"The More You Break - the More We Make"

Is it true that modern industry has adopted as a slogan "the more you break the more we make?"

Admire as one will and as I certainly do the ingenuity, variety, abundance of our factories and mills, the conveniences they provide for all classes - for the kitchen of the housewife, the bench of the artisan, the desk of the writer and the clerk - the cheapness of all sorts of novelties and devices - admiration is sunk in disgust at the lack of integrity in standard necessaries where quality counts.

It is not serious that the vanity bag be a collection of glittering junk, but it is serious that the hose I pay ruinous prices for unravel at the first wearing - the enamel of my high-priced pans peel on a week's use - the sheen of my serge and silk and broadcloth turn quickly to an oily shine.

There is an alarming side to this indifference to quality in output which those who permit it and profit by it do not appreciate and that is the revolt it stirs in the mind of the thrifty buyer. It sets him to comparing the prices he pays - the durability of his purchases with his experience of twenty, even ten years ago. He sees himself getting less wear for more money. There may be an "improvement" in the later product: there is almost certain to be more paint on the surface, more grace in the form, but when it comes to service - to doing the thing wanted over a long period,

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the product of today falls down. He feels defrauded, grows bitter, and seeks in talk and in politics a chance to express his discontent. Here is a case to the point:

I have a valued neighbor in Pleasant Valley - a careful, hard-working, thrifty farmer - fair in his judgments of those better off than himself - but he is steadily becoming a noisy revolutionist. The cause of the uproar in the mind of this normally peaceful man, who truly asks only that he be given full measure in return for the full measure he gives, is that the maker of the tools he must buy for his farming are, as he expresses it, "doin' him dirt!"

And he has proved it to me more than once by his exhibits and their history.

This year his favorite exhibit is a cultivator, new in the Spring. Now to him a new farm implement of any kind is an event. He buys it only after careful and repeated examination. He "sleeps on it" - talks it over with Her ("Her" being the wife) and finally when it does come home, sits all the evening beside it, contemplating its merits, shows it to his neighbors; and his first try-out is as exciting as the try-out of a new car.

This Spring he groaned much over the new cultivator, for it cost just three times what his old one, bought ten years ago, had cost. He put it to work and three hours later - crack went an essential bar of the front frame. He "fixed it best I could." A week, and a wheel came apart. He riveted it together. Another week, and the handle split. I looked at it after it had had three weeks' use. It was still shining with black and red paint and

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varnish, but it looked like the victim of an automobile crash - bandaged handle and frame - a heavily riveted wheel - that my layman's eye could see.

He brought out his old cultivator - ten years old. It was of the same make. "It's better today than this new one which cost me three times as much," he told me. "They don't care about me - they don't want them to wear. At the store they laugh and tell me 'the more you break the more we sell,'" - a variation of the slogan with which we started.

Last year he had a similar experience in every particular with scythes. He bought a half dozen at the opening of the haying season, paying treble what he had ten years before. In the first week every one had broken down - tangs off - blades chipped and bent. And to finish the season he had gone to his junk heap and his garret and dragged out the discarded. They, the old and worn did the work of the season.

Is it any wonder that my farmer friend says "Something's the matter." Or that he declares "Something must be changed." He has not fixed the point of attack, but if he ever becomes reasonably sure of it I miss my guess if he does not try hard to hit it.

It looks to me like a real grievance in a world where I admit there are many fictitious ones. It looks to me that he is right when he says, "Something's wrong." I thought it might be the tariff, so I looked at the Tariff Act of 1922. Cultivators come in free, and they tell me at the Custom House that it is an honest-to-

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God "free"; that is, there are no jokers.

What is it that's wrong? Is it not that over-much combination in the making of farm tools has given such power and profit to those in the combination that there is no longer need to consider quality, there being so little actual competition?

My farmer friend is right - they are not thinking of him - of his need of durable tools in his hard struggle with the land, raising our food - they are thinking only of swelling the number they can sell at the highest price that they can get. It is unfair and they who get righ at such a price must not expect their victims to hold their tongues forever.

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