

[Yankee Merchant]

Yankee Folk

YANKEE MERCHANT

“They ain't been brought up right”

Every young feller I've hired acts just like that when you try to tell them anything. Dunno whether it's true in other towns or not. I don't expect a young feller to know everything when I hire him. They's a lost lot of tricks to handling a sack of grain and coal chutes and things. A feller can tucker his self all out, doing things they's an easier way to do. I try to tell 'em and they act insulted.

It don't make so much difference what they do around here, even though they don't use their heads at all but just go at everything hind end first. They'll learn in time. But I do get mad when they don't do as I tell 'em for my customers. [When I was a boy and worked out, I felt I was obliged to do as my boss said.?)

I like to have them deliver the grain and feed where the customer wants it. [I tell the boys so.?] And I explain to them that the customer isn't always round, so they should use their heads and put the bags where they'll be handy for the customer, in case they don't know where he keeps his feed — as any fool ought to be able to find out. [But do they do it? I guess not.?] Seems like they tear out to the place with the truck and when nobody sees them they upend the truck and dump the bags in the first place they see, then tear away again. I hear more hollering from customers over that than over anything else. Man comes back from somewheres, maybe late at night, and can't get into his barn without moving a mess of heavy grain bags. Maybe in his beat clothes, too. If he'd-a been willing to move / 'em in the first place, he'd-a brought bought 'em at a 2 chain store a little cheaper than I can sell. But he figures it's worth the extry to have the bags lugged for him. That's how I

Library of Congress

stay in business, and how the young fellers have a job with me. But they don't think of that. They don't like to carry the heavy bags on their shoulders, and think if /# they can get out of it they are coming out ahead. [The way to get a steady job and keep it isn't to see how such work you can got out of. The young people don't know that. They ain't been brought up right.?)]

Talk about leaving things where they don't belong. Some of them never leave anything at all. And that's dum near as bad. I sent a young feller over the river with a load of coal. He come back with the load. Said the folks weren't to home. Was the cellar winder fastened? He didn't know. Did you ask some of the neighbors where they was? He hadn't thought of that. " Well, you take that load right back and you deliver it somehow. It's going to be a cold night and those folks will want their coal. " He went back, and it seems that the woman was in the house all the time. The young feller had been so careful not to disturb nobody that she hadn't heard him. And only saw him when he was leaving with the coal. She yelled as loud as she could, but he didn't hear her. She said he drove that truck awful fast.

Another time I sent young Stebbins—you know him—across the river up the other way with half a ton of coal. Half a ton, mind yer you , just a little jag, and it's three four miles over there and same distance-back. But they was snow on the ground, the driveway hadn't been shovelled, and he couldn't back in. Just the women folks to home. 'Course I knew the place. Couldn't back in? Why , the house sits dum near in the road. " Didn't you have a shovel? " Yes, he had. " Couldn't you shovel just those few feet so's you could back in? " Well, he never thought of it. Couldn't you have gone across the street to Buffam's 3 store and borrowed one of their old baskets and carried that little jag in? Well, he never thought of it. " So you come back here with it? Suppose you think I'll tell you to never mind, we'll just dump the little load back in the bunkers and forget all about it, and just let 'em freeze over there? " Heh! I had to laugh. He says, says he, "Miss Merriman stopped me just now and says she wants a half ton of coal." "Oh she did, did she? I says. And there she was

Library of Congress

right in front of her house, and there you was with a half ton of coal on your truck that you couldn't get rid of. Now, why didn't you deliver it to her? “ I says. Well, he didn't think of it.

Now, I'll tell you how we done when I was younger. ‘Course those were the hoss and buggy days and we couldn't go joy riding with a couple tons of coal at fifty miles an hour. But we managed to make deliveries somehow.

Paul Breinig lived on that estate just beyond Wanamaker Pond, on the hill to the right. He used coal for cooking, and he'd told me that he wanted some coal as soon an I could get it to him. I loaded up right away and started off with the hosses. When I got to the foot of ‘Chog Hill, I met Breinig Breinig and his whole family in their automobile, which was a novelty in them days. He didn't stop or holler anything so I kept on going, figuring that he was just going to the post office, or somewheres, and would be right back. I come to his place and waited a while but he didn't come. I tried the doors and they was all locked, except one where the screen door was fastened but I could see that the inside door wa'nt wasn't . I went to a barbed wire fence across the road and twisted off a piece of wire. I made a hook on one end and fed it careful through the screen. Finally, I got hold of the hook on the door and unlocked it. Then I went in and opened up to suit myself and basketed in the coal. After I got it in I malted a while for Breinig to come back. But he didn't 4 come. And I got seairt scared that he had gone away somewheres for the night. And I didn't want to leave the door unlocked, so I got out the wire and after a few tries I managed to hook the screen again, and so I come away.

