

## human nature and self-interest

1845.07.10

In order to love mankind – expect but little from them; in order to view their faults without bitterness, we must be accustom ourselves to pardon them; and perceive that indulgence is justice which frail humanity has a right to demand from wisdom.

1846.02.06

*From the Valentine Offering.*

### OUR SOCIAL CAPACITIES

How highly fraught with blessings to our race, is a right use of the social capacities. It is indeed the best gift of heaven, to the sons and daughters of earth! Take away this power of communicating thought, feeling and sympathy, one to another, and existence would no longer be a blessing, but rather a curse. The holy and sublime emotions of love, friendship, and sympathy would be lost – the ties of brotherhood sundered – the joys of domestic life annihilated, and this bright beautiful world, with all its sunshine and gladness, would become a gloomy prison house filled with living, moving bodies, destitute of souls. Thanks to God for social powers – those powers which enable us to encourage each other in every good word and work – which open the rich mines of intellectual and moral good, alike to all who will put forth their energies to acquire the true and the beautiful in human life. But how many abuse and utterly pervert those noble gifts! Instead of using them to elevate and refine, they traduce and vilify, thus rendering miserable the otherwise blessed and happy. Instead of cultivating the best and Godlike principles of our nature, becoming more and more assimilated to the fountain of all purity and excellence, how often do we nurse the spirit of hatred, envy, malice, and revenge, making in our breasts a perfect hell?

Oh, could we realize *always* the power of *one* kind word, one pleasant encouraging glance of the eye may have over the future life and

happiness of a fellow being, who is, perhaps, striving with his *last* strength to overcome temptation's power; who is faint, it may be, and weary in the struggles of life's great warfare, having none to care for or to stay his tottering steps, as he nears the awful precipice of ruin – could we, I say, realize that one kind word would snatch him from the fatal brink, think ye that we should be thus lavish with words which stir up the unholy passions of the human heart? No! no! far otherwise. Did we *feel* this in our hearts, how differently should we all live! How tender, how compassionate wayward and the sinful, striving to win them back to the path of rectitude and peace! Then would the wretched, over whom sin and cast its blight and curse, forsake the error of their ways, and, like the poor prodigal, return to their Father's house, where there is no lack of any good thing. The tears of bereavement and agony would then be dried up, and the countenance; over which brooded disconsolate sadness, would again brighten with hope and cheerfulness, and our world become a second Eden – a paradise below!

"Speak gently to the erring, know  
They must have toiled in vain:  
Perchance unkindness made them so,  
Oh, win them back again.

Speak gently! – 'tis a little thing  
Dropped in the heart's deep well;  
The good, the joy which it may bring;  
Eternity shall tell."

- H.J.S.

- Lowell, Mass. 1846.

1847.11.05

**Utilitarianism.** – How narrow is the utilitarianism of the age, as developed by the every-day life of universal Yankeedom. The first question asked concerning a fine poem, an exquisite painting, or a beautiful piece of statuary, is – *Will it pay?* Pay! Yes, Sir, Utilitarian! – If you have a soul to recognize the divinity from dull sensualism, into the air that is breathed by the gods, and links it with heaven and

immortality, *pays*; and right munificently, too. "Man shall not live by bread alone." He is not animal. His moral, his intellectual, and his spiritual nature, must be fed. He has an eye that kindles as it drinks in the glories of a summer sunset – and this was given him for some other purpose than to be blinded by continual poring over the compound interested table. His spirit trembles within him at the gush of music, vibrating upon some heart-chord, and linking the present with the past – why should he chain it to his ledger, till the aspirations of its chain it to his ledger, till the aspirations of its earlier day are forgotten, or remembered only to awaken a scornful smile? Ah, sadly true is the plaint of the bard of Windermere:

"The world is too much with us – late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers."

*Nonpareil.*

1845.07.10

The following original communication, although not written for this paper, yet with permission of the author, we give an insertion with pleasure.

### SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

"Virtue is its own rewarder –  
But vice is swallowed up in the grave it  
digs for others."

That man is a social being, the very nature and the circumstances necessary to the development of his natural capacities proclaim. – We see the infant before the dawn of intellect, cling to the matron bosom, with a fondness beyond account. And as the mind beams forth its vivid brilliancies, ray by ray, – until its orb complete is seen – and gently soars up to its noon-day arch, imparting charms to soothe the cravings of, and embellish with beauty and magnificence its fellow minds. And mildly disappear beneath the darkening clouds of premature – or gilded horizon of

ripened years – as the atmosphere in which it moves, dictates. And casting back its most impressive beams entreats us all to follow it, - in hope to arise again, to illumine a sphere more truly glorious. Yes, though all the stages of man's existence, we behold his social nature acquiring new and stronger attachments – constantly twining around his heart for his fellow man the cords of sympathy, and constantly seeking an enlarged circle of associates. Consequently families, villages, nations, become organized, and resolve into unity as it were.

Now sympathy is the only true principle of all attractions and cohesions. It is sympathy which rightly associates the human family – and binds individual to individual and association to association. But how often is this great principle misruled by the demands of want – or the schemes of vain or pecuniary policies.

And what are the consequences which must necessarily follow this digression of human invention? The beauties of gambling – or the evils of society!

Who can reflect for a moment upon the present practice of business transaction – pecuniary, social and moral throughout the world without exclaiming with myself, - 'Tis all a game – and he that is the best adept, is sure to win the wager. For who can gain a comfortable livelihood or the intrinsic reward of his merit, without making the policies of the checker-board, or a hand at cards his constant study and practice?

Deplorable indeed, 'but we have all participated in modeling the fabric, - consequently why should we complain of our tenements?' some may suggest. But these whom nature made the strongest, and circumstances of the mismovement of others have made the most fortunate, have rudely precipitated the stones that just men laid into the dark abyss of bygone shadows, - and patterned the castle so often to favor their own changes, that the ones

most prosperous to-day, cannot be certain as to their lot to-morrow. Hence arises that inhumanizing chill of distrust, which incites foe to friend – and man to jealousy, even toward his enviable Maker.

The subject of my criticism is beautifully – although lamentably pictured all around us, - in every occupation and profession.

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We are hampered by a superstitious enquette, which we are compelled to live and die by, to gain the privileges of social being, in the most scanty degree of respectability. – Dame nature will submit to no such arbitrary restrictions, and beautify the charms. But every mind is endowed with sufficient moral sentiment; if it be rightly cultivated, to control and properly guide all lower passions of the mind in the path of rectitude. And these powers are infinitely co-existent and co-equal in value. If the passions are crushed by rigor, or blighted by neglect, - the sentiments perish for want of stimulus, and the high capacities and faculties which a well balanced mind is capable of attaining too, arise but empty bubbles of nothingness. For like the lute the human soul is strung – and turned into melodies the most harmonious, by nature's fairy hand: and like the Aeolian harps, the elective cord which binds us heart to heart, vibrate most sweetly when affection's placid zephyr breathed from congenial spirits plays gently over the brow – and in a seraph's voice, speaks peace to all around. Wooed by these minstrel lips, man's love does like the trump roll back its dulcet strains on all who press it thus, exact as they are breathed into his mirror soul. – When artifice, or jealousy's huge paw, or self-esteem or malice grasp the harp – discordant notes in competition strife – each one to rise one strain above the last and drown it with an eloquence most shrill, dart rudely forth, - like lightning flashing, blazing, pealing – from 'cloud to cloud incessant – frightfully shot. All social charms are banished from the

scene; and all around is wrap't in horror's gloom – until at length the tender strings are broke! and ruined worth, and 'grief' depicted there.

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Passion increases passion, and faculty develops faculty, - and faculty and passion are the parents of sentiment. Thus if we wish to increase any particular faculty, we apply for tuition to those who have more of that faculty than ourselves. And the same is equally true with all passions. And as our capacities receive, and our passions approve, so do our sentiments decide.

