

Opportunity Key to Everything in World.

By JOHN A. HOWLAND.

When the possibilities of the business world have been canvassed, and the totals in whatever form have been demonstrated, it will be discovered that, after all, opportunity is the key to everything. In its practical bearings, however, opportunity is a many sided condition. It is conceived on the old principle of "now you see it and now you don't" sleight of hand performance; some people never do see it, others see it for a moment and it is gone, and only the few have the capacity not only to see and take its advantages but they create the condition itself. And, quite in the natural order of things, the person who has looked and failed to see is loudest in his complaints against the world's methods.

The other day one of these men wrote me a letter. It was a hard luck letter. "Instead of men with money wanting ideas, they want tangible goods," is the plaint of my correspondent. "If anyone doubts this fact, let him try it. The writer has tried persistently and faithfully to interest some man or number of men in a legitimate, conservative business proposition, acknowledged to be of the best, and yet which has its element of chance. One chance of failure to five chances of success has been admitted to the writer, and only \$1,000 ought to put the thing on the road to millions. But those men 'looking for ideas' seem not to be in my list of acquaintanceship."

Evidently this man is an inventor. Possibly he has all the inventor's absorption in his inventive processes and the least tangible proportion of common sense, tact, and business ability. But, however, this may be, his case is typical. He is bewailing the absence of opportunity. He is sore and discouraged because he has not found in his case that men with money are on the "lookout for new ideas." He doubts that "business men, men with money, captains of industry, and the like, are anxiously and at all times looking for these 'men with ideas.'"

We will suppose that this complainant has the ideas which he can deliver. We concede that the thing which needs merely money to push it to success is all that he claims for it. But we must go further and concede also that there are 10,000 other inventors in the United States who are exactly in his position! Where did this one complainant go in search of the man with the money? What is that one element of chance against the five pointing to marked success? It ought not to be possible that this chance in the invention itself lies covert in his statement, "I think I have it near to the successful point now, only that the lack of funds is holding it back."

But laying the concessions aside, I fear that here is the trouble for this man to whom only \$1,000 is necessary to start him on the road to millions. He has come to his full stop, not on the proposition of showing what a perfected contrivance will do, but to that fuller stop connected with showing how \$1,000 might perfect the contrivance which, if perfected, can be demonstrated as capable of making millions. And this is one of the poorest propositions in the world to the average man who is seeking results. Distinctly he will not put up his good money in order to nurse a possible dream belonging to another man. But the man whose dream has been realized into shape may find thousands of willing partners in his venture. Yet even under these circumstances this man would need to know where to go. The bank which would loan him \$100,000 on collateral with which to perfect an invention demonstrated as certain of making its millions could not give him a penny's use on the instrument itself. The man in a \$50,000 seat on the stock exchange might be glad to buy 1,000 shares in the incorporated company exploiting the inven-

tion, but he would not advance a dollar on the invention itself.

The whole situation may be summed up in the fact that a millionaire manufacturer of shoes, for instance, does not care the proverbial rap for the idea of an employee which might bear upon the economic production of steel rails. Which is one of the plainest emphasize of the fact that a young man who has ideas on rail making has no business in a shoe factory!

Right here comes in the question of opportunity and the making of that opportunity. One may go into an establishment employing perhaps a thousand men, and the canvassing of the employees on a confidential basis would reveal scores and scores of young men who will say: "O, this is no place for me; I don't care a continental about this work; it's all out of my line." Yet in these scores of indifferent ones will be dozens of protestants against the statement that the employer is "always looking out for ideas." Some of the brightest mentalities in such an institution are most likely to be in this indifferent class. Which is an added reason why the employer has his eyes wider open than otherwise in search of those men of ideas whose "ideas" shall be in his particular line of industry. The plodder type, which doesn't know whether it is satisfied or not, is barren. And the dissatisfied brilliant man is as unproductive.

Opportunity in its bearings everywhere may be said to be the result of the exercise of judgment, and tact, and ability. Chance is something, but the other qualities are more. As an example of how tact may figure alone in opportunity's opening, a situation may be cited where just two men are applicants for a position where opportunity is conceded. One man has arrived at the office of application ahead of the other. But time is a vital factor in the decision. The man who is first seen and heard has the better chance for the place.

But on the basis of a plain, cold blooded business proposition, can the man who came late afford to attempt getting audience ahead of the other? Tact would decide this, provided the man of tact and intuition had seen the prospective employer. One type of business man for his purpose would find all the merit in the late man who could crowd in first to an audience. Another type for his purposes would take the man who might wait in patience on the aggressive one. Opportunity in thousands of cases hangs by still flimsier threads.

"Some mute, inglorious Milton here may rest,

Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood."

These lines of sentiment from Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" will live in English literature. But the man in modern business who misses his opportunity has no chance for another epitaph than "Failure."

Love's Victory.

HE,
"Tell me, dainty lady mine,
Will you be my Valentine?
Long I've worshipped at your shrine,
Everything I have is thine!"

SHE,
"Truly, sir, I cannot say.
How much is your income, pray?"

HE,
"Income, dainty lady mine?
What of that? For you I pine
Night and day my heart is thine—
Pray, then, be my Valentine."

SHE,
"Hearts and pining touch me not.
How much money have you got?"

HE,
"Half a million, lady mine."

SHE,
"Of course I'll be your Valentine!"

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