

Endicott, N.Y.

Nov. 29th, 1919

Miss Ida Tarbell

New York, N.Y.

My dear Miss Tarbell,-

Personal

George W. Johnson (my son) has handed to me your letter dated the 26th, receipt of which I understand he has acknowledged; and with it, the article which you prepared, after a visit to our factories, entitled "Humans - 90% To The Good; How it Works as a Business Policy".

First, I wish to say that I am extremely and really sorry that I did not have the privilege of meeting you when you were here. As you were told, at that time, I was in Florida, after a much needed rest. I have known you so long (and I may add, so intimately) through the Magazines and newspapers, that I could not but feel a sense of loss, in not having had the pleasure of becoming personally acquainted with you, through your visit to our neighborhood. Mr. Endicott told me you were going to come down here, with the idea of writing up something about our business, but I was not sure when you were coming, else I would have staid home, and had the pleasure of meeting you. But perhaps at some other time I may be more fortunate.

With respect to the article prepared, I have read it carefully, and have made some changes (which would be but natural). In the main, I like it very well, and for a short visit, you certainly "dug pretty deep," and you found, (as few writers have found) the real "spirit" of it. One of the best things that can be said of us,

is the simple, and so far successful, application of the "Golden Rule" in Industry. There is nothing else that marks us as any different from others, so far as control of the "human element" is concerned.

We have, of course, a great many original and economical methods of manufacturing leather and shoes. We have been able to create products of greater value, which we market at a less price, and on which we have made a liberal profit. This of course has helped us tremendously, in giving us the necessary financial backing. Our peaceful and happy Labor conditions have given us a steady, uniform, uninterrupted production, which has also been of great help to us. These things I am rather glad you did not handle in your story, because after all, the really big thing, that seems to me best worth dwelling on, and writing on, is the human relationship which has been established, and which you write of so pleasant^{ly} and may I add - so cleverly.

Now, I want to say a few things which will justify the changes and corrections which you will find have been made in your article.

Life is short, at best. The balance of my life is limited. I am very jealous and sensitive with respect to statements which are made about this business. I want the truth to be known. Much has been written which is misleading. So it is necessary to explain.

First, you will notice I have corrected your statement which reads, "the biggest shoe makers in the world, the Endicott Johnson Company, near Binghamton, N.Y.". I have changed this to read, "the Endicott Johnson Company of Endicott and Johnson City, N.Y."

Then, you will notice I have crossed out the name of Harry Johnson on the second page, because the statement as it reads

is not fair to Harry Johnson. The idea of "broken time" was my own idea. As a young man and a factory worker, I realized the injustice of the iron-clad rule, which made a machine of a human, starting and stopping at given intervals. Hence I have taken out any reference to Harry Johnson.

For other reasons, I have taken out the whole interview (pages 6 and 7) that you had with Mr. Eliot Spalding, Treasurer of the Company. Mr. Spalding is not, and has not been, in sympathy with the "Square Deal Policy" as applied to workers; and I do not like the idea of these figures being quoted. I do not like the idea, any way, of making it appear that we have ever figured "whether it paid, financially" to do the things we have been able to do. I think when you apply terms of money, to things of this kind, it cheapens them. Mr. Spalding's reference to it does not please me, because as I have said, he is not at heart in sympathy with it. From him, I believe, ~~if~~ it has any sympathy, it is because it pays, and for no other reason.

I am writing you frankly, Miss Tarbell, because I want you to have the facts. Of course not for publication, and not for any use, except to put you in touch with the real, true situation up here.

Further, I have crossed out your reference to Mr. H.B. Endicott as having "discovered" me. Mr. Endicott did not "discover" me. Quite the contrary. As a foreman, under G. Harry Lester's direction, I went to Mr. Lester, and begged for hours - pleading and arguing - for a chance to become Superintendent of the factory. They were at that time looking for a Superintendent, and had been for three months. Over-looking the people in the factory, they were doing as so many others did at that time (and are doing still) - traveled over the Country to find a "ready-made man" at a long salary, to come in and take charge. I was

a "Boss" then, in a very limited way, but had confidence that I could "make good" if given a chance. At that, I don't believe Mr. Lester would have given me a chance, except I made a statement which must have impressed him: namely - "I will run this business for one year without pay, and any time within the year, without a minute's notice, you can discharge me, if I am not making good." After five hours argument, discussion and talk, I convinced Mr. Lester that I was worth a trial. This was the beginning of my connection as General Manager of the business. It was then a very small business, employing about five hundred people. It was weeks after, that I met Mr. Endicott. He was then simply a Director in the Company. Mr. Lester had control. This explains why I crossed off the statement about Mr. Endicott.

