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LITERATURE AND THE MORAL LAW.

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The proper approach to the central theme of these three lectures, *The Preacher and Literature*, is, as I conceive it, through a preliminary consideration of the relation between literature and morals. The connection between literature and any one vocation, no matter how sacred that vocation may be, is, of course, not an immediate connection. Nor is the connection between literature and religion a direct one. Too often, indeed, the definition of the word 'religion' is confusing: so far as it is understood to mean the acceptance of a definite set of dogmas it tends towards the scientific and impersonal, and with the impersonal great literature has little or no concern; so far as it is interpreted to mean a life of godliness, faith, and aspiration, it is personal and so appeals to literature. Before looking into this appeal, however, the more general matter of the relationship of literature and the moral law—by which I mean the central principle of right conduct—needs to be discussed.

What is Literature, anyhow? Somebody has defined art as "a bit of nature seen through a personality," and that is almost a loose definition of a good piece of description or narration

whether in a poem or in a novel. But, like most definitions of artistic or spiritual entities, it is not satisfactory. Indeed, I have almost come to the conclusion that nothing worth defining can be defined. No man can by taking thought measure in words either his deeper feelings or his higher fancy. The heart knows, but it cannot tell; the soul affirms, but there is no speech nor language—its voice is not heard. Many have tried to define literature, and the definitions generally succeed in telling us what it is not, and the end of the effort is mostly vanity. A campaign document, no matter how filled with imagination, is not literature; a newspaper article seldom turns out to be literature; a political or theological pamphlet is not literature; an almanac is not literature, though some diaries have turned up later among the permanent books, and the preface to Poor Richard's Almanac is an American classic. What, then, is literature?

A practical and at the same time literary. Englishman, John Morley, now Lord Morley, has given a more satisfactory answer to the question than most of the makers of literature themselves. "Literature," says Lord Morley, "consists of all the books—and they are not many—where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity and attraction of form." Note particularly those keynote words, "moral truth and human passion." That is surely an ethical definition. The French critic, Sainte-Beuve, in his well-known definition of a classic asserts that only that author may be so called "who has discovered some unequivocal moral truth or penetrated to some eternal passion in that heart of man where it seemed as though all were known and explored." That, too, takes into account the ethical element. Coming at the matter more directly, I venture to lay down this rather simple criterion of literature: *Any poem or story or essay which makes a permanent appeal to the emotions is real literature.*

In the long run no painting or sculpture or poem or story will interest men and women unless it has more than an intellectual quality. This is the basis for DeQuincey's famous two-fold division of books into the literature of power and the literature of knowledge. The literature of power moves men;

the literature of knowledge simply enlightens them. The parting of Hector and Andromache, as Homer tells it, is as fresh today as it was nearly three thousand years ago; and so is the meeting of shipwrecked Ulysses with the clothes-washing Princess Nausicaa and her maidens by the riverside. Homer's science is all very antiquated and very childish, but his men and women and the passions that moved them are not. Men's thoughts change, but their general emotions do not. It is an emotional, not a mental, touch that makes the whole world kin and all the ages kin. Men's motives are the lasting things in a world of changes; their thoughts vary with the process of the suns. The real issues, too, of life, as a wise man said long ago, are out of the heart, not out of the head. How profoundly the old Hebrew literature illustrates this! I cannot read without tears, even in this far-off time, the simple words of Joseph making himself known to his brethren; or the lament of David over Jonathan; or the farewell words of Paul to the elders of Ephesus. They are all intensely personal words which go straight to the heart. Was there ever love-story more appealingly told than the idyllic tale of Ruth, homesick, standing "in tears amid the alien corn," and of the same Ruth a little later, love-crowned maiden, apt pupil of Naomi, wise reader of the mystic language of the heart?