Breinig come down the next morning to pay me. “Dunnell “ , ,” he said, “how the hell did you get that coal in? The doors was all locked. And they was locked when I got back. But the coal was there. How'd you do it?”

“Mister,” I says, “I can got into any gol dummed house in this town. I know ‘em all. And I know how to get in. Nobody can keep me out - not if you've ordered something from me.

Library of Congress

You can lock your house up as tight as you want. But if you order coal, I'll get that coal in - right in the bin where you want it!"

But he teased so hard, and I could see it worried him. He wa'nt wasn't quite right in his head, you know, so I told him how it was done. But there you are, would one of these young fellers think of that? I guess not. They'd-a come back with the load 'cause the folks wa'nt wasn't to home. And that's one reason why small business men are disappearing. These young fellers wasn't brought up right to make small business men.

You say there are too many small business men now sitting in the middle of the road? Let me tell you, son, that this town would be a dum sight better off if we had some business here that would keep fifty or seventy-five men busy winters; if these young fellers would start making things the way they used to when I was a boy!

Maybe I mean 'small manufacturer ' . . ' I always thought that was what they was talking about in Washington when they said , "small business man." We don't need nobody trained up to do any trading.

[I know that when I was a boy I used to braid hats. Straw hats, you know.?] 5 They Ain't Been Brought Up Right

[Every town Most Most every town had one feller who was a hatter. I got a cent for every hat crown I braided. And when I got up to two dollars and a half I could have a pair of shoes made.?] by what I've been calling a small business man. [They wa'n't wasn't like the kind the kids now. They was really leather boots. And sometimes they had copper toes. And the real fancy ones had a little bit of red leather set in 'em. All kids have to do now when they want a pair of shoes is to holler. In those days we had to earn 'em. And believe me, we took care of 'em, too. Kept 'em greased and put away neat. We didn't wear 'em more 'n we had to. Went barefoot mostly. My feet got so tough that I could walk right on

Library of Congress

thistles and not feel 'em. Even today I ain't got a corn, nor a bunion, nor a broken arch nor nothing. Feet's as good as they ever was.?)

Oh it ain't the kid's kids' fault. They ain't brought up right. And a lot of it in this dum machinery. That's what chased the fellers out that used to hire the kids and train 'em. You just watch now, it won't be long before they ain't no small farmers either. All the farming that is done will be done by rich fellers, or by companies. I tell [?] you , the small farmer can't afford to put in the milk coolers and the milk rooms and aluminum-paint his barns and everything like the government tells him he must do else he can't sell his milk. And the same with everything else he raises. Most as bad as taxes. He pays taxes to hire government fellers to come round and tell him he can't do something to make money enough to pay his next taxes. All the way to can get out of spending the little money he has is to stop farming. You hear 'em hollerin hollering about settling people on the land. Why the hell don't they fix it so's those that's on the land now can stay there?

Not that they do stay there much, though. Try to see any farmer and you'll find he ain't to home. Gone off riding in his automobile. Him and his whole 6 dum family.

[When I run a farm we didn't have no automobiles to go riding in. 'Course we had a carriage hoss or two and went to market once a week like everybody else. But we got our hoeing all done before the weeds was higher'n the crops, by God and before it was time to hay. We got our hay in prompt, too, and started the next job. Didn't let the haying go till after snowfly. They holler about how they can't hire no help. We couldn't hire none either.?) Nobody would work for money. Oh no, nobody would take any money for what they did. They just traded work. [Your neighbor would help you get in the hay, and then you went and helped him. There wasn't all this stuff of figuring out if you was getting a proper return on your farm investment, what your overhead was and what your time was worth, such as the agricultural colleges teach now days nowadays .

Library of Congress

Guess they must teach 'em to leave their machinery out in the field all winter, for so many of 'em does it. I always put what little machinery I had under cover and looked after it the way I was trained to look after my boots. But these college farmers don't. Let the machinery all go to hell and then buy more. No wonder they can't show a profit on their farms all the time they are riding around in their automobiles.?)

