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LITERATURE AND MODERN PREACHING.*

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The history of literature shows that the man of letters is under greater obligation to the preacher than the preacher to the man of letters. Literature has often found high inspiration in the utterances of the prophet and some of its most charming scenes and fadeless memories in connection with the village parson. The present discussion is not, however, immediately concerned with that phase of the relation of the preacher and literature, interesting and alluring though it may be. The questions to be considered now are these: What is the potential value of modern literature to modern preaching? May the present-day preacher find in nineteenth and twentieth century literature some sort of heightened impulse, some direct enlightenment, some definite moral and spiritual help towards instructing men, towards appealing to men's deeper emotions and wills—in short, towards an effectual presentation, in the pulpit and out of the pulpit, of the way of salvation?

There are two or three fundamental matters which ought to be considered briefly, before an answer to these questions is attempted. One is the essential difference between the overlapping realms of Morality and Religion, my first lecture having had to do with Literature and the Moral Law or central principle of right conduct. Another is the effect on literature of certain great historic revivals from the Reformation to the nineteenth century. Still another, as immediately introductory to the present relation between literature and preaching, is a layman's conception of the general nature of modern preaching.

First, then, what is the essential difference between Morality and Religion? The point of view is different. In religion the

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world is looked at from the point of view of the all-perfect one, God; in morality, on the other hand, the world is looked at from the point of view of the imperfect one, Man. Professor George Herbert Palmer, in his book "The Field of Ethics", illustrates this difference strikingly, and I quote a paragraph or two:

"The points of difference [between Religion and Morality] come out most obviously when we set a great religious cry side by side with a great moral one; and by a cry I mean the utterance of a distressed and aspiring soul yearning for moral or religious power. Take, for example, the cry of the Psalmist, 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned!' and the cry of Wordsworth in the 'Ode to Duty', 'Oh, let my weakness have an end!' The two refer to the same matter. Each person feels his inspiration. Each mourns a departure from righteousness. In both cases the finite person, perceiving his imperfection, seeks refuge in the perfect one. To the mind of the Psalmist the horror of his sin consists in this, that he—the little imperfect creature—has attempted a blow against the all-perfect One. And the sin is wrought against Him. That is the shocking thing, that he has raised his imperfect hand against perfection. Plainly there is nothing of this in the cry of Wordsworth. On the contrary, he is conceiving of himself as so important as to require additional strength. 'O, let *my* weakness have an end!' The being in whom he is specially interested is himself, the imperfect one, the finite. He starts from his own side. His view is manward; the religious view is Godward. There is, accordingly, a sharp contrast, while each still acknowledges the same two elements essentially conjoined. But the conjunction is reckoned of consequence by the religious mind because of the Most High; by the moral mind, because of us struggling, needy, imperfect, finite creatures. And this contrast is fundamental. Everywhere the religious soul seeks after God as all in all. 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him?' To lose ourselves in Him, to abolish separation, this has been the aspiration of religion in every age and under every type of religious belief."

To this illuminating exposition of Professor Palmer I would add a few words. Among the multitudinous gifts of Christian-

ity to men, it seems to me that so far as the individual is concerned there are four priceless contributions. In the first place, to become a Christian is to have a new experience. Life is rich in proportion to the depth of one's experiences. We love to listen to the man who has entered widely into the experiences of life's joys or sorrows, who has been a keen observer of men and movements, who has a touch of refreshing idealism about his talk because, as Keats expressed it,

"Much has he traveled in the realms of gold
And many godly kingdoms has he seen."

And, indeed, a man has no right to speak authoritatively unless he speaks out of his own experience. We do not want quotations, we want personal sentiments hot from the brain that thinks and the heart that beats in tune with real life. We want to hear the man whose thinking has the rhythm of personality, who by his actions makes "beauty" rhyme with "duty". Only thus can he speak with authority and escape the warmed-over platitudes of the scribes and Pharisees. One difference, then, between Religion and Morality is, that the religious man speaks out of a new heart, a heart transformed by a great illuminating personal experience. It is henceforth the mystic bond that binds into one purpose high and aspiring souls.