The humor and the pathos of life show most clearly in the men who live near the heart of things, who experience most widely. Humor, indeed, is the pleasing shock which comes from an emotional incongruity, while wit is the shock from an intellectual incongruity; and humor is of higher literary quality than wit. Falstaff's humor is less intellectual than Benedick's wit, but Falstaff, with all his weaknesses, has more ethical value, one way or another, than Benedick, because he touches human life more closely. He lives nearer the heart of life. Pathos itself is but humor purified and heightened by the sense of tears in mortal things. It is only the reverse of the shield, the other side next to the heart. Pathos and humor are dark and golden threads running through the magic web of sympathy. When Falstaff, grown old, shrinks back chagrined and dumb before the stinging rebuke of his old boon companion, Prince Hal, now become King Henry V.—

“Fall to thy prayers, old man ;

How ill white hairs become a fool and jester”—

the pathos of the scene dries up the springs of laughter, and the moral law of retribution is written across the pages.

We need to be reminded again and again that ‘emotion’ and ‘motive’ are etymologically the same word. Emotions affect the will and so decide the issues of life. The currents of our lives are not directed mainly by outward circumstance, as old Omar would have us believe: we are not playthings of Fortune, ‘instruments for Fortune’s finger to play what stop she pleases:’ the deeper currents of our lives ebb and flow not in rhythm to the plastic power of circumstance, nor in responsiveness to thought or speculation, but in harmony with the emotions, those monitors of human destiny. I have ventured, therefore, to assert that in general what makes a book permanently vital is the power of its appeal to the emotions.

It must not, however, be inferred from this that great literature is simply emotional. We must have form and substance to give ballast to our enchanted boat. Crooked thinking may be immoral; in the end it is certainly unmoral. The poet, although not primarily a thinker, must think straight when he does think, or we will none of him. And so must the novelist. The late Professor Masson wisely said: “Every artist is a thinker, whether he knows it or not; and ultimately no artist will be found greater as an artist than he was as a thinker.” That is, of course, equivalent to saying that no emotion can be permanent unless it be based on justifiable grounds. Great literature always has to do with some profound truth and in the end makes men wise. Poetry reflects more than any other form of writing the spirit of an age and the vital thought of an age, and the greatest poetry is written in the epochs most given to action. Periods of the most lively industrialism are often periods of the most vital poetry and prose fiction. The poet who would sit in his study all day long could write little worth reading. Experience is in literature, as in human life generally, the wellspring of resourcefulness and variety, for experience is the personal test of life. The men who have told us most about life are the men who have loved

much, failed often, aspired more, wrestled most. The best text-book in the world on the philosophy of suffering is the Book of Job, not because it settles the problem, but because it disproves a traditional theory smilingly memorized and glibly repeated. The mystery of suffering is as deep as ever, but this at least has been proved—that one live righteous man is worth all your cemeteries full of dead traditions. So, great poetry goes down into the depths of things and finds adequate grounds for its emotion, esteeming principles as more sacred than rules and the experience of one heart more precious than much fine gold.

A great piece of literature will not only touch the emotions and be intellectually justifiable, but it will appeal to the imagination. Just here much modern realism fails of being true art; it reproduces too slavishly the facts of life rather than the larger realities of life. What the inner spiritual eye of the artist sees he must make us see, if he would interpret for us the little we actually see into the vast infinite we may feel. And thus the artist, the poet, the novelist may transfigure for us the world by giving us a rapid vision of possibilities. But, first of all, he must himself feel deeply, think clearly, and see into the life of things. It takes genuine passion in a poem to give it moral value, and real passion is only another name for sincerity, and there is no sincerity apart from some sort of experience, whether it be direct or vicarious. The real poet speaks for man as the old prophets spoke for God. Both poet and prophet see a new heaven and new earth, the one through the imagination, the other through faith, and the two faculties are closely akin.

Sometimes a very simple incident reveals as by a flash the fundamental oneness of life and art. A lady asked a little Parisian girl the price of some trinkets she had for sale: "Judge for yourself, madam; I have tasted no food since yesterday," said the child. The reply, as Mr. Burroughs, who reports the incident, remarks, is a piece of consummate art. "If she had said simply, 'Whatever your ladyship pleases to give,' her reply would have been graceful, but commonplace. By the personal turn which she gave it, she added almost a lyrical touch."

To exalt the emotions, to disclose to the inner eye the un-

suspected richness of common things, to reveal the flavor of character by playing upon the facts of life and nature—all this great literature does.

