

# DAILY PEOPLE

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EDITORIAL

## IN GOOD COMPANY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**N**O doubt Samuel Rosman, the nineteen-year-old youth who stole a diamond ring worth \$1,200 to get money to set up a candy store committed a crime; but he sinned in good company.

Men of wealth may be divided into two classes—those who “made” it themselves, and those who inherited it. As to the latter class, there can never be any question as to whether they “produced” the wealth they own. Even a capitalist economist will admit that the mere fact of their inheriting it precludes all idea of their having produced” it. With the others it is different. Their claim to having been the “producers”—and therefore the equitable owners—of their millions is vociferously defended. How did they “make” it?

Begin with any one of them. Pursuing him backward through his career you may make him admit that a certain tax-dodge was something shady, that a certain combination was not just right, that a certain land-fraud, perhaps, was a downright illegality. But there is one point where he will stick, and defend with tooth and nail. That is at his “original accumulation.” However splotted with irregularities he may have been in later life—Roosevelt himself said that business could not be carried on in strict compliance with law—, up to that time he was white as the paschal lamb.

The history of “original accumulation” is a work in itself.

Andrew Carnegie is charged to have gotten his by appropriating the rolling-table patents of a workman, John Brislin, and defeating the latter on a technicality when he sued.

Levi P. Morton got his by failing in a clothing store, and at once starting a bank.

Jay Gould is said to have got his by secretly purchasing for a song a tract of

land he knew another man was anxious for, and selling out at a tremendous advance.

Astor got his trading glass beads to the Indians for valuable skins, when he did not indulge in worse practices.

John W. Gates was widely written about a few years ago as having gotten his by running off with the patents of a fellow workman, evading service, and finally forcing his victim to sell out to him.

P.T. Barnum got his by fraudulent exhibits, such as showing a famished sailor as the Wild Man from Borneo, and coupling an innocent old Negro mammy to the bill of sale of George Washington's nurse, representing her as the original.

In France the fortunes founded on selling worthless goods to the army during the Napoleonic wars are so common as to excite no comment.

In England the great landed estates—and the wealth flowing from them—had their origin in the forcible expropriation with fire and sword of the former peasant holders.

Wherever one goes, the conditions surrounding the appearance of the “original accumulation” are the same—fraud, rapine, illegality, theft. One of the most beautiful demonstrations of modern biology is that the individual in his life recapitulates the history of his species. Nineteen-year-old Samuel Rosman but summed up in this theft of the diamond ring the history of the species Capitalist.

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