

## Henry Demarest Lloyd, "Wealth Against Commonwealth" (1894)

In "Wealth against Commonwealth," Henry Demarest Lloyd bitterly complained about the destruction of American liberty caused by wealth. As you read this excerpt, consider what alarmed Lloyd about the fortunes being made during the late nineteenth century. How did Lloyd believe that this new form of wealth was more dangerous to democracy and freedom than that of merchants and plantation owners during the previous century? What actions do you think that Lloyd would have supported to protect liberty from the destruction caused by wealth?

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From Henry Demarest Lloyd. *Wealth Against the Commonwealth*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1898 (originally published 1894). 1-2.

Nature is rich; but everywhere man, the heir of nature, is poor. Never in this happy country or elsewhere--except in the Land of Miracle, where "they did all eat and were filled"--has there been enough of anything for the people. Never since time began have all the sons and daughters of men been all warm, and filled, and all shod and roofed. Never yet have all the virgins, wise or foolish, been able to fill their lamps with oil.

The world, enriched by thousands of generations of toilers and thinkers, has reached a fertility which can give every human being a plenty undreamed of even in the Utopias. But between this plenty ripening in the boughs of our civilization and the people hungering for it step the "cornerers," the syndicates, trusts, combinations, with the cry of "overproduction"--too much of everything. Holding back the riches of the earth, sea, and sky from their fellows who famish and freeze in the dark, they declare to them that there is too much light and warmth and food. They assert the right, for their private profit, to regulate the consumption by the people of the necessities of life, and to control the production, not by the needs of humanity, but by the desires of a few for dividends. The coal syndicate thinks that there is too much coal. There is too much iron, too much lumber, too much flour--for this or that syndicate. The majority have never been able to buy enough of anything; but this minority have too much of everything to sell.

Liberty produces wealth, and wealth destroys liberty. "The splendid empire of Charles V.," says Motley, "was erected upon the grave of liberty." Our bignesses--cities, factories, monopolies, fortunes, which are our empires, are the obesities of an age gluttonous beyond its powers of digestion. Mankind are crowding upon each other in the centres, and struggling to keep each other out of the feast set by the new sciences and the new fellowships. Our size has got beyond both our science and our conscience. The vision of the railroad stockholder is not far-sighted enough to see into the office of the General manager; the people cannot reach across even a ward of a city to rule their rulers; Captains of Industry "do not know" whether the men in the ranks are dying from lack of food and shelter; we cannot clean our cities nor our politics; the locomotive has more man-power than all the ballot-boxes, and the mill-wheels wear out the hearts of workers unable to keep up beating time to their whirl. If mankind had gone on pursuing the ideals of the fighter, the time would necessarily have come when there would have been only a few, then only one, and then none left. This is what we are witnessing in the world of livelihoods. Our ideals of livelihood are ideals of mutual deglutition. We are rapidly reaching the

stage where in each province only a few are left; that is the key to our times. Beyond the deep is another deep. This era is but a passing phase in the evolution of industrial Caesars, and these Caesars will be of a new type--corporate Caesars.