

THE QUIET HOUR

The Sordid Order Of Exploiters.

Did you have one when you were a child? They were red and yellow; with loose-jointed legs and arms. When you pulled the string the legs and arms were jerked into all kinds of grotesque positions, and you laughed at its antics. It was only a jumping jack, and you made it go through its motions merely for your entertainment and amusement without having any other interest in it. There was no harm in that. The red and yellow wooden monkey was not affected by it for weal or woe.

But there is a difference when you come to adopt the jumping jack method and attitude in your dealings with "real people."

There is a word which admirably expresses this method of dealing with others—the word "Exploit." The dictionary says:

To exploit others is to utilize or employ them in our own selfish schemes, to bring out for one's own advantage without regard to rights or right.

Our brother-man becomes a mere thing which we use to gain our ends and in whose welfare we have no further interests.

It is a sort of blasphemy against human nature, this ignoring of others' claims upon us; this smothering of every suggestion of brotherliness and fellow-feeling, and using them as mere tools, of value so long as they can advance our selfish ends, and after that discarding them as so much worn-out machinery ready for the junk pile.

Over again all this sordid adoption of the jumping jack theory of our relation to others, the great philosopher Kant laid down the rule:

"Always treat humanity, whether in yourself or another, as a person, and never as a thing."

Whatever may be the special relation in which men happen to stand; employer and employee merchant and customer; leader and follower, it must always be remembered that there is a still higher relation between them—they are brothers, and where the claims of the two relationships threaten to conflict, the latter must be recognized as supreme.

No man has the right merely to use other men. Climbers who reach their money or ambitions goal by trampling upon human souls are as truly blood-stained as are the brutal plantation owners of southern Mexico in their slaughter of their Yaqui slaves.

Just here is to be found the essence of the strongest argument against the saloon business.

It is inevitably a soul-traffic, more truly than was that of the old Arab slaves. It goes up in the scale of prosperity only as souls go down in the scale of humanity. It thrives on ruin. It no more surely requires crushed apples to make cider than it requires churshed lives to make saloon profits. It treats men as things to be exploited, as jumping jacks to perform their fantastic antics to gratify others' whims. It ignores completely the higher brother-relation, and crushes all of the humanity out of men for the sake of cash.

And just here also is to be found the explanation of most of the troubles of modern "big business."

Every employer—whether it be in the case of mistress and maid in the home, or of the great corporation whose working force numbers thousands—who is intent only upon securing the maximum service in return for the minimum wages—or, for that matter, in return for liberal wages—and who ignores the fact that the hands and feet that serve him are but the physical equipment of an immortal soul, and that the soul of a sister or brother violates the higher code which Christ has set up, and inevitably precipitates all the social troubles that follow.

Using gold watches to drive in railway spikes is the faintest shadow of a parallel to using immortal souls to make millions without any recognition of the higher relation in which we stand to those souls. The employer of men who think of them only as "hands"—never as souls—is as truly a pirate in spirit as was Captain Kidd. To look upon the wage-earners whose service is swelling your fortune merely as paving blocks on your pathway to "Easy St.," and to ignore the human obligations, your relation to them entails upon you, is to break all ten commandments at once. No orthodoxy in theology can save such a man from the hell to which his heterodoxy in social ethics will consign him. Men and women, endowed for everlasting existence, are not jumping jacks made to dance to the tune of others' whims; but comrades on the pathway to immortality whose progress toward the blessed goal you are under Christ-fixed bonds to help — and not to hinder.

One phase of the prevalent exploiting of humanity is sometimes found in the psychology-gore-to-seed theories of the modern business world.

I picked up a rather pretentious volume on advertising recently in which this theory was worked out to the limit. Summarized its teachings emphasized the importance of working what might aptly be described as "a psychological bluff." Study human nature and its mental processes so that you may be able to coin your fellow's foibles into ducats, is this gospel of gain. Your brothers idiosyncrasies and points of easiest approach are to be discovered not that you may lend him a helping hand in life and protect him against himself, but in order that you may turn these things to your own advantage. One of the current magazines has an ably written article embodying this same thought. Its title tells the whole story. It is, "Politeness a Business Asset." Of course, politeness is a business asset, it will make you more popular, add to your chances of promotion, and all that, but that man has gotten down a few stories below the basement in the structure of human graces and fraternal courtesies who practice these virtues because "they pay," rather than from the noble prompting of a kindly heart. You will be more popular and get on more rapidly in life if you do not murder your mother, but if your ambition is the only thing that saves your mother it would be a wise precaution to electrocute you at once.

The moment my attitude toward my fellows is determined merely by "what there is in it for me," instead of by the claims of a broad and Christ-like humanity, I have joined the Sordid order of exploiters and stand ready to make merchandise of immortal souls. They are merely painted mannikins to me, and all the movements of their arms and legs are made to gratify my whims.

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