

Science Notes

BY WILLIAM G. HAYNES.

THE EFFICIENT HUMAN MACHINE

There is much talk about business efficiency these days. However, any kind of efficiency that does not call for a sound, well-adjusted, smooth running human machine will never be anything else but a spurious efficiency, economically disastrous. The efficiency slogan, to be effective, has got to be a kind of subtitle to the health conservation slogan—which latter is the greatest idea twentieth century medicine has thus far evolved. What can be the use in expecting ideal efficiency in the face of such facts as these: Every third or fourth of us has been dying between fifteen and forty-five, life's economically most productive years of tuberculosis. Consider here the waste—almost too great for the mind to grasp—resulting from our suffrance of this one entirely preventable disease. One among eight of our women dies most cruelly of cancer, after suffering through many months to several years; many such unhappy women have kept working until this physical impairment has made them give up their tasks. Apart from the anguish all must sympathize with, what an economic loss is here presented. Of 20,000 applicants for life insurance, imagining themselves to be in sufficiently good health to get policies, 43 per cent were found to have some kind of heart or kidney or artery ailment. Six hundred and fifty thousand working people die annually of preventable diseases.

The Germans years ago worked out scientifically the relation between human impairments and accidents, with the result that they have cut down the latter at least 50 per cent. The best surety against industrial accidents is an alert mind in a virile body; on the other hand, the sure preliminary to accident is an exhausted, devitalized human machine. The corollary here is that a wise corporation, soulless if you like, will ever seek to establish the essential parallelism of efficiency and humanity.

The simple truth is, we Americans are the most extravagant people in or out of civilization, and in nothing more so than in our flesh and blood resources. It is precisely as if many thousands of us were falling blindly over a horrendous precipice, at the bottom of which we have placed the best-equipped ambulances in the world, to take us off to the most magnificent hospitals in the world—after we have been hurt. Why is there not now a guarding rail around the edge of that precipice? Why are not the danger signals hoisted? So that the finest machinery in the cosmos shall not be smashed beyond repair and carried forthwith to the scrap heap; or have to be mended to 70 or 50 or 30 per cent of its former efficiency, and with a much shorter daily running time than if it had remained whole and unimpaired.

What, then, is such a railing? What are the danger signals? They are manufactured according to specifications prepared in the science of preventive medicine, and they are figured out on the basis that an ounce of prevention is worth tons of regret, of most unnecessary suffering, of vast material loss. The main idea is to unmask the masked symptoms—the only way to do which is by exhaustive, at least annual, examinations of employees. By such means is real efficiency attained; the productivity of plants increased, and

length of days assured the valuable employe. Besides, through such periodic examinations the employer will learn how to place his impaired men; how little occasion there will be to discharge them utterly. He will not send a man with a leaky heart to paint a high wall; a weak-lunged man he will take out of a dusty shop and put to outdoor work, and so on.

But here one sounds a warning note. Isn't it a dreadful thing to reveal such impairments? Will not the working man be terrified to learn the truth? Such an argument is about as logical and as merciful as if one should say: "Don't, for heaven's sake, put a lighthouse on those rocks; it would reveal to those aboard ship the awful peril they are in!"—Scientific American.

NOTHING MORE TO INVENT?

Someone poring over the old files in the United States patent office at Washington the other day found a letter written in 1833 that illustrates the limitations of the human imagination.

It was from an old employe of the patent office, offering his resignation to the head of the department. His reason was that as everything inventable had been invented, the patent office would soon be discontinued and there would be no further need of his services or the services of any of his fellow clerks. He, therefore, decided to leave before the blow fell.

Everything inventable had been invented! The writer of this letter journeyed in a stage coach or a canal boat. He had never seen a limited train or an ocean greyhound. He read at night by candlelight, if he read at all in the evening; more likely he went to bed soon after dark and did all his reading by daylight. He had never seen a house lighted by illuminating gas. The arc and incandescent electric lights were not to be invented for nearly a half century.

