

**SOCIAL EVILS: THEIR
CAUSES AND CURE: BEING
A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF
THE SOCIAL OF THE STATUS**

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THEIR CAUSES AND CURE.

DIET—ITS INFLUENCE UPON CIVILIZATION.—EFFECTS OF CERTAIN ARTICLES OF FOOD IN USE AMONG CIVILIZED AND SAVAGE NATIONS; AND OF CERTAIN BEVERAGES AND STIMULANTS IN COMMON USE AMONG THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.—“THE SOCIAL EVIL”—REMEDIES FOR IT.—WOMAN’S RIGHTS.—MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.—CHARITY CHILDREN—SUGGESTIONS RELATIVE TO THEIR TREATMENT, &c.—PRISON DISCIPLINE—FEMALE PRISONERS.

To live in the present age, is to feel the burden of a great work, if the mind properly comprehends the responsibilities which attach to life in an age when all nature is instinct with progress, and the race of man is struggling to outgrow the barbarisms of the past and attain to that higher civilization to which the age is beckoning it. The work which confronts philanthropists in this age is such as the ages past have not presented; from the fact that civilization has opened new fields for philanthropic effort, as well as stimulated philanthropy.

Advancing civilization discovers to the perceptions of men the imperfections of human nature and the real wants of society, as they are not discovered when the social status is low; as in the semi-civilized and lower states of society.

The so-called "vices of civilization" are greatly misnamed; as it is not the nature of civilization to propagate vices, but to discover and remove those of every kind. The evils which are the relics of the barbarisms of the past, do not result from the progress of the race in the arts of civilized life, but from the lack of conformity on the part of the people to the requirements of progressive law.

The load of evils which burdens American society at present is in dark contrast with the progressive institutions which place this people in advance of all others, and serve as a light to guide the nations on to liberty and enlightenment. These evils appall philanthropists who would fain apply the remedies for their removal, and often discourage philanthropic effort, when a full view is taken of their wide spread influences. To undermine and destroy them appears like a more Herculean task than the cleansing of the Augean stables of old; and whoever lifts a hand to this work in earnest, needs, like Hercules, to be strong for the work—neither faint-hearted nor weak-handed.

The work of to-day confronts laborers in the moral vineyard as of a nature not to be ignored or postponed. Nature, in this age, casts heavy responsibilities upon her intelligent children, and will not allow of their being thrown back upon the mother's shoulders. The welfare of society is committed to those of its guardians who are sufficiently wise and far-seeing to devise means to advance its progress; and all thoughtful citizens should take it to heart that they are guardians of the welfare of society and the State; that they are to labor, not only for the good of the present generation, but for future generations, who are to receive as a legacy from the present, either virtuous or immoral tendencies—blessing or cursing, according as the present decide by their acts.

The cries of "Lo here!" and "Lo there!" perpetually resounding in the ears of such as are anxiously studying the social problems with a view of discovering means to bring about real social reform, are distracting in the extreme, and calculated to mislead, unless the judgment is matured and the mind steadied by adherence to certain fixed principles

adopted as a basis of action, and considered safe, whatever contingencies may arise. When the ship is in danger, it is manifested by cries of alarm on every hand; and the occasion is one that calls forth expedients in dangerous numbers; for wisdom can not always govern when the common interest demands a common effort. However, it is the wise, the cautious, who will prevail to save in a dangerous emergency, when such have the power to act. Such an emergency is the present; for the waves are rolling high and threatening destruction, although the ship is not disabled, and there are on board of her stout-hearted, efficient seamen, who are well qualified to guide her through the storm and into smooth waters.

The flood of sensuality which is oversweeping the land must be stayed; or civilization must cease its advance, and the nation retrograde. Such vice as flourishes in high and low places is altogether inconsistent with progress and the stability of good institutions. This fact must be apparent to all who seriously reflect upon the subject; and all such must tremble in view of the actual danger to our cherished institutions, from the degeneracy of the people to whom their welfare is committed. However, there is abundant grounds of hope, and confidence in the success of reformatory measures which may be adopted as the means of changing the tendencies of the people from immorality and sensuality toward virtue and high intellectuality. There is that true worth in the American character which is a warrant for the perpetuation of American institutions and the advancement of American civilization. A people that can achieve what this people has within the last two centuries, can save itself from the thralldom into which it has fallen from causes partly incident to its struggles to conquer its present position among the nations of the earth. But not without effort will salvation come; strong effort, akin to that which sufficed to throw off the galling yoke of political oppression that threatened to destroy the energies of a rising people, but which could not so stifle these energies but that when the emergency came they could rise superior to all that

opposed them and vindicate the cause of right and justice in the view of mankind.

To call attention to some of the most glaring evils in society, and suggest methods for their cure, is the object of these pages. Short space is allotted for the consideration of each subject discussed, and therefore, much is necessarily omitted which might with profit be added to the suggestions which will be offered. The author confesses to deep earnestness in the cause of moral reform; but will seek to eschew prejudice in treating the subjects under consideration, and candidly state such principles and propose such methods of reform as present themselves as just and feasible.

To get at the root of an evil and apply means to eradicate that, is the only sure way to destroy the evil. The branches may be plucked again and again, but they will be sure to re-appear, and new ones with them, when the root remains in the soil, which is a well-spring of every variety of elements ever seeking to embody themselves. The origin of the propensity to evil in human nature, can be traced back to the origin of the race; but it is not proposed to enter into a discussion of "original sin" in order to point out a way of reformation of the abuses in society at present. It is sufficient for my purpose to trace these alarming evils to causes which can be well understood as operating to stimulate any natural propensity to wrong doing which man may possess. Society is what it is from causes apparent to every one who seeks for a solution of the problem presented by the social status. The degeneracy of the present generation does by no means prove that the race is degenerating; although it shows, unmistakeably, that it has not yet overcome the propensity to evil which is natural to it in the lower stages of its growth, but which is outgrown as it progresses.

