

The Law of Averages (Video Text)

The fear and frustration we feel in this country right now— we've faced down worse before. Never forget that. But the only reason we were able to withstand and overcome the darkness was because some Americans decided 'I'm going to get it done'. No stalling. No whining. No explanations.

Let me take you back a little bit, 1899. [Elbert Hubbard](#), he's an American essayist. He prints a little copy of an essay in *Philistine Magazine*. He called it "*A Message to Garcia*". Now it's part short story, part call to arms. The back story of the short story is that [President McKinley](#) wanted to establish contact with the Cuban Rebels during the [Spanish-American War](#), so an army officer by the [name of Summers Rowan](#) was chosen, and he established a close alliance with the General Garcia, and his Cuban rebels in the [Oriente Mountains](#).

The essay was wildly popular— sold millions of copies, it was turned into a book, two movies, and for a time in this country, became something of a [rallying cry](#), one we should remember today, about self-reliance, determination, and yes, excellence. Not everybody gets a trophy. We need those things right now. Right now. And so I wanted to share it with you, I wanted to give to you, in full,

A Message to Garcia.

In all this Cuban business there's this one man who stands out in the horizon of my memory, like [Mars at perihelion](#). When war broke out between Spain and the United States, it was very necessary to communicate quickly with the leader of the insurgence. Garcia was

somewhere in the mountain vastness of Cuba. No one knew where. No mail nor telegraph message could reach him. The president must secure his cooperation though, and quickly. So what to do?

Someone said to the president, "Oh, there's a fella by the name of Rowan; he'll find Garcia for you, if anybody can." Well, Rowan was sent for and given a letter to be delivered to Garcia. How that fellow by the name of Rowan took the letter, sealed it up, put it in an oil-skin pouch, strapped it over his heart, and in four days landed by night on the coast of Cuba from an open boat. He disappeared into the jungle and— 3 weeks, in 3 weeks he came out the other side of the island, having traversed a hostile country on foot, and delivered the letter to Garcia.

Those are things I have no special interest now in detailing for you, because the point I wish to make is this: President McKinley gave Rowan a letter to be delivered to Garcia. Rowan took the letter and did not ask, "Where's he at? "

By the Eternal there is a man whose form should be cast in deathless bronze, and the statue placed in every college of the land. It is not book-learning young-men-need instruction about this and that. No. It is a stiffening of the vertebrae, which will cause them to be loyal to a trust to act promptly. Concentrate their energies. Do the thing; carry a message to Garcia.

Now, General Garcia is dead, but there are other Garcias; no man who has endeavored to carry out an enterprise where many hands were needed but has been well-nigh appalled at times by the imbecility of the average man. The inability or unwillingness to concentrate on a thing and do it. Slipshod assistance, foolness at attention, dowdy

indifference and half-hearted work seem to be the rule. And no man really succeeds unless by hook or by crook. He forces and bribes others to assist him. Or may have God in his goodness performs a miracle, and sends him an angel of life for assistant to help him. You, reader, put this matter to a test.

You're sitting now in your office. Six clerks are within call. Summon anyone and make this request. Please look in the encyclopedia, and make a brief memorandum for me concerning the life of [Correggio](#).

Will the clerk quietly say "Yes, sir", and do the task. On your life he will not. He will look at you out of the fishy eye and ask one or more of the following questions: Who was he? Which encyclopedia? Where is the encyclopedia? Was I hired for that? Don't you mean Bismarck? What's the matter with Charley doing it? Is he dead? Is there any hurry? Shan't I bring you the book and let you look it up yourself? What do you wanna know that for?

And I will lay to you 10 to 1 that after you have answered the question, and explain how to find that information, and why you want it, the clerk will go off and get one of the other clerks to help him to try to find Garcia, and then come back and tell you there is no such man.

