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The Fruits of Enterprise

TO be enterprising means getting things done. People who get things done are preferred by society to those who do not.

The prizes in life go to those who invent some better way of doing something old, or something new that makes the old unnecessary; to the scholars who decipher inscriptions or solve equations; to the industrialists who improve production, streamline manufacture, or increase distribution.

For proof of this it is necessary only to look around us in Canada, where we have a productive society built by imaginative, hard-hitting and hard-working men and women. Enterprise is a positive, dynamic faith in the possibility of improving things, and in one's ability to do the job.

Enterprise doesn't consist entirely of big things. It is enterprise when a home craftsman puts together his first piece of furniture, even if it is only a footstool made from a butter-box. It is enterprise when a clerk demonstrates a time- or material-saving way of doing his work. It is enterprise when a school-girl makes and sells Christmas cards so that she may buy presents for her family.

Addressing graduates of Knowlton High School a few years ago, John Bassett, President and Managing Director of the Montreal Gazette, (now Chairman of the Board) said this: "If I have advice to give to you young people, I would say 'do not always be chasing security.' I would say 'do some adventuring.' . . . Let us recapture the splendid spirit of our pioneer forefathers, who by courage and hard work made this wilderness blossom like the rose."

This New World gave special opportunities to enterprising men. They could start any business they liked, but they knew that they had to swim by their own efforts, or sink. The right to risk failure became part of the liberty to try for success. With passage of the years

there have come new professions, new businesses, new opportunities of many kinds, every one providing a chance for the person eager to grasp it.

The man of enterprise

People can be divided into active individuals and passive individuals, into those eager for responsibility and action and those content to wait until action is forced upon them. The latter sometimes profess to look upon men of enterprise as being somehow "queer", which reminds us of what was said about Vincent van Gogh, that although he may have been a split personality he was in addition an artist.

The enterprising man must be presumed to have qualities of some sort in which others fail. He is a leader who faces an adversary to gain an object. He dares to try untried ways. He has something unappeased within him, seeking expression. He carries his head high, so that he may see far horizons. He is prepared to cope with the unexpected and the unpredictable through originality and ingenuity.

Striving for superiority has been behind every human creation and every contribution to our culture. We proceed from below to above, from minus to plus, from defeat to victory. When we become satisfied with our present circumstances the first stage of degeneration sets in.

Most people have stirrings toward improvement of their condition, improvement in understanding, in knowledge, or in material things, but to be effective our expectations must have a clearly defined objective. One cannot be master of one's fate if one has no intense aim, specific, concrete and definite. Without that, one is at the mercy of chance and circumstance.

Having an objective and the will to reach it, we must apply ourselves indefatigably to its attainment. Resolution and determination are strength-giving forces when one comes to scaling barriers.

Initiative is required. This is the ability to think and to start and to do new things, to break with the pattern of the past. The man who knew sports by playing in them, and salesmanship by practising it, showed initiative when he set up in business producing athletic crests and uniforms: in eleven years his capital grew from \$586 to \$105,000, and he was still only 34 years of age.

Enterprise need not be a lonely quest, with every individual chasing his own fire-fly. The enterprising man may be a leader, inspiring, guiding, interpreting and co-ordinating. Such a man will climb to high places in company with men who are part of his plan and who benefit by his leadership.

About opportunity

Is there a law of opportunity? Because there is much woolly thinking about opportunity, it may be well to inquire whether there are some observations which, taken together, seem to provide a guide.

No one will deny that opportunity most often offers itself to men according to their ability, their power of vision, their knowledge, and their will to work. Opportunities do not exist in any particular industry or profession, but within men themselves. It is the men who determine the number of opportunities they will grasp. Some will waste their time waiting for a big opportunity, while others are taking advantage of the little ones and are thereby preparing themselves for the great chance.

Some people have not learned the lesson, so well demonstrated throughout the history of business, that opportunity doesn't bruise its knuckles knocking at a man's door; it doesn't shout, but whispers. Sometimes it has to be sought. It has been asked in a speculative way what Hercules would have done had there been no lion, and hydra, and boar, that he had to conquer, and no apples to snatch from the garden of the Hesperides. One cannot imagine Hercules, a man of enterprise, wrapping himself in his cloak and going to sleep while waiting for a kind fate to bring him some job worthy of his prowess.

Enterprise in the world of business and industry does not always consist of herculean tasks like cleaning out the Augean stables. It may start very small. All valuable processes in electricity arose out of little laboratory experiments. Most of our great inventions marking the beginning and development of the industrial age were made by men doing things altogether apart from their assigned jobs, without pay, outside of working hours, and often entirely unnoticed or despised by their superiors and their fellow workmen.

Seeing opportunity isn't everything. The man who sees a dozen opportunities but has not initiative and energy enough to act on one of them won't get very far.

The frontier of achievement in business, the professions, industry and public service is closed to the man who is lazy, or afraid, or unimaginative.

