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EDITORIALS

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A NINETEENTH CENTURY PROPHET OF TWENTIETH CENTURY CIVILIZATION

I.

THE prophet of progress is the way-shower of civilization. He moves in advance of his race along the highway of the ideal. He kindles beacon-fires that illumine the dark places and guide the millions from danger to safety; from the enslavement of privilege, the bondage of ignorance and superstition and from fruitless wandering in the wilderness of conventionalism, ancient thought and intellect-paralyzing and heart-chilling dogmas, to self-realization on the higher plane. His message awakens the sleeping Divine in men and nations. His appeal is from egoism to altruism, from selfish lust for personal power and wealth to a passion for righteousness that, realizing the solidarity of life, seeks happiness through the happiness, exaltation and well-being of other lives.

All pleasures obtained through selfish egoism, that disregard the rights of others, or secured at the expense of others' happiness, sooner or later will become Dead Sea fruit of ashes in the hands of their possessors; because in the getting the law of spiritual being has been violated and through this violation the wire, as it were, connecting the soul with the great Dynamo of spiritual life has been interfered with. Only so long as men and nations are in harmony with the great moral verities of love, justice, truth and righteousness can there be harmony or enduring growth. Herein lies the supreme secret of the ages.

On the other hand, all pleasures obtained by helping others into a larger, truer and finer life strengthen the individual or nation by

securing more perfect harmony with the spiritual Source and vitalizing Essence of the universe. The function of the prophet is to awaken man to a realization of the true meaning of life; to show him the eternal verities and impress their value upon his consciousness; to dethrone lawless egoism and enthrone love-illuminated duty in the house of life, and to reveal for man and nation the path that leadeth into the day.

II.

The nineteenth century was characterized by the utilitarian spirit. The age of iron, steam and electricity, of invention and unrivaled material advance, the golden age of physical science and critical investigation, was also rendered forever luminous by the number of prophets of progress who vitalized the thought of the world with messages instinct with spiritual virility. Some were pre-eminently awakeners, appealing to the sleeping conscience and calling men to recognize the august meaning of life, with its awful responsibilities and glorious possibilities. Others made the appeal direct to the reason and endeavored to show how the cause of justice and righteousness could be so conserved as to develop the best in man and protect the rights of all. Among these great prophets are Mazzini, Carlyle, Ruskin, Tolstoi, Garrison, Whittier, Emerson, Hugo, Henry George and Karl Marx. The last two prophets of economic emancipation undertook to secure for humanity the full fruition of the promise of democracy by complementing political enfranchisement with economic enfranchisement, so that humanity might in full degree realize the dream of the ages—the happiness and development of all the people under justice, freedom and fraternity. Henry George strove for economic emancipation through justice along individualistic lines. He endeavored to secure, by recognition of great basic and fundamental principles, equality of opportunities and of rights for all and special privileges to none, with the greatest possible freedom for the individual. Karl Marx strove to compass much the same object through systematic organization of democratic government, with the master aim of securing equal and exact justice for all by law and close organization. The two theories, both aimed at happiness for all under

justice, reflect, one the Greek idea of progress and happiness through exaltation of the unit; the other, the ancient Roman concept of peace, progress and happiness through exaltation of the state through law and organization, though of course in the ancient civilizations the modern enlightened concept of democracy or popular sovereignty did not obtain.

III.

It is not, however, of the nineteenth century prophets of economic progress, nor even of the apostles of politico-economic advance who by closely reasoned theories sought to lead the race to a higher vantage-ground, that we wish to write at the present moment. Before we can hope for the triumph of the noblest political and economic philosophy, we must awaken the conscience side of life. Self-love, self-desire, self-gratification on the animal plane, must give place to the demand of duty and the appeal of the spiritual verities. The conscience of the individual and the nation must be awakened to a realization of the great truth that no man liveth unto himself; that only through a recognition of the law of solidarity and the obligations it imposes can happiness or enduring progress be rendered possible.

Among the great awakeners of the nineteenth century, Mazzini, the apostle of Italian freedom and unity, occupies a prominent place. He was one of the most profoundly religious men of his age, yet no nineteenth century leader was freer from the thralldom of creed and dogma.

"I am neither Catholic nor Protestant," he wrote to Daniel Stern. "I recognize freely the greatness of those beliefs, the truth they have borne and that they still bear. But the future brings a grand religious transformation, and Protestantism and Catholicism will be only signs to mark the religious progress of the past. . . . The new church is to set free Collective Humanity; and it will have a collective precursor. A great crisis will come. Some nation will rise in the name of all, with Duty for its motto, and the grand church of the future will emerge on a declaration, not of rights, but of duties. This church, founded on unity

of faith and action—not on analysis, anarchy of creeds, protestantism—will contain a conception of the law of God broader than that of Christianity; and it will hold open to men the wide portals of the future. This church will be neither infallible nor intolerant. It will say 'Faith is sacred; heresy is sacred.' For faith represents the principles and authority of mankind; heresy the individual and his liberty."

He offended the scholasticism of the day by his bold declaration of faith in the people. "History shows us," he declares, "the unlearned ever the first to seize and comprehend through the heart's logic the newest and most daring truths of religion." And again he declared : "God's law is a law of progress for all. men alike, with no right in any man or class to exercise of any undelegated authority."

He thus further elaborates his convictions:

"Before God there is no master, no slave, no men, no women, but only human nature, which must be everywhere responsible, therefore everywhere free and equal. . . . There is no true association except among equals. There is no true country where uniformity of right is violated by caste, privilege or inequality. . . . The law of equality between soul and soul lies at the root of every great belief linking man to God."

