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### Literature.

*Moral Views of Commerce and Society.* In twelve Discourses, by the Rev. Orville Dewey. Philadelphia: Carey and Lea.

A Mohammedan legend describes the perplexities of an angel, who had obtained permission to assume a human form, and travel through all the regions of the earth, for the purpose of ascertaining the real condition of mankind. Countless anomalies puzzled him at every step; but there was none so perfectly inexplicable as the fact, that men, nationally and collectively, boasted of extended commerce, and individually were ashamed of being supposed to have anything to do with it. He saw a class of men whose intelligence, industry and integrity procured wealth for themselves, comfort for their families, and influence for their nation; men engaged in a pursuit which had been the source of everything that really adorned and dignified humanity; and he saw, with astonishment, that these men, instead of challenging respect for their honorable exertions, shrunk from confessing that they belonged to a class which produced improvement to the community. They seemed to believe that they were disgraced, because their intelligence was kept in action, their industry engaged in the development of national resources, and their integrity recognised to the utmost ends of the earth. He saw men of whom the world ought to be proud, who were thoroughly ashamed of themselves—who refused "to stand by their order," though well aware that to their order alone society stands indebted for every advance that civilization has made since the days of the deluge.

There was a species of shame that puzzled the heavenly visitor, but there was a form of pride which completed this perplexity. He had believed, before his arrival on earth, that cut-throats, robbers and plunderers must be universally execrated by their fellow-men; he never dreamed that mortals could ever combine to deify as heroes those by whom they were insulted, injured, and trampled down; but to his inexpressible astonishment, he learned that destruction was deemed a glory, and production a disgrace,—that the management of the chemical agencies by which men were mowed down in thousands was rewarded by the cheers of multitudes, titles from Government, and pensions from Parliament; while the development of agencies which gave support to men in thousands was virulently opposed by ignorant mobs, superciliously disregarded by the Government, and contemptuously sneered at by the Parliament. The angel could not discover why this was; but how it was, required no laboured investigation to discover. Men of trade and commerce, ashamed of their order, had set the example of despising themselves, and had thus supplied sufficient justification for the contempt with which they were regarded by others.

It is a thankless task to set forth the moral dignity of commerce and manufactures; those who least desire the real elevation of their social position to be demonstrated to the world, are to be found among the merchants and manufacturers themselves. There is no earthly use in denying or concealing that traders invoke contempt on trade, that manufacturers implore for disgrace upon their order, and that merchants pray for a brand of shame to be stamped upon commerce. So far as they are individually concerned, they are most probably right: no man was ever ashamed of his order, save the man of whom his order had very ample reason to be ashamed in its turn.

But these men are not genuine exponents of the present feelings of British merchants and manufacturers; there are now in that body men resolved "to stand by their order," men who know the social importance, the moral worth, the national value, and the political weight of the order to which they belong. It is to such we address ourselves; we invite them to examine the claims of their class, and to assert the dignity of their position. Our purpose is to show them the reasons why they should be proud of commerce, and why they should glory in honourable industry. We call upon them to examine the nature of business, and inquire whether it does not afford the best training for what all genuine religion and all true philosophy concur in pointing out as the proper purpose and object of life.

"Life, say the expounders of every creed, is a probation. The circumstances in which we are placed; the events, the scenes of our mortal lot; the bright visions that cheer us, the dark clouds that overshadow us—all these are not an idle show, nor do they exist for themselves alone, nor because they must exist by the fiat of some blind chance; but they have a purpose, and that purpose is expressed in the word probation. Now, if anything deserves to be considered as a part of that probation, it is business. Life, say the wise, is a school. In this school there are lessons— toil is a lesson; trial is a lesson; and business, too, is a lesson. But the end of a lesson is, that something be learned; and the end of business is, that truth, rectitude, virtue, be learned. This is the ultimate design proposed by Heaven, and it is a design which every wise man, engaged in that calling, will propose to himself. It is no extravagance, therefore, but the simple assertion of a truth, to say to a man so engaged, and to say emphatically, 'You have an end to gain beyond success, and that is, the moral rectitude of your own mind.'

