

which we have an emblem—a faint emblem only—in the sun that illumines, and warns so many worlds. Christianity reveals to me this moral perfection of man, as the great purpose of God.

When I look into man's nature, I see that moral perfection is his only true and enduring good; and consequently the promise of this must be the highest truth which any religion can contain. The loftiest endowment of our nature is the moral power—the power of perceiving and practising virtue, of discerning and seeking goodness. . . .

At this period, we see a mighty movement of the civilized world. Thrones are tottering, and the firmest establishments of former ages seem about to be swept away by the torrent of revolution. In this movement I rejoice, though not without trembling joy. But I rejoice, only because I look at it in the light of the great truth which I have this day aimed to enforce; because I see, as I think, in the revolutionary spirit of our times, the promise of a freer and higher action of the human mind—the pledge of a state of society more fit to perfect human beings. I regard the present state of the world in this moral light altogether. The despotisms, which are to be prostrated, seem to be evils, chiefly as they have enslaved men's faculties, as they have bowed and weighed down the soul. The liberty, after which men aspire, is to prove a good only so far as it shall give force and enlargement to the mind; only so far as it shall conspire with Christianity in advancing human nature. Men will gain little by escaping outward despotism, if the soul continues enthralled. Men must be subjected to some law; and unless the law in their own breasts, the law of God, of duty, of perfection, be adopted by their free choice as the supreme rule, they will fall under the tyranny of selfish passion, which will bow their necks for an outward yoke.

I have hope in the present struggle of the world, because it seems to me more spiritual, more moral, in its origin and tendencies, than any which have preceded it. It differs much from the revolts of former times, when an oppressed populace or peasantry broke forth into frantic opposition to government, under the goading pressure of famine and misery. Men are now moved, not merely by physical wants and sufferings, but by ideas, by principles, by the conception of a better state of society, under which the rights of human nature will be recognized, and greater justice be done to the mind in all classes of the community. There is then an element—spiritual, moral, and tending towards perfection—in the present movement; and this is my great hope. When I see, however, the tremendous strength of unsubdued passions, which mix with and often overpower this conception of a better order of society; when I consider the success with which the selfish, crafty, and ambitious have turned to their own purposes the generous enthusiasm of the people; when I consider the darkness which hangs over the nations, the rashness with which they have rushed into infidelity and irreligion as the only refuge from priestcraft and superstition; and when I consider how hard it is for men, in seasons of tumult and feverish excitement, to listen to the mild voice of wisdom teaching that moral perfection alone constitutes glory and happiness,—I fear. I fear not for the final results; not for the ultimate triumphs of truth, right, virtue, piety; not for the gradual melioration of men's lot but for those nearer results, those immediate effects, which the men of this generation are to witness and to feel.

## 2. Dorothea Dix Succors the Insane (1843)

*In 1840 there were only eight insane asylums in the twenty-six states. The overflow, regarded as perverse, were imprisoned or chained in poorhouses, jails, and houses of correction. Schoolteacher Dorothea Dix—a frail, soft-spoken spinster from New England who lived to be eighty-five despite incipient tuberculosis—almost single-handedly wrought a revolution. Filled with infinite compassion for these outcasts, she journeyed thousands of wearisome miles to investigate conditions and to appeal to state legislatures. Despite the powerful prejudice against women who were outspoken in public, she succeeded in securing modern facilities with trained attendants. Her horrifying report to the Massachusetts legislature is a classic. In the following excerpt, where does she lay the blame for the existing conditions?*

I must confine myself to few examples, but am ready to furnish other and more complete details, if required. If my pictures are displeasing, coarse, and severe, my subjects, it must be recollected, offer no tranquilly, refined, or composing features. The condition of human beings, reduced to the extreme states of degradation and misery, cannot be exhibited in softened language; or adorn a polished page.

I proceed, gentlemen, briefly to call your attention to the present state of insane persons confined within this Commonwealth, in cages, closets, cellars, stalls, pens! Chained, naked, beaten with rods, and lashed into obedience!

As I state cold, severe facts, I feel obliged to refer to persons, and definitely to indicate localities. But it is upon my subject, not upon localities or individuals, I desire to fix attention. And I would speak as kindly as possible of all wardens, keepers, and other responsible officers, believing that most of these have erred not through hardness of heart and willful cruelty so much as want of skill and knowledge, and want of consideration.

Familiarity with suffering, it is said, blunts the sensibilities, and where neglect once finds a footing, other injuries are multiplied. This is not all, for it may justly and strongly be added that, from the deficiency of adequate means to meet the wants of these cases, it has been an absolute impossibility to do justice to this matter. Prisons are not constructed in view of being converted into county hospitals, and almshouses are not founded as receptacles for the insane. And yet, in the face of justice and common sense, wardens are by law compelled to receive, and the masters of almshouses not to refuse, insane and idiotic subjects in all stages of mental disease and privation. It is the Commonwealth, not its integral parts, that is accountable for most of the abuses which have lately existed and do still exist. I repeat it, it is defective legislation which perpetuates and multiplies these abuses. . . .

Danvers, November. Visited the almshouse. A large building, much out of repair. Understand a new one is in contemplation. Here are fifty-six to sixty inmates, one idiotic, three insane, one of the latter in close confinement at all times.

