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*New article*

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Dear Miss Tarbell:

I was mentioning you this morning to Joe Folk, anent something you once said to me as to the state of mind of the directors and others who were in Life Insurance scandals. You said, in substance, that most of the men didn't know they were doing wrong, or didn't stop to think whether they were doing wrong, or both, and that the accomplishing of the transaction had come to be the paramount consideration and a matter of habit, thus obscuring the possibility that a moral question lurked beneath. You put it better, but such was the drift. It was so just a comment, and has so many times proved itself to be such in my experience as a commercial and corporation lawyer trying to keep his clients from mistakes and misdeeds, that I have often reverted with pleasure to our conversation. And I likewise bought the November American because your name and "a new business series" was on the cover.

In the old days you were der Geist der stets verneint that there could be any good in the business that you so trenchantly depicted. Your new article, however, is constructive in temper. I grieve to add — unless cured in later articles — that the accent must be very largely on the "con". For your title is patently misleading.

To the beloved Author of the Golden Rule, the doctrine was unremittingly mutual and altruistic. I don't mean that a reward is promised or hoped for in return for compliance with the Golden Rule, but that its injunction is as much on one party as the other; and that A complies partly because he wishes B would do as much for him and hopes that B does or will feel the same way about it, to-day or some day. None the less, A casts his bread on the waters without expecting to see it again, and his motive is far loftier than mere selfishness. If A has any private motive whatever, it is that his Christianity may in time react upon B's spirit and stimulate him to Christian practices, thus spreading the Gospel. But the humaner practices which you describe are in most respects quite other in tendency, quite selfish in motive, for two chief reasons:

(1) The employer does not do these things in any wish, hope or expectation that the worker will, by conscious impulse, labor any better or more zealously.

(3) The worker does not by reason of these things, strive to show his appreciation for, or to reward, his employer.

Let me amplify these reasons a little:

(1) The employer feels impelled to furnish more wholesome and attractive working conditions, not for New Testament reasons, but because

(a) public opinion, perhaps voiced in the press or in statutes, forces him to change his methods. The stubbornest will yield to this force, especially when labor is scarce and, other things being equal, accepts employment in the more inviting shops.

(b) labor unions demand changed working conditions.

(c) competitors refurbish their plants. This force is stronger than (a), above. Stuyvesant Fish, who was on the Cabot Committee to investigate conditions in the United States Steel Corporation, said to me that the rest-rooms, baths, etc. would turn the men into "microcephalous mollycoddles". Nevertheless, if the Steel Corporation coddles its men, Jones & Laughlin and all the others must do so.

(d) more work can be gotten out of workers. Not, I hasten to add, because the worker feels the slightest conscious desire to do more or better work as a result of better light or air or heat or plumbing. A thousand times, no!! But because, unsuspected by the worker and in spite of himself, he does somewhat better work if he is warmed and serene. This is the indirect benefit and is relatively slight. The direct benefit accrues only when these optical and hygienic changes are part of a piece-work system. In fine, I defy you to produce an authentic case of greater and cheaper production as a result solely of bettered working conditions. Kind-hearted, sympathetic employers have tried the idea in countless forms, but I have not yet met a single employer who has not discarded the notion that either production or product is enhanced by making the workman's surroundings more agreeable. They all come back to the place where Gilbreath and Taylor start, namely, piece-work in some of its forms. An ancient canon of jurisprudence holds that only two sorts of constraint are effectual upon mankind, constraint of the person and constraint of the purse. And so, no longer able to crack the slave-driver's whip, the modern employer gives his hireling a chance to bulge his pocket-book.

(e) the employer's personal pride leads him to spend money for turf, rest-rooms, pleasing interiors, and so on. If an employer does so with his own funds, no harm results. If he does so with money that would otherwise go to his investors, he is a wastrel fool and should be discharged. (My vigorous commentary is limited to the case where personal pride, self-satisfaction, is the sole motive.)

