April 1, 1038

Dear Mrs. Wolfe:

I am enclosing the rough lay-out of a talk I had with Miss Tarbell on her proposed story for Readers Digest.

I sent the original to Mr. Wallace, informing him that Miss Tarbell did not feel that she should do the piece entirely on speculation. In reference to this point Mr. Wallace wrote: "I think we should speculate $200 on the outcome of "The Poor You Have Always with You". It may be desirable to suggest revision, but your outline sounds quite promising. Will you tell Miss Tarbell that she has a great idea, and should produce a splendid piece?"

It seems to me that Miss Tarbell should be willing to go ahead on this basis.

Understand, the enclosed outline isn't to be taken as anything but a general guide. It is merely the outcome of our talk and I sent it to her for what it may be worth. Mr. Wallace was enthusiactic about the sewing room story.

Yours very truly,

F. S. Tisdale

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71 East 77th St.

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NOTES ON SUGGESTED STORY BY IDA TARBELL CONTRASTING THE REMEMBERED PAST WITH THE PRESENT.

TITLE: "THE POOR YOU HAVE ALWAYS WITH YOU".

FROM F. S. TISDALE

MISS TARBELL IS QUOTED, ROUGHLY:

Once every year our pastor preached a sermon on the text: "The poor ~~ye~~ you have always with you". In other churches a similar rule was followed.

This discourse was intended to remind the more fortunate of their responsibilities toward the less fortunate. It followed grimly the Biblical theory that God placed the poor on the earth for certain purposes. One was to afford good Christians a chance to share their blessings. This was not something to be accepted or discarded according to any whim. It was an edict from a stern God who did not forget and might not forgive. Good Christians accepted the command without question, although there were degrees of generosity.

~~Back in the seventies well-to-do families accepted this philosophy of charity.~~ They gave to the poor as a religious and moral duty--backed in some cases by a shadowy feeling that it would insure good fortune.

I grew up in Titusville, Pa. The community had grown rich on the first oil boom. Our families usually gave lavishly, guaging their donations ~~generosities~~ to the flow of the Lord's blessings.

Only in cases of sudden and overwhelming disasters did the federal government appropriate money for relief. We practiced the preachment that charity began at home. From there it radiated to the utmost corners of the country. Churches led in all the larger campaigns, usually through the Home Mission Society of similar organizations.

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I remember collecting clothes and money for victims of the great Chicago fire. Also for suffers from the grasshopper plagues which swept Kansas and Nebraska.

In those days nobody thought of shirking individual responsibility by blaming poverty on the ecnomic system. Since the Bible said in so many words that poverty was a divine institutenn, it was accepted as a definite part of the family program. The poor fell into definite classes:

(1) "Our" poor, the families for which our family accepted responsibility. (2) The church poor, unfortunate church members or families without direct affiliations with families better off. (3) Tramps. (4) The city poor, groups cared for out of municipal funds. (5) The county poor, inhabitants of the poor farm.

We considered poverty a condition, but not a caste. Only the poor farm (which cared for indigent old folks, cripples, feeble minded, etc) was beyond hope. Efforts in all other cases was to aid unfortunates to jobs and self support.

We took care of four or five families. Two of these were negro. Then there was a Frenchman. The rest were shiftless Americans. I remember only two professionals. They were "spinster ladies" who had seen better days. One would appear with a basket and ask if she could fill it with apples or potatoes from our cellar. They were frank in apllying for old dresses, coats or hats which they liked. Only these two accepted charity as something that was their due. They always came to the front door.

Most interesting to me were the tramps. Some of them were incurable wanderers and some were workers traveling to towns where they hoped to get jobs. Between 1873 and 1879 the country was stricken by a deadful depression. For six years not a coke oven was fired in the Pittsurgh district. Distress among workmen was worse than anything I have since seen.

During this period three to five wanderers would knock at our

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kitchen door every morning and ask for ~~food~~ food. We never turned one away. Titusville believed that such men ought to be fed only after they had worked for it. Some stern christians held that tramps should do heavy tasks even if they were useless. In ~~some~~ their yards there were piles of stones which tramps moved senselessly from one place to another before they were fed. It would be called "boondoggling" now.

My father held that only useful tasks should be required. The kitchen-door applicant chopped wood, brought in coal, cut the lawn, etc. But if father wasn't home mother often handed out food without making the tramp work for it. She kept a pot of coffee on the stove in the morning for these men. Bread and butter went with it. For appealing cases mother would fry eggs or bacon.

Father loved "fried cakes", as we called doughnuts. He would only eat those cooked the same day. The tramps fell heir to the left-overs.

Then, as now, the poor were always having babies. We tried to get jobs for youngsters as they grew up. I remember that we were immensely proud when one of the negro families among "our poor" worked back to independence and self respect.

Care of the poor seems to have become a vast and intricate science. I wonder whether human recoveries under this system are as high or as permanent as under the man-to-man methods of a simpler age. I wonder too what is going to take the place of the religious instruction which gave us a moral and spiritual guide for our actions.

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