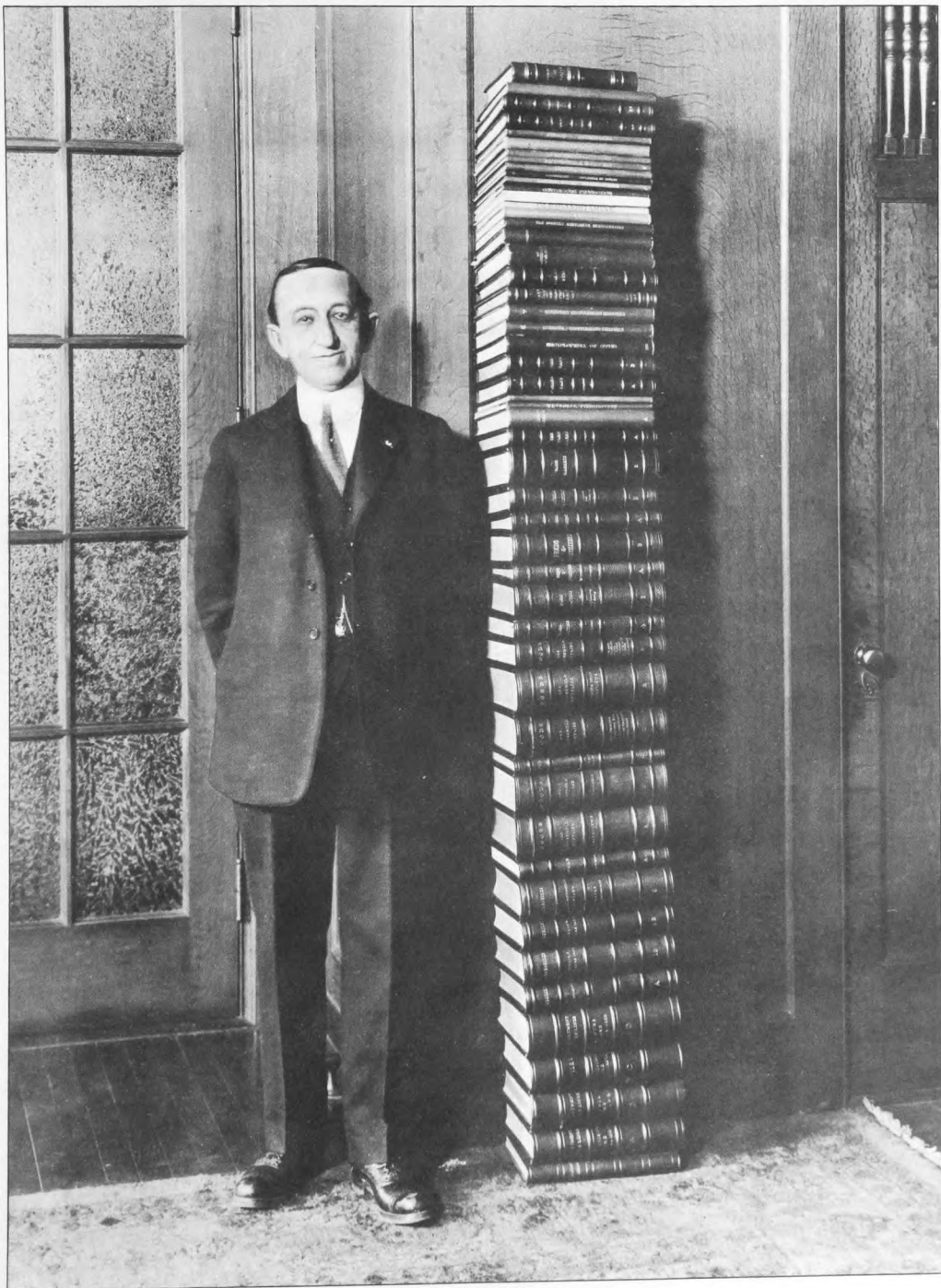


Commercial Research Volumes Which Grandfather Wrote



CHAPTER XVIII

SWAPPING TEACHING FOR RESEARCH

One day in the spring of 1911 Stanley Latshaw called at the high school office. Mr. Latshaw was now in Boston, manager of the Advertising Department of The Curtis Publishing Company. He said that The Curtis Publishing Company had decided to engage someone to study industry and that after considerable search, he had concluded that Grandfather would be the best man for the place. The salary would be twice that of the high school principalship, the headquarters would be at Boston and that he believed it was a great opportunity.