Imagination plus enthusiasm

To the self-absorbed, vision is impossible. We need to look outward, picturing our job or our business as it might be in another environment of place or time. The successful enterpriser is a person who sees what others do not.

An Italian immigrant who wanted to start his own grocery store went the right way about it. He worked as a labourer until he saved enough to buy a team and a wagon, then made his living for two years collecting garbage in the district where he hoped to have his store. He tore the labels off the empty tins and food packages, and stacked them in his room. Then he sorted his labels into piles by kind of product and brand. When the time came to lay in stock for his store, he bought the brands for which he had the tallest stacks of labels. Goods didn't go bad on his shelves, because his individual job of market research had shown him what his prospective customers wanted.

Having explored the possibilities and formed an imaginative plan, then we must call upon enthusiasm, the most dynamic of human qualities, to put the enterprise into gear. Nothing great was ever achieved without well-directed enthusiasm.

In all this preliminary work — as, indeed, throughout his active life — the man of enterprise relies upon his own efforts rather than upon the help or patronage of others. He trusts his own judgment. He is self-reliant. He doesn't lose momentum by waiting for others to tell him what course to follow. He has the courage to make up his mind; to risk mistakes in order to get things done.

Courage is of the essence of enterprise. Anything that moves around increases its risks and runs into danger: only the inert escape, and they accomplish nothing. The timid find everything impossible; they never discover opportunity; they obey circumstances instead of creating and commanding them.

Lieutenant Hornblower demonstrated the spirit of enterprise in one of C.S. Forester's delightful stories: "I'd rather be in trouble for having done something than for not having done anything." But audacity should not degenerate into rashness. True courage requires knowledge, and the man will profit who sets himself to uncover all possible guiding facts before committing himself to a project.

Energy and persistency

Having decided upon a course, the enterprising man will lose no time before getting things under way. A trainer gave this advice about winning races: "The

thing to do is to get out in front at the start and improve your position from there on."

Hesitation is fatal to enterprise. It unnerves a man and dissolves his determination. Sometimes it is well to do something, anything, rather than wait for the ultimate perfection of doing exactly the right thing.

The enterprising man, launched upon his effort, will wish for a 30-hour day and a ten-day week. He will pursue his course relentlessly. His energy supports and enlarges his ambition: indeed, ambition deprived of drive is an idle dream. Excellence in business or a profession or in any other walk of life is beyond the reach of indolence.

Even a man who is not a genius can achieve greatly if he has ambition, the initiative to start doing something about it, and the energy to apply himself industriously. We need not fear being drawn too far. There are men enough around us whose exclusive mission in life, it seems, is to extinguish the fires we kindle. The excesses of the thoughts, hopes and work of the enterprising man are essential if the average of what he achieves is to come up to his desired goal.

Common sense and calmness will keep us within bounds, and avert the frustration sure to be experienced by the man who invents a universal solvent and then tries to invent a container for it.

Some case histories

The stories of men and women who have succeeded in their efforts are instructive and useful as helps, guides and incentives. Here are some abbreviated examples of the power of self-help, of patient purpose, resolute working, and steadfast enterprise. These are true stories taken from the lives of customers of this bank, drawn from every province.

This man came from the Ukraine when he was 20, started to learn English, and worked in a grocery store. After five years he opened his own store, but had not enough money to pay for a room, so he slept under the counter. It was tough going for several years, but today he has a chain of retail grocery stores and a wholesale supply house.

Talk about starting small! Here is a youth who bought a carton of razor blades, used the profit to buy more merchandise, and kept on going. Now he has both wholesale and retail outlets, and is comfortably fixed financially.

This man was a musician. Advent of a baby in his family started him thinking about building a crib, and he ended up with a complete nursery unit. He now draws a royalty on every unit sold in five countries. Another invention of his, selling for \$1, will return him five cents on each of an estimated three million sales on this continent alone.

A farmer believed in soil conservation enough to do something about it. He invented a sub-surface cultivator, found it met the needs of his neighbours so well that they borrowed it, and finally he went into production. Today, his factory employs fifty men.

After working for other people for twenty years, Mrs. . . . launched out on her own in 1946 with courage and initiative. Three years hard work resulted in a wholesale business in a staple commodity with a country-wide market.

A man and his partner started a pick-up and delivery service, using two ancient cars. After only a year they had seven trucks and drivers, an office complete with secretary, and an assistant. They are still growing.

Hard work, thrift and foresight helped two young men from a humble start in radio parts to ownership of their own factory and a turnover of a quarter million dollars a year.

No sudden rise to success is told of in this case, but the steady building up of business over a period of 60 years. The fish products factory with which this business started grew to twelve factories with annual turnover getting on for \$5 million, and the market is world-wide.

This is about a Japanese-Canadian. He got together machinery, worked many hours a day, and after quite a struggle succeeded in establishing himself in production of a record player. After four years (while not yet 30 years of age) he branched out into making other electrical appliances. In one year he sold 50,000 of one piece of apparatus.

