

The New Business Ethics.

The present world is less in need of fresh words than the translation of old ones into actualities. Men are not asking for a New Gospel, Bill of Rights or Declaration of Independence. They are asking that those they have made good. They are not asking for new songs, they are asking that they be free to sing the old ones. You can no longer content men with dogmas and creeds and orations. You must show them the fruit of all this speaking. He who would stir the hearts of men today must give them realities.

The unrest we have knows from no dissatisfaction with our underlying ideals. We still thrill to their nobility. If loftier visions than those of the brotherhood of all men and the consequent right of all to life, liberty and happiness are to be ours there is as yet no trace of their coming in our sky. Our unrest is born of the slowness with which our visions are coming true.

The segment of life in which this failure to realize our ideas and ideals is most acutely felt is that of American Industry. But a few generations ago the most amazing Superman on Earth was this same American Industry. The exhaustless eagerness, joyousness and inventiveness with which he had attacked the new continent had set the world agape. Dazzled by the performance men and women fetched and carried, fought and worked, rejoiced even in death for him. And this he could do because he held up to their eyes banners on which were inscribed words which carried more conviction to their minds, gave more hope to their hearts than ever banner carried before in all the world's history.

"Freedom for all, opportunity for all, brothers all, we the people." These were the words the young God Industry flung out to men and they followed. Yet today he stands a culprit before these followers charged with the breaking of his own laws - with treachery to his own standards. From being the favorite God he is in danger of becoming the favorite scrape-goat.

What did the words on his banner mean? What could they mean but that in America at least the curse of ^{Cain} was to be wiped from the brow of labor and it was to be done through a liberal application of the ideas implied in the great document on which our Democracy was founded and on the Golden Rule which was its religious inspiration. There is no getting around the meanings of these rules of our natural life. They mean that labor, and labor alone is an honorable estate, that he who fails to do his share, "earn his keep" is doing just so much to hinder the realization of the vision which guides us. They mean that the worker must have a reward ascending to his service and no more. Service and character. These are the only touchstones which it is possible to read into the Gospel of Christ and the Declaration of Independence and he who fails to grasp this fact and to strive to realize it in his actual practice is putting both schemes back so much.

But what have we seen? Why a great group of the beneficiaries of these ideas decrying them as impractical. Having attained for themselves their faith seems to have collapsed. The scheme they say isn't equal to the strain of taking in everybody. In order that the nation shall keep and add to what it has gained they must not be allowed to run it - not according to "visionary ideas", - to which visionary ideas they owe what they have. - but according to the practical idea of those who possess. For fifty years we have seen them seriously laboring to formulate and put into operation a New Industrial Code from which every trace of Pure Democracy had been carefully extracted. The substance of this new code was that it was for the good of all that a few control the resources of the land, the advantages of the highways, the mediums of exchange, the machinery of representative government. To meet the obvious objections that such a code conflicted as much with sound morals as with sound Democracy we were told morals had nothing to do with business. To meet the sound objection that it worked inhuman results we

were told humanity had nothing to do with business.

Incomprehensible as it certainly will seem to the world one day this effort to take from Industry its vision and to make its banners mockeries has been successful. Take the matter of our high ways nothing is commoner than to hear people arguing that the idea that their privileges belongs to us all equally, is new. Take "not ten years ago rebates were granted and received without question". The statement is a common enough affirmation and a fair illustration of the amazing success of the Few in trying to persuade the country that rebates should be "granted and received without question". As a fact of the matter the country's sense of honor and of democracy was always outraged by the practice. It was always dangerous and done in secret. Over forty years ago that sense of outrage led to the formulation of a Federal Law making the practice illegal in the written as it was already in the unwritten law - over twenty-five years ago that law was passed. Rebates have never been granted "without a question" in this country. Pressure, fear of discovery and popular clamor have always surrounded them.

