

But that day has not come yet. The amount of strenuous effort still demanded of the workers is great and will long remain one of the most important factors in the economy of human things.

The basis of all sound thinking in economics is the realization of the truth that the good things of life—the bread, clothing, fuel and shelter, which we all need—are all hard to get and hard to preserve; men and women must be astir to have them, and it is not likely that ever mere wheels, cogs and belts can become so efficient that human brains and hands can be relieved of stress in their acquisition. Beware of him who tells you the human race may have them for the mere picking up. Such a one is a dangerous person, who either is blind to facts or who is trying to mislead.

And yet this fancy is accepted by many minds, and becomes the root of other fancies, such, for instance, as the notion that commodities are always too dear and that the excessive price is due to producers and middlemen, who are able in some very serious way to acquire their wares too cheap and sell them too dear whilst they suck the heart's blood of all those whom they employ. These are the minds who will not accept such self-evident notions, as, for instance, the validity of the law of supply and demand, and who believe that villainous cornering of markets is one of the commonest amusements of the business man. These are they who appeal to government to protect the innocent laith who get closely shorn when attempting to shear others. They are the ones who clamor for commissions to investigate why other commissions previously appointed by the same government have not put a stop to the abominable practices of profiteering.

Some of these have even come to the conclusion that buying and selling for profit are sinful and must be suppressed by the State. Business seems to be for them a complex of diabolical practices, the natural occupation of thieves and swindlers. One may well ask himself why such views are held. Business practices may not be all they should be, still that part of humanity engaged in business will compare favorably with the politicians, the clergy or the educators. The successful business man must at least play the game, and there is usually in that fact a stronger guarantee for uprightness and serviceability than is to be found in the eloquence of what might be called the talking professions.

The idea that the desire of gain is a wicked thing is false and foolish. It is just as legitimate to wish for profit when honest effort is expended as it is to wish for a good dinner after a good day's work. It is true that high-minded men curb these desires, knowing that all human qualities need to be moderated, but no wise person who understands what men are would think of eliminating such a deep-seated and widespread affection of the human mind. It is impossible to do, but even if it were possible it would be highly injurious to the race to remove such a powerful impetus to action.

We are told that we should put the desire to do social service in the place of the desire for profit. But there is no incompatibility between the two. The person who is making honest effort for the love of profit in legitimate enterprise is quite as likely to be performing social service as the one who spends his life in what is called "uplift" of the race. It is impossible to be making, transporting and selling useful things to our fellows without doing them good. The man who raises a bushel of wheat or makes a pair of shoes for profit is a benefactor to the race; oftentimes a much surer benefactor than he who preaches a sermon or writes a book for the purposes of edification.

It is important that we should be clear in our thinking in regard to