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THE DIRECTOR

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Clerk #11

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
WASHINGTON

February 26, 1935.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
120 East Nineteenth Street,
New York, New York.

Dear Madam:

I have your letter of February 26, stating that "the census of 1890 in classifying occupations says that it includes those in respectable and gainful occupations," and inquiring whether this restriction was once customary and why and when it was dropped.

On page 704 of the Population report of the Census of 1890, in a discussion of the occupation tables, it is stated:

"These tables embrace only gainful and reputable occupations. They do not seek to account for those persons, in whatever sphere of life, who have no recognized avocation for which they receive compensation in the shape of wages, salary, or profits, or derive products of a merchantable character. All persons, moreover, whose means of livelihood are criminal, or, in the general judgment of mankind, shameful, are excluded."

It has been and is the practice in the United States, and I think in most other countries, not to include in the census of occupations "disreputable" or "criminal" occupations. Larceny, robbery, prostitution, etc., may be lucrative, but thieves, robbers, and prostitutes are not included in the census of gainful occupations. They are omitted, not alone because they pursue disreputable callings, but also because it is fully recognized that any attempt to collect information in regard to their pursuits would be unsuccessful.

Very truly yours,


Director.