A bit of literature is, above everything else, the reflection of a personality. Indeed the more saturated with personality a poem or a story is, the more we love it. We sometimes talk loftily about reading a book for the style: well, if we do, it is because the style is the man; we are under the spell of the man and not of his subject. It doesn't greatly matter about the subject, but it does matter who holds the pen.

Literature has grown more personal through the years, more the reflection of an individual than of a type, as we come to modern times. The older literatures were more or less detached from common life. They were aristocratic. Kings and Queens and Princes and nobles fill the books. The two permanent types in literature, the warrior and the wanderer, are royal personages because the old conception of tragedy was a struggle between a man of highest social state and the inexorable law of Fate. It was Prometheus fighting against the tyrant Titans; it was the restless Ulysses sailing beyond the Pillars of Hercules; it was Beowulf and St. George slaying the dragon; it was Charlemagne and his Peers stemming the Saracen tide of conquest; it was Arthur and the knightly tournaments and quests; it was the lords and ladies of English castles faintly reflected in the popular conception of colonial days in the South.

Democracy was late in displacing Feudalism in literature; from the man with the scepter and the shield to the man with the hoe is a far cry. The peasant, indeed, is a late comer into Literature; until the days of Wordsworth he had scant recognition in our English poetry. In the older literatures of the world he was either a conventionalized pastoral figure, a Daphnis wooing Chloe in an impossible sheep-pasture, or an object of scorn and satire, the ridiculous or pestiferous member of a mob clamoring for civic or social recognition. Childhood, too, fared badly in the older literature. Proceeding, no doubt, upon the in many respects excellent theory that children should be seen and not heard, our literary ancestors sent the young hopefuls

to the kitchen or to bed, and they were neither seen nor heard. Not until George Eliot created Maggie and Tom Tulliver, did a perfectly natural child, bad with symptoms of goodness, or good with fits of badness, get fair play in our English fiction; for the children of Dickens are hardly average healthy youngsters. The lower animals were also late in breaking out of the jungles or cages or conventional kennels and coops and breaking into literature. We hear of the nature-fakir, as if he were a new species; as a matter of fact he is the standard literary type: it is only because we have become so scientific and humane, with out pets and our poodles and our anti-vivisection sentiments and our societies for the exclusion of birds' wings from millinery shops,—it is only because we have changed our attitude that we insist on having real bears and wolves and cats and dogs in the books. And so it is, too, with the trees and the fields and the flowers and the mountains. Nature-harmony has steadily grown from the box-tree, angular regularity of the older settings to the infinite irregularity and atmospheric suggestiveness of Hardy's Wessex downs and Turner's and Corot's mistclad seas and landscapes.

Of the older forms of literature the Drama was the most democratic, because it was concerned primarily with action and appealed for its support directly to the people. An Elizabethan play, for instance, which did not receive popular approval had a poor show of winning the applause of posterity. Shakespeare would not have agreed with Charles Lamb who exclaimed: "Hang posterity! I'll write for antiquity," for Shakespeare made no conscious appeal to either; he wrote at the crowd in a London theatre, and it so happened that he wrote partly beyond them. The combination makes him a contemporary with all ages. The Epic was, after the first epics of the folk-lore type, not as a whole a democratic kind of literature, reflecting actual life only in spots. The lyric was at its best intensely personal and always made the most direct emotional appeal; but until the birth of the modern novel in the eighteenth century, the successor of the drama, there was no form of literature which represented all sorts and conditions of men in a genuinely realistic sense. Not until the nineteenth cen-

ture did literature come so intimately close to life as to voice its complex social experiences, its infinite moral problems, and its varied spiritual aspirations. I do not forget, of course, that the lyrics of Hebrew literature voice these spiritual yearnings, but they are not primarily literary—only, indeed, incidentally so—, while such a poem as *In Memoriam*, though not primarily religious, discloses all the depths of a troubled soul feeling after God through darkened ways and finding him at last in the law of Love and Faith which keeps the world.

