HILLIS ON THE NEW ERA

The Poets and Essayists as the Prophets of Better Times.

A NEW SPIRIT IN LITERATURE.

The Works of Modern Authors as Inspirations to Higher Ideals, Better Conditions—The Qualities of the Seer and Religious Teacher.

BROOKLYN, June 4.—Rev. Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis preached on "The New Times and Poets and Essayists as Prophets of a New Era." The following was his text: "In the last days saith God, I will pour out of my spirit on all flesh; your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams, and my handmaidens shall prophesy" (Acts ii, 17).

Therefore Great Pan is not dead. Therefore morals are not stationary, inspiration is not ancient history and the Bible is not closed. Men have been telling us that God once pitched his tents close beside the tents of Abraham and Moses. In those faroff days he made friends with each sage and seer. But it is said centuries have passed since the divine form withdrew from the earthly scene. And, lo, comes this divine overture! God's wine is freshly poured. Each is to be a newborn bard. Inspiration is to speak in each voice, as spring bubbles in each lark's throat. Before the dullest eyes the vision splendid dawns. Each day is to be deluged with divinity. Rifts are made in the clouds, signals are hung over the battlements, voices from the sky come and keep coming. Each man is challenged to make ready for a divine invasion. And God is not of old, but is as new as the last apple blossom, as fresh as the last bud or babe. The divine dew is not burned off the grass, the divine light has not faded from the sky, the rustle of divine garments is still in the ear.

What God was he is. What he did he does. What he said he says. It is little that of old he helped Moses if he no longer helps men. The strength of our vineyards is not that once the sun warmed the Valentian hills. The clusters ripen because the all maturing sun comes today and keeps coming. It is much that God spake to man centuries ago, but it is more that, while he still speaks, the poets and patriots muse and the sacred fires burn. To our generation he comes pouring out his heart in tidal waves, making each man a sage, each youth a seer, each handmaiden a prophet of better days and higher things.

New Eras Bring New Inspiration.

Today everybody is saying God is ancient history. Gone forever the age of poetry and romance and heroism. No more Dantes! No more Shakespeares! Genius has forsaken the temple. Hollow eyed, she haunts the market place. Science is cold and dead. Ours is the age of humdrum and realism. At home ex-President White tells us Emerson and Lowell and Longfellow are gone and have left no successors. Abroad Frederick Harrison mourns for Browning, whose torch, falling, flickered out. Tennyson, rising in a heavenly chariot out of the temple of song, forgot to cast his mantle upon some waiting Elisha, but carried the divine garment into the realm beyond the clouds. In music Wagner is dead, dust is thick upon his harp, and the new music does but re-echo the old melody. In fiction Howells is sure that the rosy tints of idealism have faded out, leaving only the old gray morn. "It only remains for us," says the art critic, "to copy the nymphs and the madonnas of old." "The age of Horace Greeley and the molding of communities has gone," echoes the journalist. "Let us be content to report the facts of life."

No more eloquence in statesmanship, for the Websters and Clays and Lincolns have passed away. No more oratory at the bar; henceforth only moldy precedents. No more passion in the pulpit, for Beecher and Brooks have no successors. No more liberty in theology, for saith some general assembly: "In Wesley or Calvin God reached his limits. He is unequal to another Augustine. The book of theology is closed. Henceforth if any man adds unto or takes away from our confession, let his name be taken out of the book of ecclesiastical life." No more creative work, only copying, annotating and criticising. The divine resources, ever generous to men of yesterday, have no full tides for all flesh today. Therefore simism proclaims exhaustion in the infinite. Conservatism becomes atheistic. God is bound up in manuscripts, as Lazarus was wrapped in grave clothes. But God is a seed, not a dying leaf. God is a rosy dawn, not a falling star. God is a flaming sun, not the cestre many that describes it. God is a living voice, not the creed that explains him. God is flaming, eternal truth, not the manuscripts in which some student once wrote.

New Times and New Men.

In a world like ours it might not to seem strange that God hath kept his best wine of civilization until the last of the feast. Everything in nature and history proclaims this as his working principle. Science tells us that our earth, now waving with harvests from Maine to Oregon, began its history as cold, dead rock. Slowly the scant soil grew deep. Huge billows of fire melted down the granite peaks; the glaciers ground down the bowlders; the summers and winters pulverized great stones. And when the scant plant life began it carried forward this unfinished work. Each bush shook down its leaves, each tree gave its trunk to decay, the clouds gave rain, the snows their gases, until at last the soil became rich and deep and earth was all garnished with fields and forests. And the animal life, too, began at nothing and increased in kind and dignity. After the snail that crawled came the bird that flew, the beast that walked, the deer that ran, and, last of all, man, the lord of all. And society also moved from the little to the large, and the poor to the rich. Slowly man's hut journeyed toward the house, his forked stick toward the steam plow, his babbling speech toward the orator's eloquence, his smoking altars toward the glorious temple, the whistler's notes toward the deep toned organ, the reign of force toward the rule of right. And each individual life does but re-emphasize the principle.

