

MEN OF THE TIMES.

MR. H. P. ECKARDT.

The flighty purpose never is o'ertook
Unless the deed go with it.—SHAK.

In the call-over of a man's qualifications to fill any important executive position, ripe age has always counted for a good deal. The man endowed with that gift has been generally supposed by virtue of it to be of more steadied habits, cooler judgment and maturer knowledge of the world. Hence, in the past the brunt of public and large private responsibilities has had to be borne by men who had seen at least their two score years. The position seldom came to the man, the man had usually to go to the position, through the mellowing discipline of years. But age is an acquirement which all men—clever or stupid, lazy or energetic—have about equal chances of attaining, while mental ability, special aptitude, tenacity of purpose, industry, self-restraint and moral qualities generally, are possessed or developed only by the few. A man may show intellectual or moral fitness for weighty responsibilities long before he may show the trace of time. This has come to be quite generally recognized to-day, and there are more young men now in leading positions in commerce, finance, railway service, politics and the professions than there ever were before. This, more than any time in the past, is the young man's epoch.

Mr. H. P. Eckardt, of H. P. Eckardt & Co., Toronto, is probably the youngest head of a large wholesale grocery house in Canada.

He is but 28 years old, and reached his present position as principal partner in his firm four years ago. Mr. Eckardt is a Canadian, having been born in Unionville, a village about twenty miles from Toronto. When he was 9 years old his family came to this city. Here he received his education and his business training. In the year 1879 his destiny first touched the hem of the grocery trade, when he obtained a situation in the office of J. C. Fitch, wholesale grocer, Toronto. After remaining two years and a half in the counting-house, applying himself with energy to the mastery of the details that his duties brought him in contact with, he was then sent

out on the road. He continued to travel till January 1887, when he concluded to begin business on his own account, and opened the warehouse from which he does business to-day, and which is the centre of a connection whose boundaries are stretching farther out every year.

A man needed to be pretty sure of himself who started in the wholesale grocery trade here four years ago, and particularly a very young man, the fibre of whose business character was not supposed to be firmly knit yet by experience. It would probably have been impossible for so young a man to have made a successful start twenty-five years ago, when the

in which to lay the foundations of a large business among numerous and established rivals. But the house of H. P. Eckardt & Co. made rapid progress in the face of these disadvantages, and has attained to a position that would be considered a high one for a much older concern under much more favorable auspices. Under the same efforts, and in the same hands, the business of the house would have doubled in the four years between '81 and '85.

Mr. Eckardt's example presents this important fact for the contemplation of young men: That he who would succeed ought to be ready when the opportunity comes.

There are numberless men bemoaning their hard luck to-day, who ought rather to blame their own lack of diligence in preparing themselves to seize the proffered chance. Many so-called luckless men have to stand by and see positions and openings go past them in search of those who are capable of taking them. To be ready to take fortune's tide at the flood a man must have worked strenuously and with intelligence in some pursuit, whereby he will fit himself to take a place in the upper ranks of his vocation. A man's chances will come if he is ready for them. The prospects of the ready man may be brightest at the seemingly darkest moment.

Mr. Eckardt's mental and business equipment was an unusually full one when he took his place at the helm of an independent business. He had early apprehended the lesson that a man must have his mind constantly open and his faculties active in order to keep pace with the possibilities of his career. He has consequently few 'might have beens' to gaze back upon in the retro-

spect. He has accomplished most of the things that were within reasonable range of accomplishment, and did not content himself with gazing hopelessly upon vanishing opportunities. If he had discharged his duties in the service of others in a perfunctory or half-hearted way, his experience would not have been so valuable as it is, and his integrity would not have been so well-grounded a prop to his business as it is. He formed acquaintances on the road and established personal connections that of themselves constituted a good investment when he started. The thorough knowledge he acquired of retail needs by travelling among retailers was worth more to him than an equal length of previous experience as principal.



Prepossession in favor of judgment and stability tempered and confirmed by years was greater than it is to-day. Mr. Eckardt struck out into business just at the close of a good spell and at the beginning of a dull one. Preceding the year '87 there had been a succession of good harvests, and an important stimulus of money circulation—the construction of the C. P. R.—had been active for several years. Its beneficial influence ended just before Mr. Eckardt started, the influx of gold caused by it ceased, and a dull period followed. There has been no really good year since, in fact most of the crop-reports since '87 are below the average and times have been hard. It was a very trying time