In all genuine literature, as in art in the broadest sense, indeed, and in real life, three types of men figure: those who accept without question things as they find them, contented to keep the established order, living in the circle of tradition, glad to let well enough alone. These are the conservatives, the classicists, glorifying the old and suspicious of the new. Another class is made up of those who rebel, the revolutionists, the anarchists, the radical socialists, who, dissatisfied with the past and the present, fight against the old order like heaven-storming Titans, without any definite program for a new—agitators, restless spirits in epochs of transition. Still a third class persists—those who struggle, the constructive social, moral, and spiritual heroes of the world—the inventors, the discoverers, the reformers of the race. Modern literature is pre-eminently concerned with those who struggle, and the keynote word of nineteenth century art is aspiration. The past century was noted for various kinds of emancipation: the physical release of the serf and the slave, the extension of the elective franchise, scientific reconstruction, efforts at social regeneration, a general shifting of emphasis in political, religious and social creeds. The literature of the first third of the century was vision literature, rapturous glimpses into a new world by the Romantic poets, Shelley, Wordsworth, Victor Hugo, all conscious reformers. Then came the problem literature—the poets like Tennyson and Matthew Arnold and Browning, the critics and novelists like Ruskin and Carlyle and Kingsley and Eliot, all burdened with the weight of “the mystery of all this unintelligible world;” and there has come at last to this generation the increasing mass of the literature of experiment wherein the re-

forms suggested and vaguely hinted at in other decades are pressing for solution in a great sociological laboratory. Guesses at the riddle of existence do not afflict the literature of our time as much as in the early days of Carlyle and Tennyson; doubtless the sense of awe and wonder is not less deep, but we have grown weary of merely posing problems, and we now propose solutions. Literature has gone into the workshop, has come in the contemporary novel to reflect as in no other period of the world the infinite complexity of human affairs.

So much in a general way for the characteristics of great literature as a heightened transcript of life, characteristics which caused the ancient classics to be called the humanities, although the older literatures are far less human than the modern. It is now time to try to answer the question, "What has literature to do with Morality?"

Ruskin, you will recall, in a famous passage in his lecture on *Art and Morals*, gives an eloquent account of the steadfast devotion of the Italian painter, Paul Veronese to his art—the muscular precision in the hourly and daily movements of the hand, the intellectual strain of prolonged and intense concentration on the minutest lines for years and years, and all this in the spirit of perfect joy and with increase of power even to extreme old age. "Consider," says Ruskin, "what sort of an ethical state of body and mind that means!—ethic through ages past! What fineness of race there must be to get it, what exquisite balance and symmetry of the vital powers! And then, finally, determine for yourselves whether a manhood like that is consistent with any viciousness of soul." Ruskin means, of course, that a task conscientiously undertaken and patiently executed with steady devotion and high seriousness, is in itself a piece of morality. This is illustrated in works which of themselves have no special moral value. Recall the painstaking devotion of Herbert Spencer, for example, to the task of developing his system of synthetic philosophy, painfully writing a few hundred words every day; or the consecration of Francis Parkman to his life-work of writing an accurate account of the French and Indian struggles in the West and in Canada—almost blind, shattered in body from exposure on the plains

and in Indian camps, laboriously turning out a few pages every morning of what is the most fascinating historical narrative of the nineteenth century; or the loving labor of a lifetime of the late Charles Eliot Norton interpreting Dante to this and coming generations. These men had the motives of Browning's dead grammarian—

“Others mistrust and say, ‘But time escapes:

Live now or never!’

He said, ‘What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!

Man has Forever.’”

There is, of course, a moral value in all devoted labor, even though the purpose be not specifically ethical; for in all genuine work which in any way touches men's ideals the old Latin proverb, “*Laborare est orare*”—to labor is to pray—finds application.

