

PERVERTED BENEVOLENCE AS AN INFLUENCE UPON RACIAL DEVELOPMENT.

GERARD FOWKE, Madison.

The most beautiful flowers adorning our parks and conservatories are evolved from coarser varieties only by intelligent cultivation, close attention, and unremitting care. If neglected, they soon revert to weeds, or suffer extermination beneath the rank growth of more vigorous common plants which will thrive in almost any place, and under the most untoward conditions.

If a florist wishes to create a new variety, he begins with a plant which is nearest the form he desires; he does not waste time in trying to change skunk cabbage into Easter lilies, or to obtain from bugbane the fragrance of heliotrope.

The farmer who wants to raise the best corn or wheat his lands are capable of producing will select from his crib or granary the largest and best-filled grains for seed; he has learned by experience that only thus can he expect to secure the most satisfactory returns for his labors.

Stock raisers know that beef cattle are not bred indiscriminately and fortuitously from pennyroyal scrubs, nor fine hogs from razor-backs, nor race horses from farm plugs.

In the various families of the animal and vegetable kingdoms Nature has established for each species a general average to which every individual specimen must closely conform. A plant or animal which falls below this plane is ruthlessly exterminated; one which by extraneous help or unusually favorable surroundings may rise above it, must return to its place when deprived of these adventitious aids. In process of time, under the influence of climatic or physiographic changes, evolution will gradually produce an alteration in structure: but development along such lines is practically uniform over a wide territory.

The practical truth of this general law has been impressed upon the farmer and the florist by a wide range of experience and by multitudes of failures. The lesson has been thoroughly learned by both, that if grain is to be prevented from retrograding to the grasses whence it is derived, or that if a garden is to be kept from reverting to a patch of weeds, incessant warfare must be maintained against the efforts of Nature to thwart the intentions of the cultivator. The veriest tyro will readily assent to the proposition, will deem it self-evident indeed, that a man who would devote the same care and attention to every plant, ornamental, beneficial or noxious, that found a foothold on his land; who would, for example, expend the same labor upon sedge as upon wheat, or would devote the same assiduous consideration to poison sumac that is required for bringing to perfection a tropical orchid, in the expectation or hope of obtaining products equally valuable or desirable from

whatever form of vegetation to which he would give his time and labor—that such a man is naturally and properly to be considered a fool.

And yet this is virtually the plan that is being followed in another direction by thousands of honest, earnest, well-meaning persons. They can not or will not see, or, plainly seeing, will yet persistently and vigorously refuse to admit that the human race is subject to the same laws which they readily acknowledge hold sway with the rest of animate nature. They waste time and labor in the vain endeavor to educate or civilize those who can not improve along the desired lines. Their motives are the best, and they are doing the kind of work necessary for the mental and moral elevation which must precede material progress.

Money is lavishly expended in maintaining all sorts of asylums, institutions, homes, refuges, and various other contrivances whose purpose is the alleviation of human misery, human dereliction, and human delinquency.

In our schools thousands of women drag a weary existence in the effort, too often vain, to “beat an education into young savages in spite of themselves”.

Missions are established in every part of the world for making rifts in the pall of darkness thick-hung over human brutishness.

Kind-hearted men and women spend their lives amidst most unpleasant surroundings, far from friends and kindred, often for many years beyond the reach of a congenial or sympathetic companion; they wear themselves out in discharging their self-imposed and too often thankless duties; they sink under the fatigues and hardships which make life a martyrdom and death a blessing.

High honor should be the reward of those who devote their lives to noble work; for, though masquerading among them may be found incompetents, hypocrites, reprobates, and mercenary time-servers, who assume a virtue to conceal a vice, yet such are only as camp followers in the ranks of noble men and women who bring to their task souls possessing in high degree the essence of spirituality which places them among the most worthy of our race.

But they are, for the most part, cultivating worthless or noxious forms of life. And to one who recognizes this, the respect he feels for their motives, much though it be, can not equal his regret for their lack of discernment.

It may be considered a matter over which it is worth while to make ostentatious parade, when, as a result of brain-wracking toil extending through months or even years, an idiot has been taught to distinguish one letter of the alphabet from another; or when, with equal exertion, a few individual members of some primitive or alien race have been induced to assent to certain religious formulas of whose meaning they have not the remotest conception; but what does all this amount to after it is done?

