

PEOPLE and AFFAIRS

ONE of the greatest questions of the month is, "Shall we or shall we not accept gifts from millionaires?"

GIFTS FROM
MILLIONAIRES.

Notice the phrasing.

If the question were put, "Shall I or shall I not," it would be

easy of solution. Each man would be able to answer it promptly and courteously. What an individual citizen accepts is of much less public concern than what citizens in their corporate capacity accept. As a rule, however, millionaires do not give to individuals. They prefer to make their donations to corporations. And on the surface there seems little objection to such gifts. They show a generous spirit on the part of the millionaires and a generous spirit should not be discouraged. Again, there are certain undertakings for the general good which are outside the province of governments and must depend for their initiation and support upon private benefactions. Public libraries, art museums, higher education, philanthropy, and historical and economic research are perhaps the most prominent of these undertakings. The gifts of millionaires applied to these works in a proper spirit would seem to be for the public good.

But let us approach the question in another way. When the church goes out to collect funds it is not often found rejecting the dollars of the brewer, the saloon-keeper or the liquor-dealer. The missionary funds are annually swelled by contributions from those engaged in a traffic which the church is said to abhor. The great universities accept funds without inquiring into their origin or the method of their accumulation. With such examples before us, why should the

mayors of Vancouver, Winnipeg, Ottawa and Sydney be condemned as they have been by some critics because they have fallen on their knees before the golden calf and asked the millionaire for funds for public libraries?

There are churches in the city of Toronto and elsewhere supported and controlled by men who have wrung the last cent from the handkerchief of the mortgage-burdened farmer who has fallen into their hands. These men work under the names of loan companies, but of course never ask more than their legal due. Again, there are churches supported by men who crowd employees into stinking basements where the society lady trips gaily for her "bargains," who sell goods made in sweat-shops, in the corners of which lurk crime and disease. There are churches supported by men and women who pass the small corner-grocery, the butcher-shop, the cobbler's humble establishment to save a penny here and a penny there. We tolerate all these things and why should we not tolerate the millionaires' gifts?

Let us be consistent. This is the eye-shutting age. Let us keep our eyes closed when we are shown the methods of money-making by which millionaires are made, and let us open them only when the profits are distributed. Thus we shall retain that supreme virtue—consistency.

Then again the millionaire should not be discouraged. It is mean to attempt to discourage a man who is trying to do right. Public libraries will not injure the cities now begging for them, and the accepting of them helps the millionaire out of his difficulties. Think how cruel it would be if every person were to refuse to accept