"God and the People" was his slogan, and his idea of God was thus cogently expressed:

"We believe in one God; the author of all existence; the absolute living Thought, of whom our world is a ray, the universe an incarnation."

Mazzini realized that the waning of social faith was the greatest peril that confronted democratic advance. Without it, popular sovereignty would again go down before advancing privilege. In "Faith and the Future" he says:

"The peoples lack faith : not that individual faith which creates

martyrs, but that social faith which is the parent of victory; the faith that arouses the multitudes; faith in their own destiny, in their own mission, and in the mission of the epoch : the faith that combats and prays; the faith that enlightens, and bids men advance fearlessly in the ways of God and Humanity, with the sword of the people in the hand, the religion of the people in the heart, and the future of the people in their soul."

On the evolution of government and the next step forward, he said :

"To the emancipation of the slave has succeeded that of the serf; that of the serf must be followed by that of the workman. In the course of human progress, the aristocracy have undermined the despotic privilege of royalty; the financial aristocracy have undermined the privilege of birth ; and now the people, the workers, will undermine the privileges of property and money. The sole aristocracy of to-day is the aristocracy of wealth ; the sole aristocracy of to-morrow will be the eternal divine, beneficent aristocracy of intellect and virtue—at its highest, genius; but that, like everything that descends from God, will arise among the people and labor for the people."

From the shallow and sophistical opposition of the professional politicians and the hirelings of privilege which one hears on every side, we turn for relief to the lofty thought of this great apostle of humanity who was dominated by moral idealism.

"Great ideas," he declared, "create great peoples. Let your life be the living summary of one sole organic idea. Enlarge the horizon of the peoples. Liberate their conscience from the materialism by which it is weighed down. Set a vast mission before them."

Bolton King, in his fine work on Mazzini, epitomizes his concept in regard to duty and the ideal :

"On this religious foundation Mazzini constructed his code of ethics—Christian, very Christian in its spirit, essentially modern in its application; the noblest morality that has sought to answer to the

needs of a democratic society. The law of Progress judges all action by the Ideal, and the sole standard of conduct lies in what a man does that the Ideal may be better realized in himself and others. Without the recognition of such a universal law, demanding their co-operation and conformity, there can be no common rule for men ; life becomes the resultant of clashing interests; its line of advance, if advance there be, depends upon mere chance. True education is impossible, because there is no consensus on its aim; we come to value character, as he complained that Carlyle did, not by its goodness, but by its energy and persistence, whether it be to good or evil ends. Everywhere in actual life, the neglect of the Ideal means worship of brute force, cowardly acquiescence in the existing fact, the absence of all striving for a better state.

"Mazzini looked for a principle that would rate the moral above the material, altruism above selfishness, humanity above the individual; something that would reconcile where Rights divided, that would make men reach to an ideal, and by it live and die for others. 'We must find an educative principle, to guide men to better things, to teach them constancy in sacrifice, to bind them to their brothers without making them dependent on any one man's theory or on the brute force of the community. This principle is Duty. We must convince men that they, sons of one God, have here on earth to carry out one law,— that each of us must live not to himself but others,—that the end of life is not to have more or less of happiness but to make ourselves and others better,—that to fight injustice and error, everywhere, for our brothers' good, is not a right only but a duty,—a duty we may not without sin neglect, duty that lasts as long as life.' 'Life is a mission,' the call that comes to every man to make the ideal real. 'Life was given you by God, that you might use it for the profit of Humanity; that you might so direct your individual faculties, that they will develop your brothers' faculties, that by your work you might add something to the collective work of bettering men and finding Truth.' . . . The divine plan needs our conscious efforts to assist it, and the law, that rules the Universe, becomes a positive binding law of conduct. Man's bounden duty is everywhere and in all things to forward the progress of humanity, which is written in God's law. 'The supreme virtue is

sacrifice,— to think, work, fight, suffer, where our lot lies, not for ourselves but others, for the victory of good over evil."

"God demands the whole of man. Negative, inactive goodness is nothing by itself.

Our duty lies on earth, among our fellow-men, in the busy, throbbing life around us, not in some vain selfish search for spiritual satisfaction. 'Rest is immoral.' . . . Our business is to make men and their surroundings better, not live for ourselves in self-absorption or esthetic ecstasy or solitary thought and prayer. That is none other than the search for happiness in subtle shape. 'The earth is our workshop ; we may not curse it, we must hallow it.' 'God has placed you here on earth; he has set around you millions of beings like yourselves, whose march keeps pace with yours, whose life finds sustenance in your life.' . . . There is no virtue in the cloistered life. There is 'nothing worse than depression, nothing more enervating than self- contemplation.' 'We are here not to contemplate but to transform nature; and self almost always lies at the bottom of contemplation. The world is not a spectacle, it is a field of battle, where all, who love the Just, the Holy, the Beautiful, must bear their part, be they soldiers or generals, conquerors or martyrs.' 'Do not analyze,' he once wrote; 'do not light Psyche's lamp to examine and anatomize life. Do good around you : preach what you believe to be the truth and act accordingly; then go through life, looking forward.'

"Nor will God's servants take thought for their own salvation. 'God will not ask us. "What hast thou done for thy own soul?" but "What has thou done for the souls of others, the sister-souls I gave thee?" 'We cannot rise to God save by our brothers' souls, and we must make them better and more pure, even though they ask us not.' . . . 'Thought and action,' so he never wearied of insisting, must go hand in hand. 'What good are ideas,' he asked, 'unless you incarnate them in deeds?' 'It is not enough that thought be grounded on truth; the thinker's life must visibly express it in his acts; there must be an ever living harmony between mind and morals, between the idea and its application."