But all this is simply a broad generalization about life and art. Let us be still more specific. Does defective moral organization in an artist count against his work? It depends, of course, very largely upon whether one is concerned with the spirit of a piece of art or simply with the technique. Doubtless the technique would not necessarily suffer from an artist's moral weakness except in so far as it might manifest itself in unsteadiness of hand. Andrea del Sarto was the “faultless painter” in spite of his sins; but his paintings lack soul, lack reach, as Browning assures us, because he had not spiritual perception and because he had grievously sinned. No artist, remarks a recent writer, can interpret to the world what he himself cannot spiritually comprehend, and sin is the one thing in life which deadens a man's capacity to comprehend, for sin is itself the negation of personality. That was one trouble with the great German, Goethe:—he lacked spiritual sense, and no matter how exquisite his art, æsthetically considered, the serious reader of today instinctively feels that there is a moral and spiritual defect in the man back of those highly finished plays and poems. They do not grip the soul. A painting or a piece of sculpture is almost non-moral as compared with a poem or a novel, and the Olympian Goethe carried into literature the characteristics of the plastic arts. Even his wonderful drama,

Faust, is strangely out of tune with the vital thought of this generation. How much more modern is the flavor of the Book of Job, for instance, than Goethe's Faust; for in each serious soul the mental and spiritual agonies of the man of Uz repeat themselves, beside which the problems of Faust, the philosophic voluptuary, seem almost academic.

The Roman rhetorician Quintilian argued long ago that a good orator must be a good man; and a little later the critic Longinus declared in his "Treatise on the Sublime:" "It is impossible for those who have grovelling and servile ideas or are engaged in sordid pursuits all their lives to produce anything worthy of admiration and the praise of all posterity." Oratory, it is evident, more directly exposes the personality of the man behind the guns, so to speak, than other forms of impassioned literature, and certainly a bad man cannot be a good orator. The successful demagogue need not be considered, for he is only a passing figure. Neither can a bad man write a good novel, or a very great poem. A bad man might write a clever short-story, but when it comes to a long one, he will give himself away and the whirligig of time will demolish him. There are, it is readily admitted, great novels and plays and poems disfigured by immoral spots, but they are great in spite of occasional indecencies which in general more directly indict the age than the author. Besides, books which primarily reflect human nature in action, dramas and novels like the Elizabethan and the eighteenth century realists, depict life in epochs far less refined than ours, and their very frankness in calling a spade a spade is less objectionable than the innuendo method of some later literature. It is comforting to our sense of moral sanity that the unclean drama of the latter half of the seventeenth century, reflecting the licentious thoughts of the degenerate courtiers and literary dependants of Charles II.'s rotten reign of epicurism and lust, is no longer generally read. The men behind that literature were men of unclean hearts; and nowhere else in English literature is George Eliot's dictum that "A filthy mind makes filthy art" more depressingly illustrated. In literature, as in actual life, more depends on how a subject is handled and on who handles it than on the

subject itself. No one, I fancy, would class *The Scarlet Letter* among unmoral or immoral books, for in the hands of a profound moralist like Hawthorne, man of Puritan ideals and spiritual vision, literary art is solemnized through this masterful study of the wages of sin. Only a wholesome personality, touched with a sense of sorrow for human frailties, may properly concern itself with great moral crises in men's lives—subjects in the treatment of which art must suffer a moral consecration and considerations of mere aesthetic excellence be outweighed by obedience to the higher law of service.

There is a good deal of talk by the people who quote the expression, "Art for Art's sake" as if it were an axiomatic truth, to the effect that all high art exists solely for itself. Does it, indeed? Viewed even in the most elementary way, art has no reason for existence except to minister to the pleasure of man. The higher the pleasure the greater the art, and all high pleasure has in it an ethical element. Licentious art, in behalf of which one often hears the cry of "Art for Art's sake," has no enduring quality because it appeals to depraved taste, which is only another way of saying that it appeals to the lower emotions. Now, moral emotion, or emotion excited by ethical qualities in things, has far more literary value than sensuous or aesthetic emotion, suggested by mere loveliness, for instance. Heroic actions, noble endurance, a sublime hope, a great sorrow—these arouse admiration and sympathy, these affect the conduct of life with which the moral law is mainly concerned, these touch the affections and the conscience, and these form the inspiration of all great literature. There may be exquisite poems, such as Poe's, for example, exquisite prose-poems, such as Poe's atmospheric short-stories, which have no moral value in that they have nothing to do with the conduct of life; but they do not disprove the general test of a great piece of literature, namely, that it must make us sympathetic with the deeper things of life. That is very different, indeed, from saying that literature should be didactic: it is merely claiming that great literature is fundamentally ethical. The great poets and dramatists and novelists and essayists do not preach, but they are true to the moral and spiritual instincts necessary for the preserva-

tion of the race, and the lessons which they teach may be understood by those who have ears to hear. The mighty masters of literature will, in the long run, be found either directly or indirectly concerned with the question how to live as summed up so simply and yet almost devoutly in these noble lines of Milton:

“Nor love thy life nor hate; but what thou liv’st
Live well; how long or short, permit to heaven.”

