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NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK COUNCIL

450 SEVENTH AVENUE, ROOM 1508
NEW YORK CITY

A CONFERENCE BODY OF NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK AGENCIES, ASSOCIATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXCHANGING INFORMATION AND STUDYING COMMON PROBLEMS.

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NATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS ASSOCIATION

March 16, 1934

Miss Ida M. Tarbell
120 East 19 Street
New York City

Dear Miss Tarbell:

Miss Mabel Ellis tells me you are finding the little diaries helpful. I suppose nothing would more graphically show my father's devoted interest in helping maintain institutions and people working along religious lines. They do not show the influence he himself had along many other lines. He gave himself and some rare talents to a broad range of activities. Some background material is really needed to interpret his purpose and habit in systematic giving.

My father was entirely devoid of any ability to promote or publicise himself. Yet he was known among his associates in Wisconsin, where he did most of his work, as a man to tackle difficult and delicate tasks. He left the limelight and showy things for others. He was trusted by every one.

Neither did he have any flair for commercializing his talents. In music, for instance, he could have been very "successful". He was frequently called to Chicago to fill the tenor role in some oratorio. While in the Theological Seminary he held the leading position in a church choir as tenor soloist. He had the rare art of taking a group of ordinary singers and, with the help of a good organist and soprano, producing choral music of a high order. This gift he capitalized in community choral societies as well as in his own church choirs. Yet he showed no interest in flattering offers leading to the professional music field.

He was a real geologist and tramped on foot over most of southern Wisconsin. His great life interest was in the relation between

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geological truth and the first chapter of Genesis. Several books on the subject were the results. (This dual interest always reminds me of the Episcopal minister who had such a marked influence on the early life of Dr. William Osler.)

His application of the "natural science" studied at Amherst College was notable and included the making of a kodak before that word was invented; the making of a stereoptican before they were on the market (except those requiring slides); the making of microscopes (the lenses of course were bought, but he had made the measurements); the teaching of draftsmanship and architectural drawing to the young carpenters and contractors in Lake Geneva; etc., etc. But it never occurred to him to set or ask a price.

The library, the Y.M.C.A., the evening classes and other later community activities all can be traced to the life and talents of this talented, devoted, lovable and essentially unselfish man.

I could write more, but I only wish to give you a little glimpse of the person who kept so faithfully the detailed record of his plan for systematic giving.

I like to think that he was remarkable to me mainly because I knew him and not because there are not many others whose lives are being given unostentatiously, with good sense, and in the common cause. And I often wonder, as I observe the way we have superficially exploited the surface of philanthropy with our emphasis on organization, whether the real wealth of social motive is not actually hidden deep in the lives of many people little known.

Sincerely yours

David H. Holbrook

David H. Holbrook

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