The amount of money wasted on attempted education of imbeciles, civilization of savages who are better off as they were created, and “culturization” of obstreperous barbarians and ruffians whose most urgent need is a whipping-post, would be sufficient to maintain schools for the free manual and technical education of multitudes of boys and girls

whose skilled labor would far more than recompense the community for its outlay. Yet, in the absence of such training, perhaps only a small percentage of these, even if all should remain honest and virtuous, could ever be anything but hewers of wood and drawers of water if condemned from childhood to unceasing toil with untrained hands and undisciplined minds. Our streets hold many Arabs, of either sex, born with decent instincts and fair abilities, who are literally driven into degradation and criminality by ignorance or dire poverty, their innate vitality or "will to live" prompting them to adopt any convenient or possible means of avoiding starvation.

In many instances we are making the mistake in our schools, especially in the public high schools, of giving to children of low mental caliber or deficient moral perception, a kind and degree of education which renders them totally averse to or disqualified from engaging in any sort of occupation for which they are fitted by natural endowments; or which enables them to be detrimental factors in commercial or professional life through acquiring a knowledge of facts and methods by means of which they may attain greater efficiency in applying their perverted business instincts, and avoiding legal responsibility for fraudulent actions or dealings. On the other hand, many a bright ingenious boy or girl is so hampered and repressed by official uniformity of method as to be unable in after life to make use of faculties which would enable them to attain to greater usefulness and happiness.

In every land beneath the sun there are thousands of valuable men and women whose entire energies must be devoted to the maintenance of themselves and their dependents and who have neither the time nor the strength left from this struggle to engage in higher work for which they are fitted. And of those who have risen from obscurity, whose energy and determination have made a name and a reputation for them despite all the adverse conditions by which they have been surrounded, how many might have surmounted still greater heights had they received judicious aid or encouragement that would have started them earlier on their career or allowed them to progress without interruption! Not all artists have painted; not all poets have written; and in science and mechanics the names of illustrious students to whom we owe great discoveries and inventions, are unquestionably fewer than could be contained in the lists of those who might have done as well if the path of progress had not been closed against them by poverty or lack of opportunities. It is no answer to say that "great spirits can not be subdued"; that "with equal energy any man may do what any other man has done"; daily observation disproves the assertion. Men of much natural ability waste their lives filling unsuitable stations into which necessity thrust them in youth and then barred all avenues to improvement. Others, less able perhaps but still possessing good brains, are forced to occupy positions much beneath their natural capacity, solely because they do not know how to do better or different work. Their powers become dormant through lack of proper training, and finally atrophy through disuse.

To be sure, in the demands and complexities of modern life there is to be found a vast amount of menial toil and drudgery; but let it devolve

upon those who can never be put to any better use. There is no danger that the supply of such will be exhausted as long as the present facilities for unrestricted miscellaneous propagation are allowed to continue.

The best method of increasing the happiness and welfare of a community would seem to consist in preparing young persons having capacity and ambition somewhat above the average, to take advantage of opportunities for advancing themselves and improving their condition; and in then presenting the opportunities. Whether this should be undertaken by the State or by the individual, it is quite certain that many expectations would be unrealized; there is no business enterprise which does not show items on the wrong side of a profit and loss account. But, at any rate, it is safe to say that the sum total of work accomplished in this manner would be of far more benefit and value to the world than all that can ever be produced by mental or moral cripples or inferior races who are incompetent at best, who progress only so long as they are pulled or pushed, and who relapse into pauperism, imbecility, barbarism, or crime, as soon as they are left to rely upon their own unaided efforts.

"The snake that sloughs comes out a snake again."

We condemn extravagant display and ostentatious living; but may it not be better to expend superfluous wealth on luxurious pleasures if thereby clean, respectable artisans or tradesmen can devote their talents to producing beautiful work, or to use it in paying sufficient salaries, than it would be to give a similar amount to idlers and incompetents, with no better result than that of enabling them to maintain their worthless legions?

