YANKEE AND BRITON IN BUSINESS

James H. Collins Compares The Two In An Interesting Article In Saturday Evening Post

THE GOOD POINTS OF EACH NOTED—HUMOROUS ANECDOTES EXPLANATORY OF DIFFERENT BUSINESS METHODS.

ONE night, in the smoking compartment of a Pullman, traveling through a Western state, an English tourist rang for the porter and ordered a whisky-and-soda.

"Sorry, boss, but you'll have to wait 'bout an hour," said the colored brother. "We's agoin' through a prohibition belt."

The Briton became rather bitter in his comments on teetotalism and the Yankee idea of personal liberty; and went on to scold steam heating, American manners and other outstanding features of what we fondly imagine to be our civilization. Nobody took up the issue with him until he began to criticise our women. Then an elderly Westerner put a question:

"Young man, isn't this your first visit to the United States?"

"Yes, it is," replied the critic; "and I hope it will be the last.'

"Well, I reckon I know how you feel about it," said the Westerner. "On this first trip you'll miss a whole lot of things you're accustomed to at home. It was so the first time I went to England. I couldn't keep warm, couldn't find a decent barber shop, didn't like the weather, or the ways, or the people. Your country lacked so many conveniences that I came home and told folks you were in the Middle Ages. When I went back a second time it was astonishing how many excellent things and ways I found that we hadn't got—and it has been so on several trips I've made since. Young man, you come back to America again if you have a chance and you'll begin to see that we have a lot of good things in this country too."

The Relation of Precedent to Profit.

The first time an American business man goes to London either for a vacation or to carry out some project he finds the town slow and antiquated. British business is often transacted in dingy offices that might not be passed as sanitary cow stables by one of our milk inspectors. Solemn "clerks" explore huge old-fashioned ledgers under one wretched gaslight and their boss sits in a private office that is really a cell by our standards, in keeping with the prevalent British belief that business is a form of penal servitude, with hard labor. There is much secrecy—the Briton has a traditional belief that the best business is the kind that can be hidden. There is much gloom—he complains of lack of trade when, to the American's eye, possibilities lie dormant all around. The whole business fabric seems full of inconsistency, inefficiency and circumlocution on this first visit.

By-and-by the Yankee goes over again or his project keeps him in London long enough to enable him to get below the more obvious surface differences. Then he finds many methods and principles to admire and adopt. The Britisher in the cell-like private office held off suspiciously the first few times the American called upon him, but at last they entered upon a few transactions and grew to know one another. Presently the American got a conception of the immense solidity of British connections. The Britisher in the cell seemed pretty small potatoes when measured by our houses at home, and the Yankee suspected that there might be something crooked about his rating. In time, however, he found that British commercial standing is not gauged by the oriental rugs of a private office, and that the pettiness and shabbiness of business quarters give no clue whatever to magnitude. It developed that the Britisher in the cell had a great warehouse down near the docks and connections running back two generations in Calcutta, Shanghai and Yokohama. The American began to grasp the worldwide scope of British trade and to bring to light the vast hidden machinery for handling it.

The British business mind travels in a curious rut. There is an old story about a Yankee in London who saw a silk hat moving through the mud down the middle of Fleet street. Looking closer, he discovered there was the face of an Englishman under it.

"Well, my friend," said the American, "you seem to be in rather deep out there."

"Deep!" was the Englishman's reply. "You may well say that—I'm on top of an omnibus."

The British business mind is in even deeper. It travels in ways worn by the past. The American business mind, still largely of the first or second generation, operating far from the older commercial communities and often innocent of international commercial customs, does not easily grasp the underlying sense of British affairs, for there is so much nonsense on the surface.

On the day an American arrives in London he begins to encounter this strange factor—the past. At home there isn't any past. He has always gone ahead in a direct line, by himself. If he wanted to reach the consumer, and an old trade custom intervened, he walked through it. If he thought he had a better way of doing anything he was not at all disturbed by what others had done or were doing. But in London he finds the past everywhere, thick as mud, and deals with an English face under a "topper," which assures him that it is on top of an omnibus. If the Yankee protests that this is a roundabout way of doing business the face assures him that it is quite regular, and that it has always been done just that way, and that this is the hat its father wore and good enough for it.

