

Human Nature Analyzed By Doorman Philosopher



This is how Thomas Nast, popular 19th century cartoonist, pictured people with too much money. This first appeared in Harper's Weekly, October 21, 1871.

Editor's Note

Here is the second and concluding article by a hotel doorman employed in a fashionable hotel in the West, giving his views on what he really thinks of the people who pass in and out of the great swinging doors at which he presides. Did you ever stop to wonder about what the hotel doorman thinks of you? Perhaps you may say, "Who cares?" Nevertheless, if the thoughts of the doorman could be transmitted to you rather than his courteous words, there would be few who would not squirm. See if you can recognize yourself in his descriptions.

PART II

By a Hotel Doorman

AFTERNOON teas and the cocktail hour bring the supposedly "elite". If, as I call for Mrs. Blue Blood's car as she leaves and fail to get the right accent on the name, she reminds me of my error with a scowl that chills the blood and pronounces it correctly in a voice stinging with sarcasm. I am terribly sorry and say as much and no more. It is my mistake and perhaps one that I will realize most the first of the month when she usually contributes her gratitude for service.

Mrs. Silence and her equally silent sister, who have never acknowledged any form of salutation that I might offer, nor let their deep-lined faces crack with a smile in all the time I've served them, comment upon the weather and ask if I am dressed warmly enough.

I am shocked beyond words for a moment at their affable inquiry, then stutter an affirmative answer. Joy creeps into my heart at once—I have tried for a long time to warm their icy dispositions with all the energy I possess. My patience has at last been rewarded. I hitch my shoulders back another notch and stretch the brass buttons on my coat to the snapping-off point.

Another lady who has always been very sweet to me but most contemptuous to others is escorted through the door by a bell boy. Her car is waiting and I go to her assistance. She gives me a smile and a pleasant word in return for my salutation and accepts my offered arm. We strut to her car like a king and queen about to ascend our throne. Someone rushes past us and her ill temper comes to life.

"They should be put on the wrack," she berates. "Thoughtless scum, always in a hurry and going no place. I don't know what is coming to this world with the kind of people we have in it."

"Or worse," I answer her first statement. "You are too kind."

As I wrap the robe about her she pats my arm and tells me I am a very nice young man. I thank her as my smile turns into a silly grin.

A STRANGE car with a strange passenger hesitates. A stately lady peers at me through her lorgnette as I open the door.

"What time is the tea over," she asks through a thin slit of a mouth.

We have five different teas on this particular afternoon, being given by different patrons. I make the lady acquainted with that fact, ask which tea she refers to, and say that I will gladly seek the information that she wishes.

"Silly," she expostulates, arching her pencilled eye brows and closes the door with a bang.

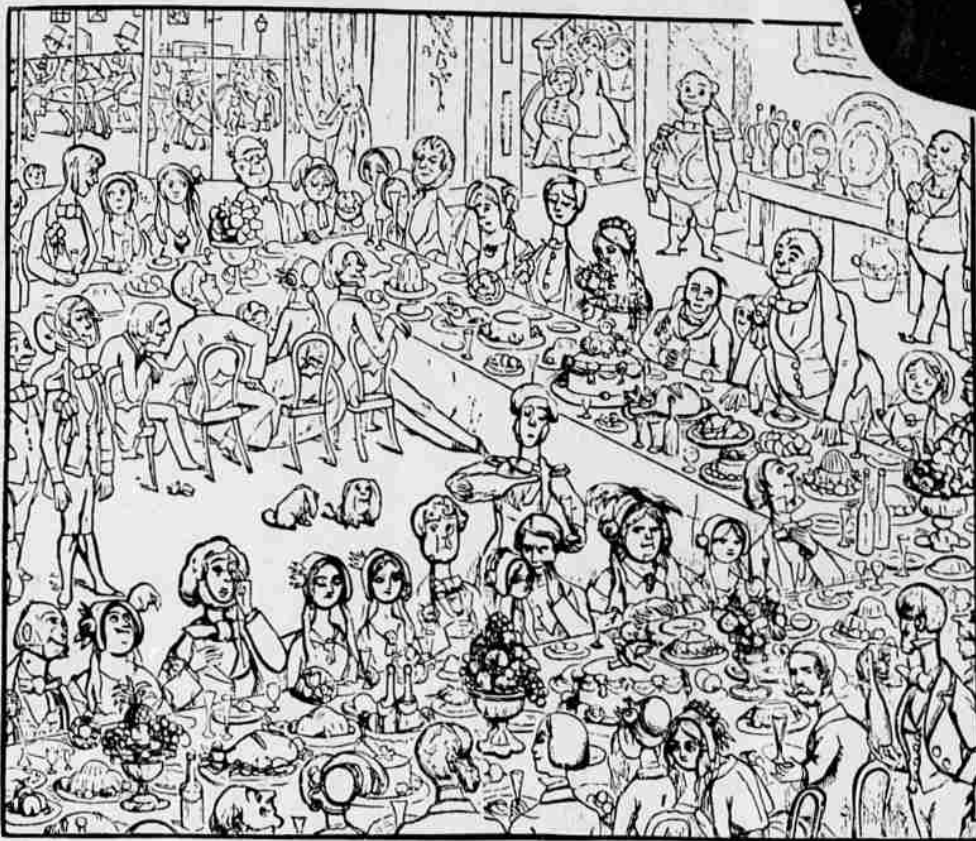
I wonder if she is condemning me, or making a confession.

