

Banks and Bankers.

The profession of banker did not always have the same air of respectability and reputation of honesty, which is attached to it in the present day, and, before it developed into an auxiliary to commerce, was to a great extent in the hands of extortioners. The money changers who were cast out of the Temple were no doubt belonging to the class of unprincipled usurers, who were even at that early date beginning to make their power felt. From the time coin began to be used in the world there seems to have sprung up a desire to accumulate or hoard it together on the part of individuals, and out of this greedy desire has no doubt come the modern bank, which is now the most powerful medium in circulating money, and one of the greatest elements of trade. From the money changers of the first century the dealers in coin seem to have become more degenerate as centuries wore on, and the debasing of coin seems to have been a very frequent practice with them. They do not seem to have advanced very much in public estimation either, and an index to popular feeling in the fifteenth century regarding their dishonest practices, can be had in the rather uncomfortable portion of *Inferno*, to which Dante consigns one of these coin debasers. The persecuted Jews, shut out for centuries from every avenue to fame or honor, found in the accumulation of wealth their only source of power; and if grinding usury was excusable in any class, it certainly was in this hated and despised race.

In England and Scotland during the middle centuries the Jew did not have quite so much of a monopoly of the usury or loan business as in continental countries of Europe. There the goldsmith or artificer in valuable metals was more or less of a banker, and as his trading in these metals was recognised by law, and bolstered by restrictions and usages of guilds which exempted the Jew from participating in legitimate trade, he conducted his business under a system of protection. Though not as a class so unscrupulous as the Jews, the goldsmiths were not free from dishonest practices and oppressive usury, and their power, owing to their standing as freemen, enabled them to enforce their usury by law. Yet there are numerous instances of men of their class showing large hearted philanthropy, and a notable one is that of George Herriot, the Jingling Geordie who supplied the pressing pecuniary wants of the needy James the first. The Herriot hospital in the city of Edinburgh, where thousands of poor boys have been raised and educated free, is a fitting monument of that man's far-seeing philanthropy.

Up to near the close of the sixteenth century the Jew and the goldsmith were practically the bankers of Europe, and the proudest of nobles had at times to show deference to these holders of money bags. The organising and operating of banks, that anything like resembled the institutions of the present day, originated either in the republic of Venice or Holland (which first, it is difficult to discover), and with the opening of the seventeenth century the value of such institutions was beginning to be recognised in these countries. Monarchs had for

two hundred years previously tried to operate banks under governmental supervision and control, and in every instance, commencing with that of Charles the fifth of Spain, failures had been the result. Towards the close of the same century more than one successful bank was in operation in Holland, and when the revolution of 1688 to 1690 had placed William the third upon the British throne, Dutch ideas of finance soon gained favor in England, and were adopted there.

The death of Louis XIV brought a period of peace to Europe, and with the opening of the eighteenth century commerce was making rapid recovery from the devastation of war. The appearance of two men in the financial world marked this age as one of progress in banking. These were William Paterson and John Law. The former was the father of the present system of English banking and the real founder of the Bank of England. His foresight and sound judgment were shown by the solid principles upon which that institution was based, which have since enabled it to withstand many a financial shock and severe trial. Law was a different kind of genius, and was doubtless the father of the wild cat or fiat system, his theory being that the prosperity of a country depended upon the amount of money in circulation, which might be increased in the form of paper at pleasure as the demand called for it.

Two opposite systems were thus at work in England and France, and the results of the succeeding century showed the wisdom of the former and more conservative. From these sprung the banking ideas of the present day, which find their extreme of unreliability in the system of irresponsible private banks, such as existed in the United States before the late civil war; and the opposite extreme in the Scotch system which, while fostering something that looks very like monopoly, guarantees absolute safety to the depositor and saddles the stockholder with unlimited liability to secure that safety. The American national bank system is a relic of the state bolstered bank system, but a well organized one, which supplies a good guarantee to the depositor, while our Canadian chartered banks are something of a safe compromise between the unlimited liability doctrine of Scotland and the United States private bank of a quarter of a century ago.

While all these changes and work of progress have been going on in banks, bankers have not been standing still, and the individual who now measures and provides for the commercial demands of his patrons, stands out in marked contrast to the usurer of the first century, the coin debaser of the fifteenth, the avaricious Jew of the same period, or even the self-important goldsmith of two or three centuries ago.

Pushing Trade.

On entering business or professional pursuits it is naturally to be expected that a few thoughts should be given to the mode of procedure most likely to result in success. Most men at the outset have an ideal of some kind or other, however deformed that ideal sometimes

may be. Probably there are few occupations that beginners imagine themselves to be more complete masters of, than the occupation of travelling salesman. One man is fully convinced that this business is one in which "cheek" is pre-eminently indispensable, and he resolves to frame his conduct accordingly. He visits his prospective customer and endeavors to induce him to make a purchase. The latter kindly, but firmly, informs him that he is well supplied already, and has no need of what the salesman offers. To retire at this moment would be contrary to the principles of one who not only piques himself on his "cheek," but, it may be, on his shrewdness. He sees that it is useless to press immediate business, but he is sagacious enough to perceive that the situation does not preclude the possibility of his obtaining an order for a future supply, and he accordingly presses the point. Hereupon he is informed that the present supply is giving complete satisfaction and it is undesirable to begin experimenting with a new article. Not daunted, he falls back on his qualification which he believes so essential to success, and begins to disparage the quality of the article which he desires to replace by his own, and at the same time talks eloquently, as he thinks, in praise of the article he has to sell. He is peremptorily informed by the now somewhat impatient prospective customer that he objects to enter into any discussion as to the merits of the articles, that he has already refused to purchase, and positively objects to hearing another word on the subject. A little crestfallen the salesman retires disgusted with the incivility of the world in general and with this individual in particular.

Another would-be salesman is confident that he has discovered the true secret of success. He sets out with the conviction that he will carry everything before him in the commercial world by sheer force of will, which he believes he possesses in a higher degree than anyone else, or can exercise with exceptional vigor when occasion requires it. He goes to work, regardless of the frame of mind in which he finds his expected customers, and is soon surprised at the number of very curt refusals he meets. By and by experience shows him that he cannot do business by force, and that his ardor must be modified by gentlemanly behaviour. He generally finds it advantageous to observe closely and as far as possible perceive at a glance the character and frame of mind of the person with whom he would trade. In fact he will eventually learn that the business of a traveling salesman is an art, which, when mastered will enable him to escape discourteous treatment, and push his business with reasonable success.

Alluvial vs. Quartz Gold Mining.

When gold diggers were accumulating sudden fortunes by extracting the metal, in a state closely approximating purity, from the rich alluvial deposits of Australia and California, the occupation of gold mining was certainly at its best. Whether these palmy days are gone never to return, it would be hazardous to say, but, there can be no doubt, if they ever do return it will be by the discovery of fresh fields of alluvial deposit. In these the influences of nature had already done the vast and arduous