Thesis.

Ethics Of Modern Business.

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Ethics Of Modern Business.

Introduction.

At the present time, the business of the world has developed to such an extent, its field has become so broad and its influence so powerful, that the principles by which it is managed, the laws by which it is governed, and the effects produced by it, should be a subject for careful thought and action by every intelligent person.

Necessity of ethical principles to a true industry.

That the world's population is not deriving much benefit from its gigantic system of industry, cannot be disputed for a moment. The advancement which it has wrought on civilization is not to be underestimated. But along with the good points of modern business, the hot-fus and observant person cannot help but see that at least from an ethical standpoint, there are to be seen many faults which promise to be and are now, opposed to the continuous progress and
growth of individuals, of states, of nations, and
of the whole world.

These faults do not continue to exist
because of non-observation; nor because the
great mass of people are not educated to a sense
of honesty, morality and justice; but—because
of gross selfishness. The poor and as well as
the powerful are blinded to the present and
future results of dishonesty, immorality
and injustice, which under the law are con-
considered a legitimate feature of modern business.
It is not that the people of the present century,
as a whole, do not agree that toleration, the
"golden rule," and the spirit of brotherly love
should be the guide in our business relations.
But it is in failing to practice what they
believe to be right— that men come to fault.
So long as we simply talk to a person about
the virtues of a high standard, we are treading
on safe ground; but let us attempt to
apply the standard to the individual—and
we have a reply from John Wanamaker as follow
—"If I should charge brother-love prices now, I
would be in the sheriff's hands in a few weeks.
In other words, this great business man pr-
fear to sacrifice principle which he knows to be right, rather than to diminish the profits which his star yields.

Departure from ethics in industrial life.

Our ethical standard of industrial life, in most cases is very high; but it is the departure from that standard, and the establishing of a new and lower one, which gives rise to injustice between men in business transactions. The trouble is, when they buy and sell, men cease to be brothers.

Average people.

We help to pay thousands of ministers to preach the brotherhood of man, we vote taxes and give endowments to support schools and colleges, that teach us to "love our neighbor as our self"; and then the student goes out of the college, the congregation (the moral element of the community) leaves the church, the minister comes down from the pulpit, and almost every soul of them goes into the produce and labor market and buys his goods for the
least sum possible; and sells his product for the greatest number of dollars he can exact.

Students.

If a person would question the truth of the above statement, let him watch various students bargain with a poor old crippled peddler, who drags himself over Manhattan, and see if some of them do not try to buy a bun out-combo for eight-cents; or seek yet, when offered pencils for a penny a piece, try to get three for two cents.

Minister.

Do you doubt whether a minister of the gospel should ever be counted in the list? If so, some beautiful Monday morning in early May, take a basket on your arm, and have done, packed most neatly with perfectly bundles of juicy, tender asparagus; and clean crisp, crinkly bunches of lettuce, and call at the parsonage. If the minister comes to the door—ask him if he would like to buy some fresh vegetables. How often he will put on a business look and tell you he does not know as
his wife came to buy any vegetables this morning. She knew she had told him to order vegetables for dinner. Then he will begin to examine the lettuce, slightly turn up his nose, and will then offer you exactly what he would have to pay downtown (for willed vegetables) remarking, "I can get them for so much a bunch at the market, and of course can not pay you more." If this is not vivid enough example of "Applied Christianity" and business ethics, then go to your merchant and see how it delights him. To accommodate his pastor with a bill of goods on credit.

Perhaps we may gladly concede that such cases are not the rule. I am not so sure of this as you are, but they are in mildest terms not exceptional. Yes, I know some say "for look it"; and perhaps occasionally it is best for us to neither look to the right nor left. But--it does not prove true in general. The time is now here when men must take a broader view. Be more open-minded, see that which is about them--and if good cultivate it, if bad weed it out.

Business men.

Let me call your attention away from the
more familiar examples, to a few illustrations which demonstrate how far from a true moral standard many business men have wandered.

Boston Gas Company.

First, we will notice the proceedings of what is known as the Boston Gas Co., in connection with the Bay State Gas Trust.