The demands of the Moral Law upon Literature are, after all, very plain; and they are just the demands which public opinion in any enlightened community would make of a peculiarly gifted citizen of the community whose utterances had come to be regarded as oracular. His fellow-citizens would, first of all, demand that he should say nothing likely to debase the emotions of his hearers. To seek to please by an appeal directly to the animal instincts of men is a violation of the moral law in letters as it is in life. Nay, more: to seek to please by an appeal to the lower senses subtly clothed in beauty of phrase and imagery is slow murder by the dark Italian method of innuendo. It is poisoning the spring of life. When a book makes evil seductive by investing it with the tinted garment of animalism, it is no longer literary but pathological, and belongs in the catalogue of what Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes used to call “medicated novels.” About such books there is an odor of decay, miasmatic vapors from the valleys of dead ideals. In them man has returned to the beast; he is passion’s slave; the reeling faun, the sensual feast have frightened the angel from this human temple. Such literature may have artistic qualities, more’s the pity. In reading some French or Italian or German or Russian stories of exquisite finish and well-nigh perfect style, one feels that the writers have sinned against morality by making desire triumph over the higher emotions through a subtle stimulation of the senses. There is an appeal to powerful but degrading passions which acts as a narcotic to the nobler impulses of the soul. This too naturalistic treatment of the passion of love, for instance, fascinates by a refined and sublimated eroticism. Many of these stories reduce great moral crises to the level of erotic, neurotic, and, as somebody has said, tommyrotic sensation, until the whole performance ends in a mental and moral debauch.

But thanks to the Anglo-Saxon sense of restraint and practical sanity of the emotions, the majority of English novels and a greater majority of American novels and short-stories avoid such a prostitution of the Muse of Literature in making pictures of sin alluring; and however commonplace the treatment of normal passion, good and bad, may sometimes be, they keep, for the most part, to the side of good taste in morals; and "taste is always on the side of the angels."

What, then, it may be asked, is the touchstone of judgment as to whether a given piece of literature tends to debase the emotions? It is simply this: the desire of the reader to imitate a bad character or to actualize an alluring picture of evil. I can never forget the almost violent righteous indignation of a pupil of mine, who belonged to an oriental nationality, at the villiany of Iago. He would fain have thrust a dagger through the inhuman Italian traducer of the gentle Desdemona, he said; and indeed he could scarcely be restrained from doing bodily injury to a colleague who more in jest than in earnest defended Othello's ancient. That was no alluring picture of wrong to my young student of Shakespeare. His righteous impulse was a credit to his own heart and a tribute to the great dramatist. Artistic appreciation of a character, even artistic admiration of a character, does not prevent moral condemnation of that character. To produce in the soul of the reader both emotions is a sign of high literary genius. That is the way Shakespeare analyzed human passion, without degrading the emotions and without distorting the crucial realities of life. He is in his tragedies in particular profoundly ethical, and yet he nowhere attempts a definition of life. He likens it to many things—"a walking shadow," "a shuttle," "a flower," "a fitful fever"—; and, indeed, he gives us a far more concrete notion of what it is than the scientists and philosophers, who after all the ages and ages of their thinking have finally assured us, with all due gravity, that "Life is a Permanent Possibility of Sensation"! "Truly a fine result!" exclaims Robert Louis Stevenson. "A man may very well love beef, or hunting, or a woman; but surely, surely, not a Permanent Possibility of Sensation!" The truth is, we get a clearer idea of life from litera-

ture than from all the metaphysical phrases of all the philosophers, so long as the depictions of any phases of human activity do not arouse unpleasant, repulsive, or degrading emotions; for with these real literature has nothing to do. Books that appeal to such emotions will not live except as semi-scientific studies in social pathology. There are sick books as there are sick people, but it is the healthy book, full of courage and hope and good cheer, that like a wholesome human personality is a moral tonic to the emotions, making "goodness as natural as flowers and as unconscious as the charm of childhood."