The youth begins indeed with rushing tides of hope and inspiration, but moving on toward his maturity the freshness and innocence of his earlier days do not die out, but the morning splendor strengthens into the richer, fuller noon. Surveying history, the scholar sees that the centuries have not been growing darker, drearier and worse. Man's march has been upward and forward until our earth is all afire with a glow that burns brighter and brighter. Society is not like Wordsworth's child that came trailing clouds of glory that died out into the light of common day. Man did not begin with a great storehouse filled with treasure. Mankind began with very scant resources and slowly moved on toward these days, when society's granaries are well nigh overflowing. Each new era brings new inspirations. God's method always is to surprise men by bringing forth the best wine at the last of the feast. Each new age makes the old one seem dark, even as the sun makes the electric light cast a shadow.

The Qualities of the Seer.

Now, if God hath pledged to society new prophets for new emergencies, what are the signs of their coming? What go we out to see? If we ask history to instruct us, we shall see that every prophet foretelling new times has had three characteristics. He is a seer and sees clearly. He is a great heart and feels deeply. He is a hero and dares valiantly. God has given vision and outlook to every Moses and Elijah, and with instant skill they have laid the finger upon the diseased spot in the social life. But it is not enough that the seer has the vision that seers. Kate can describe, Bierce can picture, Howells can photograph. But these shed no tears and feel no heartache. They paint, but do not pity. With a dream poetically of words Gibbon caused the Roman centuries to pass before each reader. The mind of this great historian worked with the precision of a logical engine—cold, smooth and faultless. But Carlyle's eloquence is logic set on fire. What his mind saw his heart also felt. All the woe and pathos and tragedy of the French revolution swept in billows through him and broke his heart. Gibbon worked in cold, white light. Carlyle dipped his pen in his heart's blood. Therefore Carlyle's history is a scathing fire. But Gibbon's is only the picture of a fire—mere canvas and paint. Moreover, the prophet who is guided of God adds to the great mind and the sympathetic heart a third quality.

Each Paul and John, each Savonarola and Luther, has had a consuming passion for righteousness. Purity has been the crowning quality of all the epoch making men. For lack of righteousness Bacon lost his leadership. While his head was in the clouds his feet were in the mire. So great was Goethe's genius that he sometimes seems like one of living steels of the sun, but self indulgence took off his chariot wheels. Therefore the German poet has never been to his century all that Milton was to his age. During his life Goethe always kept two friends busy—the one weaving laurels for his brow, the other cleaning mud from his garments. But each Paul, striding the earth like a moral Colossus, braving kings, daring armies, toppling down thrones, setting nations free, has dwelt apart from iniquity. Daniel and John and Hampden seem like white clouds floating above the sloughs from which they rise. Great was the intellectual genius of Moses and Paul, of Cromwell and Hampden. Wondrous, too, their sympathy for human woe and pain! But their supremacy was chiefly moral genius. In them reason and affection dwelt close beside conscience and were bound up in one powerful personality, as light and heat are twisted together in each ray of the illuminating sun.

A New Spirit in Literature.

Now, if these are the signs of the prophets, then of a truth unto God sent seers unto our age and land. Certainly, or unmistakably, the divine gift has been poured out upon our writers. For writers are becoming prophets. A new spirit like a summer breeze has been breathing all our literature. In reading the works of Cicero or Horace one sighs for a clean and glad life, free from the taint of sensuality. But even English literature from the days of Fielding and Smollett down to Pope and Dryden, leads with scornful mirth for the uneducated poor. The works of Sidney Smith are filled with contemptuous allusions to the value of land.

Forth comes the English poets panged at the pang of all peasants, and these poets will have for hero no man less than a saint and deal chiefly with lords and kings. But lo! this the poet, with their woes and griefs have found a station in its verse. A new spirit has been poured forth. The new epic began with "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which a slave stood forth as a candidate for home worship. Then Dickens became the knight errant of each "Oliver Twist," and society learned to hear the litany of the children. Art literature comes permeated with sympathy for the under classes. Great writers pause to chat with drunkards upon the sidewalks with them, and make our literature the equal of people. Although the best of writers like Victor Hugo and George Eliot and Charles Kingsley and Walter Besant have come in to give their whole souls to softening the lot of humanity. Today all literature is working for the once despised and unbefriended classes. Moreover, books that have no enthusiasm for humanity are speedily sent to the garret. Society cares less and less for work of artistic finish and more and more for those filled with sympathy and enthusiasm for man. Gladstone says that there are no classics except those that preach the gospel of humanity to the poor. Verily our authors have become prophets!

