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It's Easily Sold, but You Can't Buy It.

"Infra dig." is ecclesiastical slang. It is a contraction of the Latin phrase, "infra dignitatem," and means "below one's dignity."

One wonders whether the phrase will last.

One day, it is said, Chief Justice Edward Douglas White, a native of Louisiana and a thoroughbred Southern gentleman, was waiting to ascend a street car in Washington when an old colored lady, descending from the car, spilled a basket of potatoes at his feet. The Chief Justice, who was a portly man, assisted her to gather the straying tubers, much to the astonishment of the onlookers, most of whom probably recognized him (for Washington knows its faces).

That action was not infra dig. Neither was it a gesture. Edward Douglas White, Lactare Medalist, was not given to gestures. His condescension was the act of a gentleman, and quite in keeping with the character which had brought him to high estate.

Neither was it a gesture on the part of Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, when he declined the invitation of a priest to pass by others waiting at the door of the confessional, saying, "Not Chief Justice here, Father, but a prisoner at the bar."

In other words, humility is not infra dig. It is part of the constitution of a gentleman. (But it is not our purpose today to write a dissertation on humility.)

But there are things that are infra dig - and the world would be a happier and a safer place if there were more of them. There are vast fortunes built up in the United States today by people who capitalize on the fact that there are not enough people in this country who realize that certain things should be beneath their dignity.

Take indecent shows, for instance. They exist because the world is full of suckers. The producers (who find nothing beneath their dignity if it will pay) put these shows on the market simply because they know that suckers can get hold of quarters and will part with them for what is advertised as dirt. Clean, clever shows run longer, but dirt is cheap and plentiful, so dirt prevails.

Take poison liquor, for another example. Rivers of it flowed during prohibition because there were suckers who would pay three and four dollars a pint. They paid it because they lacked physical dignity - nothing was infra dig. for their stomachs.

Take new religions, false philosophies. They exist because it is hard to insult the intelligence of so many people, because there are so many people in the world who are willing to swallow gratuitous assumptions, impossible logic, and abstruse terminology. They find nothing beneath their dignity. They are the intellectual suckers.

Self-respect is what we are talking about. It is easily sold, but it can never be bought. Once sold, it is very hard to earn back - and it can be earned back only by the hard work of deep humiliations.

If you have a shred of it, try to enlarge it into a whole garment. You must have some of it. Few mothers send their children out into the world without at least the beginnings of it. But however much of it you have, be this little or great, do not sell it out by attending vicious shows, by drinking bad liquor, by trifling with ideas that are unworthy ideas. Enlarge the scope of things that are beneath your dignity.

PRAYERS: Deceased - the father of Chas. Riley, '33; relatives of Pat Fisher and of Paul and Jerry Doyle. Ill - Fr. Holderith's uncle; a relative of Bob Cavanaugh. Three special intentions.