

the paragraphers and he is probably the most conspicuous example furnished by this generation of the man who habitually stifles his conscience until it becomes too "seared" to be of service to him. He doubtless regards himself as a pious man; in fact, he is quite punctilious in attending upon the ordinary means of grace, and yet his life-record shows extraordinary moral obliquity. He has so long accustomed himself to putting money-making above ethical considerations that he can bankrupt a competitor through the rebate system, bribe a college with a donation or evade a court summons with equal complacency. But Mr. Rockefeller is not alone in the use of indefensible business methods. He enjoys an odious pre-eminence, but he has many would-be rivals. Whenever a business man is caught in wrongdoing, he is quick to reply: "They all do it." While this indictment is too sweeping to be just, it must be admitted that there is entirely too much truth in the charge.

Misrepresentation of wares, the adulteration of foods, the palming off of "just as good" substitutes—these are the petty devices of trade. Then come the watering of stock, the underselling of articles in one territory while the price is maintained or raised elsewhere, the manipulation of the market, etc., etc. Besides these, there are railroad discriminations, excessive rates, franchise-grabbing, etc. This business dishonesty is not confined to the ignorant. Professor James, of Harvard college, recently declared: "There is not a public abuse on the whole eastern coast which does not receive the enthusiastic approval of some Harvard graduate." The men who engage in dishonest practices in business have at some point in their lives considered the matter, and, putting their conscientious scruples aside, have chosen to make the getting of money their chief aim.

The lawyer has the same temptations to meet; he has frequent occasions to decide between his conscience and his purse. When the citizen's committee of Philadelphia was looking for a lawyer to represent the people in their fight against the gas company, it found that all the prominent attorneys of the city were retained by that company. These attorneys knew that they were selling themselves to a corporation which was not only robbing the city but corrupting the city's representatives. Where were their consciences? And this is not an isolated case. President Roosevelt in a recent speech pointed out that in every city able lawyers are found who spend their time preparing schemes for the plundering of the public. And each one of these lawyers at some time in his life decided to substitute the love of money for the law of conscience. If the lawyers of the United States would refuse to prostitute their brains to the service of predatory wealth, it would not be long before exploitation would cease.

Besides those who make a business of furnishing legal assistance regardless of moral considerations, there is another group of lawyers to which those belong who act as lobbyists for corporate interests. At every state capitol, there will be found lawyers of greater or less prominence who look after the distribution of funds or favors, intended to corruptly influence the legislators. At Washington, there is an unusual

number of these, some of them adding the distinction of former public service to legal qualifications.

Editors and publishers are also to be found in abundance, who, for pecuniary considerations, make their papers the champions, of those who will pay for the service. Sometimes the editorial page is put at the disposal of the corporations; sometimes only the news and advertising columns are sold. The promoters of a public steal often use the stock of their corporation to bribe the newspapers. In nearly every large city, there are newspapers which are paid to fight municipal ownership and to excuse and justify the practices of the public franchise corporations. Sometimes in a contest between these franchise owners and the public, nearly every important daily is subsidized, and yet the people have often triumphed in spite of the influence of these papers. But what shall we say of the code of journalistic ethics that will tolerate this sale of a paper's influence? Even the advertising patronage has been known to influence the editorial policy of a paper. It is not a rare thing for an editor to refuse to publish a fact that he knows to be true, where the publication may array against him an influential business interest.

College presidents and professors have sometimes been led to make their instructions harmonize with the views of those from whom they expect, or have accepted, endowments; and ministers have at times kept silent upon moral questions rather than jeopardize the contributions made by worldly-minded pew-holders. If the city ministers condemned gambling upon the stock exchange and in the grain pit as strenuously as they condemn the smaller and less injurious forms of gambling it would not take long to put an end to the speculation which victimizes traders, ruins banks and drives so many to suicide.

The desire to secure social distinction has led a multitude of men and women to disregard their higher interests in order to conform to customs sanctioned by the exclusive set. If the teachings of Christ can be accepted as a rule of conduct—and what Christian can deny that they are the only rule—how can the Christian justify a lavish expenditure on fashionable dress and extravagant entertainments when the money is sorely needed to help the poor, the sick and the distressed. There is no more stony ground upon which the words of truth can fall than that furnished by the heart of one who makes social distinction the aim of life. All of the pure and tender emotions are stifled by the selfishness of a life devoted to personal display and social success.

It is not necessary to elaborate the methods employed by those who put political preferment above the interests of the soul. In times past, monarchs have not hesitated to take the life of any possible heir to the throne, and ambitious generals have marched to military eminence through the blood of thousands. Even today, we witness the ruthless slaughter of Russian peasants whose offense is that they claim a voice in the government under which they live. In republics, and in constitutional monarchies where legislative assemblies exist, we find two forms of surrender to evil; one is the corrupt use of

money in elections, and the other is the advocacy of things supposed to be popular which the conscience does not approve.

