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WHY I BELIEVE IN AN UPWARD SPIRAL

(The childhood ambition of Ida Tarbell was to be a biologist and own a microscope, through the eyes of which she hoped to rediscover God. Instead she became a writer. For four generations she has been rediscovering manhind through the wise and warm-hearted eyes of one of the most remarkable women of our time. Now at eighty two she looks back on a world which she has seen make four sharts toward Utopia, only to return each time, it seems, baffled and unsuccessful. But she is not discouraged. She believes that in spite of many defeats, mankind's path is not a futile circle but a slow upward spiral. We asked her to tell us specifically some of the reasons for her belief. Here they are: Editor)

My faith in an upward spiral fluctuates with the time length of my measuring rod.

When I attempt to decide which way mankind is moving by keeping my eyes fixed only on the exhibits of the week, the years, even the generations, I confess to bewilderment. I see only a whirlpool in which successive sets of men and women gyrate madly for a time, then sink, leaving the senseless performance to a fresh crop of dervishers.

But it is another matter when I try a longer rod, sixty years long for example, that being the period in which I have consciously practiced my profession as a journalist. ~~I form my judgments on what I have seen and known and experienced.~~

What does that show as to what I regard as essentials in carrying out the pledge to which as citizens of the United States we are commited, that is the pledge to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, ... promote the general welfare?"

What are the chief essentials in our problem of promoting the general welfare? To my way of thinking we can simmer them down to four:-

1) Health

2) Enough Food, Shelter and Clothing for every man, woman and child, with a little fun thrown in.

3) Freedom to go out and find something to do and along with it freedom to express our opinions.

4) Basis to the continued existence and growth of these ends an End to Force at home and abroad, in government and industry as a method of settling our difficulties - the substitution for force, of Co-operation, Negotiation, decent Consideration for each other's opinion.

How do we come out if we apply my sixty year long measuring tape to these fundamentals? Take the matter of health.

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I can remember when the dread of my childhood was that I should have smallpox and come out with a pock-marked face. I never hear of a case of smallpox these days. If one lifts its ugly head our health services, the physicians of town and country are after it, segregating it, preventing its spread. It is not the only disease under control. How terrible was the idea of diptheria to my mother. She feared it more than I did smallpox ~~for~~ and it was more prevalent. Last year twenty four large cities in the United States reported that they had not had a case of diptheria.

Typhoid was another of the terrors of our towns and cities sixty years ago. There are many American cities today which have had no deaths from typhoid for as long as five years. But there are still more conducive proofs of an upward health spiral. There is the lowering of our death rate, the lengthening of our life line in this period.

How has this come about? For sixty years I have been seeing and sometimes serving in campaigns for pure water, for sewage disposal, for slum clearance, for the inspection of food, the regulation of markets, the control of milk supplies - all in the name of public health. And I have seen the effects of these campaigns in an increasing steady prevention of disease.

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And in this war I have seen men and women give their lives to discovering the causes of deadly fevers, obscure diseases. As we have learned we have applied, establishing schools of public health, laboratories for local tests and experiments; public health boards for administration for what we have learned, a constantly growing mass of discoveries, methods, machinery for appliance and regulation.

We have not conquered tuberculosis and cancer, you say. There are thousands of spots where the knowledge and practices of preventing disease, or curing it as it comes, have not been reached. True enough, but consider the impassioned efforts making to conquer the unconquered diseases, to spread the knowledge of what we do know about health.

So much for health. But how about Enough? Enough food and shelter and clothing with some fun thrown in. How about that?

What strikes hardest when I compare what we had in the 1870's with what we have now in the 1930's is the extraordinary increase, not only in quality of all these things, but in kind. I can remember when an orange was a luxury for Christmas and birthdays, but now who is so poor that he cannot have an orange if he wants it? In multitudes of ways we have increased in these sixty years the

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quantity, variety and quality of the necessities of life. And if we are to believe those who wrestle with the problem of what industry with the help of the machine have learned to do in producing Enough we can believe that we have the tools, the technique, the knowledge today to produce all that is necessary for a satisfactory orderly life for every man, woman and child in the United States.

True enough, it does not get to everybody in proper proportion. And there is our problem - to produce the abundance we know how to produce and learn how to get it to every man in proportion to his earning power.

Is that a harder problem than to have learned how to produce abundance? I doubt it. It simply means new and patient efforts. What is it that Whitman says?

"Now understand me well - it is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary."

What is most important in solving this hard problem of distribution? Is it not that same Freedom to experiment, apply, that in the main have brought our tremendous advance in health and production? The promotion of the general welfare depends upon the freedom of man, to seek opportunity, to sweat for his daily bread and the right to eat it when he has earned it. This freedom does not depend on somebody

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making opportunity for him, sweating for him. And in this perplexed and tormented present moment what is so fine, what is so heartening as the fight for this freedom of opportunity and expression which the artist, the writer, editor, has been putting up. We wouldn't have done that sixty years ago not as generally and as boldly. We believed too much in the pussyfoot. We did not see so clearly that the greatest essential in securing this general welfare is the largest freedom, freedom even to be a fool, common sense and experience teaching us that a fool is his own surest cure.

All right, but today as sixty years ago all our gains may be set back, if not shattered, by war. I grew up with the notion of the nobility of war. It was essential to the larger freedom of man, the betterment of the world. Had not the Civil War given freedom to the enslaved? For what better purpose could men live and die?

It was long before I realized that there were before this Civil War peaceful forces at work, economic and moral, that with time and patience would have produced general freedom in this country, spared devastated regions, lasting bitter hates, a new crop of problems.

Nothing convinces me more today that the world can in time learn that there are always forces at work which if slow are less destructive, surer in their effects, than war and revolutions ever proved themselves - nothing

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more convinces me of this than our experiment with the League of Nations. When you get fifty seven nations to agree even for a limited time that there may be a way to avoid wars, bring them to a point where they put their names to a covenant which makes its object the finding of this way, you have planted in the world a new hope, a new ideal. Make no mistake about it it is the hopes and the ideals of the world which in the long run push the spiral upward.

In our hasty push-the-button civilization we quickly discard any organization that does not automatically work. Having resolved, signed petitions, set up machinery, we expect that it will go as we planned. It seems obvious enough now to those who lived through the Great War and study the settlements that if the Covenant was to live great sacrifices were called for on the part of the victors, as well as of the conquered. But vengeance was strong in the victors.

A fundamental gain from the Great war is that there is no Nation on earth in which there are not a few who realize that war is a delusion, that the victors are beset by more dangers than the conquered, that peace means sacrifice no less than war. Our present job if we want a world fit to live in is to discover why the tremendous undertaking of bringing the nations of the world together for a common

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purpose failed. One of our great early machine builders used to say when he had finished his work, "Now start her up boys and see why she doesn't work." That was the true question for the League of Nations to ask in 1919 but instead it set up a complacent beauracy and expected it to do the job.

The world has built up a large peace machinery:- tribunals, diplomacies, societies, a League of Nations, and now our job is to see why this machinery, inspired as it is by the noblest and oldest of man's dreams, does not work satisfactorily. It is a long struggle we have beforeus, but remember what whitman said:- "That from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary."

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