Again, to become a Christian is to have a new motive, and that motive is expressed in the words, "For Christ's sake". I take that to be the central difference between Religion and Morality. That, indeed, is about the gist of the passage I have reproduced from Dr. Palmer. "Not my will, but thine," is the cry of the religious heart.

Another gift of Christianity to the individual is a new principle of growth. We grow by giving, not by gaining. We win by losing. We grow not by outward accretion, but by inward transformation from glory to glory. It is not a question of how much, but a question of what sort. The texture of the brain of the highly civilized man is finer, more varied, than that of the savage: the texture, as it were, of the Christian man's soul

grows finer, more varied, more responsive. His heart is a harp of a thousand strings played upon by the supreme Melodist, and his face reflects a light that never was on sea or land. Christianity reveals a new principle of growth.

Furthermore, Christianity, because it gives a new experience, a new motive, a new principle of growth, is the great steadier of the human will. The secret of the successful life lies very largely in the steady will, in the ability to say, "This one thing I do"; in the power, which we call a gift of the supremest genius, as well as of the highest saintship, to endorse as seeing him who is invisible. The essence of Religion is found in the submission of the human will to the divine will; whereas the teaching of the great moralists of the world has been rather towards the deification of the human will. The two conceptions mingle in the teachings of the mystics, from Plato to Emerson, and the mystics are truer interpreters of the religious spirit than are the strict moralists. The religious idea is voiced in the familiar lines of Tennyson:

"Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine."

These, then, in brief are, as I conceive it, the fundamental differences between Religion and Morality. Let us next consider for a moment the effect on literature of certain popular religious revivals in the last few hundred years as a help towards estimating the relation between modern literature and modern preaching; for we must remember that modern conditions cannot be understood without a glance at least at the past.

In general, it may be said that the influence of conspicuous religious movements upon English Literature has been to bring home to men the thought of the other world, "to check the spirit of selfishness and self-indulgence by enforcing anew the claim of religion" upon practical life. Out of the agitation attendant upon the Reformation in the sixteenth century came the English Bible, the supreme model of popular prose in our literature. The worldly spirit of the Renaissance was consecrated through the ardent spiritual impulses of the Reformation

as manifested upon the common people. The Reformation helped to democratize literature by bringing it nearer to the popular heart and away from the sterile fancies of the highly artificialized society of the palace and the castle. The stern realism of Foxe's "Book of Martyrs"—from which, by the way, some of us have suffered much extremity in our growth—aroused the religious sensibilities of the nation and prepared the way for the Puritans.

Puritanism—a movement from within to purify the English Church—was not the blight upon literature which some writers would have us believe. The truth is, the literature of the seventeenth century had run riot with its spirit of licentious nihilism, and the Puritan was a mighty man in helping to bring the Cavalier to his senses, sometimes by knocking him hard on the head with his moral big stick, for the Puritan was a firm believer in the efficacy of external remedies divinely entrusted to him, and his perseverance was more rigorous than the perseverance of most saints. In this age of Puritanism theology became the passion of the people and in stiffening the spiritual backbone of the people it also solemnized and strengthened the ideals of literature. Puritanism brought back into letters a purified individualism; it made of John Milton a sublime defender of Liberty; it produced great preachers like Jeremy Taylor, whose sermons are types of stately prose; and, above all, it gave opportunity for the humble tinker of Bedford jail to write one of the great spiritual autobiographies of the race. Through such books as this Literature experiences from time to time a moral and religious regeneration. The last great echo of Puritanism in that century was heard in 1689, when the Rev. Jeremy Collier gave to the world his stinging rebuke of the licentiousness of the English stage, which wonderfully purified the dramatic atmosphere.

Scant justice has as yet been done the Wesleyan Revival of the eighteenth century in regard to its influence on Literature. It certainly helped to accentuate the claims of lowly life to recognition in poetry and the novel, and was an element in the Romantic and Realistic triumph of the early nineteenth century. It helped to socialize literature, to bring men back

from the arid plains of conventional life to the blue-grass pastures of spiritual plenty. The effects of all these religious renewals in the history of literature have been to give life more abundantly, and they have taught us that religion and letters cannot be divorced without disastrous results to letters. When Mammon rules the kingdom of letters, dry rot sets in, and men die from fatty degeneration of the heart.

