

# THE BASEST OF ALL INGRATITUDE

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NEW YORK skyrocket banker is in danger of the penitentiary for looting the institutions that he strung together in a chain, each link being made of other people's money. With this he is specifically charged by the Grand Jury, and will be tried in a court of law.

This man is also charged with a far blacker crime, for which there does not appear to be any punishment provided by our ingenious system of statutes.

When he was placed in jail, thus attracting to himself more attention than even his "genius" for finance attracted, an old couple was discovered living in poverty in a miserable tenement. Their name was the name this man discarded when he discarded the poor although honorable associations of his childhood. And when they were brought to the courtroom where the banker was detained and permitted to look at him they declared that he was their son, and were overcome with sorrow at the plight in which they found him.

The man, according to the newspaper reports, at first angrily ordered them aside. He declared that he knew them—admitted even that they had brought him to this country when he was a child, and had been known as his parents. But he sullenly denied that their claim was valid, and, it is asserted, during the rest of the time that they remained in the courtroom he laughed and sneered at them.

It is right and necessary to try this man for bank looting. By his selfishness and his reckless disregard of the rights of others who had entrusted their money to him he came about as near to bringing on a frightful general panic as a man can ever come.

It seems a pity that he cannot, too, be tried on the charge of deserting his parents, so that their claim might be fully proved, and that, if found guilty, he could not be given a sentence that would be a wholesome example to all other men who despise the steps by which they have risen—even going to the length of denying the father and mother of whom they have grown ashamed.

It is worth remembering that the banker is ashamed of his parents for no reason other than that they are foreigners, and that their ways are not the ways of the tawdry set in which he lately moved.

But his parents are not ashamed of him. Charged with crime though he is; penniless although he asserts himself to be; in jail, facing trial on many indictments, they still are willing to come to his aid with their love and sympathy, which is all they have to give.

The financier's assertion that these people are imposters does not fit very well with their devotion to him in his trouble. Imposters have something to gain; these people have nothing.

The very fact that they are willing to acknowledge him at such a time will be looked upon as pretty fair proof that they actually are his parents, for no love save a deep and natural one would rise superior to the disgrace which this man's plight will bring to those who show it.

A beautiful instance of manhood this! The care and rearing of children is a heavy responsibility, even in America, where there is no class hatred, no persecution, no terrible systems of taxation to support an idle, carousing aristocracy.

But in Russia, the country from which these people came, the parents who bring children into the world and defend them against their scoundrelly human enemies, as well as against the enemies of disease and poverty, must be really heroic.

It is for their children, not for themselves, that they save what money they can, gather up their pitiful belongings and cross the ocean to America, a country of which they know nothing beyond the rumor that freedom is to be found there.

It is to give their children the chance that has been denied them that they live on little or nothing when they reach here, saving, scrimping, working night and day, in order that the little ones shall have the education that means success.

And when the child whom their efforts have given this chance really reaches success, how proud they are, how glad that they made the sacrifice, though it wore out their old lives in the making and though it meant giving up every happiness save that of pride in their children!

Imagine if you can the blow struck at such parents as these when the beneficiary of all their efforts, all their sufferings, all their sacrifices deliberately turns against them, because he now has graduated into the society of shady financiers and shoddy denizens of the Tenderloin.

Such ingratitude is to be expected of a tiger cub; but

*There Is No Duty Higher Than  
the Duty to One's Father and  
Mother. To Turn Against  
Them, or to Leave Them in  
Their Old Age Helpless and  
Penniless, Is a Greater Crime  
Than Many of Those That  
Send Men to the Penitentiary.*



The law makes it the duty of a parent to care for his child until the child reaches an age when it is presumed to be able to care for itself.

When Shakespeare made Goneril, the ungrateful daughter of poor old King Lear, inform him that, since he had given away his throne, she no longer felt that she owed him anything, he was at first too crushed to reply.

Then clenching his withered hands, he launched against her the worst of all curses—the hope that she would bear a child that would

"Stamp wrinkles in your brow of youth.  
With cadent tears fret channels in your cheeks.  
Turn all your mother's pains and benefits  
To laughter and contempt; that you may feel  
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child."

"Turn all a mother's pains and benefits to laughter and contempt!" Can any mother read that line without a terrible understanding of what it would mean to have the child that she has borne, over whom she has worried and wept, for whom she would gladly have given her life, turn against her in her old age, and laugh to see her pitiful

In return the law gives to the parents the child's earnings during the years before eighteen or twenty-one when it is permitted to work. To the honor of all

an parents be it said that this legal present is seldom accepted. No parent not forced to do so by necessity would take the wages of his child; indeed, it is the object of nine-tenths of the overworked mothers and fathers in this country to accumulate enough during their lifetimes that their children may never have to work at all.

The law does NOT force a son to take the same care of his parents. And in that particular the law needs a little adjusting.

A man who lately spent a Summer on a farm not far from New York met the owner of the adjoining farm, a shrewd, successful, hard man.

Asked how he was prospering, the farmer replied: "Well, I'm doing better now. Ain't under so much expense. You see, my old father cost a heap to take care of, and I've just had him committed to the poorhouse; so the county will look out for him."

There are many such dutiful sons and daughters in this country, and until some thoughtful statemanager arranges the laws so that whether they like it or not they are obliged to give their aged and hapless parents

actly the same kind of care they received from them, their numbers will increase.

Doubtless it is difficult to "get along" in this or any other country. The parent's duty to his children is great; they have come into the world without asking; they are entitled to support and an education.

But it is not right, and it never will be right, to treat fathers and mothers who have worked and sorrowed and loved and suffered for their children as cruel farmers treat their broken-down work horses.

It is easy for economists to point out that in a human lifetime one ought to be able to provide for old age. The widow who takes in sewing to support three or four children knows better.

It is easy to assert solemnly that industry means independence. In many cases it does, but be she ever so industrious, the wife of a drunkard cannot make herself or her children independent of the poverty and misery that his life brings upon them.

Mother love is natural; but it is none the less deep and genuine, none the less welcome by the child that needs it. And it is none the less entitled to repayment when age has withered the hand that stroked the forehead of the little sick baby and dimmed the eyes that watched so