With natures unbalanced, many fall into erroneous habits and practices, and imbibe error instead of truth when temptations are thrown in their way. When the good and the evil are placed before such, they choose the evil, naturally, when there is an incentive to it; and oftentimes the good

must be thrust upon them before they will accept of it; the unbalanced state of their minds causing them to misjudge of what is good and evil, or to love the evil more than the good.

Nature endows reasoning man with power to judge of what is good and evil by the effects of both; and therefore, civilization erects standards of justice and morality. These standards are guides for those whose natures are not a perfect law unto them, and must be respected as the safeguards of society until they are replaced by higher ones by higher civilization. Every individual possesses an instinct of justice; and although perverted minds often misjudge of what is right and what is wrong in their own acts and those of others, society in civilized communities is very apt to erect just standards as its safeguards—such as all the people can respect without doing violence to their consciences.

It is true that legislation in the most civilized communities falls short of providing justly for every want of society; and therefore, ills creep in which otherwise would be repelled. Progressive institutions admit of the remodeling of social forms to suit an advancing people, and legislation can be adapted to the wants of society.

The habits of a people, which are such a powerful influence in deciding its grade of civilization, can be, in a measure, regulated by legislation. That is to say: Legislators, whose duty it is to provide for the well-being of a people, have it in their power to enact laws to promote that well-being in every respect. On the principle that the law interferes with the commission of crime by incarcerating the criminal, it can interfere with the propagation of institutions that foster crime, or the manufacture, production, or vending, of articles which, when taken into the systems of individuals, prompt them to the commission of crime or to the propagation of evil influences throughout society. It is no abuse of power on the part of the guardians of society to protect it from what depraves, and hence, curses it; but is its legitimate use. Laws are founded upon this principle, and hence their necessity.

However, with the individuals composing society rests

the responsibility of creating its sentiment and thus influencing legislation. Social forms are what the people make them; and legislation, especially in a free country, will be what the people call for. It rests with individuals, in the present state of society, to consider what is to be done by each and all to change the condition of things. That there is something wanting somewhere—some lurking evil or evils that are a bane to the whole social body that must be removed before a higher state of society can be reached, is evident to all; and all are interested in discovering what they are, and how to remove them. Personal responsibility rests with every member of society in the matter of cleansing the filthy social pool, whose malarious influences spread themselves far and wide, poisoning the young of every class, even before they enter upon the active stage of life, and depressing all to some extent, for all are partaking, in some degree of its deadly effects.

Reformers are urging the masses of the people to escape from the Sodom which threatens with destruction every dweller within it; and they point out avenues which lead to the broad road to safety; but very few, as yet, have pointed out that road so clearly that it can not be mistaken. The danger has called forth an abundance of expedients; some of which are calculated rather to ensure swift destruction than escape; and others, carried out, would greatly facilitate the salvation of the people from the enormous burden of ills which oppress them.

The root of the evils which oppress society so severely at present, is in the natures of the people, implanted there by bad habits; or by such practices as degrade a civilized people, necessarily. Barbarism is outgrown as a people changes its mode of living—of eating and drinking, and associating. The diet of a people decides, in a great measure, its state of civilization; as the essences of food make up individuals, in connection with those spiritual elements which are attracted to cooperate with these to keep in operation the functions of life. The physical forces of individual man attract spiritual ones affinitized to them, and thus his

whole nature is greatly affected by the aliment which supports his existence.

It is a preposterous notion that civilized and refined people may eat and drink whatever is used as diet by any people without being affected in their mentality or morals by it. It is a sentiment that is dangerous to the welfare of any people; for all experience teaches, that a people are like the food they eat. The savage that feasts on raw flesh and blood, and on insects, reptiles, and the lowest orders of quadrupeds, roots, herbs, &c., is cruel and besotted; having his lower passions and propensities stimulated by his diet. The civilized man who eats of the higher fruits of the earth, partaking sparingly of animal food, and eschewing all unnatural stimulants, exhibits a refinement of nature that bespeaks the influence of this quality of diet upon the whole man. Savages remain such until they, by cultivating the arts and industries of life, provide for themselves a diet consistent with their progress into the civilized state. It is a thing unheard of for a civilized people to subsist after the manner of savage and barbarous ones. Civilization comes as an effect of gradual change in the habits of a people. Civilized man will no more habitually partake of raw flesh, dog meat, grasshoppers, crickets, locusts, &c., &c., than he will flay his victims taken in war, and reject with disdain every improvement suggested to him, that he may continue to grovel in ignorance and sensuality. Bestiality is an effect of continually fostering the lowest propensities of human nature; while physical, intellectual, and moral refinement is an effect of fostering the higher ones.

Wheat is an agent of civilization—well understood to be, as are also the other higher grains and fruits. These correspond with man's nature on the civilized plane, and foster progress; as, entering into man's physical constitution, they help to balance his whole nature. Improvements in the arts of life which accompany the advancement of a people to the civilized and enlightened stages, signify improvement of whatever serves as food, and in the manner of preparation of food, as well as in the other things. Indeed, it is one of the chief employments of civilized man to study how