

IF WE COMMAND OUR WEALTH WE SHALL BE RICH AND FREE,  
IF OUR WEALTH COMMANDS US, WE ARE POOR INDEED

The work of the eminent Italian scholar, Ferrero, on the history of the Roman Republic, states that life in the Roman State had become that of a complex and luxurious industrial civilization. We can compare the differences between that civilization and our own, and also compare the resemblances, and there is no warrant for our being drawn into any pessimistic comparison between the two civilizations.

But there is every reason why we should study carefully the past, in order to draw from it lessons for use in the present. One of the most striking features of the years which saw the down fall of the Roman Republic, was the fact that the political life of Rome became split between two camps: one containing the rich who wished to exploit the poor, and the other the poor, who wished to plunder the rich. Naturally, under such circumstances, the public man who was for the moment successful, tended to be either a violent reactionary, or a violent demagogue. Any such condition of political life is as hopelessly unhealthy now, as it was then.

I believe that the average American citizen, will no more tolerate government by a mob, than he will tolerate government by a plutocracy, that he desires to see **justice done to and justice extracted from rich men and poor men alike.** We are not trying to favor any man at the expense of other men. We are trying to shape things so that as far as possible, each man shall have a fair chance in life, so that he shall have, so far as by law this can be accomplished, **the chance to show the stuff that there is in him.**

We have no intention of trying to work for the impossible and undesirable end of **giving to the lazy, thriftless, the weak and vicious, the reward that belongs to, and in the long run can only come to, the hard working, the thrifty, the resolute and the honest.** The vital element therefore, in judging any man, should be his conduct, and neither his position, nor his pretensions, and furthermore, **that freedom could only stay with a people which has the habit of self-mastery. The price of liberty is not only eternal vigilance, but eternal virtue, and eternal common sense.**

Each man must know that he himself has been able to use his freedom to advantage only provided that he could master himself, that he could control his passions and direct his own faculties. **Every man must have a master. If he is not his own master, then somebody else will be.** This is just as true of public life as of private life. **If we cannot master ourselves, control ourselves, then sooner or later, we shall have to submit to outside control, for there must be control somewhere.**

One way of exercising such control, is through the laws of the land. Ours is a government of liberty, but it is a government of that orderly liberty which comes by and through the honest enforcement of and obedience to the law.

If a man does well, if he acts honestly, he has nothing to fear from administration. But the corrupt politician, great or small, the private citizen who transgresses the law, be he rich or poor, shall be brought before the impartial justice of a court. Perhaps we are anxious to get at the politician who is corrupt, because he betrays a great trust, but assuredly we should not spare his brother corruptionist who shows himself a swindler in business life, and according to our power, crimes of fraud and cunning shall be prosecuted as relentlessly as crimes of brutality and physical violence.

We need good laws and we need above all things, the hearty aid of good citizens in supporting and enforcing the laws. Nevertheless, men and women in this country, never forget the law and the administration of the law, important though they are, must always occupy a wholly secondary place as compared with the character of the average citizen himself ...

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