Grandfather had received some flattering offers in school work - he had been offered the principalship of the largest high school in Wisconsin, he had been approached on the subject of applying for the central high school in Seattle, he was president of the Wisconsin Teachers Association and the big meeting of the Association did not take place until the fall. Besides he was booked to take a party to Europe and in his party was to be Cousin Elizabeth. It did not seem possible to accept.

Mr. Latshaw, however, followed up the call by writing Grandfather and urging him to accept, to which Grandfather replied that he did not see how he could make the change at that time. However, Mr. Latshaw was persistent, he called in person a second time and urged Grandfather to come East at the expense of the company to look at the job. At the moment Grandfather did not accept this offer, but after talking the matter over with Grandmother and Mr. Mathie, wired that he would be willing to go East and look at the job.

The next week-end he met Mr. Latshaw and Mr. Hazen. Mr. Hazen

was no longer young; he was, however, a man of inspiring appearance and excellent ability. He was somewhat reserved in manner and rather formal in all he did, but he took a genuine interest in all who worked for him and was regarded with respect and affection by all who came to know him well.

At luncheon Mr. Hazen directed the conversation to Grandfather's experience in conducting tourists through Europe. Whether this was done to get a line on Grandfather's resourcefulness in unusual situations or merely because Mr. Hazen was amused to get an inside picture of a tourist conductor's job, was not clear.

With luncheon completed, Mr. Hazen asked abruptly: "What qualification have you for the job of studying industry for The Curtis Publishing Company?" "Just one," Grandfather replied. "I know nothing about industry, have no prejudices and will waste none of your time unlearning anything." "Mr. Latshaw told you about the job," said Mr. Hazen, "do you want it?" "It seems vague to me," says Grandfather. "It is vague," replied Mr. Hazen, "but it is a magnificent opportunity; take it and make the best of it."

"How long may I have to give a final answer?" "It took us six months to make up our minds to offer you the place," said Mr. Hazen. "I suppose you are entitled to a reasonable time to make up your mind whether to accept." "When do you wish me to begin?" "Tomorrow," said Mr. Hazen, "or as soon thereafter as you can."

Grandfather returned somewhat bewildered. The job had received no clearer definition. It was certainly vague. Should one whose success in school work was assured leave teaching, burn the bridges behind him, move his wife and four children to Boston "to study industry"? What, pray tell, could be more vague; yet Mr. Hazen had said: "It is vague, but it is a magnificent opportunity; take it and make the best of it."

Another consideration favored the change. Grandfather was "in a pocket" at Wausau. He received one of the largest salaries paid to high school principals in the state and could not expect much further increase. He was supplementing this salary with lecture work and taking parties to Europe and could not well afford to accept a school position which would necessitate his abandoning travel work. On the other hand, Wausau was a very poor place, both as a center from which to make lecture trips and also a place in which to build up prestige as a traveler and lecturer. He could not afford to move, neither could he work out a satisfactory program for growth, except through moving. To take the Curtis job would at least get him out of the pocket.

Grandmother was game - she wished to take the chance and favored the move. Mr. Mathie urged Grandfather to accept. Grandfather wired acceptance and had one of the busiest days of his life resigning from things. Every little while he thought of another responsibility and wrote another letter of resignation. A school man belongs to an unbelievable number of organizations, in all of which he has some measure of responsibility. Most of these have long since been forgotten, but among others were:

President of Wisconsin Teachers Association
Excellent High Priest of Wausau Chapter
Ex officio manager of High School Athletics Association
Ex officio manager of Oratorical League

and so on for about a dozen other high school associations, for all of which the principal was the de facto treasurer, the accounts all being carried in his name. Besides there were numberless local organizations and educational associations, all of which had to be informed of the sudden leaving of one of their members.

But at last evening came and with it a strange sense of peace and carefree ease. Grandfather was free from responsibility except to his family and to his newly acquired job.