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DR. MARTINEAU ON "LOSS AND GAIN IN  
RECENT THEOLOGY."\*

THIS publication of Dr. Martineau has had a somewhat singular origin ; but its significance is still greater. It marks a period in the history of Unitarianism ; and though its author is, we believe, mistaken in thinking that it marks a similar period in other Churches, his utterances are at least such as they may all lay to heart. No one who knows the career and writings of Dr. Martineau but will speak of him personally with respect, and, so far as his works protest against the current materialism of the age, with admiration ; but it hardly needs to be said that on Christian theology his views and anticipations are "wide as the poles asunder" from those of *The Catholic Presbyterian*. It is with the more interest, therefore, that we notice this publication in such a journal.

It has been the custom, it appears, in the Manchester New College, London, with which Dr. Martineau has for forty years (1840-1880) been connected, and during the latter portion of them as Principal, to hold a valedictory service at the end of the five or six years' study, which marks the transition of each group of students from academic to public life. A leading feature in this service has been an address by the Principal, suitable to the commencement of a religious ministry. This year an occurrence, which is doubtless exceptional, seemed likely to defeat the custom, as no students were prepared to go forth, at the close of their preparations, to the Unitarian ministry. In these circumstances, Dr. Martineau's old pupils, to the number of forty-five, joined in a request to him to hold the usual service, and to address them, engaged as many if not all of them had been in the work of the ministry throughout the country, on such topics as might be suitable to so unwonted a meeting. It is this address, accordingly, under the above title, delivered (23rd June, 1881) in Little Portland Street Chapel,

\* London, 1881. Williams & Norgate.

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speak of siftings and shakings, but when results come to be tabulated, the faith of centuries still keeps the field.

We willingly close with a passage from Dr. Martineau, with which we largely agree, and which, coming from him, may have more weight with those whose watchword is progress, and only progress.

“Religion is reproached with not being *progressive*; it makes amends by being *imperishable*. The enduring element in our humanity is not in the doctrines which we consciously elaborate, but in the faiths, which unconsciously dispose of us, and never slumber but to wake again. What treatise on sin, what philosophy of retribution is as fresh as the fifty-first Psalm? What scientific theory has lasted like the Lord's Prayer? If it is an evidence of *movement*, that in a library no books become sooner obsolete than books of science, it is no less a mark of *stability* that poetry and religious literature survive, and even ultimate philosophies seldom die but to rise again. These, and with them the kindred services of devotion, are the expression of aspirations and faiths which for ever cry out for interpreters and guides. And in proportion as you carry your appeal to those deepest seats of our nature, you not only reach the firmest ground, but touch accordant notes in every heart, so that the response turns out a harmony” (pp. 20, 21).

JOHN CAIRNS.

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## SENSATIONAL PREACHING.\*

A SHORT time ago, I read a statement which may serve to introduce the subject of this paper. The congregation of a distinguished living clergyman of this country, on one occasion became greatly excited by the preacher's theme and manner. His church was about to become the theatre of a scene not unlike that which, it is said, attended the first delivery of Massillon's sermon on the “Small Number of the Elect.” Men and women wept audibly; and the crowded congregation bent forward as one person toward the preacher, who seemed to hold their feelings at his command. But scarcely had the tide of feeling reached this unusual height, when suddenly he checked his discourse, and, in a tone as calm as he could summon, said substantially, “Excitement like this does not become the house of God.” Nor did he proceed with his sermon, until the members of the congregation had resumed the control of their feelings, or, to use the common but expressive phrase, had regained “self-possession.”

This incident brings before us a Christian orator, not only unwilling to strive after a particular kind of power, but refusing to go forward with his oration from the moment that he sees he is wielding it. Whether by intuition, or after careful investigation—by some process at all events—he has reached the conclusion that “sensational preaching” will benefit neither himself nor his people. Even if we disagree with this conclusion, we must regard his conduct as highly honourable.

\* A paper read before the Presbyterian Ministerial Association of Philadelphia.

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He is an orator in the immediate exercise of tremendous power over his audience. His will determines their cries or laughter, their joy or sorrow. The congregation is a passive, but highly sensitive instrument before him, of which if he but smite the keys, it will return the appropriate note or chord. But he refuses; and says, "I dare not go on. This is not the place for such an exhibition." This certainly is self-sacrifice; and, as certainly, self-sacrifice from lofty considerations. For what considerations not lofty can be conceived of as moving him? It is difficult to believe that a man is led by low or selfish motives, when he denies himself the pleasure which low and selfish men covet most of all—the pleasure growing out of the exercise of power over their fellow-men. And what pleasure is more enticing than that which springs from power of the very kind which this preacher was then wielding so obviously, and in a measure so exceptional?