The adage of "what is meat for one, is poison for another," embodies more truth than poetry. In this elementary principle we may trace all the ills which now degrade and oppress man. The faculties, passions and sentiments of another organization, until the whole race of man has become poisoned. There diseases, moral mental and physical pervade the entire human family.

The feelings of a philanthropist upon investigating this horrible condition of his race, may be the most truly expressed in the words of "the mad poet," for he is regarded more as such than any other order of beings, by a majority of people.

#### THE MAD POET

O, let me dwell in the regions of fancy,  
Where nought but the clear sky is seen -  
And the fairies that dance there so sweetly,  
Like Aurora in evenings serene.

For there I can rear me a castle,  
Like Solomons temple of old -  
Its tower shall reach unite to Heaven,  
And glitter with purer than gold.

And then I can muse with the spirits,  
Of those who have gone to their rest, -  
And listen to chants of the angels,  
That dwell in the hand of the blest.

(Hush! Hush!! list thou that sweet lovely voice?  
She smiles, as she sighs, from the  
dark lonely tomb!  
"My loved one – my own dearest lover, oh, come  
to my arms,  
Prepare for your eternal doom.")

I will rush from the crowd of a city,  
And flee from the tortures of wiles -  
Where nature bestows all her smiles, -  
To a far distance cell in the mountain,  
A [] feast on my spirit's repast  
Yes, there I will like a hermit,

Where the ivy and woodbine are twining,  
And evergreen's shadow is cast.

There envy nor malice will bliss me,  
Nor friendship can e'er prove a curse;  
I'll fly to that, beautiful sphere, -  
And love like the rhyming of verse.

How can we improve but by social intercourse. Where are the demands of nature to be learned than where they are proclaimed freely. How are we to restore sympathy to her imperial throne, but by discarding her opponents. How purify a corrupt system than by cultivating reform, - or how eradicate error than by ingrafting truth.

In order to produce these results, mind must cease to prey upon mind. Then will our noblest powers exult in virtue's cause, and glow with life as perfect as their present sleep beneath their fallen towers. Then will the meager conceptions which now limit man's earthly sphere to a niggardly round of selfish desires, in darkness and bigotry - and shorten his days by successive transgressions of nature's laws. Then will they be expanded to scan immensity - dissolve mystery - transcend egotism - and shun the approach of evil. - Then we shall recognise our neighbor as a part with ourselves, and ourselves as only a part of the human family.

KINNEY

1845.11.24

He that clothes the poor, clothes his own soul. He that sweetens the cup of affliction, sweetens his own heart. He that feeds the hungry spreads out a banquet more sweet and refreshing than luxury can bestow.

1847.01.08

*For the Voice*  
*Fables Translated from the German of Lessing*

A shepherd by means of a terrible pestilence, had lost his entire flock. The wolf learned this, and came to offer his condolence. "Shepherd," said he, "is it true that so cruel a misfortune has befallen thee? Art thou of the whole flock deprived? The dear innocent fat flock! I am pained and could shed bloody tears." "Thank you, master wolf," replied the shepherd, "I see thou

hast a very compassionate heart." That he has indeed, added Hylax, the shepherd's dog, when under the misfortunes of his neighbors he also suffers.

1845.11.14

**LIVE - LET LIVE - HELP LIVE.**

There are three sorts of people in the world, who may be characterized in the following monosyllable above. First, there are those who take for their motto - Live - live regardless of others - live if others die - live for one's self, and to one's self. Such persons care for nobody but themselves - they think of nobody else. They have got on in the world, it may be without much aid from others, and others must bet on as they can, or stick by the way - it is all one to them - it is none of their business; they are not their brother's keeper. These are supremely selfish men.