Of course I may lose my bet, but according to the law of averages I will not. Now if you're wise you may not bother explain to your assistant that Correggio is indeed indexed under the 'Cs', not in the 'Ks', but will smile sweetly and say, "Never mind." And you'll go look it up yourself 'cause you wanna get it done. This incapacity for independent action, this moral stupidity, this infirmity of the will, this unwillingness to cheerfully catch hold and lift are the things that put

pure socialism so far into the future: "If men will not act for themselves, what will they do when the benefit of their effort is for all?"

A [first mate](#) with [knotted club](#) seems necessary, and the dread of getting the bounce Saturday night holds many a worker in his place. Advertise for a stenographer, and 9 out of 10 who apply can neither spell nor punctuate, and do not think it necessary to do so. Can such one write a letter to Garcia?

"Do you see that bookkeeper?" said the forman to me in a large factory."

"Oh yes, what about him?"

"Well, he's a fine accountant, but if I send him up to town on an errand, he might accomplish the errand alright, maybe. On the other hand he might stop at 4 saloons on the way, and when he got to mainstreet would forget what he had been sent for. "

Can such a man be trusted to carry a message to Garcia? We have recently been hearing much motley sympathy for the downtrodden denizen of the sweatshop, and the homeless wanderer searching for honest employment, and with it all often go many hard words for the men in power.

Nothing is said about the employer who grows old before his time in a vain attempt to get frowzy [ne'er-do-wells](#) to do intelligent work, and his long patients striving with that 'help' that does nothing but loaf when his back is turned. In every store and factory there's a constant weeding out process going on. The employer is constantly sending away help that have shown their incapacity to further the interest of

the business, and others are being taken on. No matter how many good times there are, this sorting continues only if times are hard and work is scarce; then the sorting is done finer, but out, and forever out. The incompetent and untrustworthy will go. It is the survival of the fittest.

Now self-interest prompts every employer to keep the best: those who would carry a message to Garcia. I know one man of really brilliant parts who has not the ability of his own to manage a business of his own, and yet is absolutely worthless to anyone else because he carries with him constantly the insane suspicion that his employer is oppressing, or intending to oppress him. He cannot give orders, he will not receive them.

Should a message be given to him to take to Garcia? Well, his answer would probably be, "take it yourself." Tonight this man walks the streets looking for work, the wind whistling through his thread bear coat. No one who knows him dare employ him, for he is a regular firebrand of discontent. He is impervious to reason, and the only thing that can impress him is the toe of a thick sole, #9 boot.

Of course I know that one so morally deformed is no less to be pitied than a physical cripple; but in our pity, let us drop a tear too for the men who are striving to carry on a great enterprise, whose working hours are not limited by the whistle, and whose hair is fast turning white through the struggle to hold down, hold the line in dowdy indifference, slipshod imbecility, and the heartless ingratitude, which but for their enterprise, would be both hungry and homeless.

Have I put the matter too strongly? Well, possibly I have. But when the world has gone a slumming, I wish to speak a word of sympathy

for the man who succeeds, the man who against great odds, has directed the efforts of others, and having succeeded finds there's nothing in it, nothing but bare board and clothes.

I have carried a dinner pail, and worked for a day's wages, and I have also been an employer of labor, and I know there's something to be said on both sides. There is no excellence, per se, in poverty. Rags are not recommendation. And all employers are not rapacious, and high handed, anymore than all poor men are virtuous. My heart goes out to the man who does his work when the boss is away, as well as when he is home, and the man, when given a letter for Garcia, quietly takes the message, without asking any idiotic questions, and with no lurking intention of chucking it into the nearest sewer, or doing odd else but deliver it. Never gets laid-off, nor has to go on a strike for higher wages.

Civilization is one long anxious search for just such individuals. Anything such a man asks shall be granted. His kind is so rare that no employer can afford to let him go. He is wanted in every city, town, and village, in every office, shop, store, and factory. The world cries out for such. He is needed, and needed badly— the man who can carry a message to Garcia.

America, we have to get into this fight, and stay in it. Every one of us! Carry the message.