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DUTTON

Points of View

Henry Ward Beecher

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

May I beg the courtesy of your columns to defend myself against the attack upon my "Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait" made by Mr. Beecher's grandson, Mr. Samuel Scoville, Jr.? To economize your space I shall try to confine myself to a statement of facts, without superfluous comment.

Mr. Scoville says:

1. "The sources which Mr. Hibben draws upon . . . include the *National Police Gazette*, extracts from yellow journals of the seventies, and anonymous pamphlets and posters."

My sources include over 300 published books, the files of over 50 newspapers, besides unpublished manuscripts, original court, synod, and church records, and letters and documents. The principal newspapers cited are Henry J. Raymond's *New York Times*, Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*, Charles A. Dana's *Sun*, Joseph Medill's *Chicago Tribune* and the *Indiana State Journal*. In the so-called "scandal chapters" (XXI to XXVII inclusive), of 288 references, 199 are to the court record. Only 60 are to newspapers, and these for comment, not as source material. Mr. Scoville is of course well aware that the *National Police Gazette* is cited in no reference whatever to Mr. Beecher.

2. "Robert Ingersoll, the noted atheist, is quoted as an authority upon Mr. Beecher's life and surroundings."

Col. Ingersoll was an agnostic, not an atheist. No nobler tribute to Henry Ward Beecher was ever written by any man, living or dead, than Robert G. Ingersoll's tribute to Henry Ward Beecher.

3. "His [Mr. Beecher's] accusers were discredited and execrated as self-confessed liars and blackmailers."

This somewhat intemperate assertion that Mr. Beecher's chief accusers confessed to perjury and blackmail is, of course, preposterous. All three died men of prominence and standing, and left families as respected as Mr. Beecher's family and quite as entitled to consideration. On page 114, volume III, of the report of Tilton vs. Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher himself, under oath, admitted that there was no blackmail in the case, and on page 1033 of the same volume, the judge, charging the jury, threw out all suggestion of blackmail. Mr. Scoville, in renewing an accusation thus formally repudiated, assumes a certain responsibility for it, which I cannot share.

4. "Their [Mr. Beecher's accusers] chief counsel became convinced of Mr. Beecher's innocence."

This is a fiction which rests on no foundation of fact. A story to that effect was launched by Mr. Scoville's father after the death of Mr. Beach, the counsel referred to. It was vehemently denied by Mr. Beach's family, legal associates, and friends, and is, moreover, belied by Mr. Beach's scathing arraignment of Henry Ward Beecher as a conscienceless seducer.

5. "The largest council of Congregational churches . . . investigated the charges . . . and unanimously found him [Mr. Beecher] to be innocent of any wrong doing."

The council in question did nothing of the sort and found nothing of the sort. Having refused to hear Mr. Moulton, who wrote: "I am prepared to prove Henry Ward Beecher guilty of adultery and perjury, by evidence both oral and documentary," the council found: "We hold this pastor of this church [Mr. Beecher], as we and all others are bound to hold him, innocent of the charges reported against him until they have been substantiated by proof." Italics mine.

6. "Mr. Hibben fails to give any details of the defense of Mr. Beecher, which had convinced three tribunals of his innocence."

No three tribunals were ever convinced of Mr. Beecher's innocence. The Congregational council, referred to above by Mr. Scoville, itself found, on the contrary, that: "we cannot overlook . . . the dissatisfaction which more or less extensively prevails with the previous investigations," and recommended another. Mr. Beecher could, had he desired, have set at rest all doubts of his innocence by the same method which Theodore Roosevelt employed. Instead, he not only brought no suit for libel against those who repeatedly and publicly charged him with adultery and perjury, but withdrew

the complaint he had filed against Mr. Moulton for criminal libel.

7. "Mr. Hibben states that Mr. Beecher received a \$15,000 stock bribe from Jay Cooke to boom the Northern Pacific Railroad in the columns of the *Christian Union* of which Mr. Beecher was the editor. He offers as authority Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer's biography of Jay Cooke. No such statement appears in the biography."

No such statement appears in my book, either. Far from accusing Mr. Beecher of accepting a bribe, I say: "There was, of course, nothing dishonest in Beecher's share in this transaction." Pages 164-166 of volume II of Professor Oberholtzer's admirable biography of Jay Cooke are devoted to listing those who were, in Professor Oberholtzer's phrase, "properly 'sweetened' to aid the enterprise" of the Northern Pacific Railway. Mr. Beecher's name appears on page 165 as down for \$15,000 worth of stock. "Beecher's aid," says Professor Oberholtzer, "included the use of the *Christian Union* newspaper." That this aid was actually rendered by Mr. Beecher's paper is evident from the publication, beginning on page 403 of Volume II of the *Christian Union*, of a series of publicity articles advertised to the readers of the paper as "elaborated from notes taken by Mr. Wilkeson during a reconnaissance of the proposed route of the Northern Pacific Railway."