"That business is so exquisitely adapted to accomplish that purpose, is another argument with me to prove that such is the intention of its Ordainer, was its design. I can conceive that things might have been ordered otherwise; that human beings might have been formed for industry, and not for traffic. I can conceive man and nature to have been so constituted, that each individual should, by solitary labour, have drawn from the earth his sustenance; and that a vesture, softer, richer, and more graceful than is ever wrought in the looms of our manufacturers, might have been woven upon his body, by the same invisible hands that have thus clothed the beasts of the desert, and the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field, so that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. Then might man have held only the sweet counsel of society with his fellow, and never have been called to engage with him in the strife of business. Then, too, would he have been saved from all the dangers and vices of human traffic; but then, too, would the lofty virtues cultivated in this sphere of life never have had an existence. For business, I repeat, is admirably adapted to form such virtues. It is apt, I know it is said, to corrupt men; but the truth is, it corrupts only those who are willing to be corrupted. An honest man, a man who sincerely desires to attain to a lofty and unbending uprightness,

could scarcely seek a discipline more perfectly fitted to that end than the discipline of trade. For what is trade? It is the constant adjustment of the claims of different parties, a man's self being one of the parties. This competition of rights and interests might invade the solitary study, or the separate tasks of the workshop, or the labours of the silent field, once a day; but it presses upon the merchant and trader continually. Do you say that it presses too hard? Then, I reply, must the sense of rectitude be made the stronger to meet the trial. Every plea of this nature is an argument for strenuous moral effort. Shall I be told that the questions which often arise are very perplexing; that the case to be decided comes, oftentimes, not under a definite rule, but under a general principle, whose very generality is perilous to the conscience? It is indeed, here, perhaps, lies the great peril of business, in the generality of the rule. For conscience does not in most cases definitely say, 'thou shalt do this thing, and thou shalt do that.' It says always, 'thou shalt do right; but what that is, is not always clear. And hence it is that a man may take care to offend against no definite remonstrance of conscience, and that he may be, in the common acceptance, an honest man; and yet that he may be a selfish, exacting and oppressive man—a man who can never recognise the rights and interests of others—who can never see anything but on the side that is favourable to himself—who drowns the voice of his modest neighbour with always and loudly saying, 'Oh! this is right,' and 'that can't be'—a man, in fine, who, although he seldom, perhaps never, offends against any assignable or definite precept of conscience, has swerved altogether from all uprightness and generosity. What then is to be done? A work, I answer, of the most exalting character. A man must do more than to attain to punctilious honesty in his actions; he must train his whole soul, his judgment, his sentiments and affections, to uprightness, candour, and good will.

"In fine, I look upon business as one vast scene of moral action. 'The thousand wheels of commerce,' with all their swift and complicated revolutions, I regard as an immense moral machinery. Meanness and cunning may lurk amidst it, but it was not designed for that degradation. That must be a noble scene of action where conscience is felt to be a law. And it is felt to be the law of business; its very violations prove it such. It is the enthroned sovereign of the plan; disobedience, disloyalty, give attestation to it. Nothing is too holy to connect with it. There is a temple in one of the cities of Europe through which is the very passage to the market-place, and those who pass there often rest their burthens to turn aside and kneel at the altar of prayer. So were it meet that all men should enter upon their daily business. The temple of manum should be the temple of God. The gates of trade should be as the entrance to the sanctuary of conscience. There is an eye of witnessing and searching scrutiny fixed upon every one of its domes. The presence of that all-seeing One, not confined, as some imagine, to the silent Church or the solitary grove—the presence of God, I think it not too solemn to say, is in every counting-room and warehouse of yonder mart, and ought to make it holy ground."

Commerce has been, under the guidance of Providence, the grand civilizer of nations, or rather, it alone has presented that condition of things under which civilization has rapidly advanced; and without which it never has made, and never can make, progress. The spirit of naval and commercial enterprise could alone counterpoise that spirit of barbarism which poets and novelists have dignified with the name of chivalry, but which, in reality, means nothing more than

"That those should take who have the power, And those should keep who can."

"This is 'the good old rule, the simple plan' of government which the advocates of oligarchy and monopoly have advocated in all ages; which has enriched titled robbers at the expense of plundered slaves, and which divided communities, according to the Eastern proverb, into 'kites and pigeons, the eaters and the eaten.' It was commerce alone that broke the despotism of the single tyrant who chastised his subjects with whips, and the still more cruel despotism of oligarchy which chastised its subjects with scorpions. Hence tyranny of every kind, but most of all the tyranny of class ascendancy, has been ever opposed to the progress of commerce. 'Well might the aristocracy of Sparta,' says the lamented Dr. Arnold, 'dread the introduction of foreign manners, and complain that intercourse with foreigners would corrupt their citizens, and seduce them to forsake the institutions of their fathers. Injustice and ignorance must fail, if the light be fairly let in upon them; evil can only be fully enjoyed by those who have never tasted good. The sea deserves to be hated by the old aristocracies, inasmuch as it has been the mightiest instrument in the civilization of mankind. In the depth of winter, when the sky is covered with clouds, and the land presents one cold, blank, lifeless surface of snow, how refreshing it is to the spirits to walk upon the shore and to enjoy the eternal freshness and liveliness of the ocean! Even so, in the deepest winter of the human race, when the earth was but one chilling mass of inactivity, life was stirring in the waters. There began that spirit, whose genial influence has now reached to the land, has broken the chains of winter, and covered the face of the earth with beauty.