One of our curses today is a mass of physiological literature. People defend its materialism on the ground that it is "scientific". That is assuming that science is chiefly interested in degenerates, in abnormal folk. It is assuming that science is freakish; it is to confuse terms. Physiological novels are not scientific and, more than that, they are not literature. The writers of them see things. Wasn't it Gilbert Chesterton who recently remarked in his attack on the critics of orthodoxy: "St John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his visions, but he saw no creature so wild as one of his own critics?" And so it is of the writer of physiological fiction. You cannot base the art of fiction upon the science of physiology, anyhow, any more than you can have a permanent school of fiction dealing with the mere intellect. "The greatest monsters of English fiction," said Mr. Bliss Perry the other day, "have never forgotten that man has a conscience. The novelist who ignores the moral and spiritual nature abandons the very field of fiction where the highest triumphs have been won. There is a word to describe this field,—a word broader than either 'mind' or 'conscience', and inclusive both of mental and spiritual perceptions. It is the word 'heart'." But, ladies and gentlemen, the note you and I love to hear best of all in a book is the "note of robust triumph, or unquestioning faith in individual happiness and in the sure advance of human society". When a poet or novelist repeats the great divine prayer, we want to feel that the heavy stress falls not so much on "Forgive us our trespasses" as on "Thy kingdom come". And, in truth, literature throughout the ages has been indebted to strong religious movements in a nation for renewed heart-emphasis, a more vital sense of sin, and a heightened vision of a kingdom of righteousness.

But I have wandered somewhat far afield, and it is high time to consider the next division of my subject—some characteristics of modern preaching. It will then be an easy transition to the potential value of modern literature to the present-day preacher.

I suppose there are fashions in preaching as in everything else. The message may be about the sense, but the dress varies, all the way from the interesting definition of clothes by the old Calvinist—"Theologically considered," said he, "clothes are the product of sin"—to the high ritualist who regards a gorgeous vestment as a positive virtue. Sermonic dresses are equally varied and are subjects of lively interest to observant laymen, and especially to professors of homiletics who sample many styles every year, and I suppose find ancient, mediaeval and modern types rubbing elbows with each other. I asked the other day a distinguished theologian, well known and beloved here, what he regarded as the distinctive trait of present-day preaching. He gently smiled and replied: "Well, now, that would be hard to say." And he never did say. I thought of how Browning used to smile amusedly and somewhat quizzically when some one—doubtless a feminine member of a Browning society—asked him the meaning of a line in *Sordello*, and would keep exasperatingly silent. So I concluded that if a layman can't get a preacher to tell him what he thinks about present-day preaching, the layman can just go ahead and tell the preacher what he thinks about it, and if the layman is wrong, it's not the layman's fault.

It is safe to say, first of all, that the scholastic type of sermon is out of date, however highly it served its day and generation and however great its literary merit. Leavened theological discussion does not interest a present-day audience. Sermons of this type served a noble purpose and helped to ground us all in the fundamentals; or, to vary the figure, to give us bone and sinew. It was the sermon of knowledge rather than, primarily, the sermon of power. There was a superabundance of heads in such a sermon, and it was mentally exhilarating. It was particularly in demand in so-called "religious debates", where a preacher acted as counsel for the defense, and generally, also,

for the offence. Such sermons were logic-heavy and sometimes engendered a species of sectarian big-head, or intellectual pride at variance with the spirit of the Master. I have long been distrustful of Logic as High-Priest. The Prophet is greater, because he is lifted above partisanship and the thralldom of the letter. "The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens," says an English satirist. "It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is the head that splits."