[Leon Alexander graduated from State College.?) He'd inherited that big farm just this side the state line - guess maybe some of the farm was over in New Hampshire, too. Well, he got most all the kinds of farm machinery they was in the world. Got a job as agent, too. [He had the first manure spreader I ever see. Kept it down under the barn where the manure could be pushed through the floor right into it. That was an efficiency method he had learned at State. Well sir, a man wanted to buy a manure spreader?] and he heard about Leon being the agent and having one, [so he went up to see Leon.?) Oh yes, Leon had one and [(?) He explained?] to the man [all about it, ?] and how much it cost, and the efficient way of filling it. [The And the man was real interested [,?] ?] and wanted to see it. [Leon took him out round the barn?] - he hadn't been there himself for some time - [and showed him where the spreader was.?) Lucky he come along or the man never woulda found it. [The thing was all covered up with manure so deep that only the end of the pole was showing! Leon got the idea of how to fill her up all right. He just didn't think to take her out and spread the manure on the fields now and then.]

Leon was a funny feller. He dropped dead over in Greenfield. Should think he would. All he ever did was eat - never took no exercise. Farming didn't give it to him. Not the way he farmed. He was quite a church feller. Sang in the choir and never smoked, nor drank, nor nothing. I went to a church supper once and he was there. Never went again. It make me sick. I did go to a supper at Masonic Hall one time the Masons was giving a public installation and Derby invited me to come, when he was the head one. There was Leon Alexander and Frank Montague and Frank Williams and Charlie Stearns and a lot of those Mt. Hermon professors - all the same thing. Pass 'em a dish of mashed potatoes and

Library of Congress

they'd scoop half of it off on to their plates. Then they'd they'd take a couple of pieces of meat - enough for a small family - and a damn good helping of everything else they was in sight, and never say nothing. Just sit there hunched over their plates shoveling it in. And then by God, yell for more! I never see such a passel of hogs in my life! My stomach never bothers me. I guess I can eat anything - plenty of exercise in the grain and coal business, but I'd be ashamed to eat the way those fellers do. And look at the bellies on 'em. They all walk an if they was carrying bass drums. Probably Old Moody started it. He had a big belly, you know. Wouldn't never touch a mite of liquor, but he sure did shovel in the food. Guess he skipped that place in Scripture where it says to be temperate in all things.

8

Well, Leon would get up in the morning and help his man milk the cows. He was selling milk to a boy's camp up on the Ridge. Then he'd take the milk to the camp and stay there for breakfast, 'cause it didn't cost him anything. He'd get back about nine o'clock, maybe, and then he'd fool around and get out to the field about eleven.

One year he hired me to cut grass on that big field of his east of the road. There wasn't no houses there then. 'Course I came bright and early to do what I could in the cool of the morning. I had a good pair of hosses, but they wasn't fast walkers. When Leon come , he showed up with a hoss that, by God, couldn't walk two miles an hour. Darned old plug, all right for a plough, maybe. But Leon had his on the rake. Light job, you know, where we generally put our good carriage hosses. Darned if I couldn't cut faster than Leon could rake. Finally he said it looked like rain and thought I better help him get the hay under cover. I didn't see no signs of rain but I took one of my hosses and finished the raking job. Leon hitched his plug onto the funniest looking hay wagon you ever see. 'twas a bit bigger than a kid's toy wagon and it did have four wheels. He and his man pitched the hay into it. But they didn't use no system at all. A load of hay is built up, you know, with forkfuls of hay like a brick chimney or a stone wall. They just pitched it on any old way - made a kind of big haycock so's one forkful would top the load - 'stead of regular rows like we did it. Maybe it was the way he was taught at State. Then they wouldn't bind the load, nor

Library of Congress

nothing, just start for the barn. On the way the forkfuls would keep tumbling off like kids out of a truck at a school picnic. But they wouldn't stop, no sir! They went straight for the barn with whatever was left on the wagon. And they never picked it up on the way back neither. I know I went by there late in the fall, and here the field was, covered with little haycocks where the wagon had been. And, [?], the rest of the grass hadn't been cut neither! [College or no college, Leon just wasn't brought up right. ?]

Robert Wilder