8. "Mr. Beecher was not the editor of the *Christian Union*."

Lyman Abbott: "Henry Ward Beecher." New York. 1903; page xxiv: "*The Christian Union*. Edited by Henry Ward Beecher, January 1, 1870, to November 2, 1881. New York. Now *The Outlook*."

John R. Howard [of J. B. Ford & Co., publishers of *The Christian Union*]: "Remembrance of Things Past." New York. 1925; page 237: "On January 1, 1870, Mr. Beecher took its [*The Christian Union*'] editorship."

The Independent, November 2, 1869. Advertisement 8 by 11 inches for *The Christian Union*: "HENRY WARD

BEECHER . . . EDITOR-IN-CHIEF." (Letters 1/2 inch high).

9. "Miss Scoville authorizes me . . . to say that the only 'aid' she ever gave Mr. Hibben was to give him the correct date of a photograph of the Beecher family, which for reasons of his own he afterwards inserted in the biography as of a date fourteen years earlier."

I have before me half a dozen letters from Miss Scoville giving me considerable detailed information on various points which puzzled me at the time. I am also grateful to her for permission to examine Mr. Beecher's diary kept during his Cincinnati days as well as the original of the agreement between Mr. Beecher and the Greek lad, Constantine Fondolaik, and a number of Mr. Beecher's early manuscript sermons. She also very kindly supplied me with a number of photographs, a courtesy which I reciprocated; but she was unfortunately unable to give me the correct date of the photograph to which her brother refers. I deeply appreciated the large-mindedness of Miss Scoville in this and courteously acknowledged it in my book.

In regard to the space given in my "Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait" to the various charges of adultery and perjury brought against Mr. Beecher, I need, I think, only quote the Rev. Leonard Bacon, D. D., one of Mr. Beecher's oldest and staunchest friends; "The transaction, with all its consequences, belongs to history," Dr. Bacon wrote, "and it is in every way a legitimate subject for public criticism."

Henry Ward Beecher is in the Hall of Fame. His life is no longer the private affair of his family. I quite understand Mr. Scoville's feeling; but much that he finds so distressing was published broadcast in Mr. Beecher's own lifetime and became a matter of common knowledge to a whole generation. Against reiterated accusations of immorality, perjury, and hypocrisy, Mr. Beecher himself took no action whatever, though the courts were open to him and he had many friends in high place. I cannot but feel that what Henry Ward Beecher could and did accept with equanimity, his family can now bear without grievous hardship.

PAXTON HIBBEN.

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The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the selection of books and questions of like nature should be addressed to MRS. BECKER, c/o The Saturday Review.

A. B., Minot, South Dakota, asks "what would be the general nature of an ideal discussion-paper for a study club?"

TAKING for granted that it is a club for the encouragement of reading and thinking and not a substitute for either, a good paper would present to its membership the salient points and distinguishing features of the book in question. Those who had already read it would find their impressions clarified, and those who had not would be in possession of a body of evidence from which to determine whether it were a book they wished to read. Meanwhile, even these latter could at least discuss the points raised by the paper—I hope without deluding themselves that they were discussing the book itself.

So introduced, a discussion may bring out a general interchange of opinions and experiences; without it, the subject may be kidnapped by anyone with a good clear voice and dropped up a blind alley a long way from home.

Take, for instance, one of the noblest books of the year, Michael Pupin's "The New Reformation" (Scribner), one that should be brought to the attention of as many intelligent people as can in any way be reached, and such a reading-club as this is one way of reaching some of them. It describes, in detail sufficient to give the steps of the process, the change in our comprehension of the universe due to the gradual disclosure, under scientific investigation, of new physical realities—matter in motion, electricity in motion, electrical radiation—and it directs the attention of the reader through all this to the presence of "creative coördination," transforming chaos to cosmos. As every epoch that rediscovers God describes Him in terms of its own experience, the deeply religious spirit of the culminating chapters of this book is in accord with the scientific method by which its conclusions have been reached. One reporting upon it to a group of prospective readers untrained in scientific methods and unfamiliar with scientific terminology, will do well to give, in as summary a manner as may be, the stages of the progress it describes from Archimedes through Galileo and Newton to Faraday, Garnot, Maxwell, Roentgen, Gibbs, so as to leave itself plenty of time to make sure that the hearers know what the author means by "creative coördination," and to read keystone passages from the last three chapters. Without some such plan as this, a paper might easily lose itself in attempts to condense the first two-thirds of the book, and reach the conclusions panting, with no time left. Let the paper give the hearer an idea of what the book is working toward, and a strong impulse to read for himself and find out by what processes it comes to these conclusions. At least that is one way in which it is possible for a non-scientist to introduce this work to others, and if it be objected that only a scientist should deal with this book at all, it may be replied that it is addressed to the general public and readily understandable by anyone who reads English and is willing to think.