It is, moreover, safe to say that the oratorical type of sermon is out of date, however aesthetically edifying it was at one time. The polished sentence, the balanced periods, the classical allusions, the carefully built up peroration, of the good old days of ornate oratory—these have passed from sermons as they have passed from other forms of public speaking. They lingered longer in the South than in other parts of the country, for the men of the old South were a race of orators and loved the leisurely roll of the cadenced period and the classic structure of the great French pulpit orators. They had a relish for the deliberate, measured tread of the ponderous, orotund style which now seems curiously formal and stilted. In a busy community a sermon of this order would seem as much of an anachronism as a quotation from Horace on the first page of a cosmopolitan daily newspaper, or as a citation from Juvenal upon the floor of the United States Senate.

The modern city church seems to have become a sort of religious business centre with club attachment, and the pastor must be a versatile man, indeed, to meet expectations. He must be both a specialist and, if I may coin the word, a generalist, and in addition, a general. Changed conditions of modern life have increased his obligations and rendered his responsibilities highly complex. Even if he would, he may not stand apart from the current of affairs. In the religious world there is a mingling of three aspirations, and the modern preacher must share in all three. There is, as a keen student of contemporary spiritual ideas recently put it, "an intuition of the large misery of the disinherited and their appeal for help", that great compassion for the struggling, hidden mass of men. The modern preacher wants to uplift them by going out among them and

bringing hope into their darkened ways. There is another aspiration, no doubt, in his heart and that is "for the subordination of earthly passion and of personal earthly joys." The first aspiration is humanitarian, the second ascetic; and with them is sometimes combined a third, the aspiration to know, an intellectual aspiration; and by an aspiration to know I do not mean the hunger for the knowledge as a matter of selfish enjoyment or as an end in itself, but as a help towards constructive and permanent Christian leadership. However eloquent the present-day preacher may be, he will soon learn that in our own practical time the eloquence of deeds counts far more than any mere eloquence of words. And yet I fancy that the preacher of today, if he succeeded in the widest sense, must feel these three impulses stirring within him, namely, the social humanitarian conscience; the ascetic conscience, which leads him to the desert for prayer; and the knowledge-impulse which urges him to keep intellectually abreast of the age; for the minister of today, especially the young minister, must not forget that congregations have risen enormously in the scale of general education, that standards of culture are higher than they used to be, and that they are going to be still higher.

All this leads me to say that present-day preaching is pre-eminently social, that is, pre-eminently concerned with people and especially with the hitherto neglected people. I am aware that preaching has, in a general way, always been social; and it is the great glory of the dissenters in each age that they have brought religion direct to the people when a state church was paralyzing spiritual activity by formalism or indifferentism. But this age is, so far, above all else a social age. The social consciousness is in bloom; it is not yet in full fruitage, and we are casting about trying to find means to prevent premature ripening. In this direction of the social consciousness, as well as of the social conscience, the church must have a large part. The signs of these social awakenings are on every hand. There is widespread restlessness, mental and social and spiritual. It is not an irreligious age; on the contrary, it is intensely religious. All classes were never before so interested in religion. It is true that religion never before manifested itself in so many ways. It

may be that we shall have to reconstruct our definitions. Men are less willing today to define Religion, but they are living it and talking less about it, and bringing creeds and conduct closer together.

A glance through a list of recent books will convince one that the sociological side of Christianity at present chiefly exercises American writers on religious themes. Following in this trend, more conservative thinkers see the need of the restatement of old dogmas, of the resetting of accepted principles. It is the opinion of many that we are just beginning to have a practical understanding of the Sermon on the Mount as a part of the social program. The immense interest in missions outside of the ministry shows the new world-consciousness, and the new conception of the old word, "neighbor". There may be skepticism abroad, but it is less rampant than it was once, and we are not surprised to hear an English journalist say: "Modern skepticism is the suicide of thought. It is the belief that we can be sure of nothing." It reduces to an absurdity.

But with all our readjustment, we do not need a new gospel. The old gospel fits present-day conditions, and it is the task of the preacher to proclaim it in all boldness and love to this social age of ours. How may a knowledge of modern literature aid him in this? That is the main question here, as preliminary to an answer to which I have deemed it necessary to touch on the three matters of Religion and Morality, Religious Movements and Literature, and one important phase of present-day preaching.

