

On Money and Wealth



He who knows that enough is enough, will always have enough.

—*Lǎozǐ*, ~ fourth century BC

It is not the man who has little, but the man who craves for more, that is poor.

—*Seneca*, ~64 AD

That man is richest whose pleasures are the cheapest.

—*Henry David Thoreau*, 1856

That who has less than he wants, should know that he has more than he deserves.

—*Georg Christoph Lichtenberg*¹

Who wants everything - and immediately, will get nothing - and gradually.

—*Mikhail Zhvanetsky*, 2010

Some luck lies in not getting what you wanted but getting what you have, which once you have got it you may be smart enough to see is what you would have wanted had you known.

—*Garrison Keillor*, 1985

Anyone whose needs are small seems threatening to the rich, because he's always ready to escape their control.

—*Nicolas Chamfort*, 1812

Who has nothing, fears nothing.

—*European proverb*

¹From his *Reflections*, whose apparently first English translation (by Norman Alliston) was published only in 1908.

You cannot take a cow from a man who has none.

—*Danish proverb*²

Poverty is not a vice, but it is a great inconvenience.

—*European proverb*³

To be poor and independent is nearly an impossibility.

—*William Cobbett*, 1829

The trouble with being poor is that it takes up all of your time.

—*Willem de Kooning*⁴

Those who have some means think that the most important thing in the world is love. The poor know this is money.

—*Gerald Brenan*, 1978

Money is better than poverty, if only for financial reasons.

—*Woody Allen*, 1976

I've been poor and I've been rich. Rich is better!

—*Beatrice Kaufman*, 1937⁵

[The two most beautiful English words] are 'check' and 'enclosed'.

—*Dorothy Parker*, 1932

The only way not to think about money is to have a great deal of it.

—*Edith Wharton*, 1905

There are few sorrows, however poignant, in which a good income is of no avail.

—*Logan Pearsall Smith*, 1931

Who has, is.

Who has not, is not.

Who has something, is something.

—*Italian proverbs*

Money couldn't buy friends, but you got a better class of enemy.

—*Spike Milligan*, 1963

You want as much again as you have already got.

—*Horace*, ~21 BC

²There are proverbs with the same idea in many other languages.

³Could originate from a John Florio's line in his *Second Fruits* (circa 1591).

⁴As quoted, without a date, in several collections, already during author's lifetime.

⁵Often misattributed (among many others) to Sophie Tucker.

Who is rich? He that is content.
Who is that? Nobody.

—*Benjamin Franklin*, 1755

To be content with little is difficult; to be content with much, impossible.

—*Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach*, 1893

With wishing comes grieving.

—*Italian proverb*

Who accepts, sells himself.

—*Italian proverb*

The ways by which you may get money almost without exception lead downward.

—*Henry David Thoreau*, 1863

All paid jobs absorb and degrade the mind.

—*Aristotle*, fourth century BC

Money often costs too much.

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 1860

Money is a good servant, but a bad master.

—*French proverb*

Money is the fruit of evil as often as the root of it.

—*Henry Fielding*, 1731

Acquisition of wealth for its own sake is disgusting.

—*Robert Bunsen*⁶

Salary is no object: I want only enough to keep my body and soul apart.

—*Dorothy Parker*, 1928

The art of living easily as to money, is to pitch your scale of living one degree below your means.

—*Henry Taylor*, 1848

All progress is based upon a universal innate desire on the part of every organism to live beyond its income.

—*Samuel Butler*, 1912

Expenditure rises to meet income.

—*C. Northcote Parkinson*, 1960

Riches cause arrogance; poverty, meekness.

—*German proverb*

⁶As quoted, without a date, by R. Oesper in 1975.

There is nothing more demoralizing than a small but adequate income.

—*Edmund Wilson*, 1946

Excess on occasion is exhilarating. It prevents moderation from acquiring the deadening effect of a habit.

—*W. Somerset Maugham*, 1938

I spent a lot of money on booze, birds and fast cars. The rest I just squandered.

—*George Best*, 2005

The best things in life are free. The second best things are very expensive.

—*Anonymous*

What costs nothing is worth nothing.

—*Dutch proverb*

Every time you spend money, you're casting a vote for the kind of world you want.

—*Anna Lappé*, 2003

Ninety percent of everything is crud.⁷

—*Theodore Sturgeon*, 1957

As long as people accept crap, it will be financially profitable to dispense it.

—*Dick Cavett*, 1971

Commerce is the school for cheating.

—*Luc de Clapiers*, 1747

The best plan is to profit by the folly of others.

—*Pliny*, 77 AD⁸

When fools go to market, peddlers make money.

—*European proverb*

Words fine and bold
Are goods half sold.

—*German proverb*

Advertising may be described as the science of arresting the human intelligence long enough to get money from it.

—*Stephen Leacock*, 1924

⁷This popular *Sturgeon's Law* is a jocular embodiment of the serious *Pareto Principle* in applied statistics. Another popular name of this principle is the *20/80 Rule*, stemming from another quasi-joke: "20% of all people drink 80% of all beer".

⁸Note the date. Despite its age, this formula seems to describe many (most?) modern corporate *business plans* pretty well.

Advertising is a valuable economic factor because it is the cheapest way of selling goods, particularly if the goods are worthless.

—*Sinclair Lewis*, 1922

Give them quality. That's the best advertising in the world.

—*Milton Hershey*, 1953⁹

Good wine needs no crier.

—*European proverb*

Unethical advertising uses falsehoods to deceive the public; ethical advertising uses truth to deceive the public.¹⁰

—*Vilhjalmur Stefansson*, 1964

If a man deceives you once time, he is a rascal; if he does it twice, you are a fool.

—*European proverb*

Finance, *n.* The art or science of managing revenues and resources for the best advantage of the manager.

—*Ambrose Bierce*, 1906.

Finance is the art of passing money from hand to hand until it finally disappears.

—*Anonymous*¹¹

The world of finance is a mysterious world in which [...] evaporation precedes liquidation.

—*Joseph Conrad*, 1915

Banking establishments are more dangerous than standing armies.

—*Thomas Jefferson*, 1816

Behind every great fortune there is a great crime.

—*Anonymous*¹²

When a man tells you that he got rich through hard work, ask him: "Whose?".

—*Don Marquis*¹³

⁹Note the date. Perhaps at that time the words "Hershey" and "quality" were compatible.

¹⁰It seems like this classification is applicable to most newspaper articles and politicians' speeches (and very unfortunately even some scientific papers) as well.

¹¹This quote is frequently attributed to Robert W. Sarnoff (in 1965-1969, the head of the *RCA Corporation*), but I could not find a reliable confirmation of this authorship.

¹²Perhaps based on a much longer line by Honoré de Balzac (circa 1834).

¹³As quoted, without a date, by many, probably starting with Edward Anthony in 1962.

You may know how little God thinks of money by observing on what bad and contemptible characters He often bestows it.

—*Thomas Guthrie*, 1865¹⁴

Nothing is more admirable than the fortitude with which millionaires tolerate the disadvantages of their wealth.

—*Rex Stout*, 1937

The only thing I like about rich people is their money.

—*Nancy Astor*, 1955

Money-getters are the benefactors of our race. To them, in a great measure, are we indebted for our institutions of learning and of art, our academies, colleges and churches.

—*P. T. Barnum*, 1880

¹⁴Frequently misattributed to Dorothy Parker.