An American construction engineer was putting up a new office building in London. At one corner of the site stood an old brick tenement. In digging foundations its wall was slightly fractured. The engineer had anticipated something of the sort.

"There; she's cracked," he said. "Now I'll go direct to the owner, settle the damage man to man and save time."

When the owner was asked to estimate his damage, however, he referred the American to his estate agent, saying:

"That's a matter of building and very complicated, you know." I couldnt put a price on it—never did such a thing in my life."

The estate agent, in turn drew a long face.

"Damage to one of our buildings! Oh, but I say, my dear fellow, that's very complex—very. We shall have to refer you to the solicitor."

The solicitor also assumed aserious professional expressin.

"Matters of building are extremely knotty. Must settle in regular form, of course. Give me the name of your solicitor."

So the engineer handed the case over to his company's lawyer. The two solicitors agreed that they would be unsafe in proceeding farther with a complex matter like building without the advice of quantity surveyors. Each sde appointed its own quantity surveyor; the latter experts solemnly inspected the crack and reported. Ultimately damages of two hundred and fifty dollars were awarded. This was more than the engineer had expected to pay the owner direct; so he lost nothing but time. The owner got only seventeen dollars—the rest went for fees and costs!

The American points out that such procedure is inconsistent. The Britisher admits it; but he says that is the regular procedure. The thing has always been done that way. He would rather be regular than right. He thinks of precedent first and profit afterward.

When a Board is No Board At All.

When our business routine is wrong it is commonly in some deta.. that has not yet been thought out and provided for; but when the British routine is wrong it is because the established way does not happen to be exactly consistent in this particular case. Inconsistencies do not worry John Bull at all. Much of the enjoyment of his existence comes from the abounding inconsistencies of his social, political and commercial fabric. The British Board o Trade, for instance, is not a board at all and has virtually nothing to do with trade. The Lords of the Treasury are not lords and have practically no connection with the treasury, apart from drawing their salaries. When the Yankee hears of such instances he protests: "How foolish!" But the Britisher says: "How jolly British!" Once upon a time, when he was yound, perhaps he looked into a few such cases and found that they had started so far back in the past that nobody was to blame; now he regards inconsistencies as purely impersonal.

A New Yorker, establishing a branch office in London, encountered a thoroughly senseless trade custom whereby he had to pay a commission for no value rendered whatever. When he protested, everybody said it had always been done that way. Getting nowhere after a week of objections, he paid it in disgust. Next month it came up again and he held out two weeks. Everybody conceded that it might be unjust, but said it had always been done, you know. So he paid it once more. By-and-by it came up a third time.

"Teddy," he said to his English head clerk, "I want you to put on your hat and find out who is responsible for this practice. Everybody follows it and nobody knows why. Don't come back till you run it right to headquarters."

Teddy was gone most of that day.

"Well, have you ound the man who started it?" asked the boss when he returned.

"Yes, sir—that is, next to it, sir. There's a difference of opinion. Some says James the First, sir, but they mostly attribute it to Henry the Eighth."

The Yankee in London will hardly be happy or get anywhere until he adopts the British view of inconsistencies.

In a venerable London chophouse a thorough Johnny Bull got into a dispute with a thoroughly British waiter. He had eaten turbot and had a second helping, which was charged in the bill.

"But here!" complained the customer. "Turbot is the same price as roast beef and you never charge for a second cut of that. Why should I pay for another helping of turbot?"

"Cawn't say, sir," said the waiter. "Rule of the 'ouse. We've always done it, sir; and the 'ouse 'as been 'ere since 1787."

The customer turned for sympathy to an American at the same table.

"It's not very consistent," agreed the latter, who had had long experience in England; "but you must admit that it's very British. Really, I think it's just these little inconsistencies that give charm and character to English life."

