was assistant chief of the Danbury Fire Department in 1880, assessor of Danbury soon after that, and state representative on the Democratic ticket in 1887. He has been councilman and alderman. In 1896 Mr. Loewe voted for McKinley and he has been a Republican ever since that time. He is a member of the executive board of the Danbury Relief Society, and since 1901 has been president of the Danbury Hospital Board. He is a member of the German Benevolent Society and was its secretary for thirty years, resigning in 1902. He was at one time chairman of the town poor investigation committee.

On June 21st, 1877, Mr. Loewe married Christina Heinzelman. Their children are Charlotte C., Mathias C., Earnest E., D. Carl, Melanie C., and A. Percival.