(2) Thus much for the employer. In turning to the worker, I want to remark that I am no mere looker-on, who shudders because the factory-floor vibrates. While I have not been a Walter Wyckoff, I have lived for months in a small New Mexico railroad town, in old clothes, slouch hat and black shirt, at a brakeman's boarding house, have known dozens of

them well, have known not only their day's work but how they spent their hours off, and in general am able to speak otherwise than as a Scribe or Pharisee (no offence intended, ma'am!). Also I have had to do with railroad shops, with a placer mine and with automobile factories. So, while not a qualified industrial captain, I know more of real working conditions than the average lawyer or reformer knows.

And from this knowledge, I unhesitatingly aver that the worker, taking him by and large, has no idea above or beyond Getting More Money for Less Work. I am unutterably sorry that it is so. In isolated cases it is not so. But in 99 per cent. or thereabouts, the fact is as I have asserted.

When I was a boy, the carpenter's hammer began at 7:00 A.M. and ceased at 6:00 P.M. Now I meet the carpenters who are building my house as I am on my way to my 8:09 train, and they don't begin until 8:20; they quit at 4:20, two hours before my homeward train leaves Grand Central Terminal. And they are paid more than they got for the old ten-hour day. Oh, I know all wages have risen and living is dearer, but they get more per hour, per foot-pound-second, per any old unit you want to apply, and what hurts is that not one in 10,000 of them works for the work's sake. Their union has been shaped and managed solely to get them more wages and a shorter day — never to give the employer anything. If the employer gives his people safer track to ride over, steel vehicles, automatic signals or safety devices, do they give him anything in return? Not a bally thing! And they strike every other April in the coal business out west, regardless of whether the mine-operator has complied with all Federal requirements plus a few frills of his own

devising.

No, Miss Tarbell, all is not gold that glitters. The pleasure you take in the light and airy workshops, brilliant in cleanliness and order, must not persuade you that the Golden Rule is hovering near. The employer is paying the least that he can to get the work done amid such surroundings as he thinks it provident to create, and the worker is doing his little old minimum, the same as ever, unless spurred by the piece-work system.

I am not a perfectly just person, so I can't deal fairly with the subject. But I wish some perfectly just person would some day discuss the history of the unionized trades on railroads. For example, and by way of contrast, consider my office force and the engineer of the train on which I happen to be riding. My office people are educated, of circumspect behavior and pleasant manners. I pay them, I believe, at least as well as similar work commands elsewhere. They work six days a week from 9:00 to 5:30 or 6:00. Overtime work occurs frequently. The engineer is educated enough to read the rule book, his morals are as may be (drinking being the only thing prohibited), and he may be as uncouth in dress and bearing as suits his taste, if any. Successive demands by his union have brought his work to the almost irreducible minimum. He mustn't do too many miles per month. So to-day he takes me from Washington to New York, 210 miles, 6 hours of running time, say 8 hours on duty at the outside. Some 2,000 miles per month are his maximum, or say 10 working days, so he works only every third day. His work is safer

and easier than driving an automobile half the distance. And he gets for this, thanks to his union's unblushing nerve, from two and a half to three times as much as the best of my clever and industrious stenographers. Answering your inquiry at this point, certainly I should like to pay the office force better, as a matter of mere generous impulse, but as a selfish, competitive question in a competitive world, why should I? The point I am making is that there is no altruism about this matter, on either side. The Golden Rule simply isn't involved.

Possibly, after all, my real grievance is with your title, not your subject-matter. Yet the last paragraph of your November article, for example, I believe to be arrant nonsense; indeed, one of the "fatigue and efficiency" girls, — not Miss Goldmark — one said that it had come to be a melancholy reflection among her group that with pleasant working conditions you ordinarily find the lowest possible wages, a statement that I think is at least as true as your closing paragraph. But, concededly, ever since Charles Reade wrote, shop conditions have steadily bettered. I shall suspend judgment until I see how you treat workmen's compensation, for example, wherein, as enforced in this county the Golden Rule is emphatically not among those present.

Permit one other wicked little dig, something rather infra dig. Three at least of the corporations that you praise have been prosecuted by the public authorities! Indeed, these prosecutions are getting to be a badge of merit: if you are progressive and prosperous, prosecution will follow as the night the day. I know this has no con-

nection with the interior of the workshop; I simply am amused that the Miss Tarbell of "You must compete, but you mustn't compete too hard" is willing to praise methods, which, among other effects, have certainly cost competitors a pretty penny to emulate. .

Faithfully yours,

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