

In ancient times the people were subject to cruel slavery; in the middle ages they were suffering from an equally cruel tyranny; and in modern times they have been crushed beneath the merciless absolutism of capital.

In order to comprehend fully the social and political situation of the present, it is necessary that we should understand the relation of the individual to society. An individual is the unit of the community, whose qualifications are apparent evidences of the characteristic progress of that community; and according to the percentage of units in the acquired standard of intellectual refinement, educational deportment, and economic attitude we classify them as being civilized, semi-civilized, or barbarous. But still it remains a question whether the attainment of such qualifications will be sufficient to confront the difficulty, or reduce the intensity or the number of such social and economic problems as are perplexing the minds of the statesmen and legislators of the day.

From the conditions already alluded to, you can easily understand that the transition from ancient to modern times has not accomplished much, thus showing that there are still a few fundamental defects which prevent the attainment of the object in view. And, Mr. President, it is the very same defects which constitute the basis of my subject.

Civilization consists of the development and amelioration of the intellectual, physical, and moral faculties of man, and the social and judicial system under which he lives. If, upon examination, we find our conditions approaching to the conditions of the

preceding statement, then we can feel proud of our century and congratulate ourselves on our progress. But if you kindly allow me to direct your attention for a few moments outside of the city of Guelph, and visit the so-called industrial centres, where the inspiration of modern life seems to be concentrated, and observe the appalling degeneration of moral sentiments, and then compare these conditions with the atrocities committed during the reign of Emperor Nero of Rome. If civilization consists of the increased activity of life, the invention of labor-saving machinery, enormous accumulation of wealth, together with the substitution of lower for higher principles, the predominance of vice over virtue and the subjugation of duty under passion, then we cannot be proud of the conditions of civilization. So long as the ultimate object is perfection, the acquirement of a little progress should not make us indifferent. Civilization, as it advances, requires an acute and more sensitive conscience, a keener sense of duty and justice, a loftier and truer public spirit. If the disrespect of young to old, and of old to their sense of duty has increased, then it is time that the question should be of public moment. The mighty nations of ancient Greece and Rome lost their prestige through moral degeneration, which commenced with individual indifference. True, a person seems to be of no account as compared with the majority, whereas he is the type of the active element of that combination, and its benefit and injury are influenced by his conduct. I cannot, therefore, under any consideration, over-exaggerate the value of individual duty.