

## GIVE ME NEITHER POVERTY NOR RICHES

In one of Lowell's biting satires he holds up to special scorn the smug, conscienceless creature who refuses to consider the morality of any question of social ethics by remarking that "they didn't know everything down in Judee." It is to be wished that some of those who preach and practice a gospel of mere materialism and greed, and who speak as if the heaping up of wealth by the community or by the individual was in itself the be-all and end-all of life, would learn from the most widely read and oldest of books that true wisdom which teaches that it is well to have neither great poverty nor great riches. Worst of all is it to have great poverty and great riches side by side in constant contrast. Nevertheless, even this contrast can be accepted if men are convinced that the riches are accumulated as the result of great service rendered to the people as a whole, and if their use is regulated in the interest of the whole community.

The movement which has become so strong during the past few years to secure on behalf of the Nation both an adequate supervision of and an effective taxation of vast fortunes, so far as their business use is concerned, is a healthy movement. It aims to replace sullen discontent, restless pessimism, and evil preparation for revolution, by an aggressive, healthy determination to get to the bottom of our troubles and remedy them. To halt in the movement, as those blinded men wish who care only for the immediate relief from all obstacles which would thwart their getting what is not theirs, would work wide-reaching damage. Such a halt would turn away the energies of the energetic and forceful men who desire to reform matters, from a legitimate object into the channel of bitter and destructive agitation. The reader of Prince Kropotkin's Memoirs must be struck by the damage wrought to Russia by the unwise opponents of all reform, who, by opposing every sensible movement for betterment, turned the energies of the young men, who under happier conditions would have worked for rational betterment, into the

channels of a useless and destructive revolutionary movement.

The multi-millionaire is not *per se* a healthy development in this country. If his fortune rests on a basis of wrongdoing, he is a far more dangerous criminal than any of the ordinary types of criminals can possibly be. If his fortune is the result of great service rendered, well and good; he deserves respect and reward for such service—although we must remember to pay our homage to the service itself, and not to the fortune which is the mere reward of the service; but when his fortune is passed on to some one else, who has not rendered the service, then the Nation should impose a heavily graded progressive inheritance tax, a singularly wise and unobjectionable kind of tax. It would be a particularly good thing if the tax bore heaviest on absentees.

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