Recapitulated by the name of Mr. Addicks of Delaware, goes to Boston and secures a franchise for the organization of the Bay State Gas Co., which is, in fact, what Mr. Addicks. The work was commenced at once. The factory was completed, and a few pipes were laid, at a total cost of $50,000. At this time, the Boston Gas Co. naturally became alarmed, so the managers asked the Bay State Gas Co., offering to make terms. They agreed that the Bay State Co. should make the gas at 1.00 per 1000 ft., and the Boston Co. should sell the gas pipe, and sell at 1.80 per 1000 ft. to their customers. The actual cost, plus expenses, and fair profit, being 60c per 1000 ft. The out-come was that in 1873 the two companies formed a trust—with a capitalization of $1,000,000 and a half million of dollars. The Bay State Gas Co.
receiving $5.3 profit on their actual investment.

Now let us stop and think what a spirit of brotherly love these companies really are showing. First—Mr. Addicks went to Boston with a determination of ruining the Boston Gas Co. No matter the cost; he more likely forcing it to unite with him. Second—After the two companies have had their fight out, they both turn on the consumer and force him to go with out-gas, or pay the expenses of their fight by charging him 10c. 30 per 1,000 ft of gas. While it could have been furnished, and yielded a good profit on the investment, at 60c. Even the struggle of competition is not permitted—simply corporation despotism.

**Nail Trust:**

We might trace a similar case, so far as the ethics are concerned, in the Philadelphia Gas Co. or the Nail Trust, in which jobbers were bought, machines actually worked, funds run up from 90% 3.50 per bag, wholesale, and 4.00 retail, simply by unscrupulous means. How kind men are when it comes to practical business!
Let us next notice what is known as the "Rice Case." The Standard Oil Co. entered into an agreement with a Pennsylvania railroad, that its oil should be carried to Marietta, Ohio, for 10c per barrel. Not only that, but there was to make a rebate to the Standard Oil Co., of 25c for every barrel of oil Rice shipped over the road. One might well exclaim, what may we not expect business men to do in the way of unfairness! And we must not forget what rank this class of men hold in our churches today, how their contributions are sought. Oh! let us meditate on the morality of modern business — modern church leaders.

Beef Combine.

I might speak of the "Beef Combine." Only I suppose it more it came perfectly just and right — that this combine should dictate to a butcher in our town of whom he shall buy his meat, and especially if he insists on buying of others, rather than the combine, is forbidden on penalty of being run out of business if he disobeys. Does this seem like individual freedom? (Let alone brother love).
Rail-roads.

But let us think of our railroads. They are one of the best examples of dishonesty and corruption in their dealings, for e.g. Mr. De Forest, President of the New York Central Rail Road, says thousands of individual shippers as well as whole towns are being killed by their roads making discriminating rates to certain persons along the line. Mr. Vanderbilt has sworn that as a rule all large shippers got special rates, which of course built up the fortunes of the persons receiving such rates. He mentioned Mr. O. T. Stewert, a dry goods merchant of New York, as one whom he had helped.

A good illustration of the advantage which some shippers get is that in which the Federal Grand Jury indicted Swift and Company, dressed beef shippers of Chicago, for having received $30,000 in rebates for the previous six months from the Nickel Plate Road alone.

I think it hardly necessary to give more examples to show the immorality of business among the great trusts and combines of our country. It is well known that every railroad practices such corrupt acts, regardless of
the crushing effect on many business men.

It would seem to the hot-headed, non-selfish person that a system of industry that is of equal importance to the whole people such as means of transportation, should not be conducted in a way that would lead to the building up of fortune and comfort for one man, at the ruination of another, who is perhaps equally capable of rendering mankind valuable service, if afforded an equal opportunity. It would only seem that the progress of the whole people would be vastly greater, were our transportation system managed on the principle of equal rights and the best service to all, rather than on a plane of selfishness and special privileges to a limited number. To-day our railroad corporations, instead of practicing justice, honesty, fairness, consider neither the rights of their patrons nor the justice of their charges.

Abduction and Shoddy Goods.

