

the top is the one to be first supplied. After this initiatory demand has been satisfied, the shoes are imitated in cheaper grades, until finally russet shoes become so common that the leaders refuse to wear them longer and they go out of fashion—only to come back again in a few years, after which the same cycle is repeated.

Vanity is literally insatiable. Without vanity there would be little use for the fortunes of multimillionaires. Beyond a modest fortune more wealth would be to them entirely superfluous. Therefore the use to which they put their millions is of much more moment to society than to themselves. If they use it to set standards of luxury, they are using it in a socially injurious manner. They produce the same effect on society as though they levied a tax on all persons poorer than themselves.

The individual can emancipate himself from the expense of social racing by asserting his independence and "living the simple life" regardless of his neighbors or their opinions of him. An interesting book called "One Way Out" describes how one family "ran away from its neighbors" in order to start life afresh in a less expensive environment. By such a step the cost of living could probably be cut in two or reduced in an even greater ratio.

But to most men and women such Spartan measures would seem a hardship rather than a saving. For them, no remedy for their own extravagance would be adopted which did not carry with it a remedy for the extravagance of their neighbors also.

§ 7. Remedies for the Evils of Vanity

We have seen that the natural remedy for cutthroat competition in business is combination. In the same way if there could be a general "disarmament," as it were, or agreement between the social competitors, it might solve the problem of social rivalry.