

PROF. MURDOCH ANSWERS GREED OF POPULARITY HAS RUINED MANY

*"What Makes Men Corrupt?" asks F.G.F.,
Meadoes, S.A.*

YOU quote Einstein as saying that the great corrupters of mankind are power, money, and fame.

I agree, except that for fame I would substitute popularity.

The two things must not be confused. The men who have in the course of history achieved real fame have not been corruptible. Bacon is the only famous man I can think of who sold his honour, and he sold it, not from love of fame, but from love of money.

But the passion for popularity is certainly one of the roots of this sin. Its rootlets are everywhere. It is hard to eradicate without digging up some of the best things in social life—good manners, for instance.

There are people so afraid of sacrificing their integrity on the altar of popularity that they become permanently grumpy and disagreeable; social nuisances.

'A corruptive'

All the same, greed of popularity is certainly a corruptive. It has been the ruin of many painters, musicians, and writers. A government afraid of doing unpopular things is a corrupt government.

Einstein, in placing power first in his triad of corrupters, perhaps had in mind Lord Acton's famous saying, "All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

I have never felt certain that this sweeping statement was correct. Julius Caesar had abundance of power; it remains to be proved that he was corrupted by it.

At all events, the greed of power is undoubtedly one of the great corrupters. To join in the scramble for power is to shed whatever virtues one has possessed. Once this passion has taken command of you, you are capable of any crime.

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Love of money

But I never saw much sense in Nietzsche's doctrine, that the will to be powerful is the universal human motive, the spring of all our actions. One can only judge by oneself.

I consider myself an average human being, and I am not conscious of any will to be powerful.

As for Einstein's other corrupter—money—this is so obvious that I shall not talk about it. When men take bribes, it is not from love of fame or power, but from love of the bribe—from love of money. It is for money that men fall from honour.

One force not mentioned by Einstein is the force of example. The Italians have a proverb, that a fish begins to putrefy at the head.

Once a nation's leaders come to be known as bribable, the rottenness soon spreads through the body of the nation. I shall not expatiate on this truth.