How few historians have cared to record the multitudinous blessings for which the world is indebted to commerce. The cradle of Grecian poetry and philosophy was in the commercial cities of Ionia; merchants were the patrons for whom Thales examined the phases of the celestial luminaries, and Homer poured forth his immortal songs; it was for commercial Athens that Æschylus created the drama, that Pericles founded the Parthenon, and that Socrates raised morals to the dignity of a science. But these are among the least of the triumphs of commerce:—

"Liberty has always followed its steps; and with liberty, science and religion have gradually advanced and improved, and never without it. All those kingdoms of Central Asia, and of Europe too, which commerce has never penetrated, have been, and are, despotisms. With its earliest birth on the Mediterranean shore, freedom was born. Phœnicia, the merchants of whose cities, Tyre and Sidon, were accounted princes; the Hebrew commonwealth, which carried on a trade through those parts; the Grecian, Carthaginian and Roman states, were not only the freest, but they were the only free states of antiquity. In the middle ages, commerce broke down in Europe the feudal system raising up in the Hansa Towns, throughout Germany, Sweden and Norway, a body of men who were able to cope with barons and kings, and to wrest from them their free charters and rightful privileges."

And yet of commerce—with all these undeniable claims to human gratitude, reverence and respect,—there are

men who pretend to be, or who really are, ashamed; men who would sacrifice their order for the smile of some titled patron, whose only claim upon their homage is, that

"His ancient but ignoble blood Has run through scoundrels ever since the flood."

We should be tempted to speak of such men with scorn and leathing, were we not forced to weep over the moral prostration which has led men to speak of their own sphere as habitually given over to low aims and pursuits. Would that they could see what true dignity encircles the upright man of business. We should like to see every man of business assert for himself the impregnable position which our author has taken in his name.

"I say that there is no being in the world for whom I feel a higher moral respect and admiration, than for the upright man of business; no, not for the philanthropist, the missionary, or the martyr. I feel that I could more easily be a martyr than a man of that lofty moral uprightness. And let me say yet more distinctly, that it is not for the generous man that I feel this kind of respect—that seems to me a lower quality, a mere impulse, compared with the lofty virtue I speak of. It is not for the man who distributes extensive charities, who bestows insignificant donations. That may be all very well—I speak not to disparage it—I wish there were more of it; and yet it may all consist with a want of the true, lofty, unbending uprightness. That is not the man then, whom I speak; but it is he who stands, amidst all the swaying interests and perilous exigencies of trade, firm, calm, disinterested, and upright. It is the man who can see another man's interests just as clearly as his own. It is the man whose mind his own advantage does not blind or cloud for an instant; who could sit a judge upon a question between himself and his neighbour just as safely as the purest magistrate upon the bench of justice. Ah! how much richer than ermine, how far nobler than the train of magisterial authority, how more awful than the guarded bench of majesty, is that simple, magnanimous, and majestic truth! Yes, it is the man who is true—true to himself, to his neighbour, and to his God—true to the right—true to his conscience—and who feels that the slightest suggestion of that conscience is more to him than the chance of acquiring a hundred estates."

It almost makes a man ashamed of sharing a common nature with his fellows, when he finds a public opinion in the world derogatory to labour; as if the very constitution of nature—as if the very physical and mental powers which the great Creator has bestowed upon our race, did not show it to be the design of Providence that every man should work either with his hand or his head.

"Yes, such is man's task, and such is the world he is placed in. The world of matter is shapeless and void to all man's purposes till he lays upon it the creative hand of labour. And so also is the world of mind. It is as true in mind as it is in matter, that the materials only are given us. Absolute truth, ready made, no more presents itself to us in one department, than finished models of mechanism, ready made, do in the other. Original principles there doubtless are in both; but the result—philosophy, that is to say—in the one case is as far to seek, as art and mechanism are in the other.

