

# BOOKS OF THE GREAT PREACHERS

**"MODERN Masters of Pulpit Discourse" is the careful title given by Professor William Clever Wilkinson, of the University of Chicago to a book of appreciations and criticisms of twenty of the greatest of those masters in America, England and France. The title covers both great pulpit orators and great teachers, or students who have distinguished themselves from each other the author well illustrates in his criticism of that popular idol, Henry Ward Beecher, who was one of the world's greatest pulpit orators, but not a great preacher, according to the high ideals of the students of his course. Spurgeon is here estimated to be a greater preacher, though less an orator than Beecher. These two head their respective classes. The valuation of Spurgeon is ventured that he ranks as the greatest preacher since the days of the apostles, and a sentence used about this man's greatness is good to quote here for the purpose of early calling attention to the worth of the subject of this book: "To be the greatest of preachers is greater than to be the greatest of orators."**

We are told that Spurgeon possessed in full measure every natural qualification for being a great statesman—especially that special qualification, the orator's gift. "But he chose wisely to devote his life to the study of the Bible, and a sentence used about this man's greatness is good to quote here for the purpose of early calling attention to the worth of the subject of this book: "To be the greatest of preachers is greater than to be the greatest of orators."

The book is to exalt the art of using language for its superlative ends—the binding of men in that bond we name religion. To say that about Professor Wilkinson's work is to give you the heart of the whole matter. It is in that feature of his performance that his heart is. He is a lover of language, and in all his study of the great preachers their personalities, their influences, their powers, the permanence of their work for Christ, their faults, blemishes, deficiencies, are chiefly estimated as they revealed themselves by their spoken or written word. This in a measure may be a right way of judging all men, but in the case of preachers it seems true that in a peculiar sense. For them to so devote their lives and lives them out that the very essence of their best obedience to their Divine Master will in natural outflow be given to his world in their pulpit utterance, or their reported word for the sick or absent from the pew, is a work so close to their souls that their more or less perfect performance and all the trait and manner and individuality of it make an image of their mental selves by which they should more willingly be judged than ought else that men can.

Whatever else they may add to their work they must be supremely emulators of the prophet, "greatest among those born of women," who defined himself by saying, "I am a voice," and imitators of that Teacher who said, "I am the Word." All through the book, like a gold thread in a varied texture, goes this author's clew to men's character—the use they make of the gift of speech.

One of the reasons given for this kind of criticism is thus explained by the writer, when he is talking about Phillips Brooks:

"Do I seem to be applying a literary standard to a man who is a preacher rather than a literary? I acknowledge the existence here of a valid distinction. But I insist there is true ethical, and even religious, teaching force in what I have elsewhere called 'strict literary criticism.' The man whose work is here pointed out. And this series of criticisms had a faithful and serious aim to help make the prevalent practice of the pulpit, even in subordinate things, better and better. It is not the aim of the author."

The book is perhaps as useful as a study of literary values as it is of great preachers. It would be well worth reading by any one who loved the powers and beauties of language, even though his interest in religion or biography were too little for the title of the work to attract him. The author not only gives you accounts of the methods of great masters of language, but he writes masterfully himself. If reader felt no urge to learn about Phillips Brooks, Richard Salter Storrs, Newman, Spurgeon, Eugene Bersier, Moody, Pere Felix, Alexander McLaren, or John Hall, but did delight in examples of consummate art in expression, he could enjoy this book for its extracts from the great discourses, and its own word mastery in describing them.

This predilection of the author for "the literary consideration," and his keen search for verbal beauties and beauties, does not set aside from our realization the firm purpose which he holds to throughout the volume of writing criticisms of these masters of discourse from the point of view of a man with strong and clear-cut religious convictions. We can get a good idea of where he places himself for this purpose by beginning with the paragraph at the very beginning of the book: "No persuasion enters more deeply into my mind, my conscience, and my heart, than the persuasion that I press the message chiefly needed by church and country when I present Paul as the highest human model for all preachers, and in especial when I most commendably present him as, above all things else, the apostle of obedience to Christ."

WHILE MOTHER SLEEPS BY UTAMARO FROM IMPRESSIONS OF UKIYO-YE

Wilkinson makes this criticism—a criticism whose strength resides partly in its restraint:

"When the mind recovers itself and becomes undazzled from the blinding effect of such sudden magnificence, it perceives clearly that here is a highly rhetorical expression of what, throughout, is Mr. Beecher's governing thought, namely, that love as a sentiment, an emotion, in distinction from love as obedience to God, is the ideal to aim at. I say nothing against this thought; I need indeed say nothing whatever about it, except that it is not the ideal presented in Scripture."