I may be allowed just here to repeat a fundamental statement made in my first lecture, namely, that real literature makes an appeal not primarily to the knowing faculty, but rather to the emotions and the will. Now I conceive that to be true in a general way of preaching. The successful preacher must touch the deeper emotions and cause the will to act; for without will-action stimulated feeling vanishes into thin air, or hot air, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Preaching, of course, makes more use of the will than literature. Preaching is not, except in mission fields, specially concerned with mere intellectual enlightenment, with the contribu-

tion of knowledge. As a rule men know more than they feel or will.

Moral earnestness and high seriousness are primal requisites in poet and preacher. The poet and the preacher are kin in many ways, and they should know each other more intimately. I think they have never been so nearly related in spirit as in the nineteenth century. Mrs. Browning somewhere speaks of great poets as "the only truth-tellers now left to God, the only speakers of *essential* truth, opposed to relative, comparative and temporal truths, the only holders by His sun-skirts, through conventional grey glooms." This is high praise, indeed, and must be taken with some allowance; but it is not far wrong as a description of an ideal preacher in an age like ours. Let us consider some of the messages of nineteenth-century poetry and of nineteenth-century prose.

The two forms of literature which had a virtual monopoly in the nineteenth century were poetry and the novel. The novel rose about the middle of the eighteenth century and today is master of the field. There was a marked change in the tone of poetry in the last years of the eighteenth century. The cataclysm of the French Revolution is a convenient event for working this change in Western Europe. The heart of the Romantic movement was the humanitarian impulse, the renaissance of emotion, the restoration of sentiment in the Kingdom of Letters after the reign of Formalism, which had chilled "the genial current of the soul" for nearly two centuries. Gray had been chilled himself and just escaped being a Romantic poet. It was, however, left for William Blake and Robert Burns,—the first with his songs about children and lambs and other innocent and neglected creatures, and the second with his peasants and mice and daisies,—it was left for these two poets to bring poetry close to every-day life. But they were not burdened with any special message. Then Wordsworth came, "trailing clouds of glory". The themes of his poetry he himself sums up:

"Of truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope,
And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith,
Of blessed consolations in distress,

Of moral strength and intellectual power,
Of joy in widest commonalty spread,
I would give utterance in numerous verse."

Wordsworth had definite spiritual purpose in his verse—to illumine the commonplace and to dignify lowly life. In a letter to Lady Beaumont he gave his idea of the mission of poetry, and lovers of Wordsworth know that his poetry fulfills it:

"Its true mission," said he, "is to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and gracious of every age to see, to think and feel, and therefore to become more actively and sincerely virtuous." That utterance shows Wordsworth's kinship to Milton, and it gives a pretty good working pastoral program for the minister of today.

Then followed Shelley—"beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain," as Matthew Arnold said,—Shelley with his iridescent dreams of social and political reform, an "insubstantial pageant" soon faded, leaving only a wreck behind, a wraith of luminous mist. Then Byron stormed and fretted and posed and died fighting for Greek freedom.

"Nothing in his life become him like the leaving it."

Then Coleridge, rhythmic dreamer, builder of metaphysical palaces pinnacled, like Shelley's, high in the dim inane, had socialistic visions of Eden restored; while Keats, not stung by the revolting gadfly, sat apart as a worshiper of antique beauty. All these poets were singers of the dawn of a new day of deeds and spiritual struggle. Only Wordsworth was intensely ethical, but Shelley, with all his weaknesses—his childish rebellion against authority, his irresponsible clamors in the face of high heaven—was not without prophetic intuition in regard to the social tendencies of the nineteenth century. Poems like *Adonis* and *Promethes Unbound* should be read not only for their ethereal lyric beauty, but for their significant symbolism in nineteenth-century thought.

By the time the young Queen Victoria was firmly seated on her throne, the vague aspirations and almost inarticulate yearnings of the first third of the century found a voice in the two supremely spiritual poets of recent times—Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning. The career of Tennyson was from a conventional faith, through Doubting Castle, to a triumphant personal faith achieved by struggle with the monsters of darkness. He overthrew Giant Despair, and his victory is celebrated in the prologue to *In Memoriam*, the noblest prayer in our poetry. *In Memoriam* is, of course, a spiritual autobiography, as Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is a spiritual biography. The English poet records his own journey from the lowlands of Doubt to the shining uplands of Faith; the Frenchman records an imaginary journey from prison-walls to the gates of the city celestial—almost an allegory, a new Pilgrim's Progress.

