

Influence of the Middle Man in the formation of social Casts in America

Maria Mitchell in her "Reminiscences of the Herschels" says, Lady Herschel (Wife of Sir John Herschel) told me that by traveling "second class" she sometimes made valuable acquaintances; she talked with intelligent farmers and learned to know something of a class whom she could never meet socially. I pitied in England the isolation of rank, the narrow circle of class, which becomes narrower and narrower all the way from the peasant to the queen, the peasant having the largest social circle, and the queen the smallest. Again she says, "The eldest daughter of Sir John had read "Uncle Louis Cubin" and she asked me if it was a true picture

of American life - if it were possible for
boys and girls to be educated together; if a
girl stood a public examination in America
if a young lady really received guests herself
etc. ⁹⁹

This was written some months ago but refers
to a period ^{or thirty} twenty five years back, but
the time is not important for the same con-
ditions of the social atmosphere continue,
Modified in ^{some minor} details perhaps by the example
of free America. While the social customs in
America are growing toward those of
Europe being modified in detail by the pre-
vailing differences of conditions, and
social age

We might inquire into the influences
which are potent factors in the formation
of social custom but that in its entirety would
require us to write a history of the human

family from the earliest historical times
When social cast, closely drawn, is found
in young communities it has been trans-
planted from an older community from
which its people sprang, or from race dis-
tinction. The first instinct of the ~~human~~
man is favorable to social equality and
all departures from it are artificial. In the
beginning they spring from certain natural
peculiarities of mind, ^{or physical vigor} which enables
certain individuals to control the actions
of his associates to such an extent that
he regards himself as superior, and prefers
~~those who show similar qualities as his asso-~~
~~ciates;~~ and the admission of these qualities
by those less gifted in these directions. Such
a person prefers those who show similar
qualities as his associates. This leads
to the formation of a phase of social

class or caste, which, while artificial,
is founded upon natural principles and
is inevitable. Therefore social equality
cannot exist, - in the most strict meaning
of the term, because men are not equal
in mental ^{and physical} qualities. These distinctions
are, however, purely personal and die with
the person possessing them unless his off-
spring actually shows ~~the same~~ similar
personal aptitudes. When, in the course
of the development of communities,
such distinctions are perpetuated by
entailment, ^{or are created by law,} they become in the highest-
degree artificial. This is the condition of
things of which Lady Hershel complains
and which she tries, in some degree, to avoid
by ~~traveling~~ ^{traveling} second class.

In America we have not this form of
artificial distinction or class rank, but

a wholly different form is growing upon us
lead on by perfectly natural mental traits
treading in artificially produced paths which
lead to ~~an intensely artificial~~ product as
artificial which, if not so entirely artificial,
in its principal personages,
is likely to develop greater intensity than its
European cousin, an aristocracy
of wealth.

But my object in writing this paper is
not to discuss all of the primary causes which
lead up to the formation of social castes
but rather to call attention to one of them, which
is in a certain sense new and the ultimate
~~effect~~^{results} of which cannot now be much more
than guessed at though its effects are already
felt far and wide, I allude to the Middle
Man in the business transactions of this
country. This specimen of the genus homo
is now almost omnipresent and is entering

as a great wedge between the producer and the consumer mauled in ruthlessly and persistently by the thirst for dollars, that has taken possession of our people and refuses to be satisfied, Open in the times of the feudal system when class distinctions were sharp and decisive, ~~even~~ the superior class was brought in the most direct contact with the inferior and knew intimately their worthlessness and worth. The consumer knew personally the men who were his producers. The middle man of the present threatens to estrange the producer and consumer by separating the one from the other, by destroying that social well being which arises from mutual acquaintance, ^{ships} ~~which~~ resulting from contact in trade.