The moral law makes a second emphatic demand upon literature, namely, that it shall not deaden the conscience. A keen sense of duty is the supreme requisite in the conduct of life. Character, after all, is the byproduct of constantly doing one's nearest duty. We do not consciously set about developing our characters: we just go ahead from day to day doing our duty, doing right as God gives us to see the right, and the result is character. Now, then, it is important that the art we see, the poetry and fiction we read should quicken the conscience to translate emotion and knowledge into active Duty. Real literature will not be false to the nature of sin and its effects. If the moral be not stated—and it seldom is—it will at least be in solution in the poem, in the drama, in the story, and you, to speak chemically, may precipitate it. The book may deal with bad men or bad women and be a good book; it might be filled with saints and be a silly book. It is not expedient that the youth read some standard books, but it is essential that they read books which deal sanely with human life, illustrating the fundamental moral obligations of man and the ruin which attends the neglect of them. The spirit of such literature finds expression in the lives of serious readers, especially of young readers, those of whom Emerson was thinking when he wrote the clarion lines:

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low "Thou must!"
The youth replies, "I can!" "

Cynicism is the bane of some of our contemporary literature

—cynicism, that supposedly cultured contempt for the virtues or generous sentiments of others. The earliest cynic in literature is Satan in the Book of Job, and his posterity is numerous; but no really great writer has let the cynical element predominate.

Over against the conscience-drugging of the decadent novel or play consider the sacred hymn to duty which Wordsworth chants, wherein we find the "stern Daughter of the voice of God" transformed into the smiling angel of a new Puritanism, no longer the sombre goddess of Miltonian vision:

"Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face:
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong."

The third imperative demand which the Moral Law makes of Literature is that it shall not make the will flabby. That old seventeenth century preacher and moralist, Joseph Glanvil, living in dissolute times when the reaction from the rigors of Puritanism was degenerating into social license and spiritual decay, uttered these high and solemn words about the will: "And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great Will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will." The masters of literature have recognized that in the action of the will are revealed both the dignity and the baseness of man. "Every hurtful passion," exclaims Amiel, the Genevan recluse, "draws us to it, as an abyss does, by a kind of vertigo. Feebleness of will brings about weakness of head, and the abyss, in spite of its horror, comes to fascinate us, as though it were a place of refuge. Terrible danger! For this abyss is within us."

The struggles revealed in art and literature are mainly struggles to preserve personality against the paralysis of will-weakness. Even the dauntless courage of Satan—

"———— th' unconquerable will

And study of revenge, immortal hate"—
 has made the fallen arch-angel the hero of the first part of *Paradise Lost*. The agonies of Prometheus symbolize the pioneer triumphs of discoverers and inventors whose mighty wills dared oppose the outworn customs of their day to herald the coming of a new order. Strong literature is will-literature, from battle-song like "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled" with its trumpet-call "to do or die" for Scotland, to Tennyson's impassioned prayer—

"O living will that shalt endure
 When all that seems shall suffer shock,
 Rise in the spiritual rock,
 Flow through our deeds and make them pure."

And when these three demands of the Moral Law upon Literature—that it shall not debase the emotions or deaden the conscience or weaken the will—are realized in poet and novelist, they speak to us with compelling power. They are like the voices of our own souls, heard in the calm of thought; and they are ever hopeful voices. He who robs me of my ideals gets no enrichment himself, but he bankrupts me. The effect of the great books is to give life more abundantly. He who drugs my will with the narcotics of fatalism is a murderer, no matter how refined his manner or how fragrant the fumes from his censer. He is sacrificing to the demons of darkness, and to these great literature pours no libations; for even if we are made to pass through an Inferno, we are cheered by the knowledge that the sentinel stars are keeping watch beyond the shadows and into their light we shall emerge. Great literature wears, as it were, the scar of suffering as a memorial of darker hours, like the veteran of many battles, but it talks not of scars, but of triumphs. Great literature is incurably optimistic.