So throughout the book in these criticisms of men's religion the thought of obedience is strongly emphasized, and in criticizing their language his belief is made plain that in the use of words reverence for literary excellence is closely bound up with true ethics and genuinely of manhood.

The work is written both for preachers and for the general reader. Any one who cares for literature for letters' own sake will enjoy every page. One of the best uses of reading it will be that he who does so will likely gain thereby in capacity to appreciate the thoughtful sermons they may hear. Fine things in the way of pulpit masterpieces are often heard unappreciated. His difficult they are to do to be perfect in obedience to religious law, and to be so reverent of the truth of good taste in the language that conveys the thought with sonorous persuasion to ears held to attention by the speaker's skill—all the aptitude and the preparation that this task involves will be more clearly realized in the pews after our attention has been called by a keen and honest critic and an ardent lover of our language to the beauties and also the flaws that exist in the work even of the world's great masters of pulpit discourse. Sometimes when we listen, let us remember the sentence from John Hall, the great preacher whose extraordinary endowment of common sense is said to be glorified into genius, and whose distinguishing trait of character and of language is genuineness: "Gentlemen, we ministers are not heathen philosophers finding out things; we are expositors of a revelation that settles things."

Perhaps as fair a sample as can be given in brief space of Wilkinson's work in portraying the pastors for us is the following, in which, speaking of the great preacher, Pere Felix, he combines high praise with a little touch of adverse criticism—showing the one thing lacking in a truly great man:

"Hearing him preach was like seeing a saint crystallize. His matter seemed instinct with some spirit of life that moved it into perfect forms. Every sentence was a formulated thought—definite, clear, sharp, ultimate—like a crystal. The whole discourse was a glittering mass of crystallization. . . . How do I account for this strange phenomenon—the absence of all school and imperial intellect, the electric touches of those human hearts, the vitreous non-conductors of his ecclesiastical . . . priest, celibate, Jesuit, how solitary he was! I could have pitied my human brother; but in the pride of schooled and imperial intellect, he wanted nothing that the heart had to offer."

The best chapter in the book is an appreciation of Eugene Bersier, whose work is estimated to be more likely to take a permanent place in literature than that of any of the other preachers of modern times. His sermons, either in translation, or better, in the French, are urgently recommended by the author for the reading of all preachers who would excel by studying the best models. Let us imagine him, whose words are to go furthest down the ages, to be in the pulpit, while we listen for moments to a fragment of his discourse:

"Consider, from this point of view, the manner in which Jesus Christ trains and prepares his disciples. I have just been recalling to what moral height he summons them; I have now to remark with what admirable patience he conducts them thither. It is impossible to think of it without a stir of profound emotion; never was human nature treated with such respect. . . . You find delicacies the most exquisite, words that warn without wounding, that enlighten without dazzling, that humble, then revive, without even once despising. Such passages as these:—

"Faint & Wagnalls Company, New York; \$1.50.

**Picture Is the Story's Central Theme.**

An odd and very well told story is that of "The Weird Picture," by John R. Carling. It is also well illustrated by Cyrus Cuneo. Its being a good story about an artist would naturally incite the enthusiasm of an illustrator to do good work in



ILLUSTRATIONS FROM BOOKS OF THE WEEK. ONE FROM A WORK ON JAPANESE ART, ANOTHER FROM "THE WEIRD PICTURE" AND TWO SKETCHES FROM A VOLUME DEALING WITH HORSES.

helping the author, and so Cuneo puts into the book some impressive samples of his craftsmanship. It is to be playfully noted, however, that he wisely refrains from attempting to give any representation of the "weird picture" around which, and the criminal method of its production, the story is formed. It was well to leave that bit of uncomfy canvas to the imagination of the reader. The whole novel is cleverly arranged to give the imagination power to conceive the force of the realism in that painting and to picture to the mind's eye the startling effect it would have upon certain persons connected with its execution, and the awful fascination it had for the artist who had committed a crime to make its realism possible and who worshipped this work of his own hands as his one great life and the thing that had brought him fame and fortune.