"Why, that's so! You're quite right," agreed the customer; and the suggestion so delighted him that he paid at once. The reflection that though a thing is inconsistent it is also very British constantly leads John Bull to pay much heavier items than a second helping of fish.

The Yankee business mind looks forward and expects all good of the future. It believes conditions are going to be better this year than they have ever been before and invites you to wait a while and watch it grow. It has an optimism and a willingness to make mistakes most disquieting to staid London. The British business mind, on the contrary, habitually looks backward, and tries to safe-guard against mistakes by drawing on the wisdom of the fathers. That makes necessary two unhealthy assumptions—that the fathers were better than ourselves and that we are a fallen generation. So the British business mind is pessimistic and expects little of the future.

The chairman of a British joint-stock company can take a piece of good news, such as a dividend, and announce it so that it sounds like a disaster. He will begin by reminding the stockholders that their company has never paid a dividend. True, this year there is a dividend, due to an unexpected fall in the price of coal and a reduction in expenses. But the outlook for next year is not promising; in fact, it is gloomy—very gloomy.

The Yankee business mind will stand discounting. It is wisdom to take twenty-five per cent. off its proposition, thirty-three per cent. off its expectations and a hat fifty off its clothes. But, with the British business mind all the discounts have been taken o f by itself already; and it is often advisable to stick on a reasonable percentage, because it apologizes for favorable conditions and hedges itself about with checks and safeguards.

In a London house of more than a hundred years' standing there was a confidential clerk who had been in the firm's employ fifty years. He knew everything that had ever been done in his time. The proprietor consulted him in every important matter; and the old fellow would say: "Don't do that, for we did the same thing in 1868 and so-and-so happened." The proprietor was always satisfied to abide by such counsel, and in his time the business never grew. When his son came into the management he consulted the old clerk too; but, when the latter said that so-and-so would surely happen if a certain thing were done, the son went ahead and did it anyway, using the old chap's warning as foreknowledge to guide him through the consequences. The house then expanded so greatly that an optimistic Australian was made manager. He immediately pensioned the veteran to get him out of the office.

"But it is very unwise to dispense with his knowledge of past errors," was British comment.

"His knowledge is out of date," said the Australian. "What we want now is a lot of brand-new mistakes suited to the present generation." Under this policy the business has nearly doubled.

The British business mind rather lacks imagination. A New York sales manager got to thinking that there must be money in toothpowder. He went to a pharmaceutical house and secured prices on a formula, asked or quotations on tin boxes and printing, figured out a complete advertising and marketing campaign, devised means of getting capital and spent several weeks developing his scheme, even talking it over with his wife. When the whole scheme was in shape, however, he tore up all the plans and forgot it, because his present work gave him plenty of opportunity. The British business mind would hardly let imagination lead it that far. It likes to deal with actualities. Its basic quality is stability. Where we develop novelties, it sticks to staples; and where we seek new ways of marketing, it sends goods through timeworn trade channels. Our enterprises show wonderful growth from year to year—if they last. The Briton's usually last, but show little growth. When these two different minds come together they strike sparks.

A young Englishman got a job in New York. At home he had been fond of economics. An eminent Boston professor was to lecture on an economic subject. The Englishman went to hear him, taking an armful of books. As the argument unfolded he got his authorities ready and at the close stood up and began asking questions. In three minutes he had the eminent Bostonian so wound up that he protested he hadn't come there to answer questions, but to lecture. The Englishman thought that very odd.

In another instance an Englishman, who was manager of the London branch of a large American manufacturing company, came to the United States to see principals. They entertained him handsomely, but for several days he could not get them to discuss the affairs of the London branch thoroughly. The matter was referred to casually at lunch or on the rear platform of a car going out to the ball game. The London man had plans for the expansion of his branch, but a week passed before he got a conference. Then the president of the company told him that they maintained their London office chiefly for the prestige it gave them; and the vice-president said they could not enlarge that branch because there was no profit at all on goods sold in England. The Britisher waited until they had finished. Then he spread out some papers. He said that probably Englishmen were slow compared with Americans. They were also sentimental in business matters. They liked to stick to one connection as long as possible. And he himself would never give up their London office, even in the face of better opportunities, until it was absolutely necessary. If they thought that the London branch made no profit, however, they were mistaken. While he had been waiting, during the past week, he had spent a good deal of time out in a factory, had gone thoroughly into the cost of making their goods, and could show them that they not only made a profit on London sales but two distinct profits—one when the stuff left the factory and another when it was sold on the other side. Upon his thorough calculations they gave him what he asked for.