Long before reaching the house, wild shouts, snatches of rude songs, imprecations and obscene language, fell upon the ear, proceeding from the occupant of a low building, rather remote from the principal building to which my course was directed. Found the mistress, and was conducted to the place which was called the

home" of the forlorn maniac, a young woman, exhibiting a condition of neglect and misery blotting out the faintest idea of comfort, and outraging every sentiment of decency. She had been, I learned, "a respectable person, industrious and worthy. Disappointments and trials shook her mind, and, finally, laid prostrate reason and self-control. She became a maniac for life. She had been at Worcester Hospital for a considerable time, and had been returned as incurable." The mistress told me she understood that, "while there, she was comfortable and decent."

Alas, what a change was here exhibited! She had passed from one degree of violence to another, in swift progress. There she stood, clinging to or beating upon the bars of her caged apartment, the contracted size of which afforded space only for increasing accumulations of filth, a foul spectacle. There she stood with naked arms and disheveled hair, the unwashed frame invested with fragments of unclean garments, the air so extremely offensive though ventilation was afforded on all sides save one, that it was not possible to remain beyond a few moments without retreating for recovery to the outward air. Irritation of body, produced by utter filth and exposing her to the horrid process of tearing off her skin by inches. Her face, neck, and person were thus disfigured to hideousness. She held up a fragment just rent off, to my exclamation of horror, the mistress replied: "Oh, we can't help it. Half the stunts of some times. We can do nothing with her; and it makes no difference what she eats for she consumes her own filth as readily as the food which is brought her."

The conviction is continually deepened that hospitals are the only places where insane persons can be at once humanely and properly controlled. Poorhouses converted into madhouses cease to effect the purposes for which they were established, and instead of being asylums for the aged, the homeless, and the friendless and places of refuge for orphaned or neglected childhood, are transformed into perpetual bedlams. . . .

Injustice is also done to the convicts. It is certainly very wrong that they should be doomed day after day and night after night to listen to the ravings of madmen and madwomen. This is a kind of punishment that is not recognized by our statutes, and is what the criminal ought not to be called upon to undergo. The confinement of the criminal and of the insane in the same building is subversive of the good order and discipline which should be observed in every well-regulated prison.

Gentlemen, I commit to you this sacred cause. Your action upon this subject will affect the present and future condition of hundreds and of thousands.

### 3. T. S. Arthur's Ten Nights in a Barroom (1854)

*T. S. Arthur, an ill-educated New Yorker, became the moralistic author of several books and countless articles. His lurid Ten Nights in a Barroom was the Uncle Tom's Cabin of the temperance crusade, and second only to Uncle Tom's Cabin as the best seller of the 1850s. Endorsed by the clergy, it was put on the stage for an incredible time. Although the author was a foe of saloons, he was not a teetotaler, and he consistently advocated temperance by education rather than prohibition by legislation. In his famous novel, Simon Slater's tavern ("Sickie and Sheaf") is portrayed as the ruination*

*T. S. Arthur, "Night the Sixth," Ten Nights in a Barroom (Boston: L. P. Crown, 1854).*

*of quiet Cedarville. After numerous heart-tugging tragedies, the climax comes when the drunken tavern owner is murdered with a brandy bottle by his drunken son. Earlier in the book, the following conversation takes place. Enumerate and assess the arguments on both sides, and evaluate this interchange as propaganda in the battle against the bottle.*

The man, who had until now been sitting quietly in a chair, started up, exclaiming as he did so—

"Merciful heavens! I never dreamed of this! Whose sons are safer?"

"No man's," was the answer of the gentleman in whose office we were sitting; "no man's—while there are such open doors to ruin as you may find at the 'Sickie and Sheaf.' Did not you vote the anti-temperance ticket at the last election?"

"I did," was the answer, "and from principle."

"On what were your principles based?" was inquired.

"On the broad foundations of civil liberty."

"The liberty to do good or evil, just as the individual may choose?"

"I would not like to say that. There are certain evils against which there can be no legislation that would not do harm. No civil power in this country has the right to say what a citizen shall eat or drink."

"But may not the people, in any community, pass laws, through their delegated lawmakers, restraining evil-minded persons from injuring the common good?"

"Oh, certainly—certainly."

"And are you prepared to affirm that a drinking shop, where young men are corrupted—*ay*, destroyed, body and soul—does not work an injury to the common good?"

"Ah! but there must be houses of public entertainment."

"No one denies this. But can that be a really Christian community which provides for the moral debasement of strangers, at the same time that it entertains them? Is it necessary that, in giving rest and entertainment to the traveler, we also lead him into temptation?"

"Yes—but—but—it is going too far to legislate on what we are to eat and drink. It is opening too wide a door for fanatical oppression. We must inculcate temperance as a right principle. We must teach our children the evils of intemperance, and send them out into the world as practical teachers of order, virtue, and sobriety. If we do this, the reform becomes radical, and in a few years there will be no barrooms, for none will crave the fiery poison."

"Of little value, my friend, will be, in far too many cases, your precepts, if temptation invites our sons at almost every step of their way through life. Thousands have fallen, and thousands are now tottering, soon to fall. Your sons are not safe, nor are mine. We cannot tell the day nor the hour when they may weakly yield to the solicitation of some companion, and enter the wide-open door of ruin. . . . Sir! while you hold back from the work of staying the flood that is desolating our fairest homes, the black waters are approaching your own doors."

There was a startling emphasis in the tones with which this last sentence was uttered, and I did not wonder at the look of anxious alarm that it called to the face of him whose feats it was meant to excite.

"What do you mean, sir?" was inquired.