A huge Packard draws to the curb across the street. A tall skeleton-like chauffeur with watery eyes salutes me. My heart races with the anticipation of serving the kindest person I have ever known.

I turn an eye upon the swinging door, anxious for her appearance. Here she comes; tottering with halted steps, like a child learning to walk, between a nurse and a companion. I rush to her assistance. The companion steps aside; I take her small bony hand in mine and feel that my afternoon salutation is being addressed to a saint. She laughs and speaks of the security she feels when she hears my voice and feels my strong young hand about hers. She jests of her helplessness as we near the curb and asks God to return her eyesight that she might see our faces.

HER voice, soothing as an angel's, rings with sincerity and makes the day worth while. I feel a wadded bill, that her guardians know nothing about, pressed against my palm as I relinquish her hand to that of her chauffeur. We bundle her in robes and blankets. Her body

*Many Strange Peoples Roam The Earth
But None Stranger Than Those Met
By The Hotel Doorman Of A Large
Hotel On The West Coast. Rich
Man, Poor Man, Beggar Man,
Thief—They Are All Here*



is well past eighty but her mind remains young. She parries our remarks with affable good humor and never a whimper.

Another car at the curb breaks the chain of my thought. I step lively and open the door. A lady of youthful appearance unlatches her staid expression and pokes her head out of the collar of her furs like a turtle from its shell.

"Tell The Lady Blank that Mrs. So and So is waiting," she demands.

"Lady Blank?" I repeat to be sure of the name.

"The Lady Blank," she returns haughtily, emphasizing the "the" as a trap drummer portraying the sound effect of a thunderstorm.

I call the operator and after five minutes of waiting locate the lady in question and give her the message. She doesn't waste her breath or energy in acknowledging my statement. The phone just clicks in my ear. To tell Mrs. So and So that The Lady Blank has made no statement as to when she would be down would hardly be the good diplomacy I always try to extend. So I say she will be down shortly and trust to God for developments.

"Well it sure took you long enough to get my message through." She snapped and ordered her driver to pull ahead out of the loading zone.

THREE minutes pass and The Lady has not appeared. Mrs. So and So's driver approaches, shaking his head in disgust.

"My lady would like to see you," he states. "Unreasonable creature, born that way."

As I approach her car she turns and glares at me through the rear window. Her face is not pleasant. It looks like a thunder cloud and I expect lightning to strike any minute.

"I have been waiting 15 minutes," she begins. "The Lady Blank is always punctual and should have been waiting. I can see no reason for all this waiting unless you have made some imbecilic error in the delivery of the message in the first place. Now will you see if you can deliver my message this time and do it correctly?" she ends vehemently.

I rub the dead-pan expression from my face with a half frown and half smile, as I promise to do so.

Approaching the phone for the second time, I hope chance has intervened and that The Lady will make a hurried appearance. For she has a disposition and as much reasoning ability when bothered by a servant as a pole cat. When something annoys her she spews over like a volcano in full eruption with the public be damned. So far I have missed that searing ire which has all but withered the hearts of men more courageous than I.

I ALSO know that The Lady is never punctual or on time. And should I phone her again and find her she will blame me and not the lady that calls for her. I spar for time by holding the receiver hook at the non-contact position, while carrying on an imaginary conversation. Then I heave a sigh that makes the side walls of the canopied entrance belly out like the main sails on a wind jammer. The Lady has appeared smilingly. She offers many profound apologies for being late. Mrs. So and So bubbles over with pleasantries and says she has been waiting but a moment.

A youngish man with a pimply face and a decided accent drives to the curb. I ask him if I might call some one for him, since he sits and glares at me.

"No I'll just wait," he snaps.

Other cars have arrived behind him bearing impatient occupants. A short blast of the horn on the car directly behind him is a courteous request for him to move on. He ignores it.

"I'm sorry, my boy, but you will have to move ahead so these waiting behind you can get up to the curb," I say.

HE STARES at me for a moment and I see his chin quiver with emotion.

"I demand an apology," he finally lisps. "I am not your boy. My father was a gentleman."

My temples throb with rage. I have erred in my courtesy, though unintentionally. I feel as empty inside as a gourd. My fingers twitch. My shoulders hunch up as though I were about to leap. Could I but dare to drag this throwback from medieval ages to the curb and slap some decency into his egotistical and contemptuous mind. No, that is not the proper thing to do. I must raise myself above that. I swallow that thing we call pride and apologize, but add that I owe my own children an apology as well. He is satisfied for the moment and with the blare of horns behind him moves out into the street.