The New Message of the Poets.

Our greatest thinkers also, like Ruskin and Carlyle, like Emerson and Tennyson, have arisen to be poets and have become seers. A divine something is making each lyre sacred. Our singers are giving themselves to lifting up those fugitive ideals, the pursuit of which makes man's progress. God has always staid the ages upon some hard or singer and breathed his purposes and providences through some parable and poem. And in our day he has caused Emerson to stand forth a veritable prophet, telling each individual that being is better than seeing; telling the orator and publicist that it is good for a man to have a hearing, but better for him to deserve the hearing; telling the reformer that the single man, who indomitably plants himself upon his divine instincts and there abides, will find the whole world coming around to him. And Carlyle also was God's prophet—a seer stormy indeed and impetuous, with a great hatred for lies and laziness and a mighty passion for truth and work; lashing our shams and hypocrisies; telling our materialistic age that it was going straight to the devil, and by a vulgar road at that; pointing out the abyss into which luxury and licentiousness have always plunged. Like Elijah of old, Carlyle loved righteousness, hated cant and did ever plead for justice and mercy and truth. His every sentence was laden with intellect and still more heavily laden with character. Verily, God gave the great Scotchman the prophet's vision, the seer's sympathy and scepter.

And here is English teaching us that life without industry is guilt; that industry without art is brutality; that men cannot eat stone nor drink steam; that the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah, the daintiest of ashes and the nectar of seas will feed no man's strength; that the making of self sufficing men is a business worthy the ambition of cities and states; that rich talent men returning to give an account of their stewardship can never thrust gold into God's hands; that man lives not alone by tending cattle and tending corn, but by the manna of God's wondrous words and works; that justice and truth and love alone are able to turn this desert earth into the gardens of God until all the valleys are covered with vineyards and the shouts of the happy multitudes ring around the wine press and the well. And here is our Lowell telling us that upon the open volume of the world, with a pen of sunshine and destroying fire, the inspired present is even now writing the annals of God, and that while the old Sinai, silent now, is only a common mountain, stared at by climbing tourists and crawled over by hammering geologists, there are tables of a new law among the factories and cities, where in this wilderness of sin each leader is a prophet of a new social order and where

> New ones slain keep fresh darling; time
> Rolls onward, leaving good in earth
> They march and sing still and onward,
> Who would keep abreast of truth.
> Lo, before us gleams her temple!
> We meanwhile, like pilgrims tired,
> Lean in our shallower and stoop boldly
> through the desert winter's night
> Nor attempt the future's portal with the
> past's blood rusted key.

The Religious Element in Machinery.

If now we examine the tendency of invention and the mechanical arts, we shall find that even tools have become evangelists and machines prophets of a new day. From every quarter come voices foretelling an age of wealth and happiness and comfort. Many feel that we are upon the threshold of new and wondrous mechanical discoveries. Already science has fashioned 60 steel slaves for every family. Edison thinks the time is rapidly approaching when this number is to be increased to 200, but each tool is ordained of God for the betterment of mankind. Every time a river is enslaved a thousand men are set free. Every time an iron hand is mastered a thousand human muscles are emancipated. In nature God's machines are called natural laws. Man's natural laws are his machines, and while the new conveniences have brought no increase of happiness and comfort to the class they have done a thousandfold more for the poor. There never has been an age when the rich could not travel rapidly. But steam enables the poorest man to travel rapidly.

Always the rich could wear warm garments, but the loom gave soft raiment to the poor. Always the rich could buy books. In the tenth century the Countess of Anjou could give 200 sheep, one load of wheat, one load of rye and one load of millet for a volume of sermons written by a German monk. But the press has placed all the classics within the reach of the poorest. Chiefly it is invention refining the multitude through the diffusion of the beautiful. The time was when only the prince could afford a painting, but photography multiplies the masterpieces, and during the long winter evenings while the tired body rests, the illustrated paper carries the pyramids and temples and palaces and mountains and rivers of the earth to gratify the fascinated eye and mind. That is great in any once could well in painting or statue or cathedral is now offered free. It is splashed upon the fans, hung upon the walls, it adorns the tables, it enriches the chambers of affection, it has refined and sweetened the universal life.

