

THE EVENING NEWS.

Friday, February 23, 1912.

WANT OF MORAL PRINCIPLE AMONG MEN IN POSITIONS OF TRUST AND POWER.

A Sermon by Rev. J. H. Baylis, a Roberts Park Chapel, Indianapolis Ind., Sabbath Evening, Jan. 14.

[CONTINUED.]

PROVERB xvi. 12 "It is an abomination to kings to conceal a witness: therefore he that shames a witness is established by righteousness."

when he won it. Does he restore it? Does anybody taboo him as a partaker with thieves? The man who played and lost is shut up in prison; the man who played and won is thought to be the whole history of the case, and is now using the money which he knew at the time the other had no right to risk, now unused of the law and unwatched of good society. If the player had won, paid his balance, and moved into a palace, polite society would have welcomed him, and other men less favored would have sought for his acquaintance or his opportunity. The difference is just the difference between losing and winning at a game of chance in which the player uses somebody else's money. Can anybody explain why the winning player should be patted on the shoulder as a shrewd and lucky fellow, and the losing player should be imprisoned, or is winning an apology for gambling, and gambling with other people's money! Shall the police arrest only the losers in faro houses? And shall we do in society what we would condemn in the police? Shall we admit to our burglar a man who is rich, and wink at the known questionable way in which he got his money, and imprison another man who played the same game as our favorite, but lost at it?

All these questions and illustrations bring us back to the idea, or rather the fact, that money is the basis of the only aristocracy we have in this country. No matter how coarse and illiterate a man is, if he has large wealth it is his patent of nobility. If a man is shrewd enough to get rich by questionable means, and escape the law, we rather flatter him for his shrewdness than denounce him for his dishonesty. "Sharp" is one of America's pet phrases, and this becomes itself a reflection upon us. A nation is to be pitied, and the watch out aloft should cry out "Breakers ahead!" when its most prized and lauded quality of mind is "sharpness."

Who, at our fashionable watering places, scowled on the chief robber of the Erie railway as a scoundrel? Who would use his name in this connection if he were present? The philippic of the press against him were fearful, but his reputation in high life was that of a prince. We are wonderfully virtuous in the abstract, but in practice we have no virtues to spare.

It is said that some of our great newspapers can be hired to advocate anything. Money is our god. The shrines of this divinity are on every high hill and in every valley throughout the land. We smile at the credulity which inspired that ancient cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," and we are amazed at the enthusiasm which kept the cry alive for two incessant centuries, but we are not tire of shouting to each other from the hillside, and up among the mountains; in the dingy workshop and the dusty labor field; in the store and counting house on the river bank and down by the sea shore one loud, unceasing cry, "Great is Gold!"

Now I do not apologize for fraud. I do not say that men who are guilty of betraying their high trusts should escape. They should not. But this I do say, that there are imbedded in the common, almost fundamental thought of this country, certain ideas in regard to money which furnish to many men who have the opportunity, the inspiration to these evil deeds. The fault is not wholly with the individual offender. A part of it is in society, which puts money before merit, which judges men by their houses, and horses, and hounds, and not by their own integrity and nobility, which is the power behind the throne which prompts men who would not steal outright, to "tamper" the lives of thousands over steam boilers of rotten iron, or on railway bridges of rotten wood, saving expense for the sake of large dividends. This is the stimulus which leads men and women to imbue their hands in the innocent and defenceless blood of the unborn, until the crime smells to heaven from every city, and is hamlet throughout the land; and it is becoming a question whether the real American stock will not ere long wholly disappear. Practitioners engage in this murderous business because it is a rapid road to fortune, and many of their patrons accept it as the least expensive alternative, and as the most favorable to the glitter and pride of life. Money puts into our daily lives the spirit of Mammon, which is as full of abomination as ever Sodom was. There is a power in it which often pulls the minister of Christ down from his honor, prostitutes genius; betrays genius into mammonism; leads thousands into defiance of law; makes the clerk rob his employer, the cashier his bank, the mayor his city, the senator his country.

But we have stayed long enough before this sad picture. It is a very "court of death," and reminds one of that awful scene which Rembrandt Peale has given us to behold from every city, and is hamlet throughout the land; and it is becoming a question whether the real American stock will not ere long wholly disappear. Practitioners engage in this murderous business because it is a rapid road to fortune, and many of their patrons accept it as the least expensive alternative, and as the most favorable to the glitter and pride of life. Money puts into our daily lives the spirit of Mammon, which is as full of abomination as ever Sodom was. There is a power in it which often pulls the minister of Christ down from his honor, prostitutes genius; betrays genius into mammonism; leads thousands into defiance of law; makes the clerk rob his employer, the cashier his bank, the mayor his city, the senator his country.

Having thus dealt with the fact, and its philosophy, let us now inquire, thirdly, for the cure.

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