

But between these two extremes there is a rational medium. Every man has the construction of his own fortune. Birth may afford him greater advantages; wealth may supply him with superior facilities for improvement; but success will depend on his personal exertions. He who relies on the virtues or abilities of his ancestors to build him a fortune is an ignoble man, whatever may be the quality of the blood which courses through his veins. A man may be born to wealth, or influence, or power, or all these combined; but so far from regarding these as his fortune, he should look upon them as the means of acquiring a fortune for himself. The ranks of the nobility have furnished men whose magnificent achievements in life have commanded the admiration of the world. England has a brilliant array of such men at this hour. In fact, the Lords combine quite as much talent as the Commons.

On the other hand, a far larger number have risen to great eminence, and distinguished themselves from the lower ranks, in absolute monarchies, as well as countries blessed with constitutional government. This is particularly the case with respect to useful inventions and scientific discoveries. Necessity has been aptly called "the mother of invention." Under her exacting patronage, genius has been brought into being, and educated to the greatest daring in all departments of life. The lives of the most successful mechanics furnish ample illustration of this.

Here I cannot forbear a brief extract from that renowned letter, written by Burke, shortly after the death of his son, in reply to the Duke of Bedford, who had scandalously assailed the great philosopher and statesman for his acceptance of the royal favor:—

"Had it pleased God to continue to me the hopes of succession, I should have been, according to my mediocrity, and the mediocrity of the age I live in, a sort of founder of a family. I should have left a son, who, in all the points in which personal merit can be viewed, in science, in erudition, in genius, in taste, in honor, in generosity, in humanity, in every liberal sentiment, and every liberal accomplishment, would not have shown himself inferior to the Duke of Bedford, or to any of those whom he traces in the line. His Grace very soon would have wanted all plausibility in his attack upon that provision, which belonged more to mine than to me. He would soon have supplied every deficiency, and symmetrized every disproportion. It would not have been for that successor to resort to any stagnant wasting reservoir of merit in me, or in any ancestry. He had in himself a salient, living spring of generous and manly action. Every day he lived he should have re-purchased the bounty of the Crown, and ten times more, if ten times more he had received. He was *made* a public creature, and had no enjoyment whatever but in the performance of some duty."