And so we rightly expect in great literature a dignity, an elevation, and a certain power of uplift, because it touches and interprets the deeper emotions and energizes the human will. No time, indeed, has had a more real need for lessons out of the great books of the race, ancient and modern, than ours. They teach us that there are certain fountains in our lives "deeper than ever plummet sounded," from which, after all, the abiding

power to achieve more than the day's work must come. One of these fountains is Religion, another is Human Fellowship, another is Art in its broadest sense. Out of them flow the streams that bring richness, freshness, faith and youth again. They are like the rivers of Dante's vision, Lethe and Eunoe, wherein the passing spirits forever forgot their sorrows and fixed forever the blessed memories of their dreams.

Every master of literature has a philosophy of life, not always definitely formulated, but discoverable by discerning spirits. The basis of it all is an unfaltering devotion to the truth. Detect a note of insincerity in a writer and his fine talk counts for little. Let a man plant himself squarely on his instincts, Emerson once said, and the world will come round to him. But when there is a note of self-exploitation, as in Byron for instance, at the expense of consistent regard for truth, moral discord spoils the harmony of the song. It is in literature, in the long run, as it is in life: to him who pursues truth the people will be true and they will follow his ideals, with wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

It is interesting to note how much is made of failure in great literature and how little, relatively, is made of success. What are the stories which have most moved men's hearts? Not always the triumphs of victorious causes, though the sacrifices and the unwavering devotion to ideals had in them the earnest of ultimate victory, victory of personal character or victory in the righteousness which exalts a nation. The themes which great poetry and fiction most love are stories of action, deeds of daring, where the risk is far greater than the probability of practical results. Hopeless bravery, as in the charge of the Light Brigade or in the struggle for Greek freedom against the Turk, or in the contest of high souls in Shakespearean tragedy against low and perverse environment is a frequent theme in literature. It is customary to call Hamlet a tragedy of failure. But is it? The melancholy Dane simply died to win; he accomplished what he set out to do; he avenged his father's death. I say "simply died"; well, death is of small consequence where a point of honor is at stake.

Ladies and gentlemen, when we are brought face to face with

the really heroic struggles of life, we come to realize how greatly in error we are when we value things simply by practical results. And the final teaching of literature as of all history is this: "It is the doing that makes the deed worthy of record, not the material outcome." The successes of some men are infinitely worse than the failures of others. "The successes of Napoleon left him each year smaller," says a recent writer; "he had a character which gave the promise of heroism; but its climax is at the beginning, not at the end." There is no moral heroism in this man. His career appeals to the imagination, but I find less interest in it now than when I was a boy and worshipped physical prowess. And literature, as the years go on, will take less and less account of Napoleon, and more and more of less brilliant but more unselfish men, whose very failures are virtues because they loved much. Some men's failures leave them larger. The man who is looking out for himself we do not honor; the man who forgets himself in looking out for others, we do honor, even though he may be a visionary and his ideas chimerical. And so does literature honor him. He is the one, to use Dante's expression, that teaches us how man eternizes himself. Literature is the inner record of how man eternizes himself. It gets its material from legend, and history, and daily life, and it cares for men of ideals.

Out of the immense convulsion of our civil war two men have emerged supreme above the rest. They were very different men. One was the child of the western frontier; the other was the product of colonial aristocracy. Each man counted his cause as everything and himself as nothing. One died just as his cause was triumphant; the other accepted defeat with sublime heroism and spent his few remaining years in the healing of wounds and in building up a shattered commonwealth. Because Lincoln and Lee were men of moral ideal^s they will loom larger upon our national life as the years go on, and future writers will find in them an appeal through the creative imagination to the emotions and conscience of our country. It is of such material as this, I repeat, that poem and story and drama are made; and when we come down to the last analysis of any national literature, we shall find its warp and woof wrought out

of the strong moral fibre of a people's traditions around which the poet and novelist have woven the varied colors of each epoch's emotions, thoughts, and fancies. But the soil under this cloth of gold is rich with the blood of heroes, saints and martyrs, redolent of high princely deeds of courtesy which live again in pulses stirred to generosity, and veined with the golden ore of human fellowship and human brotherhood.