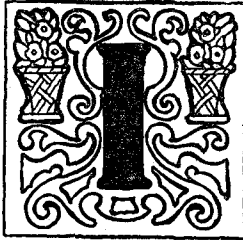


A Christmas Sermon

BY WILLIAM LOWE BRYAN

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WISH to preach a short sermon on the text, "He knew what was in man." In all that you have learned within or without the schools, there is nothing more important than what you know or believe you know about human nature. You have been told many conflicting things. You have been told that men are, on the whole, very good, that they are friendly, generous, trustworthy, and that the joy of life lies in friendship and in co-operation with your fellows. You have been told that where men do fall short of what they should be, they are teachable, that they can be reached and touched and changed and made right, and that the highest and happiest life work is in some way to make men better, and then to live and die compassed about by their gratitude.

On the other hand, you have heard an entirely different story. You have heard from many high sources that life is essentially tragic, that under all the shows of civilization and religion life is war, as relentless as ever it was in the jungle, and that the hope of making society really better is forever an illusion. The honorable Brutus, it is said, the noblest Roman of them all, is never able to regenerate Rome. He comes at last to his Philippi, and is slain by the corrupt society which he has sought to save. The generous Timon, they say, who lavishes his wealth upon those about him, always finds himself forsaken in his adversity, and can only turn upon mankind with rage and curses. Prince Hamlet, we are told, finds always that the State of Denmark is rotten, and can only cry, "How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world!" According to this tragic view of life, Moses, the nation-maker, who leads the people out of Egypt through the desert toward the Holy Land, is always stricken with despair, not by his enemies, but by the perversity and treachery of his own people, and is always forced to cry to God as Moses did for death as an escape from his intolerable burden.

Now, in hearing and weighing these and other conflicting views as to what the truth is about human nature, it is surely worth while to hear

and to weigh the view of Him of whom it was said, "He knew what was in man." What did he see in us?

For one thing, he saw the evil. No man-hater ever saw it blacker. He knew that there is in man lust and murder and treachery and a covering of hypocrisy. He knew no philosophy with which to take these things lightly. They were to him infinitely more dreadful than the lash or the crown of thorns. The worst of them was disloyalty—the disloyalty of his friends. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." He wept over Jerusalem, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" He was betrayed by one of the Twelve for money. On the last night they all forsook him and fled. And one of them, that night, three times denied that he knew his Master.

If ever a man was justified in turning with tragic hopelessness away from the human race, it was Jesus of Nazareth.

Why did he not give us up? The answer is, because he knew what was in man. Because underneath the man of lust and murder and treachery he saw another man who can not be given up. He knew the passion of the Prodigal, the passion which led him from his father's house into every iniquity; but he also knew that in the Prodigal there was a deeper passion which, if awakened, would lead him from among the swine back to the life where he belonged. He knew the disloyal cowardice of Peter, but he knew that below the cowardice and disloyalty there was a Peter who would stand like a rock in a storm. He looked out from his Cross upon a jeering multitude, symbol of the vaster multitude who forever jeer and crucify the good, and there he performed his supreme miracle. He believed in them. He saw what was in them. He saw through the darkness and through the whirlwind of evil passion the real multitude, whose deepest law, whose deepest necessity, is that they shall be loyal to each other and to their Father in Heaven.

My children, believe this man. Life is tragic, as he saw. Life is terrible, as you will know. You may fight as the tigers do until your turn comes to perish. You may curse with Timon. You may despair with Hamlet. Or, with Jesus of Nazareth, you may find a place within, where there are neither curses nor despair nor war, but where there lives an unconquerable courage for every circumstance and for every task which can come to you before the going down of the sun.

AN IMPRESSION OF WHITTIER

BY EDWARD EVERETT HALE

It is safe to predict that among the group of New England writers none will be more widely beloved by Americans of the future than John Greenleaf Whittier, the centennial of whose birth (December 17, 1807) is being celebrated this week at Amesbury, Massachusetts, the poet's birthplace. He will be welcomed, like Longfellow, to the hearthstones of the homes of the future; for both poets were in a peculiar sense laureates of the family, singers for children, lovers of home. If Whittier had written nothing else, "Snow-Bound" would not only give him a permanent place among American poets, but endear him for all time to come to American children, and to their elders as well. So far as manner is concerned, it has very little in common with Burns's "The Cotter's Saturday Night;" but the two poems are fragrant with the memories of old homes, and bound up forever with the tenderest affections of the two countries. "Snow-Bound" is the domestic idyl of the American home. All that Whittier wrote suggests his religious temperament, his patriotic spirit, his facility of expression, and his frequent indifference to the niceties of poetic speech. A large part of his work, like a large part of Longfellow's, will quietly fall into oblivion; but a little group of poems, like "Snow-Bound," "The Eternal Goodness," "Maud Muller," will not only be found in the anthologies of the future, but, what is still better for the poet's reputation, will live, generation after generation, in the memories and on the tongues of children. Like Longfellow, he will be the poet of the school-house. At such a time readers of *The Outlook* will be glad of the glimpse of Whittier which Dr. Hale gives them this week.—THE EDITORS.

WHITTIER'S judgment of his own abilities and of his own services to mankind has been so well stated by himself and is so precise and so correct in its precision that I am not going to say a word about them. He has analyzed his own work a great deal better than I could do. I do like to say this: that his absolute indifference to fame and his utter unselfishness have given to the people, by and large, helps and opportunities which they would never have had, had he been a dainty officer in the royal guards, thinking for a moment of himself, his uniform, his buttons, or the traditions of the particular corps in which he was born. If there were a thing to be said, Whittier said it as well as he could, without the slightest thought of his own reputation.

Because of this there is a great deal of his writing which nobody reads and practically nobody remembers. In a thousand of his poems, perhaps, there would be nine hundred from which nobody ever quotes a line. But the other hundred stand out to be recited and repeated forever, because he said the right thing at the right time.

If he saw a head which needed to be hit, he hit it. He did this without a thought whether men would praise him for doing it or would not praise him.

That head was to be hit; and hit it is. And you and I, if we read the address to the patrons of the "Pennsylvania Freeman," find in the twenty-third verse

"That he, the basest of the base,
The vilest of the vile, whose name,
Embalmed in infinite disgrace,
Is deathless in its shame,"

is "nailed to his self-made gibbet fast," and that he is to be left "a mark for every passing blast of scorn to whistle through." The chances are that you and I do not remember his name and that the deathless fame has already died. And it is of no great consequence whether we do remember it or do not. What is of consequence is to have somebody standing round who is not afraid to say such things when, for whatever high purpose, they need to be said.

It is this determination to do the thing which came next his hand that has given Whittier an introduction to thousands of readers who are quite indifferent to literature as literature.

Many years ago I had a very interesting class of thirty or forty ladies who met me Wednesdays for reading and study which should connect itself, partly with the calendar as the year went by, and still more so with the history of America. Before the class parted I would say, perhaps, "The eleventh of