There are still other fields in which many business men are far from the practice of a high standard of honesty and right. Few people know how many merchants practice mixing
different grades of coffee, and selling all for a high grade, keeping a sort-blanket about the barrel of sugar, selling what they know to be shoddy goods, for medium or first-class, using loaded weights—and a hundred other little tricks that are practiced wholesale every day. True there are little things, but they tend to make men unhappy, discouraged, suspicions of everyone. It is well realized that an honest businessman must be extraordinarily shrewd, or he will be tricked out of his very means of sustenance life.

Further more.

How An Immoral Business Practice Affects Civilization.

Further more, from such imperfect industrial institutions as exist, there is a tremendous reaction on manhood, and it is thus not confined simply to our business life, but lends to debauch our sobe civilization. We can not help observing this in our factories, mining, and meat shop conditions, where men women and children are compelled by necessity to work under unwholesome conditions, long hours and for low wages. The result is they become discouraged, die-
featured, and lose all sense of integrity and worth.
They become so debased as to use all sorts of violent
means in retaliation; and this condition is infused,
by inheritance and association into the very core
of civilization. Thus we can trace the reaction
from law business principles to a degrading
effect on the whole of society.

How The Competitive System Leade To Antagon-
isms, Selfishness, Hence Immorality.

Similarly, the whole competitive system
leads to a disregard for each other's interests, a
lack of sympathy among classes; and this intense
antagonisms develop selfishness, and thus naturally
tends to prevent the growth of sympathy, virtue
and honesty.

Necessity Of a United Interest Of The People, To
Carry Out An Ethical Industrial System.

Thus if we would make it possible for
society to stand upon an individual plane, governed
by truly ethical principles, we must first estab-
lish interest between the individuals of our
society. This is fundamental. Without it we cannot raise the standard of morality to a high plane, because with out unity we have antagonisms, and this begot selfishness— the basis of immorality.

Conclusions.

I would next call attention to some of the conclusions which I believe a thoughtful person will be able to draw from even this brief treatment of such a broad subject.

First, - View our industrial system from a standpoint which enables me to see it in actual operation, and I believe we cannot fail to observe a vast amount of demoralizing practices among all classes of men.

Second, - That our present competitive society is not conducive to kindliness and good will between men. But rather hatred, bitterness, division.

Third, - If we were able to remove the cause - i.e. replace the struggle of competition by some form of co-operation, or public ownership, we would have taken a grand step toward the improve-
ment of our ethical practice in modern business
relations.

How To Raise The Moral Standard.

We now come to the question of how this
may be brought about. There are the groundwork
that which we may use our efforts to attain this
end.

Schools & Colleges.

First, — Our schools and colleges. Here should
be the beginning. Here is the place to train the
mind, and direct its course, so that it may be
able to fathom the depths, grasp the relations, and
supply the methods which will lead to a solution
of these great problems.

Influence of Working men for Educational Purposes.

Second, — Thus the various unions of working
men. For truly these have become an im-
potent factor in moulding the sentiment of a
great mass of people; and it is to the interest of
civilization, that — the leaders of these unions
inculcate into the minds of those, they influence,
the principles of justice and equity; and use their whole power toward securing the fulfillment of these principles.

Churches and All Other Religious Organizations.

And last, but of first importance, is the church. It should not only continue using its grand influence toward the upbuilding of ethical principles; but it also may and should take more advanced steps. Let it not hesitate longer to enter political affairs as a purifying agent. The field to purify should not be limited by the notions of a few church leaders. The time has passed when it should now try to keep school and political sepsis; for they are dependent on each other, and should work in unison. You say politics are to corrupt for churchmen to meddle with. If so, will they ever become pure by avoiding them? No, Never! If it is the duty of the church to purify, then why avoid that which most needs purification?

So in conclusion I would say, let our public institutions of learning, our churches, and all other kinds of religious organizations on combinations of working and business men for
educational purposes, each and every one envision to instruct men to solve the problem of how to establish unity of interest between individuals, between states, and between nations. This will tend to make men sympathetic, tolerant, just one to another; and will reduce immorality to a minimum. Thus only can we have most happy business and social relations.