"Such, I repeat, is the world, and such is man. The earth he stands upon, and the air he breathes, are, so far as his improvement is concerned, but elements to be wrought by him to certain purposes. If he stood on earth passively and unconsciously, inhaling the dew and sap, and spreading his arms to the light and air, he would be but a tree. If he grew up capable neither of purpose nor of improvement, with no guidance but instinct, and no powers but those of digestion and locomotion, he would be but an animal. But he is more than this: he is a man; he is made to improve; he is made, therefore, to think, to act, to work. Labour is his great function, his peculiar distinction, his privilege. Can he not think so? Can he not see, that from being an animal to eat, and drink, and sleep, to become a worker—to put forth the hand of ingenuity, and to pour his own thought into the worlds of nature, fashioning them into forms of grace and fabrics of convenience, and converting them to purposes of improvement and happiness—can he not see, I repeat, that this is the greatest possible step in privilege? Labour, I say, is man's great function. The earth and the atmosphere are his laboratory. With spade and plough, with mining shafts and furnaces, and forges, with fire and steam—amidst the noise and whirl of swift and bright machinery, and abroad in the silent fields beneath the roofing sky, man was made to be ever working, ever experimenting. And while he, and all his dwellings of care and toil, are borne onward with the circling skies, and the shows of heaven are around him, and their infinite depths image and invite his thought, still, in all the worlds of philosophy, in the universe of intellect, man must be a worker. He is nothing, he can be nothing, he can achieve nothing, fulfil nothing, without working. Not only can he gain no lofty improvement without this; but without it, he can gain no tolerable happiness. So that he who gives himself up to utter idleness, finds it too hard for him; and is obliged, in self-defence, unless he be an idiot, to do something. The miserable victims of idleness and ennui, driven at last from their chosen resort, are compelled to work, to do something; yes, to employ their wretched and worthless lives in—'killing time.' They must hunt down the hours as their prey. Yes, time,—that mere abstraction,—that sinks light as the air upon the eyelids of the busy and the weary, to the idle is an enemy clothed with gigantic armour; and they must kill it, or themselves die. They cannot live in mere idleness; and all the difference between them and others is, that they employ their activity to no useful end. They find, indeed, that the hardest work in the world is to do nothing."

In the name of common sense, in the sacred names of reason, justice and humanity, we not only protest against the stigma which prejudice, ignorance, and corrupt interest have affixed upon honorable industry, but we further demand that nothing else should be respected.

"What is there glorious in the world that is not the product of labour, either of the body or of the mind? What is history but its record? What are the treasures of genius and art but its work? What are cultivated fields but its toil? The busy marts, the rising cities, the enriched empires of the world, what are they but the great treasure-houses of labour? The pyramids of Egypt, the castles and towers and temples of Europe, the buried cities of Mexico, what are they but tracks, all round the world, of the mighty footsteps of labour? Antiquity had not been without it. Without it, there were no memory of the past; without it, there were no hopes for the future.

"Let then labour, the world's great ordinance, take its proper place in the world. Let idleness, too, have the due that it deserves. Honour, I say, be paid wherever it is due. Honour, if you please, to unchallenged indolence—for that which all the world admires hath no doubt some ground for it; honour, then, to undisturbed, unchallenged indolence—for it reposes on treasures that labour some time gained and gathered. It is the effigy of a man, upon a splendid mausoleum—somebody built that mausoleum—somebody put that dead image there. Honour to him that does nothing, and

yet does not starve; he hath his significance still; he is a standing proof that somebody has worked.

"Nay, rather let us say, honour to the worker—to the toiler—to him who produces, and not alone consumes—to him who puts forth his hand to add to the treasure-heap of human comforts, and not alone to take away! Honour to him who goes forth amidst the struggling elements to fight his battle, and shrinks not, with cowardly effeminacy, behind pillows of ease! Honour to the strong muscle and the manly nerve, and the resolute and brave heart! Honour to the sweaty brow and to the toiling brain! Honour to the great and beautiful offices of humanity—to manhood's toil and woman's task—to parental industry, to maternal watching and weariness—to teaching wisdom and patient learning—to the brow of care that presides over the state, and to many-handed labour that toils in the workshops and fields, beneath its sacred and guardian sway."

