GRAFT IN BUSINESS.

Why is everybody so dejected and disgusted at the corruption uncovered in the management of the Pennsylvania Railroad? The reason is not, we think, merely because the repute of a great corporation in which we have all taken pride has now been sadly dimmed. The general uneasiness goes deeper than that. Every man asks his neighbor, Where is this to stop? What business that has not seen the greatest names and the most beautiful companies in the insurance world smirched; as if that were not enough, we now behold high officials of what has often been called the model railway of America holding out itching palms, like so many blackmailing policemen; and what branch of private affairs can we believe immune?

This is the ugly thing. The disease which we have complacently assumed to be confined to politicians, we now see tainting business men. When it has been said of a man, "Oh, he is nothing but a knave!" the implication has been that he is in some public office of trust which he prostitutes for private gain. But that inference is no longer sure. The grafters in business begin to rival the grafters in politics, not only in numbers, but in turpitude. It is an alarming figure, this new apparition in our business life, shamelessly admitting, as Frederick Vroman, Assistant Trainmaster of the Pennsylvania Road, did at Philadelphia last week: "If there was money to be given out, I was there to take it." Add to this the testimony at Kansas City the same day, showing how reputable merchants made large secret payments to railroad officials for secret favors, and it almost looks as if the making of such signs would find the advantage to introduce one, reading, "No Orders Attended to unless Accompanied by the Corresponding Bribe." It must be frankly admitted that all these disclosures put a new aspect upon the work of grappling with corruption in public life. We have too easily concluded that graft and favoritism and methods that would not bear the light are the vices of politicians. But the evil is shown to be rooted in human nature itself. The corrupt public man is more conspicuous; his exposure causes the greater sensation and his fall the louder echo; but the unobtrusive man in bank or insurance company or railroad or dry-goods house who levies his blackmail, or takes his bribes, is his true brother. The one betrays his constituents; the other only his stockholders; but both are alike in being lost to decency. Of the two, we confess we think the respectable private graftor the more detestable. He not only does what he can to destroy confidence in private virtue, but really fosters public corruption. With his example before them, cynical politicians can sneer at all talk of reform and say: "They all do it. We are as honest as your merchants and railroad men." And the argument of the political reformer is certainly cut into by the sheer depth of graft which the revelations in private business. One of the appeals has been, "Let us apply business methods to politics." But the taunt will now come, "What business methods? Those of the Equitable? Those of the Pennsylvania?"

In part, no doubt, the existence of so much peculation in private business is the seamy side of our prosperity. There would not be so much stolen if there were not so much to steal. The thing might be brazenly fronted out after the manner of Mosley's dictum that "the quantity of theft is, to a certain extent, an index to the quantity of useful industry and judicious speculation." With that writer we can imagine a booster about our wonderful prosperity further contending: "That there are ten thousand and thirteen ways in which a man can be very melanochly fact. But, looked at in one point of view, it is a reason for exultation. For what other city could maintain ten thousand thieves? St. Khida would not support a single pickpocket." But such bravado we shall scarcely see employed. We must be smitten with corruption, but we have at least enough drugs of conscience left not to attempt to defend or palliate corruption. That there remains a strong and even heightened sentiment against dishonesty, whether in public or private life, was testified to by one of the Pennsylvania officials: "These things were not once thought improper. It seems that they are now." What he meant was, we presume, that railroad officials were once expected, if not encouraged, to go into enterprises along that line because it could be of a sort to develop traffic and so swell the company's income. But what may have been comparatively innocent in origin, has plainly become corrupt and oppressive in development. For the taking of such thinly veiled bribes as so many Pennsylvania officials have been shown to have received, for such purchased discrimination, such schemes against rival traffic, such wicked use of a common carrier to ruin one man and enrich another, there is no possible excuse. The guilty men are branded indefinitely with dishonor.

Yet they fell before what we must admit is but a besetting sin of the day. If the evil is shown to be more general than any of us thought, the remedy must be equally general. It will never do to stop with laws directed at public officers who accept bribes or claim their rake-offs; the statute against giving "commissions" to cooks and coachmen on their monthly purchases looks almost ridiculous in presence of the revelations affecting their employers which we are getting. Our only hope is a quickened conscience and a moral toning-up all round. Business men are rapidly putting it out of their power to cast a stone at politicians. It is better to admit that we are all in the same boat. It is useless to pretend that the disease has spread through the community up and down; that the politician who discovers that public office "serves" well the purposes of private fraud is only acting on the same principle, or lack of principle, that impels men in private walks to the shameless deeds which now stand confessed. To denounce and withstand and expel this widespread spirit of graft should be the daily business of all who would not see our society and our government fall into the pit.

EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY.

The Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce has reported the Employers' Liability bill, passed by the House. Partly, no doubt, in the hope that it might become law, several proposals to amend the Rate bill with provisions modifying the common-law rule as to fellow servants and contributory negligence were rejected. This was proper enough. The Rate bill was sufficiently weighted, and the measure to fix the liability of employers for personal injuries to their employees is so complicated as to deserve and even require separate treatment.

At common law, an employer could not be held liable for personal injuries to an employee resulting from the fault or negligence of a fellow-servant; or in cases where the employee could be charged with contributory negligence. The dispositions of legislatures to protect certain classes of employees from the rigors of this rule became apparent very early on. Thus, Georgia in 1863, by statute entirely abolished the fellow-servant doctrine as applied to railway employees. Wisconsin adopted a similar course in 1875, and, although the law of that year was repealed in 1880, recent enactments have again done away with the fellow-servant doctrine as a defense where the injured employee was actually engaged in the switching or running of trains. Ohio, in 1896, so limited the scope of the term "fellow-servant" that a defence based upon the common-law doctrine became practically impossible. The Virginia Constitution of 1862 abolished the doctrine with reference to a large class of railway employees, and empowered the General Assembly to enlarge the class and extend the rights conferred to employees of any corporation. Maryland, in 1901, by statute fixed liability upon railways and many other employers, notwithstanding the negligence of fellow-servants, unless a certain plan of insurance, outlined in the statute, had been adopted prior to the accident causing the injuries. In our own State, the liability