The Yankee business mind is a light-running, ball-bearing affair. It assumes much, hopes everything, disregards the past, and jumps quickly from point to point. The British business mind, on the other hand, is very solid and serious, going conscientiously through all the valleys and hollows and reaching the summits only by the most thorough labor and calculation—and often the most gloomy. Both arrive at approximately the same results, however; and as each becomes better known to the other through mutual dealings it is more and more apparent that each has good qualities that the other needs.

Slaves of the Russian Passport.

A peasant leaves his home to seek for work as a field laborer wherever he can find work to do, and, like every Russian, male and female, he takes his passport with him, which is quite as much a part of him as his soul is. It is always a half yearly passport, which he must renew at the end of six months, sending it home in a registered letter to an official at his native place and inclosing the legal fee and something over for the trouble. The time of renewal draws near; the workman gets a demand for a new passport. Through official neglect or other reason the passport fails to come in time. The honest workingman, who is earning his bread in the sweat of his brow and by the practice perhaps of exceptional sobriety is trying to earn a pittance for his family, is arrested suddenly and sent home—that is, is flung into a forwarding prison, whence he emerges to join a convict party, which contain the cream of criminality, and is made to suffer torments before he gets home. When he arrives he gets his passport and is a free agent—once more a loyal subject.—E. B. Lanin.

Fixing Up the Horse.

If you had a highly intelligent thoroughbred horse to which you were greatly attached, what would you do for him in order to bring him to the highest point of efficiency?

Would you teach him, at great inconvenience and after many repetitions, to smoke from ten to fifteen cigars a day, and would you mix with his oats all the way from a pint to a quart of alcohol? Would you re-enforce this by overloading his stomach with highly spiced food and add all the narcotics that were in the market, such as tea, coffee, etc.? Would you keep him in a heated stable without any fresh air, make him sit up at all hours of the night and permit all the veterinarians in the neighborhood to hold consultations and operate upon him as often as they needed the money?

And if you did all this, what sort of a race would you expect that horse to win?—Life.

Ancient Football.

Philip Stubbes wrote in 1583 in his book on "The Anatomie of Abuses:"

"For as concerning football I protest unto you it may rather be called a freendly kinde of fight than a play of recreation; a bloody and murthering practice than a felowly sporte of pastyme. For dooth not every one lye in waight for his Adverserie, seeking to overthrow him and to picke him on his nose, though it be on hard stones, so that by this meanes sometimes their necks are broken, sometimes their backs, sometimes their legs, sometimes their arms, sometimes one part thrust out of joynt, sometimes another; sometimes the noses gush out with blood, sometimes their eyes start out—fighting, brawling, contention, quarrel picking, murther, homicide and great effusion of blood, as experience dayly teacheth."

He Explains.

"Why do they call Washington the city of magnificent distances?"

"Because," answered the office seeker, "it is such a long way between what you go after and what you get."—St. Paul Pioneer Press.

NOTICE is hereby given that an application will be made to the Governor of Pennsylvania on April 18, 1911, at 11 o'clock a. m., under the Act of Assembly, entitled an Act to provide for the incorporation and regulation of certain corporations, approved April 29, 1874, and supplements thereto for the charter of an intended corporation to be called the Wallen-Paupack Power Company, the character and object of which is the storage, transportation and furnishing of water with the right to take rivulets and lands and erect reservoirs for holding water for manufacturing and other purposes, and for the creation, establishing, furnishing, transmission and using of water power therefrom and for these purposes to have, possess and enjoy all the rights, benefits and privileges of the said Act of Assembly and supplements thereto.

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