I expect your story will be widely read, and I would like to have it "run true to form", as I know you desire also.

I have never liked - to repeat - and like today less than ever, to refer to our relations with our working partners in any manner which makes any distinction between these partners and the Directors in control. I have said, and have believed firmly, that the way to get the respect and confidence of the workers, is to honor, respect and have confidence in them. I have educated myself to speak of the worker and his wife and family, as I would speak of the Director or General Manager, or any person in the Concern, and his wife and family. I think you get the idea. I have come to believe it is just as important that the worker and his wife and family, be courteously, kindly and considerately treated, in every way. Hence, I have not liked the impression that has been given, that while we lose on the meals we serve for fifteen cents - and while we pay out a lot of money for recreation, etc. - it pays to do it. Of course you and I know it does pay to do it, as it pays to be honest and fair in all our dealings with our

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fellowmen, always. But I hate to believe that these things can be figured in dollars and cents. It is just doing right for Right's sake. It pays on that account; but I hate to see it printed. For instance, I have seen it printed, that our workers were given a good big meal for fifteen cents, on which we lost fifteen cents; but that it paid, because after they had "filled up" they would do a lot more work. I wonder if I am getting anywhere near what I am trying to say to you? I wonder if you understand what I have in mind? If I had your gift of expression, I could say it much easier, and much better. But what I mean is - and what I want you to understand, is - the reason why I have changed your article somewhat.

I have no sympathy at all with the profiteering, in and about our business. I love all the people who love the business. I don't want it considered as a big money-making machine, even if that is what it is. I want it considered as a big, human, splendid effort to improve conditions - to improve and make happier the lives of all our people brought in contact with it - and to do this without robbing the consumer. Meaning, a better product for less money, with better wages, and splendid things brought about by cooperation, have produced these results, which you, in a small part, have been able to see here, in a brief visit to us.

I wish I could write a story of this business, as you could write it, if you had in your mind and heart, what is in my mind and heart. If I could just take your gift of expression, and put it to paper, I would like to write a book about this business. I would like to tell who is right and who is wrong, in it; because there are people in it who are wrong. It has not been easy to bring about these happy conditions. Please believe this. There has been, at times, a very strong inclination to treat this business in a cheap and shoddy manner, looking for immediate, quick and large returns, and

for no other reason. I am writing these truths to you, because I want you to understand; and as further explanation of why I have changed a good many of your sheets somewhat. Though after all, I haven't changed them so very much. But I think I have explained enough so you will understand why I changed them at all.

I had a Magazine writer - Mr. Samuel Crowther - who has gotten up an article on this business, written by him, and submitted to me for correction. This article will be published in the next (January) issue of SYSTEM. His article was shot all through with the personal "I" - and mind you, was purported to be written by me. Now, I changed that article very materially, by crossing out just as far as I possibly could, every letter "I" in the statement, and made an article that I was willing to sign, as having been written by me. This article was rather different than yours, and different than any that has heretofore appeared. If you find it convenient, hope you will read it. You will understand of course, that I did not write it, although I did have the privilege of going through it, and materially changing it. I don't want you to get the impression that I am anxious to appear in this story, any more than necessary, to state the facts fairly. I have realized for fifteen years, that we had created something here, that would in time draw the attention of a great many inquiring minds. Now they are coming from all over the world, I am saying, to look us up - study us up, read us up, and write us up.

As a matter of fact, however, in common truth and justice, the things which have made this business different and better, have been things which I myself felt were the correct basis for Industrial relations, and I have had to fight mighty hard, at times, to force them through some of my partners. Now, when

it is accomplished, I hate to see those who have constantly opposed these things, "grab off" credit to which they are not entitled; and not only that, but they stand condemned, because of their opposition, which has made a hard job harder.

You will think, I imagine, that I am writing you pretty frankly. But I only want to give you the correct viewpoint of this business, so that you can write a true story of it.

I hope you will not publish any story of this business until I have had a chance to check it up, as in this instance.

Very truly yours,