If the League had performed no other service to the community than teaching the merchants and manufacturers that theirs is an order of which there are many noble spirits ready to avow their membership, it would have well earned the gratitude which a future generation will assuredly bestow upon its exertions. It has improved the social position of every merchant, and trader, and manufacturer, and operative, not merely within the seas of Britain, but within the circuit of the round world. Every man who has joined its ranks has received with his dignity a patent of nobility, issued by his own soul, attested by his own reason, and sanctioned by his own conscience. "My mind to me a kingdom" was the boast of the old poet; and it is truly the boast of every man who thinks for himself, and does not delegate that privilege to other people. For the first time Britain has seen a great association of its wealth, its intelligence, and its working power based on the principle of independent action, and this independent action is an absolute realizing of the royalty of soul of which the poet dreamed.

"It is, doubtless, a very extraordinary state of things. Its distinctive feature is a grand popular movement, slowly propagating itself through all civilized nations—a revolution of ideas, which is elevating the mass of mankind to importance and power; and, in fact, to the eventual government of the world. It is a revolution which goes alike beyond all former examples in history, and principles in philosophy. The education of this age—that mass of sentiment and maxims which it has received from former ages—does not prepare it to understand itself. Though the noblest genius and philosophy of former times have been distinguished by their generous recognition of the claims of humanity; yet they have seldom descended to work out the great problem of human rights. They have shown more admiration of human nature than confidence in it. Their speculations, indeed, have proceeded upon grounds widely different from the present state of facts. When Aristotle discoursed in such discouraging terms on the popular tendencies, he discoursed concerning a people that could not read; that had no newspapers; that were ignorant and brutal, compared with our educated and Christian communities. When Plato reasoned of his ideal republic, his ground was pure hypothesis; his work pure fiction. The philosophy of modern politics has not been written in past times; it cannot be written now; that work, I believe, in its full perfection, must be left to a future age! I do not pretend to say what it will be; the principle of intelligent, Christian freedom may develop results that are out of the range of our present contemplation. But this, I think, is evident, that when the future philosopher and historiographer rises that shall analyze and portray the stupendous revolution that is now passing in the civilized world, he will speak of a revolution having no precedent in history. None was ever so universal, so profound, or so fearful; all former revolutions have been local, occasional, and sanguinary. In former days, when power has been wrested from its despotic possessor, it has been done only by a violent and bloody hand. But now, an influence, silent and irresistible, is rising up from the mass of the people, and is stealing from thrones, and princedoms, and hierarchies, their unjust prerogatives; and, at the same time, as if by some wonder-working magic, is making their incumbents helpless to resist, and even willing to obey. Potentates are learning a new lesson, and so are the people too. Before, revolutions have been violent and bloody, from the very uncertainty whether they should succeed. Now, the people are reposing in calm security upon their undoubted strength. Assurance has made them moderate. Let no one mistake their moderation for apathy, or their quietness for defeat; for they are calm only in proportion as they are determined and sure.

"Such is, undoubtedly, the character of the present era, however we may regard the good or the evil involved in it. To me, I confess, it is far the most momentous and sublime era in the history of the world. The introduction of Christianity and the discovery of printing—the two greatest events on record—are, in fact, now producing, for the first time, on the broad theatre of national fortunes, the very results which we are witnessing. They have given birth, if not to the free principles of modern times, at least to their free action. Like the sun and the moon in heaven, they have penetrated by their influence the great deep of society. The effect produced may well awaken that solemn and even religious emotion in the mind of which a late distinguished writer has spoken. What is now presented to the attention of the world is not, as formerly, kingdoms convulsed, or navies wrecked upon the shore, but that 'tide in the affairs of men,' that slow rising and gradual swelling of the whole ocean of society, which is to bear everything upon its bosom."

We have written of those who are renegades to their order more in sorrow than in anger; for we feel deeply that the mercantile community of England has too long shown itself insensible of the great moral responsibility which the circumstances of its position involves; and the consequence has been, that its political influence has been least when its elements of political strength were greatest.—*The London League.*

**TAKING THE PLEDGE.**—Some ideas have occurred to me on the subject of signing the pledge, that I do not recollect ever to have heard bronched at any of our Temperance meetings. They are in answer to the stale and often repeated objections urged against taking the pledge,—that a man in so doing, signs away his liberty. Now, though I do not mean to admit that an individual, in taking the temperance pledge, parts with the smallest fraction of his natural liberty, yet, for the sake of argument, we will suppose that he does.—What then? It is the chief characteristic of a civilized community, and in fact, the very means by which man emerges from savage into civilized life, that each individual gives up a small portion of his natural liberty for the good of the whole community. It is by this means that we are enabled to have wholesome laws and regulations, and officers to enforce them. It is by this means that the fee simple to real estate is obtained, for it is the opinion of the best legal commentators, that a man has no natural right to designate the individual who shall occupy a farm after his death, simply