To make actualities of all our great democratic principles as we are beginning to do on the highways - that is the Day's Work in the United States of America. The work must be done from within. Little but insistence that it be done, can come from without. Reformer's attempts to show how business should be run - to frame law laws controlling business are usually amateurish and bungling. Their value is that they force scientific practical work to be done. It is when Industry sets itself seriously to establish new standards that we may expect substantial and permanent results. And Industry is doing this, has been doing it steadily throughout all the long period of the effort to upset the democratic business code and establish one without morals and without humanity. Industry furnishes today many proofs worked o

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Incomprehensible as it certainly will seem to the world one day this effort to take from our ~~great~~ ^{the} Industry ~~the~~ ^{its} vision and to make ~~its~~ ^{the} banners mockeries has been largely successful. Take the matter of our highways, nothing is commoner than to hear people arguing that the idea that their privileges belong to us all equally, is new. "Not ten years ago" writes one of the ablest journalists of the country "rebates were granted and received without question". The statement is a fair illustration of the amazing success of the Few in trying to persuade the country that rebates should be "granted and received without question". As a matter of fact they know best - these steel, iron, oil and grain barons, who would like us to believe this - the fight that they made for fifty years to secure rebates, so dangerous was the practice even before a law had been written on the statute book books. They know the country's sense of honor and of democracy was always outraged by the practice. Over forty years ago that sense of outrage led to the formulating of a Federal Law making the practice illegal in the written as it was already in the unwritten law - over twenty-five years ago that law was passed. Rebates have never been granted "without a question" in this country. Pressure, fear of discovery and popular clamor have always surrounded them.

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out silently and sometimes, though not always unconsciously, of the essential soundness of every point in that program of social and industrial reform which in the last few years has been so fully elaborated by humanitarians and progressives that it was possible last year to put at least a part of it into the platform of a political party and secure for it 4,174,000 votes.

Certain of these demonstrations cut deeper into the industrial trouble than any reforming device. Starting within and followed often painfully always slowly where they naturally led, they have come or they are coming out at the very seat of the difficulties. Follow for illustration the lead of the work that has been doing for a quarter of a century by a certain Brooklyn forging Company and you will find yourself with unmistakeable proofs that a certain highly venerated privilege which we have been pinching ourselves for decades to support is little better than a Humbug and you will find yourself believing more firmly than ever that the Brotherhood of Man is a workable doctrine.

Thirty years ago the house in which this work has been unconsciously enough done was the smallest of eight of its kind in the United States. The two men who owned it made up with the men at the hammers its entire force. They managed it; kept its books; sold its output. One of their subjects of friendly chaffing in those early days was that the junior partner worked at a desk which had cost \$7.00, while that of the senior partner cost but \$6.00.

This senior partner at the \$6.00 desk, James H. Williams by name, was then a man about forty years old. He had grown up in another manufacturing business and he held as a principle primary to success a doctrine which was so in contradiction to

wrong. I am not saying that Mr. Williams and his associates have had as full an idea of their relation to all labor as they should have had or that in this factory all the planks of the Progressive Party have been realized. I am saying that their work is a tremendous argument for conducting a business on the principles that its chief asset is its men and that all which contributes to their prosperity, health and happiness contributes to the success of the business.

All of which leads us back to the first proposition in this paper that the unrest of our times has come not from dissatisfaction with our fundamental beliefs and ideals but from their denial and perversion by those who for their own imagined good have combined to persuade the country that they are impractical. Industry itself is demonstrating that the most impractical features of present day business and politics are the so-called practical ones! Industry itself is proving the falsity of the theory that higher wages are a burden to be balanced by special privileges. Industry itself is proving the extravagance of over-work-the taking of the last drop of a man's vitality. Industry itself is proving the shameful wastefulness of allowing conditions which eat up a man's health - which maim him and throw him uncared for on the scrap heap.

Industry is demonstrating that a fair share of profits - a measure of the joy of life - a chance for a home of one's own, a hearty co-operation of all elements in a business, pays and that by a combination of scientific management, democratic ideals and Christianity they are possible. Industry will not stand longer for monopoly of production, for centralization of credit and money, for the tying up of any of its elements in a few hands. It will not consent that our fundamental beliefs were wrong beliefs because within itself it has the constant and repeated proof that they are the only permanently satisfactory ones. It sees monopoly inviting the destruction of itself by its ~~enjoyance~~ ^{arrogance} with rivals and its taxes on the public. It sees privileges concentrating the products of men's labor and of natural bounty. It sees ~~unhappiness~~ ^{bitterness} and poor work and incessant unrest coming from a denial to the many of a fair share in the fruits of

Industry. These it says are the impractical features of our working life. These are what we must strip off. Let us return to old visions and lift up old banners. It is to certain of the demonstrations that industry is shaking off its fetters that this series of articles will be devoted.