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Alexis de Tocqueville, "Privileges of Wealth"

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From Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journeys to England and Ireland*, trans. George Lawrence and J.P. Mayer.

The whole of English society is based on privileges of money. Demonstration of this:

A man must be rich to be a Minister [high-ranking government official], since the style of living expected from him runs him into expenses much greater than what he receives from the State, which is obvious when one thinks of the lavish political world in which he must live.

A man must be rich to get into the House of Commons because election expenses are immense.

A man must be rich to be a Justice of the Peace, Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff, Mayor, or Overseer of the Poor as these duties are unpaid.

A man must be rich to be a barrister or a judge because the education necessary to enter these professions costs a lot.

A man must be rich to be a clergyman again because the necessary education is expensive.

A man must be rich to be a litigant since one who cannot give bail must go to prison. There is not a country in the world where justice, that first need of people, is more the privilege of the rich. Apart from the Justices of the Peace there is no tribunal for the poor man.

Finally, to gain that wealth which is the key to all the rest, the rich man again has great advantages since he can easily raise capital and find opportunities to increase his own wealth or to enrich his relations.

Why should one be surprised at this people's cult of money? Money is the hallmark not of wealth alone, but of power, reputation, and glory. So where the Frenchman says: 'He has 100,000 francs of income', the Englishman says, 'He is worth £5,000 a year'.

Manners go even further than the laws in this direction; or rather it is the laws that have moulded manners.

Intelligence, even virtue, seem of little account without money. Everything worthwhile is somehow tied up with money. It fills all the gaps that one finds between men, but nothing will take its place.

The English have left the poor but two rights: that of obeying the same laws as the rich, and that of standing on an equality with them if they can obtain equal wealth. But these two rights are more apparent than real, since it is the rich who make the laws and who create for their own or their children's profit, the chief means of getting wealth.