There is another class of men among us whose motto is - live and let live. They are glad to see their neighbor prosper; but it must be without their help. - Their first and great enquiry is, who will show us any good? How will this affect my interest? Shall I gain any thing by it? If such men are quite sure that anything they may do for another will return ultimately to their own benefit, they will cheerfully lend a helping hand. And in some cases they will even help a friend in need, if persuaded that it will no way operate to their own disadvantage and inconvenience. Otherwise they are as deaf as dead men to all who approach them. They are simply selfish men.

There is yet a third class of men, whose motto is - live and help others to live. They are not inattentive to their own affairs and to their own interests; but they seek not their own exclusively. They are not merely willing to let others live around them, but are willing to help others live, and even to subject themselves to the inconvenience and trouble in order to do this. And all this they will do without first stopping to ask - shall I get my

reward? If I lend a dollar, shall I get two in return? They are men who act either from the impulses of a kind and generous dispositions, or men whose principles of action have been derived from the teachings and examples of him "who went about doing good," who sought not his own but the things which were another's - who was never unmindful to do good and communicate as he had opportunity. These are truly benevolent men.

1845.11.29

**KINDNESS BETTER THAN FORCE.**

If you want your horse or your servant to work well, you must endeavor to make them happy; happiness increases the strength and energies of both, and unhappiness diminishes them. When you find either of them weak in any particular point, do not press and harness the weakness, but show it indulgence. - Do not urge of them to do more than they are well able, as the more they are compelled to do to-day, the less they will do tomorrow. When you find your horse begin to slacken his speed, do not recklessly compel him to maintain it, but think how you yourself would like to be, thus urged on beyond your strength. Do not worry your horse by repeated whip strokes, as every blow robs the animal of some of its strength, and continual blows rob it also of the motives to exertion by the violence of the strokes on the skin, and affect the muscles underneath on which the motions depend. If any person doubts this, a slight blow on his arm or leg will soon convince him of the truth. If you have two horses working together, and one horse is slower or weaker than the other, do not force it to do as much as the other, but rather slacken the speed, if even it is done by keeping the other horse back; and never use bearing reins, they are useless to the driver, vexatious to the horse; and are the cause of many falls; but above all, be not too fond of showing them that you are their master and they your

slaves; they know it well enough to their sorrow without this trouble.

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1845.09.04

**LOVE OF GAIN.** – The Americans are proverbially fond of gain – and many anecdotes are told of the unscrupulous avidity with which they pursue any path which leads to riches. – But it is a well established fact, that unprincipled beings maybe found of all nations, who will be induced by the *hope of gain* to pursue with glee the most disgusting employment – employments, which are revolting and disgraceful to human nature. And how many thousands, nay, *millions*, of human beings, not only gain their very subsistence from, but fatten on the miseries of others.

During the great Plague, which raged in Bassorah in the year 1773, when three hundred and seventy-five thousand perished, during the summer seasons, through the violence of the distemper, an English gentlemen who resided at Bassorah at that time, preserved himself from infection by retiring with his goods and merchandise to a mud house, where he carefully avoided any direct communication with the inhabitants. But not wishing to remain idle during the reign of pestilence, and having a large quantity of Bengal cotton, he sold it to the people to wrap the dead in. – The price he demanded, and it was proportioned to the distress of the miserable inhabitants, was put into a basket which was hauled up by a rope to his warehouse form which, after undergoing a certain disinfecting process, it was transferred to his vaults; and the basket was again lowered with the proportionate quantity of cloth. In the course of the summer he accumulated a handsome fortune by disposing in this manner of *seventy thousand winding sheets*.

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1845.11.07

**AN EXCELLENT SENTIMENT.** – Frederika Brenner, the talented Swedish authoress, remarks, “We should not preach so much to people; we should give them an interest in life, something to love,

something to live for; we should, if possible, make them happy, or put them in a way to happiness – then they would unquestionably be good.”