One of the greatest hindrances to an abatement of crime and misery is this same indiscriminate charity. Many of our philanthropic efforts might well be called, "Devices for the Promotion of Mendicity and Mendacity". At all times, to be sure, there are in the world thousands, even millions, of worthy poor who are such by force of circumstances not within their power to alter, and who are entitled to sympathy and all necessary assistance; but there are other millions of degenerates, moral imbeciles, mental dwarfs, and natural criminals, whose deplorable deficiencies can never, under any state of affairs, be improved to a degree justifying any considerable self-sacrifice on the part of others. They are the useless survivors into modern times, of prehistoric conditions. They are the vermiform appendix of the body politic. If it be repugnant to our sense of duty to destroy them, there can certainly be no great reproach to us if we neglect to interpose an obstacle when natural causes are striving to abolish them, in order to replace them with something better; or if we decline to thwart the evident attempt of evolutionary processes at letting them gradually and painlessly become extinct.

Moreover, our benevolence, so far from alleviating the misery of such defectives, taken as a mass, is continually adding to it by encouraging them to increase and multiply the number of vicious and worthless weaklings who must always have a certain amount of extraneous support, careless whether the dole be obtained by beggary or by thievery. The small quantum of prudence which would prompt a

restraint of appetites and passions by causing the lower strata of humanity to reflect upon the consequences of their recklessness, improvidence, or wrong behavior, is scattered to the winds by the knowledge that no matter what may be the causes leading to pauperism and helplessness, the community—meaning thereby the self-respecting and careful who look out for their own futures—will be compelled either by law or public sentiment to give up so much of their earnings as may be demanded, to support in idleness the drones who have deliberately refused to provide for themselves.

The active exercise of emotional philanthropy is a direct violation of natural law; consequently, it is unwise, and deleterious to the best interests of humanity. All desultory, unsystematic, hit-or-miss efforts at amelioration of wretchedness defeat their own purpose, by recruiting the ranks of those demanding charity. The specious argument that it is our "duty" to overcome and repress any promptings of reason or judgment which would lead us to question the judiciousness of such exuberance of charity, furnishes its own refutation when carried to a logical conclusion. The thrifty and provident also have "rights", which are infringed upon when their property is taken from them for such purpose.

With the first manifestation of mobile life, in the formless speck of protoplasm, begins the work of eliminating the weaker and the less perfect; and through all stages of animate existence this process continues with constantly increasing force until the point is reached, among the higher classes of the human race, where the refinement of spiritual feeling leads to a protest against cruelty, and rebels at the seeming injustice which is the cause of so much suffering. We then attempt to "improve Nature"; and, of course, make a botch of our job.

The Arabs have a legend to the effect that when Jonah had emerged from his cetacean retirement and was on the high road once more, he saw a blind man by the wayside. He besought Allah to allow him to restore the poor fellow's sight. For some time, Allah demurred; but wearying at last of importunity, gave the desired permission. As soon as the beggar got his bearings, he began throwing date seeds at Jonah, who felt the sting quite keenly, his skin being still soft and tender as a result of its prolonged and unaccustomed exposure to warm fluids. "How is this, O, Allah?" he exclaimed. "I treated this man with kindness and he repays me with injury." "You could not be content to leave matters as I had arranged them," replied Allah, "so now you must accept the consequences of interfering in affairs which are none of your business."

In the nations which by centuries of selection and improvement have gained a commanding position in the world, there are numerous individuals so unconscious of the obvious causes by which this condition has been brought about, as to believe in the psychic equality of all their fellow-beings. They regard the emotions and motives of depraved and criminal men and women from the standpoint of highest Christianity. They imagine that bestial, cruel, undeveloped, or mal-developed wretches, in whatever grade of human existence, dwelling by preference in purlieus of vice and filth, or like wild beasts in desert or forest, will forsake their

chosen life and at least make an attempt to become mild in manner and refined in tastes when told it is their "duty" to do so. If these worthy and conscientious promoters of righteousness had a more accurate knowledge of human nature, if they would mingle more freely and familiarly with the objects of their solicitude, they would comprehend the futility of their endeavors. The moral development of mankind, taken as a whole, proceeds in its earlier stages almost as slowly as the physical development; and it is only by centuries of self-striving and self-help, even after their eyes are opened to a knowledge of good and evil, that the best elements of a race or a people can attain to a high standard of excellence. The inferior types remain at varying depths beneath; in the most civilized centers the ape-and-tiger instinct is perniciously active, and sometimes finds its victims among the purest and noblest because these so frequently commiserate instead of condemning the depraved and vicious.