As for current fiction, an excellent plan for its study and discussion by groups has been worked out by the Institute of Current Literature, Harvard Square, Cambridge, Mass., in "Creative Reading," a course sent by mail twice a month. In each number one current novel and one book of non-fiction is analyzed according to a simple, sensible plan, used each in his own fashion by a number of well-known critics. A long list of these is promised; the editor-in-chief, Professor Robert Rogers, has already reviewed "The Old Countess," Emily Newell Blair had "Death Comes for the Archbishop" last month, and in the current number I have one on "Meanwhile," in which for once I have space enough to say all I have to say about a book. Having developed under necessity a technique in getting it all into one sentence, I felt in this review like the family goldfish dropped into the bathtub. Readers of this column often ask me for advice on detailed reading-courses for current literature—this applies lately to the club in Santa Barbara and the one in Georgia, and I have walked wide of most of the printed ones, but this series of lectures-in-print I believe has real usefulness.

Since we have permitted ourselves the dangerous word "ideal," here is another inquiry that uses it. M. K., Detroit, Mich., is an adopted citizen of this country; "still breathing the acquired conception that this is a land of materialism, of dollar worship,

of steel-hearted people," a notion nourished by the atmosphere with which he is surrounded, and the "trades" of his former countrypeople on American culture and civilization. "I am unconsciously aware of a better America, a spiritual America, that could easily be compared with any of those that attack my new, adopted country. To find entrance into the America of thought and ideals and spiritual awakening, this is my quest."

Steering neatly between the twin rocks of too-good and too-bad, "The Rise of American Civilization," by Charles and Mary Beard (Macmillan), should give a student an idea of the real America as viewed in the light of her past. Someone lately wrote to ask if I carried out my promise to read every word of this: yes; and in five days. Follow this with the most lucid statement of her present situation, André Siegfried's "America Comes of Age" (Harcourt, Brace). Get a copy of each of the volumes of Mark Sullivan's delightful records of our middle distance, "Our Times" (Scribner), and treat the work as a lucky-bag into which to dip, sure of finding something significant; a foreign-born citizen will not get the fun out of it that comes from being a middle-aged native, but he will learn a great deal. And after that—after that I leave the matter to the scouts of this department. What are the novels, for instance, that show us the America of the spirit, the land of thought and ideals and awakening? Come now, I will give a copy of James Boyd's "Marching On" (Scribner) for a list of novels as good as that is for giving an insight into the psychology of a period, including this present period of ours.

SEVERAL inquirers, among them D. A. K., Brooklyn, and M. T., Geneseo, N. Y., ask for a Christmas play that may be used for or made into an evening's entertainment, given by young people large and small. In the second of Montrose Moses's collections for young actors, "Another Treasury of Plays for Children" (Little, Brown), may be found the charming revue called "Make Believe," by A. A. Milne; it is also in paper (French) but the collection is a good book to keep if one has anything to do with entertainments. The Milne fantasia was given at the Lyric in Hammersmith; one finds upon the list of grown-up actors the inimitable Hermione Baddeley, and in another scene Jean Cadell, who took this town by storm in "At Mrs. Beam's" at the Theatre Guild. The play is so flexible that almost any use could be made of it. In "Why We Celebrate," seven plays for holidays by Marjorie Woods (French), there is one called "The Christmas Angel" that could be made the nucleus of a much longer entertainment. "The Toy Shop," by Percival Wilde, is published in one little volume by Baker of Boston: it is for twelve people, of whom three double: there is an effective but not difficult transformation scene, and the general atmosphere of fantasy and tenderness is most appropriate to the season. Most of the parts should be taken by older children—unless the little ones have real talent—and the play is complete in itself and should not be tinkered with.

E. A. W., Vancouver, B. C., asks how Lord Beaconsfield pronounced his name. I never heard of anything but Beckonsfield, but E. A. W. says that the Century Dictionary gives the name of the village as either this or Bekkonsfield, and upon consulting Mackey's "Pronunciation of 10,000 Proper Names" (Dodd, Mead), I find them both given. This inquirer says that she has stood for Bekkonsfield and that all resident Englishmen in her locality call it Beckons "and add crushingly that they ought to know!" It might make for amity if they both pronounced it Disraeli.

C. O. L., asks for a book in which the modern novel is compared with that of the nineteenth century.

THE method of E. M. Forster's "Aspects of the Novel" (Harcourt, Brace), is to consider novels of these periods simultaneously rather than consecutively—as forming each a part of the body of living literature. He quotes, for instance, at the same time from "Tristram Shandy" and from a novel by Virginia Woolf, from Samuel Richardson side by side with Henry James, from "Mr. Polly" and from "Great Expectations" in the same breath. This is worth, so far as I am concerned, a ton of more formal comparisons.



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