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1845.11.29

**COMPASSION.** – Compassion is an emotion of which we ought never to be ashamed. Graceful, particularly in youth, is the tear of sympathy, and the heart that melts at the tale of woe. We should not permit ease and indulgence to contract our affections, wrap us up in selfish enjoyment; but we should accustom ourselves to think of the distresses of human life, of the solitary cottage the dying parent, and the weeping orphan. Nor ought we ever to sport with pain and distress in any of our amusements, or treat even the meanest insect with wanton cruelty.

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1846.10.02

#### **Everybody's Corner.**

Dear Voice. – Agreeable to promise I write you again this week and submit a few thoughts on jugglery. I could not but think how innocent a kind of deception was the performance. He notified the audience that he intended to please, amuse and deceive them. How different from the deceptions usually practiced. The professions of honesty often awake suspicion.

You are very ill says the quack. Your liver, or your lungs are decaying; you must have immediate relief, or serious consequences will be the result. I would not bear such insult, says the lawyer, you can and ought to have redress – and then he draws them into the meshes. Poor man! he finds but little justice in the law.

Friendship has its deceivers – the kindest heart the world ever saw, has often, too often, felt the cold return of a kind warm devotion, “like Alpine streams of bitter woes flow back on the bleeding heart. Often have our hearts bled to feel the cold return of a loving, pure spirit, which has been given with the purest motives of which the heart is capable. Nor is the worst feature of deception in social life. The heart is

often made to feel a purer, holier emotion. It is called forth by words and deeds with as little sincerity as the most depraved are capable of. If there is one deception more to be feared than another, it is this. If there is a sin which should draw down upon the dead of the offender the just indignation of God and man, it is that which would call forth the deep, pure devotion of woman's love, to crush or treat lightly.

The religious, too, are guilty of deception. The minister, poor man, has received a call to leave his well beloved flock to the wolves, it may be – he “can be more useful” somewhere else. He laments the call of Heaven, and would not be induced by any worldly consideration to leave them. Look out for deception, he is offered a larger salary, or else wants you to offer him more. He would not preach, without a good fat living were made by it, if his dear people went to perdition.

Thus the world is deceived by such hollow pretensions to goodness, and made to distrust the honesty of all men. We do not wonder the present state of society is so alive to deceivers and deception. We hope there are some who are true, honest-hearted. It will not be those, however, who make the greatest pretensions.

- S.G.B.

Boston Sept. 23, 1846

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1848.01.21

“A lawyer,” said Lord Brougham, in a facetious mood, “is a learned gentlemen, who rescues your estate from your enemies, and keeps it himself.”

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1846.10.23

#### **[lawsuits]**

It is truly surprising to witness the eagerness with which men engage in lawsuits, without inquiring the why or wherefore. It is true that men, under the influence of sudden passions, easily find evil counselors, who hurry them on with what they call legal advice, and before they take time to reflect, the lawyer has

charged for advice, write, &c. and the sheriff has a bill for fees. On reflection, the man regrets that he has commenced an action against his neighbor, but he is not willing to pay costs, and the neighbor is angry; so instead of stopping it, they allow it to go into court, let costs accumulate, and one or both are ruined. There are too many evil counselors among lawyers, for the good of community; and the only way in which this can be accounted for is, that law business is overdone, and those just entering it are compelled, in too many justices, to adopt the motto, "rascality or starvation."

If men understood their own interests, were willing to do as they would be done by, or refer their difficulties to their neighbors, how much misery and poverty might be avoided – how many angry passions quelled. It is not often that men obtain justice by engaging in law, nor can it be expected that juries, forced to attend courts at a sacrifice of money, will thoroughly investigate every matter which may be brought before them. They soon become tired, and are anxious to get home; and it is often the case that late at night verdicts are rendered which are wholly unjust. We saw it stated a short time since, that a judge kept a jury locked up three days and nights, and compelled them to agree. They agreed; but it must have been evident to all concerned that their verdict was brought about by unjust means. The simple fact that Daniel Webster will win a case where a less eloquent pleader would lose it, shows plainly that *law* is not always *justice*.

- *Weekly Mess*