What the author's words can do toward depicting this masterpiece of art may be slightly suggested by the quotation of a fragment from the story, whose whole narrative focuses attention upon that remarkable brush work of the half-mad devotee to his profession. The artist who paints it is a monomaniac on the subject of realism in art, and to his mind no sacrifice should be allowed to bar the way to a superlative success in it. It is represented that the young painter, Vasari, has only executed mediocre work, until his friends are astonished by his production of an extraordinary picture, called "The Fall of Caesar." Here is the writer's conveyance of the impression the work of art made upon a visitor to the Vasari gallery:

"What the visitor first sees on entering the apartment devoted to this masterpiece is a wide doorway at the farther end, draped on each side with curtains, between which can be seen a court, apparently open to the sky, since glimpses of a heavenly blue are visible between lofty columns. By one of these columns rises the statue of a warrior mounted on a pedestal, and at the base, with narrow beams of sunlight streaming over it, lies a prostrate form, which requires no second glance to certify that it is a dead body, especially as the blood-stained weapons that have accomplished the deed are scattered on the pavement around."

The spectator hurries forward, and on arriving at the end of the apartment can hardly be persuaded that no doorway exists and that the whole scene is simply a picture painted on canvas. Yet so it is. . . . The picture has every appearance of being an actual scene beyond the room in which the spectator stands, and in which some terrible tragedy has taken place. The illusion is perfect. . . . The fallen Caesar with his toga wrapped partly around him, the statue of Pompey rising above, a tessellated pavement of glistening blue, here and there a discarded dagger, columnar architecture in the background—such are the simple elements presented by this work of art."

and he mingles with the love of her personality the desire to possess her person as model for his masterpiece. He is half-mad with the aspiration to do genius work, and he wants no hired model, but a beautiful, pure woman to pose for him in his coveted own-created masterpiece. His infatuation to study the peculiar beauty of this rare girl for model to picture to the mind's eye the startling effect it would have upon certain persons connected with its execution, and the awful fascination it had for the artist who had committed a crime to make its realism possible and who worshipped this work of his own hands as his one great life and the thing that had brought him fame and fortune.

Excitement born of the coming visit caught her up like a leaf. Prattling on, she moved swiftly into the long room. In the center of the room the girl paused, and, as if impelled, threw herself into a pose of wonderful beauty, every bone every inch of white flesh set, as it were, into visible expression of a poetic thought. Her long eyes closed into a mere gleam, her throat, her lips parted, and trembled, she talked on in broken Japanese phrases, uttering them in rhythms, which subtly related to the gestures of her body. . . . Those American girls could never dance. I will dance the dance of the Sun Goddess and of morning, because my friend is coming."

There are so many schools of Japanese art, we are told, that a lengthy catalogue would be required to enumerate the masters who inaugurated them. For as soon as an artist in Japan developed talent he founded a school, and his descendants had to adhere to the principles which he inculcated. The school of Ukiyo-Ye did an international work in preparing the Japanese people for intercourse with other nations. Its pictures created interest in foreign countries and promoted the desire to travel. The great master of that school is Hokusai, and his work is better known to Americans than any other Japanese art. He is the last and most brilliant figure of a progress of more than two centuries—the exuberant and exquisite product of a time of profound peace and untroubled refinement. He died in 1848 at the age of 89 years, and continued to increase his powers up to that advanced age.

Out of his works could be extracted a good item for the jokers about Oskelism. He did not need to be choleric, as at the age of 89 years, and continued to increase his powers up to that advanced age.



FROM RIDING AND DRIVING

I was fifty I had published an infinity of designs, but all I have produced before the age of seventy is not worth taking into account. At seventy-five I have learned a little about the real structure of nature. In consequence when I am eighty I shall have made more progress. At ninety I shall penetrate the mystery of things; at a hundred I shall certainly have reached a marvelous stage. To this he signs himself "The Old Man Mad About Drawing." It is said to be easy to believe that had he lived to great age his prophetic of continued progress would have been fulfilled.

Another very popular artist of that school was Utamaro. Although of astonishing versatility, he was essentially the painter of women. A sample of his work called "White Mother Sleeps" is the cutest cut in the pretty little book. The artist is represented as holding court in a gayly decorated barge, surrounded by a bevy of beauty paying homage to his genius. Alas, his intended great work, Modesta, the Martyr, which story has proved, his undoing, his worship of beauty, search for models, and pleasure yielding led him to the lowest depths, and he could do art work no more.

