



Stand for America™

Patriotism and Wisdom are Won, Standing United.

On this [Labor Day](#) of 2010, we reflect on the spirit of the American labor team of entrepreneurs and workers. This is an excerpt of a classic piece of literature by Elbert Hubbard. Written before the industrial boom of the 1900's and reprinted throughout the World for more than 110 years, it is again as relevant as ever. The "don't ask questions, get the job done" message is used as a motivational message, if not done so in a somewhat biting manner. For many reasons, it is required reading by every person who is or will be a wage-earner.

According to [Wikipedia](#):

The essay celebrates the initiative of a soldier who is assigned and accomplishes a daunting mission. He asks no questions, makes no objections, requests no help, but accomplishes the mission. The essay exhorts the reader to apply this attitude to his own life as an avenue to success. Its wide popularity reflected the general appeal of self-reliance and energetic problem solving in American culture.

A Message to Garcia

By [Elbert Hubbard](#)
[Edited and Abridged]

[1899] When war broke out, it was very necessary to communicate quickly with the leaders. General Garcia was somewhere in the mountain vastness -- no one knew where. No mail nor telegraph message could reach him. But, the President needed to secure his cooperation, and quickly.

What to do!

Someone said to the President, "A fellow by the name of Rowan will find Garcia for you." So, Rowan was given the message to be delivered to Garcia.

Rowan took the letter, sealed it, strapped it over his heart, and, in four days, he landed by night off the coast from an open boat. He disappeared into the jungle, and, in three weeks, came out on the other side of the island, having traversed the hostile country on foot. [He delivered the letter to Garcia, but that is not my point.]

The point I wish to make is this: the President gave Rowan a letter to be delivered to Garcia. Rowan took the letter and did not ask, "Where is he at?"

By the Eternal!

This man's form should be cast in deathless bronze and the statue placed in every college of the land. It is not book-learning young men need, nor instruction about this and that. Men need a stiffening of

their vertebrae which will cause them to be loyal to a trust, to act promptly, concentrate their energies: do the thing -- "Carry a message to Garcia!"

General Garcia is dead now, but there are other Garcias.

You, reader, put this matter to a test: You are sitting now in your office -- six clerks are within call. Summon any one and make this request: "Please look in the encyclopedia and make a brief memorandum for me concerning the life of [Correggio](#)". But, he will look at you out and ask one or more of the following questions:

Who was he?
Which encyclopedia?
Where is the encyclopedia?
Was I hired for that?
Don't you mean Bismarck?
What's the matter with Charlie doing it?
Is he dead?
Is there any hurry?
Shan't I bring you the book and let you look it up yourself?
What do you want to know for?

And I will lay you ten to one that after you have answered the questions, and explained how to find the information, and why you want it, the clerk will go off and get one of the other clerks to help him try to find Garcia -- and then come back and tell you there is no such man. Of course I may lose my bet, but according to the Law of Average, I will not.

Now, if you are wise, you will not bother to explain to your "assistant" that Correggio is indexed under the C's, not in the K's, but you will smile sweetly and say, "Never mind," and go look it up yourself.

We have recently been hearing much maudlin sympathy expressed for the "downtrodden denizen of the sweat-shop" and the "homeless wanderer searching for honest employment," and with it all often go many hard words for the politicians.

Nothing is said about the employer who grows old before his time in a vain attempt to get frowsy never-do-wells to do intelligent work; and the long patient striving with "help" that does nothing but loaf when his back is turned. In every store and factory there is a constant weeding-out process going on. The employer is constantly sending away "help" that have shown their incapacity to further the interests of the business, and others are being taken on. No matter how good times are, this sorting continues, only if times are hard and work is scarce, the sorting is done finer -- but out and forever out, the incompetent and unworthy go.

It is the survival of the fittest.

Self-interest prompts every employer to keep the best -- those who can carry a message to Garcia.

I know one man of really brilliant parts who cannot manage a business of his own, and is yet absolutely worthless to any one else, because he carries with him constantly the insane suspicion that his employer is oppressing, or intending to oppress him. He cannot give orders, and he will not take them.