In Memoriam is the more personal and therefore more vital—a poet's confession of faith.

Tennyson's great epic poem, *The Idylls of the King*, is at bottom a religious poem, with its recognition of the disintegrating effect of Sin in both individual and national life, where Sense wars against Soul. "The Palace of Art," "The Two Voices," "The Vision of Sin," are profoundly religious. Do you know anywhere in literature a more awful picture of the end of the debauched reveller, that Prodigal Son in Tennyson's allegory, *The Vision of Sin*, who did not come to himself and return to his father's house and for whom, on his death-bed in a far country, some one cried to heaven?—

"At last I heard a voice upon the slope
Cry to the summit, 'Is there any hope?'
To which an answer pealed from that high land,
But in a tongue no man could understand;
And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
God made himself an awful rose of dawn."

Or is there anywhere to be found better advice to the materialist, who refuses Christianity because he cannot understand it all, than these lines from *The Ancient Sage*?

“Let be thy wail and help thy fellow-men,
And make thy gold thy vassal, not thy king,
And fling free alms into the beggar’s bowl,
And send the day into the darkened heart;
Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men.”

Throughout Tennyson’s poetry, from the earlier lyrics to the last solemn hymn—“Crossing the Bar”—three dominant religious truths appear: First, *A personal God*. “Take that away,” he is quoted as saying, “and you take away the backbone of the universe.” Second, *The freedom of the will*. Third, *Personal immortality*. Tennyson strongly adhered to these three great religious beliefs, the climax of which is faith in the survival of individual life beyond the grave:

“Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet.”

But among the poets Browning’s voice is the most unfalteringly spiritual, the most energizing in modern times. His health was chronically good. The question, “Is life worth living?” did not trouble him. He answered categorically and emphatically “Yes”! He marched breast forward; never doubted right would triumph. He says he was ever a fighter. He glories in action, in achievement rather than in contemplation, has a passion for the Deed, and splendidly stimulates the will. Browning was burdened with a message; and in many respects it resembles some of the heartening calls to service and renewal of spirit which the great heroic Apostle to the Gentiles addressed to the faltering brethren in degenerate centres in the twilight hour of Hellenic culture. Browning spiritualizes the passions, summons the will from lethargy to activity, values effort more than attainment, and creates hope out of apparent failure. “He is steeped to the finger-tips in radiant hope.” He gives a new definition of the word “Success”, about the same which Hawthorne implies in his allegory of “the great Stone Face”, that success is not to be judged by conventional earthly standards.

“There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
 The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;
 What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
 On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round.”

His poetry is a tonic to the weary and heavy-laden. It is full of clarion-calls to young men summoning them to battle, like war-horses of the ancient lyrics sniffing the atmosphere of conflict from afar, and eager for the fray. The reassertion of the Spirit was the need of the age in which Browning wrote, an age when the forces of materialism were drowning the still small voices and when the intellectual pride of scientific discovery was setting men adrift upon a wide, wide sea. It was a time of transition, and the poet's voice cheered men while they were puzzled about the so-called conflict between Science and Religion, until they could readjust themselves to new conditions and come to understand that the God of Revelation is also God of the natural world.

I do not know anywhere in poetry more solemn, comforting words than those in “Paracelsus”—words which Chinese Gordon repeated as he went cheerily to conflict and to death:

“I go to prove my soul!
 I see my way as birds their trackless way.
 I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
 I ask not; but unless God sends his hail
 Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
 In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
 He guides me and the bird. In his good time!”

Indeed, the poetry of Browning is militant poetry and leads us out of the study into the world of men where the present-day preacher must go. In a social age the cloistered life is an anachronism. The clash of the conflict reaches the study, and out the man of God must go to work for the righteousness that exalts a nation—purer laws, sober communities, civic reforms physical, moral, mental—all potentially contained in the mes-

sage of Jesus to the doubting John. This note of inner conflict, symbolizing the outer, is the central note in Browning's poetry; and if one had to choose a passage expressing it, these lines from *Bishop Blongram's Apology* would best reveal the poet's sense of God's interest in man and also of Satan's. Between the opposing forces man, through conflict, finds his real selfhood:

"No, when the fight begins *within* himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet. Both tug;
He's left, himself, in the middle. The soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life.
Never leave growing till the life to come."

