

GENERAL STEEL CASTINGS CORPORATION

COMMONWEALTH DIVISION

GRANITE CITY, ILLINOIS

March 5, 1930.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
120 E. 19th Street,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

Mr. William H. Cameron, Managing Director of the National Safety Council, has just advised me that you have generously volunteered to write a safety article for publication entitled "SAFETY SENSE". This is a worthy and timely undertaking and is deserving of any assistance industry can render in providing lessons learned from experiences in the shops.

Mr. Cameron tells me you would welcome such experiences, therefore, as a background to the following incident which occurred in our shop you will perhaps better understand it if I tell you first that we operate a steel foundry, manufacturing heavy railroad castings. Some of these castings weigh thirty-five tons each and we employ approximately 3500 men. On our chipping and machine floors, owing to the nature of the work, it is very noisy, this being caused by operation of air hammers, large overhead cranes, milling and planing machines and drills. Frequently men must shout to be understood.

On December 8, 1928, at about 9:50 A.M. two employees were operating a large machine known as #513 Slotter in #5 Building. A large casting was on the bed of the slotter at the time. The operator was adjusting tool in slotter head and his helper was on opposite side of machine at the controls, moving bed and casting slowly to cutting position.

While bed was in motion the man at the controls heard someone shouting. He immediately stopped the machine and then reversed its motion, again stopping it. After he had done this he went to see whether anyone was in danger. When he crossed over to opposite side of the machine he found that a man from an adjacent machine had come over without his knowledge to secure a wrench and had become caught by the moving casting.

Fortunately, due to the prompt action of the helper, he was released without serious injury which would not have been the case if the machine had traveled a few inches farther. Had the helper hesitated or looked around to see if there was any trouble instead of first stopping the machine this hesitancy on his part would have unquestionably resulted in a serious accident.

To a casual observer this incident may seem very commonplace and have nothing in it to attract special attention, however, when one realizes that men frequently shout back and forth on their machines, and chainmen shout to warn men to get in the clear from loads being carried by cranes, it would be very easy for a man in a position of the helper in this case to have misinterpreted the shout of this man as it was much the same as he

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hears many times during the day. However, he did not. There was apparently something different about it that told him things were not right and immediate action was demanded. Further than this his senses at the moment must have been in tune with the situation as immediate and intelligent action resulted. Do you not agree with me in that this might be considered the operation of a sixth or SAFETY SENSE?

We endeavor here at the Commonwealth to study the mental attitude of our men as we feel this is the big problem before us now in our safety work. We have found that harmony and the synchronisation of action not only develops proper coordination resulting in skill and performance, but also sharpens the senses to a point where they can intelligently meet situations with precision and good judgement. Proper preparation and forethought are excellent safe guards as they teach men the habit of doing things in the right way. This habit in itself is a protection for it is apt to repeat itself unconsciously when instantaneous action is called for.

Experience we feel is also another quality of protection as men who are experienced in their work know pretty well what is apt to occur in the course of the various involved operations. Anything which interferes with or changes the proper sequence of events will immediately attract their attention. Sight and hearing of course play an important part in helping men sense a new situation.

We have always been strong believers in the positive or right way of doing things as this tends to build confidence and confidence is an attribute of safety, helping one to have dominion over self. At time of extreme emergency one who is habitually confident will react involuntarily along the lines of previous training and by having all his faculties working soberly and efficiently will sense an unsafe situation in sufficient time to either correct it or avoid it.

Please feel, Miss Tarbell, that in giving you the above impressions it is my earnest desire to help the safety movement in any way I can. I wish you success in the preparation of your article.

Sincerely,


E. G. QUEENEL,
Safety Engineer.

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Copy to Mr. William H. Cameron.