Indeed the worldliness of today enjoys comforts that were the despair of caesars and princes of 300 years ago, and each new discovery seems set so much to bring power to the strong and rich to roll in the interests of the weak and helpless. As in the olden days Jesus Christ approved himself by preaching the gospel to the poor, so now every convenience clings in having received this divine sanction. The poems of today are ships and engines and reapers. Tools free the mind to books, free the taste and imagination, free the affection. Thereby comes the day of universal happiness and civilization of which the poet dreams, for which the philanthropist works. Like the prophets, God is now baptizing inventors and their tools with the spirit of service. Some Watt perhaps, with a new method of transit, making it possible for the dwellers in tenements to journey into the country ten miles in ten minutes for 5 cents, will, through sunshine and fresh air, cleanse and gospelize the cellars and the garrets of our slum districts, for tools are become divine evangelists.

The Prophet in the Pulpit.

It ought to go without saying that the preachers are prophets divine. It would be shameful indeed if they, instead of being seers and living forces, should fade into emblematic figures at christenings, weddings and funerals or become mere guardians for theological dogmas. Some one has said that every new era has been created by a preacher. Guizot insists that Paul did more for free institutions than any man who ever stood on western soil. Froude says it was not the scholar Erasmus, but the preacher Luther, who created the reformation. It was a prophet of Florence that turned the city of art into the city of God.

Cromwell's letters tell us that the Puritan preachers destroyed the divine rights of kings, that citadel of falsity and cruelty and crime. It was Robertson of Brighton that first said that man was never justified by faith until faith had made man just. It was a preacher, Barnett, who went to live in Whitechapel road and in that wilderness of ignorance and misery founded a social settlement to which came students from Oxford and Cambridge to give themselves to the poor. It was a preacher, General Booth, with his emigration schemes, his colonies, his shelters, who devised a means by which to fight the black floods of heathenism and ignorance and sin.

It was a preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, who, when men said that evolution would destroy the Bible, drove out fear and doubt and showed us that the theory of evolution insured the immortality of the Bible and the permanency of Christianity.

Life Grows in Richness.

From different viewpoints we have seen that in every realm God is causing life to expand and take on increasing breadth and richness. Naturally, therefore, man's religion is assuming new proportions, greater reasonableness and higher ideals of service. As our age journeys away from Bacon's theft, but gladly carries forward his philosophy, as society left behind the poaching of Shakespeare, but joyfully carried forward his poetry, so the church is journeying away from the falsities of the medievalism, to carry forward the sweetness and light of Jesus Christ. Gone forever the hideous dogmas that tortured our fathers! Gone forever the scholasticism that confused satan with God! Never again will the cross mean pacifying the wrath of an angry being. Never again will a man be asked to debase his reason in order to exalt his heart. The church is exchanging the worship of the past for the heritage of the present, the old philosophies for the new living Christ. We have already seen the shapes of mental and moral beauty increase in number, we have seen our youth journeying toward the schoolhouse, our homes growing beautiful and happy; our workers moving in the morning hours toward shop and store, carrying in their hands the emblems of knowledge; new and nobler forms of literature coming from the rapid press, and now it is given us to behold Christianity moving forward with increasing breadth and having the might and majesty of a great river.

Already this divine teacher hath touched poverty and clothed it with power; hath touched marriage and surrounded it with romance and love; hath touched the soldier and turned him into a hero and patriot, and now he is here to touch work and wages for making them sacraments of human fellowship. He is also here to enrich each life with new and impressive forms of mental and moral beauty. He offers man new powers and new impulses, for as the keel of the ship in the trade wind that sweeps it on and the joy of the sailor in the harbor toward which he moves so the dignity and majesty of life are in the divine motives that sweep the soul upward and in the sublime display toward which the soul moves. In days gone by this divine one put justice into law, chivalry into politics, love into letters and planted immortal hope upon our graves. Having girded the loins of old for their tasks, he steps into this new era, to continue the line of prophets and heroes. He offers to make specific succession a sublime fact. He bids each youth stand in the line of heroes and seers, with Savonarola and Hampden and Lincoln. Let us remember with Merlais Jones that we are Saxons and therefore sons of Cromwell and Milton; that we are Puritans, and therefore sons of the pilgrim fathers, of Phillips and Webster; that we are Christians, and therefore the sons of God. Forget not your noble ancestry, the dignity of your succession. Let the life be deluged with divinity until God shall make all things new.

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No Written Sermons Allowed.

The students of Lincoln university have been informed by the Chester presbytery that for after no trial sermon preached from a manuscript will be accepted.—Presbyterian Journal.

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

Gems Gleaned From the Teachings of All Denominations.