And not even then, I gather from the poet's words elsewhere. Browning would have a man realize who he is, and through that higher self-consciousness aspire to an infinite possibility. It is a kind of new birth of personality. We believe, and rightly, that a man must be born again if he would enter into the highest conception of the kingdom of God—the old and yet ever-recurring miracle that puzzled Nicodemus so. And we believe, too, that the new birth brings with it the obligation of steady and indefinite growth. This is very like the theme of the finest utterances of the clearest singer among the Victorian poets.

There were other poetic voices, to be sure, in those years when Tennyson and Browning were asserting the supremacy of spiritual things: Arnold, with his saddened sense of loss of faith; Mrs. Browning with her minor notes of love's undying sway in human hearts; Rossetti and Morris with their sensuous wanderings in a Paradise of Mediaeval Art; and Swinburne, academically remote; but these had no stirring message for heavy-laden men. They do not kindle the soul. Mrs. Browning alone is deeply spiritual in lyric tones. Let the young preacher seek, first of all, the message-poets and make them his familiar friends.

As the last century grew to its maturity, it became evident that two great forces controlled its democracy. One was In-

dividualism, or the vital conviction that "a man's a man for a' that." Each separate life became sacred. For the first time it was generally felt to be proper that every man should have a square deal, that there should be no "under dog." The other force was Socialism, or a realization of the sacredness of the collective life. There dawned a sense of kinship between hitherto separated classes. It was a new sort of chivalry, an obligation of the stronger to help the weaker, a rediscovery of the truth that a man is his brother's keeper.

Out of this democracy of the individual and of the mass was born into the world of letters the modern novel, the most democratic, the most social form of literature known to man. It was the outward growth of a general social ferment in the first third of the nineteenth century. Two ministers of the Church of England were among the stirring leaders of the new movement for social betterment—Charles Kingsley and Frederick Denison Maurice. Kingsley wrote two novels of passionate protest against the church's neglect of the outcasts from society.

Following this earlier literature of protest against neglect of the lower classes and the arraignment of the church and politics for this neglect, came a flood of humanitarian novels, social studies with distinctly reformatory purpose. Dickens was of course the most conspicuous of these, with his revelations about workhouses, debtors' prisons, pawnbrokers' shops, hovels of the poor, the laws' delays, dark streets and dark alleys of London, lurking-places of vice, crime, and pain. He became the advocate of the down-trodden and oppressed, and through him the heart and conscience of England spoke.

Not, however, until George Eliot do we find a passionate, moral earnestness in fiction concerning itself with flesh-and-blood men, women and children. She was virtually the creator of the social consciousness in our fiction, for she gave to lowly lives a certain dignity and treated them with the sympathy which comes from a sense of human brotherhood. Moreover, George Eliot insistently taught the transforming power of regenerative self-sacrifice both for the individual and through the individual for society. Thus, she says in the closing sentence of *Middlemarch*, which is pre-eminently a social study: "The

growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs." The Christian motive of these "unhistoric acts" George Eliot's unfaith kept her from duly emphasizing. And yet of all our great novelists she was to me the most atmospherically spiritual. Her heart was better than her head when she came to analyze personality, and the human soul was a very musical and a very sacred instrument to her. You remember what Mr. Cross says in his life of George Eliot about her reply to the question as to how she came to write such and such moving passages: "She told me," says he, "that in all that she considered her best writing there was a 'not herself' which took possession of her, and that she felt her own personality to be merely the instrument through which this spirit, as it were, was acting."

This recalls Tennyson's regular answer to the same question about where he got the lofty idea in any fine line or passage: "Oh, it just came to me." He did not attempt to explain. He couldn't. The glory of nineteenth century poetry and fiction is that it is so often burdened with a spiritual message, and that back of the message there is a not-human something moving the poet to speak out a truth to which our spirits instantly respond.