Utamaro planned schemes of color and devised harmonies—themes which, improvised upon and endlessly imitated by his artist confreres, filled his own countrymen with delight and ravished the hearts of Parisian painters. So great was his influence on the color-sense of the art world that Theodore Child, writing in 1892, said: "The Paris salon of to-day as compared with the salon of ten years ago is like a May morning compared with a dark November day."

(Paul Elder & Co., San Francisco, \$1.60.)

**Scenes of Romance Laid in Japan.**

Four years ago Sidney McCall put forth his book called "Truth Dexter," and the four years since then he has devoted to the careful writing of his new book, "The Breath of the Gods," which story has for its heroine the Japanese girl, Yuki. The book is not essentially a study of Japanese life, but much of that is incidental to it because of the strong scenes of the romance being laid there. The author states that most of the remarks, questions and speculations put into the mouths of the peasants and servants of the book were overheard by himself. An idea of the famous dancing of the little Japanese girls is given in this bit of description: Yuki says, "She protected me and would not let me dance till my heart began to sing. She knew that real dancing, like poetry, should only come when your heart sings—not just because you are requested. Sometimes in homesickness I would dance, sometimes in joy of spring-time flowers."

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(Little, Brown & Co., Boston; \$1.50.)



FROM RIDING AND DRIVING

of the book treats of the history and training of the horse. Much painstaking instruction is given as to the art of equitation, and riding of many kinds is studied—road, cavalry, racing, plains riding, hurdle jumping, the management of the double rein, all come in for a share. The writer says:

"When the subject of riding is broached our minds naturally turn to Kentucky. From a long line of good horsemen the Kentuckian inherits a love for the animal and a talent for riding, and from childhood he is accustomed to the saddle. His work in breeding and in training has placed the country under a debt of gratitude."

Anderson visited our cavalry post at Fort Riley, Kans., and he says the performance of our troops compared most favorably with similar movements he had witnessed with "crack" companies of European cavalry. The handsomest horse in the book is George Wilkes.

The section on driving covers the history, housing, harnessing and hitching of the horse, and the various methods of harnessing. The author's sentence of Mr. Collier's would be a good one for an English groom to practice uttering. There is an illustration opposite page 28, of the notorious "brush burr," an instrument of torture known to fashionable grooms, to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and to some horses who have by it been made to try to look gayer than they felt. They should be warily watched for by all the kindly breeders and in training has placed the country under a debt of gratitude."

Tandem driving is taught in the book, and there is a picture of a most covetable pony tandem team. Talking about training, Anderson says: "A lively colt is shy, suspicious and curious, easily amused and easily bored; by recognizing these characteristics and by correcting himself with reference to them the trainer will find success easy and agreeable."

(Macmillan Company, New York; \$2.)

**Epigrams in Books of Oscar Wilde.**

In writing an introduction to a collection of "Epigrams and Aphorisms" from the works of Oscar Wilde, recently published by John W. Luce & Co., Boston, George H. Moore gives this definition: "An epigram is the sublimate of genius. It is a crystallization from the commonplace. In its earliest form, indeed, it was but a mere writing upon a wall, but the modern epigram is distinct and its particular brilliancy. It embodies its very quintessence of the thoughts of the writer. The early Greek epigram did not aim at wit, or necessarily produce the feeling of surprise, which are essential characteristics of the modern one."

Sargent estimates Oscar Wilde as chief among English epigrammatists of modern times. A few of his witty sayings may be worth rescue from oblivion. Many of them display a brilliant but insane mind; too clever to be anything more than clever. Much of clever sounding cynicism is allowed to pass as brilliant because we believe the sayer of it only pretends his levity, and wills us to see in his superficial wit, but not his profoundest wisdom. Now we know that Wilde sincerely believed the cynicism that came from his lips and pen, and the wickedest of his wit was all his wealth of wisdom. However, one of his epigrams was this: "The value of an idea has nothing whatever to do with the sincerity of the man who expresses it." That may be a rapier twist calculated to disarm criticism. Here are a few more which may be worth saving in one's memory. The first of these is the worst, the last is the best, and the one in the middle is susceptible of two interpretations, and may be good or evil according to the spirit in which it is said, intended and acted upon.

art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital."

"The tragedy of old age is not that one is old, but that one is young."