It can not be too often repeated or too firmly impressed that always and everywhere cultivation implies, nay, demands, extermination. Wolves and lambs, tigers and gazelles, can not be reared together; we can not raise a crop of corn and a crop of weeds on the same ground in the same year, and have two good crops. In regard to animals and plants alike, the choice lies before us, "Which shall be preserved?" Such a question seems too trivial to formulate; and yet the analogy between it and the question, "Which is the better, a respectable citizen, or an irreclaimable thief, or ruffian, or pauper?" is perfectly clear.

We are all agreed that the weeds and the beasts of prey must go. If it be impracticable or impossible, at present, to eradicate the congeners of the weeds and the beasts from the human race, they should at least be rigorously excluded from the areas where cultivation is in progress. They must all die in the end, anyhow; and if we grow pathetic over the extinction of delinquents, defectives, even of a tribe or a whole race of primitive men who can not, or will not, keep step with the progress of enlightened peoples, let us endeavor to explain to ourselves the wisdom or the utility of worrying over the fate of future generations which have not yet been, and from the very nature of the case never can be, brought into existence?

We deem it our duty to bend every effort toward the extermination of animals and plants hurtful to us through their own volition or the possession of some noxious quality; we wage unceasing strife against those which, though harmless in themselves, yet militate against our endeavors to produce what is of use to us; but we spend our time and our strength, our money and our lives, in the attempt to preserve as long and in as great numbers as can be done, the degraded and criminal types of the human race which are a constant menace to health and property and progress.

We make them shiftless, indolent, and worthless, because we teach them they will always be cared for, no matter how little they deserve it. We make them deceitful, sneaking and treacherous, by the facilities we afford them for preying on our kindness. We permit them, or even encourage them, to marry when scarcely adolescent, and the conditions of the life they lead are so favorable for unstinted propagation that they

multiply in far larger ratio than do those who are struggling upward in the scale of life, until the children almost seem to come in litters; and these, with their birthmark of undesirable mental traits or physical imperfections, we sedulously care for, to poison and corrupt the blood of future generations, like a fungus engrafted on a healthy vine.

Striving for a bulky census roll, we seem turgescient with pride and satisfaction as we contemplate our increase of population, regardless of the fact that too much of it is due to the annual accretion of these mill-stones about our necks.

We have the appearance of congratulating ourselves on the growing army of neurotics, imbeciles, paupers, incorrigibles, and criminals, who crowd our public institutions as fast as they can be erected.

We complacently make annual reports of the numbers thus provided for, the vast sums of money expended, as evidence of our wealth and culture, of our ability to keep in the front ranks of civilized nations; in which respect we may be compared with a Marathon runner who would triumphantly display a patch of sticking plaster over an abscess in his hip as a proof of his qualifications for entering the race and his superiority to contestants who were less careful in treating their disabilities.

We tax the resources of Church and State to provide means for the still further increase of places of refuge or detention; we so conduct our economic, political, social, religious, and charitable organizations as to keep these asylums and penal institutions crowded to their capacity, with a constantly increasing demand for more room. Yet, with illogical sentimentality, we so frame our laws as to set at liberty many of those most capable of mischief.

In a word, we are trying to preserve the weeds at the expense of the flowers, and are vainly hoping that under such treatment all will soon be flowers alike; losing sight of the fact that there is no method of securing uniformity of elevation except by leveling downward; that to level from below upward is an impossibility, whether in mind or matter.

It is well to bear always in mind that "Nature cares nothing for the individual, but everything for the species"; and that the species is perpetuated by getting rid of the least progressive individuals. We, wiser than Allah, seem desirous of reversing the process.

Well, "we are a great nation." It may work out all right. But the man who persistently demands of his physical organization that it assimilate large quantities of unwholesome food, often lives to wish he had not been such a fool; and a nation is only an aggregation of men.

There is a glimmer of light in the horizon. For generations, not satisfied with our own great and steadily increasing production along these lines, we have allowed or even encouraged reinforcements from other lands. Now, we are trying to put up a fence to keep out the "undesirable foreign element." Is it too much to hope that, in time, we may awake to the propriety of confining by some sort of barrier, the scum and dregs which are with us to stay because we have no place to which we can send them? The remedy is simple and practical; merely, by segregation or otherwise, to prevent their further breeding.