A husky little chauffeur with a nose like a pelican has been listening to our conversation. He doesn't understand how I let him speak as he did. But helps me explain to those he knows what caused the delay as I am busy once more opening doors and trying to be pleasant. At last traffic becomes normal and I hope to have time to cool off before something else happens to add fuel to my boiling blood. But I have not finished with my friend as I had hoped. My final remark had at last penetrated his finer feelings and he returns like a march wind.

"Do you mean to insinuate your children, the children of a doorman, are my equal?" he splutters and grasps my arm.

I shake my head with disgust. His rage is pathetic and comical.

"No. Better than you, you louse," my chauffeur friend intercedes, taking him by the shoulder and swinging him about. "Now beat it before a wall falls on you and don't come back. This fellow can't smack you, he is on duty, and if he did it would be his job. But I can smack you—I don't work here. Now get going." He gives the hapless youth a shove down the sidewalk that spins him like a top. He does not return, but I wonder if any one in his family possesses a share of stock in our institution and if so how much longer I will be doorman.

MRS. Short-Of-Change arrives in a cab. Will I pay the fare and give the driver a dime, she asks.

"Certainly," I return.

"And I'll pay you tomorrow," she adds as I pay the bill and she walks away.

I wonder if tomorrow will ever come. This is the third time in less than a month that I have paid her cab fare with a promise of her seeing me tomorrow. Perhaps she will see me the first of the month! If not, it's charged to profit and loss.

The afternoon has worn itself into early evening. The cocktail hour has arrived. A dizzy crowd of dissipationists has awakened from its daily slumber and started the rounds of cocktail lounges on a breakfast of alkali seltzer and a stiff drink for a bracer. Some are already inebriated—others on their way. Some bewail their headaches, others frown with remorse and the bitter taste of last night indulgence which they



The revelations of this hotel doorman make interesting reading, whether he has pictured you or somebody else. Good and bad, they all come under his scrutiny.

This nineteenth century cartoon, drawn by Richard Doyle, aptly emphasizes the story of the hotel doorman.

This was first published in 1849 and called "Manners and Customs of Ye Englyshe in 1849", subtitled, "A Weddyng Breakfast." Note the bored expression on some of the guests.

hope to drown or wash away over cocktail glasses or the numerous other concoctions meant to cheer.

A YOUNG man, his deaf mother and his lady friend halt on the steps. He is damning his mother and wishing she were dead because she interferes with his pleasure.

"Damned old fool won't stay home, always in the road," he finishes.

"Keep quiet. You are out in public now and the doorman is getting an ear full," his lady friend interrupts. "You should be ashamed to talk so."

"To hell with the public and the doorman! He's a dummy or he wouldn't be one," he answers spitefully. "I'm mad."

I am getting slightly angry, too. I've swallowed a lot, today. I'd like to paste him one on the chin, but I contain myself.

Another car draws my attention. Mr. Takem lights on the curb with a beaming smile. He has a sucker in tow and is spending a few dollars of someone else getting the lamb ready for market. He gives me a slap on the back and a slight wink.

"Have you seen Mr. Get It, this evening," he asks.

"Indeed," I answer. "He went in just a few moments ago. Two other gentlemen with him."

"Thanks," he answers, and slips me a half dollar. He and the dumb looking individual enter the hotel. The stage is set. A sucker, looking for easy money, is being taken to the cleaners. I wonder if it is a salt mine on top of Pike's peak, or a gold mine in the middle of the Atlantic ocean or just some loaded dice.

A LADY, very young and very beautiful, appears at the curb. Her ermine coat glistens in the lights from the doorway, countless jewels on her fingers flash as she draws the collar of her coat higher about her neck.

"She's a movie star," some one whispers as I help her in a waiting limousine.

"Sure is. But who? I know I've seen her on the screen but can't place her," someone answers.

The fact remains she was a telephone operator

until she became the mistress of a man twice her age.

Another woman, old and flabby of face, with runs in her stockings and a thread-bare coat drawn about her stooped shoulders, shuffles down the sidewalk shivering in the cold.

"Pity that poor soul," some stranger states. "Quite a contrast. Youth, beauty and wealth rides away in the luxury of a limousine. Ugliness, old age and poverty creeps down the street."

I have to smile and turn away. This poverty stricken soul could wreck half a dozen industries with her wealth any day in the week. Strong men have feared to tread where she has flown and conquered.

Another cab arrives and I open the door while a young man and his lady emerge. He is labeled dynamite like a box of explosives. And you can read it a block away. He argues about the cab fare and the service. He has but a five dollar bill, and the driver can't break that. The lady pays the fare. He suffers from egotism in its worst form, which his lady mistakes for initiative. They have had a drink already, and she smears lipstick over his mouth after paying the bill. He will awake tomorrow proud of this evening's adventure and return his rented dress suit. Perhaps by the time his whiskers really begin to grow he will have learned to be a gentleman.

NOT all of the pests are sprouting their first whiskers, or blushing through a dime store make-up. Some of them are tottering towards their graves, in second childhood and others just seem to carry on through life from infancy to death that way.

My relief has arrived, so I will change from my monkey suit to street clothes. My wife is waiting for me, and perhaps we'll stop somewhere on the way home, have a drink or two and act like monkeys. Why not? We, too, are human!