"A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." (John W. Luce & Co., Boston.)

## Little Book With Cheerful Hero.

Tarkington is the best fellow in the little book called "The Wing of Love," by Katherine M. C. Meredith. Close to the end of the story we get this, "Tarkington was full of pluck. Always to him, as in the maddest throes of his youth, life was to fight on, and to laugh." A chapter about him is headed with this jingle:

"When a man's just glad plum through, God's pleased with him, same as you. A melancholy friend asked who was the secret of his content and gets this response: 'I'm happy. I have a right to be happy until I have committed some wrong. I'm not conscious of having done so, and I feel my right. It is temperamental, perhaps. Somehow I cannot suffer—somehow I am so sure that, in spite of what we do not understand—in spite of what you call the mystery of pain—all is well with the world.'"

It is a pleasant little story of Bohemian life in an attic. It is mixed of comedy and tragedy. There's a little widow in it, whose manuscripts always are returned and she has an interesting little child named Sappho. Three men in it love one girl in different ways. Tarkington is the best of them and he gets her.

## Notes and Comment About Writers.

It is interesting in connection with the present war to find in Prince Kropotkin's "Russian Literature" an account of Tolstoy's youthful military prowess. He lived through the three or four dreadful experiences of the defenders of Sebastopol. . . . He has the right to speak of war; he knows it from within. . . . Kropotkin points out the pertinent facts that Tolstoy "obstinately refused during the siege to become an officer of the staff, and remained with his battery in the most dangerous spot," and that, though he seems never again to have written verse, he at that time composed, in the usual meter and language of soldier's songs, a satirical song in which he described the blunders of the commanders which ended in the Balklava disaster."

The constant cry of the average American is that he has no time to read. He gulps his newspaper like a literary ananassa and leaves the books to his wife and children. Once a week he nibbles at the description of the day, but he has no time to read. We have it on good authority that huge editor presses and cotton gins are being installed in certain large publishing houses into which will be cast the usual meter and language of soldier's songs, a satirical song in which he described the blunders of the commanders which ended in the Balklava disaster."

The Reader Magazine for June contains the first installment of Meredith Nicholson's new story, "The House of a Thousand Candles," which will run through several numbers of the magazine. The story is conceived by a man who has had an opportunity of reading it to be by far the most vivid, intense and yirile novel Mr. Nicholson has produced. It is a story of Indiana, the home of the "Hoosier" and the scene is laid in the picturesque lake country of the Hoosier State. In plot, development and action the narrative is crisp, fresh and compelling and there can be no doubt that in his latest work the brilliant young author, "The Hoosier," has produced a story that will place his name well to the fore in the list of American writers of fiction. Howard Chandler Christy illustrates "The House of a Thousand Candles," a drawing in which by him for the first installment being the frontispiece of the June number of the Reader Magazine.

Writing of the beginning in The Theater magazine for June, Blanche Bates says: "Prior to the fateful night of September 17, 1894, when I made my debut, I was an energetic young person, whose sole aims and soul aims were to get 'the part,' and to do nothing for the theater, seldom saw a play, and wondered why my parents insisted upon staying on the stage. Actors, I thought, were really very common people. I tried to illuminate a kindergarten for a year, but when the year had dragged by, my superior informed me, oh so politely, that, perhaps, it might be just possible—my dazzling future might not be in a kindergarten."

The Simplon is the longest tunnel in the world, and has been finished in the face of tremendous difficulties, most of which were entirely unexpected, and many of which presented new problems for engineers. It extends from Brig in Switzerland to Iselle in Italy, a total length of a little over twelve and a quarter miles. The story of "The Simplon" has been written for the June Century by Deshaer Welch from authoritative personal investigation, and there will be plenty of illustrations from photographs to add to the interest of the article.

**BOOKS RECEIVED.**

IMPRESSIONS OF UKIYO-YE—By Dora Amsten. Paul Elder & Co., San Francisco.

EPIGRAMS AND APHORISMS—By Oscar Wilde. John W. Luce & Co., Boston.

HISTORY OF ALL NATIONS, VOL. VIII—John Henry Wright, editor. Lea Bros. & Co., New York.

ALASKA AND THE KLONDIKE—By John Scudder McLean. McClure, Phillips & Co., New York.

THE GARDEN OF THE COM-MUTER'S WIFE—By the author of "Barbara." Paper, Macmillan Company, New York.