The frequent use of the phrase "Sensational Preaching" would seem to indicate that the method or type of preaching which the phrase designates is becoming quite common; at least, that the tendency of preaching is towards the sensational type. This tendency good men usually lament and condemn. If, however, you should ask them to state the grounds of their condemnation, they would find it difficult to formulate them. The sensational preacher is distrusted by good men instinctively, more often than after reflection and for reasons. It may not be obligatory on the laity to investigate the sources of their instinctive distrust, but we of the profession ought to know precisely what the phrase "sensational preaching" imports. I shall, first, describe sensational preaching, and, secondly, state its evils.

Let me begin with the statement that the preacher is an orator; as distinguished from the essayist, the poet, and the dramatist. The four may be comprehended in a single class; because all are engaged in the exhibition of truth by means of language. Some writers would call them *artists*, as enjoying that free play of faculty which distinguishes the artist from the restricted workman. Adopting the name, without justifying it, it will be noticed that they are widely separated from the painter, the sculptor, the architect, and musician, by the instrument which they employ. These latter use dead matter, which they fashion into form, or blend in harmonious colour, or arrange so as to evoke tuneful sounds; while the former employ written language or articulate speech. Now, language is the symbol of *thought*; and we may therefore call the essayist, the orator, the poet, and the dramatist intellectual artists, to distinguish them from the other four, who are sensuous artists. The products of the intellectual arts arrange themselves in two groups. In one group are the (philosophical) essay and the (imaginative) poem. In the other are the oration and the drama. They are separated by the fact that the essay and the poem are marked by the simple unfolding of *the truth*;—in the essay, to satisfy the understanding; in the poem, to satisfy the imagination. The essay is the

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philosophic, the poem is the imaginative development of truth. Neither the essay nor the poem contemplates distinctly an *audience*; a mind other than that of the essayist or poet. On the other hand, the *dramatist* and the *orator* have always in view their respective *audiences*. Their products are shaped by the influence they desire to exert on those they address. It is the *audience* that determines the difference between the historical plays of Shakespeare and Hume's philosophical "History of England." The poet will employ the detailed simile in illustration to please himself; the orator, the bold metaphor to strike his audience. The essayist will use the elaborated syllogism in argument to satisfy his theme; the orator, the swift enthymeme. Hence, as Theremin is at great pains to show, you cannot make either the imaginative or the philosophic development of truth the fundamental, the all-important thing in oratory. This development of truth must give way to something more important in the orator. Development of truth is an important element, but it is not that element that ultimately determines the form of the oration: the prime factor is the audience. To make this clear, he proposes a question. "Is not, it may be objected, this profound and powerful development of ideas, which is the essential element in the philosophical representation, itself also the most infallible means of making an entrance for these ideas into the minds of others, and thus of fulfilling all the requisites of eloquence? Let one make this attempt, but let him make it with thoroughness, without suffering himself to be diverted by circumstances from the purpose once fixed upon. Let him lose himself entirely in the idea; let him develop it in its whole compass; let him not omit even the least of all that can serve to exhibit it still more clearly; let him forget, as is fitting, the place where he stands; let him confine himself to no definite time, but speak until his subject is exhausted; let him not trouble himself about his hearers, about the degree of their culture, about their capabilities, qualities, prejudices, inclinations; in a word, let him seek only to express his own mind. Will such a discourse be adapted to gain over an opposing mind, and to transfer the sentiments of the orator to his hearers? I think not. Hence no one, who refers the rhetorical or oratorical manner and method to the philosophical, is able in his practice to remain true to his theory. Imperceptibly he concedes something to the time, the place, the occasion, and the hearers; and thus there arises a product which is neither philosophical nor oratorical, and which can satisfy no one who is accustomed to judge of things with strictness."\*

We have, then, the drama and the oration in a single class, separated from the essay and the poem by the fact that they imply an audience, and by the additional fact that the influence they intend to exert on this audience determines their form.

But are the drama and the oration essentially the same product? or

\* "Theremin's Elements of Rhetoric," translated by W. G. T. Shedd, D.D., pp. 61, 62.

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is there a difference in their respective impacts on the audience? What is this specific difference, if any exists?