Corruption while disgracefully common in every part of the country is almost universally condemned, and, therefore, needs no special attention here. Not so much has been said, however, about the practice of making one's views conform to the views of others for the purpose of securing political advancement. There are innumerable instances where men have changed their views upon a public question in order to remain in public life or where they have changed their views in going from one locality to another. The man who to promote his ambition advocates what he does not conscientiously believe to be right stands upon the same plane with the business man who violates his conscience for trade advantage and is a fit companion for the lawyer who sells his intellect to the highest bidder. And no better is the business man who advocates whatever policy of government he thinks will bring the largest returns in his business, regardless of the moral principles involved in the policy.

But enough has been said to show that in every department of life one is constantly tempted to put selfish considerations above that which appeals to his better nature, and what reward does he secure? It is easier to discuss this question with the old than with the young, for those who are advanced in years are prepared to say with Solomon, that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Neither wealth nor social distinction nor yet political power can bring peace to the human heart or satisfy the aspiration of man's soul. The conscience "void of offense toward God and man" is the one possession which is above value, and, no matter by what route one seeks to escape from his conscience, he is doomed to disappointment at last. The asking of a question is a familiar form of argument, and no one ever used this form of argument with more effect than Christ. Of all the questions propounded by Him no question goes more unerringly to the heart than this supreme one: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

W. J. BRYAN.

#### EMINENTLY CONSERVATIVE

Nothing is so serious but that it is made the subject of a joke. The controversy between Governor Cummins and Secretary Shaw is so far-reaching that timid republicans are expressing the fear that it may hurt them both. A Minnesota story is being modelled to fit the Iowa situation: A cautious son of Sweden was approached by an inquiring politician and the following dialogue took place:

Politician—"What do you think of Governor Cummins?"

Swede—"He pretty smart man."

Politician—"And what do you think of Secretary Shaw?"

Swede—"He pretty smart man too."

Politician—"Which do you think has the best show?"

Swede—"Oh, Ringling Bros., they have the best show."

## AVENUES OF USEFULNESS---MERCHANDISING

Some have a taste for trade, and merchandising is not only a legitimate but a necessary branch of business. There is a vast economy to the public in having a middle man through whom to exchange products. The old-fashioned market brought certain traders together and enabled them to exchange their wares, but it was at best a rather clumsy affair. The man with a horse, a hog or a sheep to sell might not find a purchaser and then he would have to carry his property back with him, and not every thing that the farmer needed could be found at the market place. Then, market days were occasional and man's needs are constant. The store is a convenience that only those can appreciate who have been forced to do without it.

The young man who enjoys barter can prepare for storekeeping with the assurance that he can render a valuable service to society and in doing so secure a fair remuneration. From the country store, with its general stock of staples, up through the special lines to the wholesale

house leads an honorable path that millions have followed with profit to themselves and benefit to their fellows. Clerkship is the first step and it is well for one to take it before becoming an owner, even though he may have money enough to start as a proprietor. Nothing can take the place of experience and no one is so fit to become an employer as one who has worked up from the ranks of the employes.

The first lesson for the merchant to learn is that he is in business for the accommodation of his customers. They can live without him, but he can not keep store without them. To secure them and hold them he must treat them fairly and to treat them fairly he must furnish them what they want at a price that is not extortionate. The merchant who takes advantage of his customers, charges more when they send after an article than when they call themselves and enquire the price, or palms off an inferior article soon becomes acquainted with the sheriff and the judgment creditor. The clerk who shows an aptitude for business, who makes friends for his employer, who can be relied upon and who is not afraid to work is the one who

stands the best chance of becoming the partner when a change occurs in the firm.

Merchandising has an advantage over farming in that the merchant can better coin into money his personal popularity and the confidence which he enjoys. The cattle, hogs, wheat and corn of the just and the unjust sell at the same price in the market, but the trade of a community, other things being equal, will flow into the store of the man who by courtesy, kindness and character wins the confidence of the people.

What a pity that any young man should live an idle, pleasure-seeking life when it is possible by honesty, industry, perseverance and good habits to make a success in so many useful occupations—and few occupations offer greater opportunity than merchandising for a gradual growth on merit from a small beginning to financial independence. Just now the trusts are squeezing the merchants by shortening credits, forcing exclusive contracts and throwing more and more of the risks of trade upon them, but the trusts will not last always. An enlightened public sentiment will soon set limits to corporate power and restore competition.