Tonight this man walks the streets looking for work, the wind whistling through his threadbare coat. No one who knows him dare employ him, for he is a regular fire-brand of discontent. He is impervious to

reason, and the only thing that can impress him is the toe of a thick-soled No. 9 boot.

Of course, I know that one so morally deformed is no less to be pitied than a physical cripple; but in our pitying, let us drop a tear, too, for the men who are striving to carry on a great enterprise, whose working hours are not limited by the whistle, and whose hair is fast turning white through the struggle to hold in line dowdy indifference, slip-shod imbecility, and the heartless ingratitude, which, but for their enterprise, would be both hungry and homeless.

Have I put the matter too strongly? Possibly I have. But, when all the world has gone a-slumming, I wish to speak a word of sympathy for the man who succeeds -- the man who, against great odds has directed the efforts of others, and having succeeded, finds there's nothing in it: nothing but bare board and clothes.

I have carried a dinner pail and worked for day's wages, and I have also been an employer of labor, and I know there is something to be said on both sides. There is no excellence, *per se*, in poverty; rags are no recommendation; and all employers are not rapacious and high-handed, any more than all poor men are virtuous.

My heart goes out to the man who does his work when the "boss" is away, as well as when he is at home. And the man who, when given a letter for Garcia, quietly take the missive, without asking any idiotic questions, and with no lurking intention of chucking it into the nearest sewer, or of doing aught else but deliver it, never gets "laid off," nor has to go on a strike for higher wages.

Civilization is one long anxious search for just such individuals.

Anything such a man asks shall be granted; his kind is so rare that no employer can afford to let him go. He is wanted in every city, town and village -- in every office, shop, store and factory.

The world cries out for such: he is needed, and needed badly --

-- the man who can carry a message to Garcia.

-THE END-

Ed. Comment. Elbert Hubbard was a man of complexity, with ideas some of which we adopt and others which we do not adopt. Nevertheless, on its basic point, A Message to Garcia became and remains an inspiration for our need to "carry the pail," and to do the work by self-reliance. We "pull our own weight" as Theodore Roosevelt put it.

It should be noted that there is a lost distinction in the risk and character of the American Entrepreneur. Some people think that the American Entrepreneur has the safety net of unemployment compensation if the venture fails. Generally, that is incorrect. If a venture fails, the entrepreneur goes bankrupt and does not qualify for unemployment compensation. There is no social safety net for the American Entrepreneur.

Moreover, on that point, some employees think that they pay for their unemployment compensation insurance from their own paycheck, such as social security. Accordingly, some employees think that they are "entitled" to unemployment compensation, having paid for it. Again, generally, that is incorrect. It is the employer who pays for the social benefit of unemployment compensation. Yes, it is true that American Entrepreneurs pay unemployment compensation for their employees, and, yet,

American Entrepreneurs are not "entitled" to collect the benefit for themselves. If a venture fails, the American Entrepreneur goes bankrupt and is financially destroyed. And, yet, we do not hear of the American Entrepreneur crying for "entitlements." American Entrepreneurs are too busy carrying the pail.

Let us praise and thank the American Entrepreneur. Every wage-earner, the American Entrepreneur included, has a "boss"; the only distinction is that, for the American Entrepreneur, it is more direct to the ultimate customer who supplies the source of funds. Everyone must carry the pail.

The American Entrepreneur is the last bastion, the final protection, for American capitalism. And, better, it is the healthy dynamic created by the smaller American Entrepreneur, and, indeed, new startup businesses with fresh untethered ideas -- and not the evolved oligarchy of a few behemoth corporations -- that keeps The Entrepreneurial Spirit safe and secure in America.

We cannot carry the pail while lying on our backs or sitting on our buttocks. Hope, and pray if you do, that the strength of the American Entrepreneur does not falter, but continues to stand up strong and carry the pail for Lady Liberty. For, if Lady Liberty should fall to her knee, it is the American Entrepreneur who gives her that sip of water from which she regains the strength to fulfill her mission.

-- Gregg Zegarelli, Ed.

* The name of the publication is derived from a special publication of [The Entrepreneurial Spirit](#),[®] entitled, "[I Stand for America](#)" for which there was an overwhelming positive response. The purpose of this publication is to provide a reflection upon the intersection of character, values, wisdom and traditional patriotism in the United States of America.

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