

He the pleasure of  
the rich. certainly  
nothing



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

He represents the increase of wealth as leading to the exile of the sturdy agricultural population, which constitutes the chief strength of a nation, and as depopulating the country, which, instead of being tilled, is converted into barren parks for the pleasure of the rich. Certainly nothing can be more melancholy than the departure of the rural population from the homes in which their ancestors have lived for many generations, and the national character is likely to suffer from the loss or diminution of the tillers of the soil, whose physical strength and simple virtues contribute much to the sum-total of national well-being. But can this lamentable necessity of emigration, be rightly regarded as the result of the spread of wealth? That this is not really the case would seem to be proved by the fact that the greatest exodus of the agricultural population was, not from rich areas, but from the most poverty-stricken districts.

Also the land to which the largest number of emigrants have taken themselves and their good qualities, and which has afforded them a secure home, is the richest country in the world; and there the great wealth of millionaires does not interfere with the prosperity of the cultivators of the soil. By these considerations we see the one-sided character of Goldsmith's view. There is more truth in the Roman idea, that wealth ruins its possessors by leading to luxury and effeminacy. This was certainly the case in ancient empires. The great wealth acquired by the ancient kings was lavishly squandered on the coarsest forms of extravagance, on costly banquets, the dishes of which were collected at enormous expense from every land and sea, on gladiatorial combats, and on magnificent spectacles in the amphitheatre, more conspicuous for grandeur than for grace.

No wonder that the Roman populace and the Roman nobles became debased under such influences, and were unable, without barbarian help, to defend the empire that their ancestors had acquired. In the East, too, we find the great empires, established by nations of poor and hardy mountaineers, fall to pieces when wealth gives the means of luxury, and luxury produces effeminacy. But it is not the invariable rule that great national wealth must be spent on degrading luxury. Wealth may be employed to better purpose, as by the Greeks, who spent the tribute obtained from their allies and conquered enemies on the erection of noble statues and temples and on the support of a national theatre, that produced great literary master-pieces and taught high moral lessons to the people. Thus the Greeks when they were at the zenith of their material prosperity, retained undiminished the mental and physical vigour by which they had gained their high position.

In like manner we find that the leading nations of the world have become wealthier and wealthier without showing any signs of deterioration. So we may conclude that, though wealth if ill- employed may have ruinous effects upon a nation, these bad consequences may be and have often been avoided.