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BUSINESS MORALITY.

Mercantile life, like every other occupation or calling, has its bright and its shady side. It is always pleasant to look on the former; but sometimes it becomes profitable and instructive to glance at the latter—to take stock of the foibles and faults to which mercantile human nature has proven itself to be susceptible. What a black catalogue might be drawn up from the material which is afforded in the peculations, frauds, abscondings, bogus warehouse receipts, tobacco and whiskey seizures, and the false custom house entries that come to light once and again? The inference might be drawn that we are falling into a lax state of business morality. Time was when we twitted our neighbors about their wooden nutmegs, and wooden ham cheats, but consciously or not, we seem to have copied their example, and to emulate their unenviable fame. We are not, however, mere copyists; our sharp men have shown an amount of originality which would do a regular down-easter no discredit. Styles of roguery have been developed suited to the tastes and spheres of the grain dealer, coal dealer, bank officer, alderman and government official, as well as the rowdy. It is not to be expected that well-educated men should turn house-breakers and express robbers; these are unquestionably too low. The cashier of the Commercial Bank of New Brunswick would have shrunk from the thought, much more the attempt to plunder his neighbor's dwelling; and a government subordinate now under sentence in the penitentiary, could not have brooked association with an express robber. Those vulgar forms of villiany are not suited to their taste; they each needed money to gratify their tastes and wishes, and each obtained it in a way suited to their sense of propriety. They were not bad men in the ordinary sense, but were respectable church-going persons. Hughes, who absconded from Brampton, and refused to give his creditors a farthing, but took his gold to Kansas city, was a respectable man; so was another trader missing from the same locality now. The "Barley King" was respectable; so are many of those who have gone shamelessly through most discreditable examinations in insolvency, and they regard themselves as respectable still. The respectable dry goods merchant who can swindle the State under oath, is a dainty, choice man in his way, and seems only disgusted at his want of success in this field of enterprise.

These are the most marked phases of the too prevalent moral obliquity, but there are milder symptoms. When suffering from backslidings of the pocket, it is sometimes convenient to allow a relative to sue, and obtain judgment for a large amount. It is occasionally found useful, in trade, to establish a friend in business, and let him, gradually, have the most of your goods, and as you are not much at book-keeping, you cannot be expected to remember just how or to whom you sold your stock. You can live regardless of expense, out of a small business, call yourself the possessor of a good surplus, and continue to augment it in the same ratio that your effects decrease; mingle in good society and live well, and none will doubt you. These appear to be the most congenial methods, to the tastes of a numerous class, of obtaining other people's money.

Then there are lighter phases of immorality; false promises, and untruthfulness, deception and prevarication; exchanging cheques presentable next day, when you know that there are only a few dollars to your credit, and won't be more for days to come; giving notes without the slightest intention of paying them, or any part of them, at maturity, then excusing yourself by writing some palpable falsehood; sending pieces of newspapers in a registered letter, and then trying to saddle the post office with robbery, as was done the other day; and so the dark category might be extended.

In all this there is reason to infer a retrograde tendency in commercial morality. This drifting away from good morals has been prominently noticed in Great Britain and sharply reproved. Froude, the historian, in a recent address, took the British Ministry to task, for not pointing out the growth of this evil, and denouncing it on the floor of Parliament. Dickens has said, that society has no right to complain of abuses, which it permits. The golden rule of "doing as we would be done by," is forgotten; our ideas are too lax; the punishment meted out to offenders is too light; society winks at crimes which should shut their perpetrators out from respectable associations, till a genuine reformation was shown to have taken place. We listen to the tale of a "sharp" who boasts that he has hoodwinked his creditors with the same *nonchalance* that the depraved associates of a desperado catch up the details of his villainous recital. The principle is much the same; position and education make the chief difference.

We have no desire to reflect upon men, who from unavoidable causes, have been unfortunate; they are just objects of sympathy; their misfortunes have not forfeited their claim to respect. But there is a large class who have wasted other men's substance, and are authorized by act of Parliament to repeat the process. This is the class we must get rid of. Their example is a moral contagion in mercantile life. Certainly there is great need that a healthy business tone be cultivated, and that we should carefully revise our ideas of what is moral and right, among the intercourse of trade, and that our young men should be educated up to a high standard; they should be taught that strict probity is indispensable to true and lasting success.

LIFE INSURANCE IN CANADA.

We are enabled to publish a pretty full comparative statement of the life insurance business of Canada this week. The totals showing the operations of 1869, are—

Policies issued	6,332
Premium receipts	$ 1,331,621
Amount of new policies	10,770,157
Total insurance in force	32,527,537
Policies become claims	149
Amount of same	312,451
Claims paid in 1869	237,213

A comparison of the business of 1868 and 1869, deducting from the latter year the figures of two companies which commenced operations in Canada since the date of the previous statement, gives the following result:

	1858	1869
Premiums rec'd during the year	$ 960,331 33	$ 1,314,324
Number of New Policies issued	3,990	6,308
Amount of New Policies	8,971,967 86	10,708,838
Total am't of Policies in force	29,577,188 21	31,845,397
No. of Policies become Claims during the year	106	146
Am't of Policies become Claims during the year	238,482 34	306,125
Claims paid during the year	210,423 90	231,833

These figures, mostly official, and no doubt tolerably accurate, show a very fair rate of progress and may afford the subject for future comment. A table showing the amount of business transacted by the various companies, is given on another page.