A father and two sons divide the work of a bakery according to their individual interests: producing, marketing and financing. From one stove 20 years ago, the business has grown to a bakery and two warehouses.

When farmers started in the honey business it gave this planing mill operator an idea. He went in for making supplies such as hives, then progressed to foundations, extractors, and other bee-keepers' needs. At the end of 15 years turnover was nearly \$500,000 a year, and 35 people were employed.

Consider how enterprise can be carried on from one generation to another: Col. R. S. McLaughlin's grandfather started making axe handles for his own use when he was clearing land at Enniskillen. He made such good axe handles that his neighbours asked him to make some for them. Then he started building wooden sleighs, expanded to the making of carriages, and eventually the McLaughlin automobile: today, General Motors of Canada Ltd.

The professions, too, hold out bright prospects for the enterprising young man. Dr. Samuel M. Best was born in Maitland, Nova Scotia, worked his way through the schools of New Hampshire and Massachusetts,

graduated from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, and became president of the Cuticura Corporation.

Overcoming difficulties

There are many obstacles in the way of a venturesome man, but there will always be found men who will defy the odds and succeed. The difficulty may be strong competition, a decline in business, a subordinate's incapability, or it may be something within the man himself.

Physical limitations can be overcome, too. A young Nova Scotian mine foreman suffered a spinal wound after the invasion of Europe, and was hospitalized as a paraplegic. Quite unfitted for anything in his own line of work, he took up study of secretarial practice, and became secretary of the Quebec Division of the Canadian Paraplegic Association. He is now organizing a workshop for handicapped people.

All these are stories of successful enterprise. But many people have failed, and why should not failure be chronicled as well as success? There is no reason, except that a record of mere failure would be excessively depressing and un instructive.

Men who succeed do not always do so by steady increment. They have their set-backs and partial failures and complete collapses, but by persistency, and taking a second breath, and extending their knowledge, they overcome the ill that has happened and win through to success.

What are some of the apparent reasons for failure? Faulty appraisal of one's qualifications; over-optimistic view of opportunities; lack of required assets, whether money, equipment, or skill; too-easy satisfaction; fixation at a lower level than need be. "Man is what he has it in him to become", is a belief expressed by Aristotle, to which we would add that he needs to know what that is.

The man of enterprise will not be disheartened by failure in one particular field. He will not be content with anything but success, and if it is not found here he will seek it there. He will not fixate when he reaches a plateau of partial or minor success, but having got one idea upon its feet he will spring another.

There is always some degree of uncertainty about human projects. It has been said that a philosopher invented "chance" to cover the astonishing fact that there were certain phenomena for which he found himself unable to account. From that conception, some people have gone on to see in "chance" or "luck" a positive force that may be invoked to help them toward their objectives.

The man of enterprise will banish the idea of luck from his mind. He will accept every opportunity, however small, to make progress toward his objective. If there is no opportunity proffered him, he will seek to make it.

A never-ending quest

There can be no permanent satisfaction for the enterprising person in any work that has reached its peak. His goal recedes as he advances. He is uneasy and restless unless he is on his way somewhere. Sir William Van Horne, said his biographer, was "eternally trying to get to the end of something, so that he might begin all over again."

A crowded life is a happy life for the enterprising man. To have many different things to do in every day, and somewhat more than he can do at all times, keeps his energies alive and his faculties sharp. He is not the sort of man to build a business and then spend his time at the club telling about it. He will always have some finishing touches to put on the job that's nearly done, and some plans to assess for the job that is coming up.

There are challenging openings for Canadians of all ages from the 'teens to maturity and beyond. Resourceful young people who have taken the pains to get a good general education will find spots awaiting them in both big and small businesses. There are advisers in their universities and schools who will help them to find opportunities in keeping with their talents and abilities. They should approach these advisers in the spirit of finding out, not where they will be tomorrow or next year, but ten, twenty, forty years from now — providing they have the initiative, enterprise and drive to make their way there.

Not long ago, the Chairman and President of this bank said in an address something that is apropos: "The best a banking career has to offer the young man is not, as popular opinion would have it, security; but rather the stimulating challenge afforded by abundant opportunity for advancement in open competition in which nothing counts but the man's own qualifications and attitude to his work. As a matter of fact, the banks view with a jaundiced eye the young fellow on the threshold of his life's work who is preoccupied with the type of pension which will some day become his."

There are, shaping up in today's offices, factories, workshops, laboratories and inventors' rooms all manner of wonderful things that are going to excite and satisfy the world ten and twenty years hence. The new frontiers of technology and the new world markets opened up by expanding industrialization promise new opportunities for those who are willing to qualify themselves and to hustle around and find them.

The point of this essay is that however new and thrilling the prospect may be, the man who wishes to achieve in coming years needs virtues that are old-fashioned but basic: study, application, initiative, diligence, determination, perseverance, courage, self-reliance, patience, honesty, and a purpose in life.