If he had ever heard of electricity, he thought of it as the mysterious and dangerous fluid that strikes from the clouds during a thunderstorm. That it could be harnessed to do man's will had never occurred to him.

He never heard the clicking of a telegraph sounder. The telephone would have seemed as wonderful to him as a voyage to the moon. Motion pictures would have reminded him of black art, and the idea that a machine could be invented whereby man would fly above the clouds like a bird, ascending and descending at will, would have seemed to him merely absurd.

The modern printing press, the linotype machine, which seems almost to think; the X-ray, by means of which surgeons diagnose disease and injury and lay out their work with scientific certainty, these things were yet to be invented long after he was dead. He could not imagine the automobile, now so common that they cover the streets and roads of all the world.

He could not dream that a cannon would be made to throw a projectile more than twenty miles, that repeating rifles, revolvers and machine guns would be invented, that steel monsters of the deep would speed invisibly under the seas with the power to send a giant ocean liner to the bottom within a matter of moments.

He lacked the imagination to see all the thousands and tens of thousands of comparatively small inventions that have come into being since his day, some of them for good and some for evil, but all telling a story of progress of one sort or another. Probably in this he did not differ from most of his fellowmen in his day. It is very likely most of his friends

agreed with him that the limit of invention had been reached.

He seems unfortunately deficient in imagination and in optimism, as we read of his letter of resignation in the musty files of the patent office. But let us not take too much unctious to our souls. We are quite as ignorant of what the next eighty years may bring forth as he was of the future of American inventions.—Scientific American.

Harry Buford, Police Chauffeur Making Good

Among the young colored men of Omaha who are making good in their chosen line of work, an important place must be given Harry Buford, who for four years has been police chauffeur and in that position has won an enviable reputation for resourcefulness, quickness of decision, bravery and intelligence, and received the commendation of his superiors.

Harry is the only son of Henry A. and Lizzie Buford of 3510 Blondo street, and has had quite an interesting career. He was born at Atchison, Kan., July 10, 1888, and was brought to Omaha by his parents in 1891. He attended the public schools of this city, but he always had a "hankering for machinery." The first automobile he ever saw had a fascination for him. The driver left his car for a short time and Harry began an investigation, which was rudely interrupted by the return of the driver, who kicked the young investigator off the sidewalk. But nothing daunted Harry, made up his mind that he "would run one of them things" someday. He kept his word. He learned so well that he was sent to the West Indies by the western branch of the Apperson automobile company to introduce their cars. He traveled through the islands and subsequently went to Haiti, where he drove the first car ever seen on the island with the president of Haiti as his guest. It was not an easy matter to persuade that distinguished gentleman to ride, but once in the car he was so well pleased that he offered Harry a position as his official chauffeur, which was declined with thanks because the numerous revolutions were rather trying on even Harry's nerves, and he has got some nerve. Returning to Omaha Buford was appointed police chauffeur in 1911 where he has made good.

The following list of headlines of articles appearing from time to time in the local newspapers will give some idea of the work young Buford has done:

"Chauffeur Turns Detective;" "Harry Buford Stops Mad Race of Runaway Team;" "Laundry Theft Foiled by Buford;" "Buford Drags Boy From Wheels of Auto;" "Chauffeur Buford Is Some Slugger;" "A Baby, a Boy and a Dog Too Much for Sympathies of Buford, Called to Kill Sick Canine, But Tells Boy Where He Can Buy Medicine;" "Two Light-Weight Omaha Policemen (Buford being on duty a Scrapper);" "Parts of Omaha Flooded by Near Cloud-burst; Police Chauffeur Buford and Patrol Conductor Burchardt Wade Hip Deep in Water, Rescuing People;" "North Omaha Bandit and His Partner Caught." This last item refers to the work done by Buford a week or two ago, a report of which appeared in last week's issue of The Monitor and for which he was complimented for his intelligent and quick work by the department, with which, because of wit, kindheartedness and good nature, he is a general favorite.

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