

The SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE SECTION

A Magazine for your Reading Table

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS' PAGE



Dr. Orison Swett Marden

Who is the Rich Man in America?

By ORISON SWETT MARDEN

RECENTLY an employee said to me: "I am only an ordinary mechanic and my employer talks as though I were a failure in life because I am not in business for myself, and haven't got rich. He tells me that anybody with an ounce of brains and pluck ought to be able to make a fortune in this land of opportunity."

To every one, from the immigrant, who comes here looking for dollars rolling along the streets, to business men all over the world, the American "opportunity" means the opportunity to get rich. We are all trying to live up to this idea.

But the sacrifices we Americans make, the price we pay for fortunes, is really appalling. Just take a look at the physical and mental wrecks we see on every hand. Does it pay to sacrifice everything for which we ought to live, to get together a little more money? How often we see hungry, cadaverous men with big pocket-books. They have the money, but that is all they do have.

What is more common than to see men and women starving the soul, and paralyzing the growth and expansion of the finer sentiments, which alone make life worth living, for the sake of piling up material wealth? A few acres of dirt, a row of buildings, a place to live in, a few stocks and bonds, a little silver plate and fine furnishings, good clothes, are, after all, pretty poor sort of things to satisfy the longings of an immortal soul.

To be engulfed in one's occupation, swallowed up in a complicated life, harassed by the striving and straining, the worry and anxiety, which accompany a vast fortune—is this to be rich?

Opportunities in Service

I HAPPEN to know a wealthy American who, when asked what deed of his life had given him the greatest happiness, replied that it was paying a mortgage off a poor woman's home, which was being sold over her head. The probabilities are that this man had expected to find infinitely greater happiness in money-making, in trying to manufacture and to sell more goods than his competitors; but in helping to save the home of a poor woman he had actually gained greater joy and satisfaction than in any experience of his business career.

Now this man unconsciously stumbled upon the secret of true

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riches, and the real meaning of the American "opportunity." There never was before in any country such an opportunity for developing the riches of personality through unselfish service to others as in the American democracy today. The cause of Universal Brotherhood claims us on every hand.

The Oneness of Life

BENEATH all our different races or creeds, sects, prejudices, there is a oneness of life, a unity of essence, which, if we were only conscious of it, would dispel all differences of race hatred or class prejudice. Time and opportunity, the inclination and the means to help others and to bring happiness into their lives, are the most valuable things in the world, and if you can not seize these, if you can not utilize them to your own enlargement, your own betterment, you are poor indeed, and can never know the joy and satisfaction of true riches, although you may have millions of dollars.

The more a man hoards for selfish ends, the more he wants. Instead of filling a vacuum, it makes one. A great bank account can never make a man rich. It is the soul that makes the body rich. No man is rich, however much money or land he may possess, who has a poor heart.

Only soul wealth, generous disinterestedness, the love that seeks not its own, and hands that help and hearts that sympathize constitute true riches, and fill the possessor with the joy of one who knows that he is fulfilling the real purpose of his life.

The Wealth of the Poor Man

CAN you regard a man as poor who may not happen to have money, but whose character is so exuberant and whose career is so succulent with the sweet things of life and experience that he has enriched and made happy a whole community? Can you regard a man as poor whose neighbors feel enriched by his mere presence? Can you regard a man as poor who lives in an attic, but whose very existence enhances the value of every acre of land and every home for miles around him? Do you think of Phillips Brooks, Thoreau, Garrison, Emerson, Beecher, Agassiz, as poor men?

The men and women who would move the world, who would realize true fortune and power, must be a part of it; they must touch the life that now is and feel the thrill of the movement for social progress.

Only he who seeks humanity's good, humanity's welfare, to endow humanity with a fortune, can find his own.

Perhaps the richest American who ever lived was Abraham Lincoln, because he gave all of himself to his fellow people. He did not try to sell his ability to the highest bidder. Great fees had no special attraction for him. Lincoln lives in history because he thought more of his friends—of his countrymen and the cause of humanity—than he did of his pocket-book. He gave himself to his country as a wise farmer gives his seed to the earth, and what a harvest from that sowing! The end of it no man shall see.

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