Find the secret of the lily, and you will be in the library of heaven.—Rev. Dr. Myers, Denver.

Sympathy.

Sympathy is the cement that binds together individual men and women into association.—Rabbi David Philipson, Hebrew, Cincinnati.

Worth of One Word From Heaven.

One pure word from heaven is worth more than the cattle on a thousand hills or the gold in them.—Rev. R. E. Bennett, Episcopalian, Cincinnati.

Test of Faith.

Your faith is tested by your attitude to God in his relation of help to you in every circumstance of life that affects body and soul—Dr. Trumbull Lee, Presbyterian, Cincinnati.

God's Plans.

God's plans and providences may seem zigzag, but they are speeding like arrows to that one faroff event to which the whole creation moves.—Rev. Dr. G. R. Robbins, Baptist, Cincinnati.

Benefit of Predictions.

Those who best serve their fellows are those who most clearly see and most truly declare what the future will bring, good or evil, as outcome of present activities.—Rev. David Utter, Unitarian, Denver.

Childhood Faith.

It is not an easy thing in this world, as we find it, to retain the sweet and simple faith of childhood. But he who does is a victor over doubt and a victor worthy of heaven's fete.—Rev. Dr. Harmon D. Jenkins, Kansas City, Mo.

Eternal Godlikeness.

Heaven is more than streets of gold, and walls of jasper, and gates of pearl and choirs of angels, and reunion with loved ones lost awhile—it is eternal godlikeness.—Rev. W. A. Ferguson, Methodist, Philadelphia.

Word of God.

The word of God is in the love of man for man, the love of woman for her children, the acts and words of all the good and brave and holy of all the ages.—Rev. Dr. William S. Rainsford, Episcopal, New York City.

Riches of Christ's Fullness.

The light of the sun may fail, the waters of the ocean may be dried up, but the riches of Christ's fullness are the same yesterday, today, and forever. "Giving doth not impoverish him, nor withholding enrich him."—Rev. E. Duckworth, Episcopal, St. Louis.

Only True Man.

The only true man is the one who looks out of our eyes, the one of whom we have taken so little account, the one whose highest aspirations we have sacrificed in order to acquire a lesser, an inferior, satisfaction.—Rev. George Hepworth, Congregationalist, New York City.

Simpler Church Dress.

I believe that if the rich in the United States would adopt simpler church dress it would certainly not diminish their piety and would in all probability increase the disposition for religious observance on the part of the poor.—Rev. Madison C. Peters, Reformed, New York.

Truest Happiness.

The truest happiness comes when, in addition to those motives that center in self, there is the motive to render a great service to the time and generation in which we live, starting a stream of influence that will bless the world after our names are forgotten.—Rev. Richard E. Sykes, Universalist, Denver.

Life of the Bible.

The Bible will live as does its divine author. It will go on conquering and to conquer in all the ages to come. "The grass" of infidel eloquence withereth, "the flower" of agnostic philosophy "fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever."—Rev. Dr. R. S. MacArthur, Baptist, New York.

Wise Men Have Faith In Their Work.

The wise man is he who has faith in his work, whatever it may be, humble or high, conspicuous or obscure, and who believes that since worlds began to be, great destiny was waiting to have just that work done for him. I hate the superficial distinctions that call some professions honorable and others menial and base. Everything that is toil at all, honestly and conscientiously done, is necessary and honorable. But a man must have faith in himself to look at it that way. In the surroundings and environments there may be little romance, less beauty, no inspiration. It may all be dull and monotonous to the flesh, but let a man irradiate that common toil with the light of his faith in it and in himself and the place upon which he stands is holy ground.—Rev. Dr. J. E. Roberts, Church of This World, Kansas City.

How Truth Must Be Won.

Truth is God's daughter, and she must be wooed with all one's soul in order to be won. It is not sufficient to listen to men's talk about her, to look at her from afar, to learn by tradition about her and to accept and retail all men's stories and opinions concerning her. The divine wisdom is the fairest of women, according to the conception of the Book of Proverbs. Think you that God's daughter will manifest herself to the idle, the careless, the indifferent or to those that think they know her sufficiently well already; who are content to know of her at second or third hand, or do you think that she will disclose her beautiful face and glorious form and speak her all conquering words to a mere traditionist, who is content to know about her through the transmitted formulas of a throng of generations? No, a thousand times, no! God's daughter will give herself only to him who will search for her above all things else, who will follow her wherever she goes, who will show by every motion that he cannot live without her, who will live for her alone, who will fight for her, who will suffer for her, who will die for her.—Rev. Dr. Charles A. Briggs, Episcopalian, New York.

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