"As the tide on a crescent sea-beach, when the moon is new
and thin,
Into our hearts, high yearnings come welling and surging in;
Come from the mystic ocean, whose rim no foot hath trod:
Some call it inspiration, but others call it God."

In these novelists of the last century we see the rise of a powerful social consciousness which in latter writers developed into a true social conscience. Back in the eighteenth century France had her Rousseau in whom the social consciousness awakened, reaching its volcanic acme in the French Revolution. In Victor Hugo the social conscience was aflame, and we feel the hot indignation of the author of *Les Misérables* at the

criminal indifference of society toward the weak and oppressed. Tolstoi has been preaching powerful sermons for several decades against social and political crimes in darkest Russia. The very heart of his message is in that little book *Master and Man*, with its brief history of a soul redeemed from greed to saving love. It is a powerful illustration of the text: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend."

In England the social conscience found its most direct and powerful utterance in Carlyle, Ruskin, Kingsley and Maurice. Carlyle, as we know, fulminated against the industrial injustice of his day, growing, as he thought, out of the cant, insincerity and irreligion of a society based on outworn class-distinctions; and yet he had no deep faith in democracy, he offered no practical solution—he simply indicated society. He was a peasant-prophet crying out against shams. But by sheer vehemence of preaching he made men think.

Ruskin went among the workingmen of England, and with impassioned appeal tried to arouse in them a desire for beauty, and for soap and the paint-brush as means of grace. He proclaimed the gospel of Art for Man's sake. He worked for aesthetic sanitation; and his glowing speech, luminous with the familiar imagery of the Bible, did help the cause of moral reform in England.

But a deeper remedy was needed. Social reformers in all ages have relied too much on outward applications. They too often forget that sin is a worse disease than smallpox or leprosy, and that the permanent cure for social ills is to be found in the new-birth of the individuals who make up society—high and low. Society is not sound so long as there is one unsound individual. The only kind of socialism we need is Christian socialism, a very old kind, beginning among some fishermen a good many centuries ago, and having as its motto:

"Unto the least of these my brethren." And that is where we are today, and that is where the message of you preachers is having its most telling effect. The keynote word of our age is *Service*. It is a new note in literature, but an old note in Christianity; and in the nineteenth century Christianity and

Literature came closer together than in all the centuries before. The dedicated life became the heroic life in poem and novel. It was no longer the mail-clad warrior showing physical prowess amid the clashing din of battle, who had a monopoly of interest in the books. The Redcross Knight, in "dear remembrance of his dying Lord," has come again, but not this time to feudal tournaments, but in lowlier fashion "to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind and to set at liberty them that are bruised." It is a new ideal in Literature, an ideal for which Literature had to go to Christ. The new warrior in Literature is the "Happy Warrior" of whom Wordsworth speaks:

"Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be?
It is the generous spirit who, when brought
Away the tasks of real life hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:
Whose high endeavors are an inward light
That makes the path before him always bright.

* * * * *

Who, not content that former worth stand fast,
Looks forward, persevering to the last,
From well to better, daily self-surpast.

* * * * *

This is the happy Warrior; this is he
That every man in arms should wish to be."

This is an old warfare in Christianity, but late in getting itself glorified widely in literature. I say again, therefore, that the literature of a social age and the preaching of a social age touch each other closely. Men and women have never been so deeply interested in the personality of Christ as they are today, when the humanity of the Master permeates all our thinking and our conduct. The greatest poetry and the greatest prose in our modern English literature emphasize the fact that the divine personality, Jesus Christ, is the perennial fountain of the

world's life. That is what Robert Browning, the most emphatically Christian of our past recent poets, means when he exclaims:

“Where is the point where Himself lays stress?
Does the precept run, ‘Believe in Good,
In Justice, Truth, now understood
For the first time’?—or, ‘Believe in ME,
Who lived and died, yet essentially
Am Lord of Life’? Whoever can take
The same to his heart and for mere love’s sake
Conceive of the love,—that man obtains
A new truth.”