I reply, that the *drama*, by *representation* of past action, excites the *feelings*, for the purpose of promoting *enjoyment*; and the *oration*, by the *development* of truth, moves the *will*, for the purpose of securing *action*. The end of the drama is enjoyment; the end of the oration is action. The drama addresses the feelings; the oration addresses the will of the audience. The point, on which for the purpose of this paper it is important to seize, is that in the representations of the drama, however much the feelings of the audience may be in sympathy with the actor, the wills of the audience are in perfect repose, utterly passive. So true is this, that were the will to act in sympathy with the feelings, the situation would become ludicrous, and the propriety of the occasion would be violated. To make this clear, let us suppose the subject dramatised to be the life of Demosthenes. Demosthenes is delivering his first great Philippic. The purpose of the dramatist is, by representation, to call forth in the audience the same feelings that were called forth at Athens by Demosthenes by his oration. He intends that the audience shall feel what the Athenians felt; that their hearts shall throb and their pulses quicken; but with this difference: that whereas Demosthenes aroused the *wills* of the Athenians to action, so that they cried, "Let us march against Philip," the dramatist means that the wills of the audience shall be quiet. But suppose that one of the audience should be so completely under the spell of the illusion that, in addition to the excitement of his feelings, there should be also the arousal of his will; and he should cry out, "Let us march against Philip." The theatre would be in an uproar of laughter. And why? It was not intended that the whole man should be affected. It was intended that the feelings should be aroused, and the will, the characteristic thing in man, should be unmoved. The separation, then, of the feelings, the sensibilities, from the voluntary power in man, for the purpose of affecting the former alone, is the characteristic purpose of dramatic representation. On the other hand, the orator has action in view; never emotion, except as associated with a movement of the will. I am happy to quote, in confirmation of this view, the words of the late President James Marsh, of Burlington (Vermont) University, whose brief tract on "Eloquence" is one of the finest papers on that subject I have met with. "The work of the dramatist," says Dr. Marsh, "is professedly ideal, and we require of him, as the condition of submitting to the effects which he would produce, only a dramatic probability, and a harmony and unity of parts conformable to the natural and necessary principles of the act. He does not ask us to awake and believe; but if he performs these conditions, we voluntarily surrender ourselves to illusion, and indulge in a waking dream. We suffer his magic power to transport us now to Athens, and now to Thebes, and to stir up every emotion of our souls for the pleasure with which he repays us. *But then, in this case, our judg-*

*ment is all the time behind the curtain, ready to awake us at the first motion of our will.”\**

Now, as the name imports, the characteristic of *sensational preaching* is, that it is an address distinctly to the *feelings* by means of vivid *representation*. The sensational preacher, in so far as he is sensational, addresses the part of man that the dramatist addresses. His point of attack is the sensibilities. The danger arising from his method is, that he will convert his oration into a drama; that his power will be the power of the actor rather than the power of the orator; that he will represent vividly instead of speaking eloquently, and, as a result, will excite the feelings without arousing the will.

Thus we have reached the *idea* of sensational preaching. And now, the question arises—and it is a pertinent one—whether this idea is ever thoroughly realised? When we discuss the realisation of ideas, we are in a region of fact; we must talk not positively, but in terms of comparison; and must apply the adjectives “more and less.” Of course, some preachers more often and more thoroughly employ the method of exciting the sensation than others do. But the ground which this paper takes is, that there is danger in the method. And to speak definitely, there is this danger, namely, that the will and the emotions will be separated; that the latter will be active, and will have the similitude of voluntary and lofty religious feeling, while the will will remain utterly quiet. This is carrying the sermon from the category of the oration over to that of the drama.

Just this is the popular conception of the sensational preacher. It will scarcely be denied that the phrases “sensational preaching” and “dramatic” or “theatrical preaching” are used interchangeably. The interchange is fair. Whether we inspect the movement of the mind in sensational preaching, or whether we observe those classed as sensational preachers, we find that the popular definition is correct. I do sensational preachers no injustice when I say, that they exhibit a power the same in kind as that, not of Webster or Burke, but of Booth or Fechter.

This is the secret of the *popularity* of this method of preaching. There is a positive pleasure in having one’s feelings harrowed by painful sights and sounds, if only one’s will is not obliged to act in correspondence with them. Let me be able to separate feeling from the central action of my soul, and I shall enjoy my tears. Hence, the paradox is true—a man will *enjoy* a tragedy in the proportion in which it is *tragic*. The more *blood*, and *fire*, and *deluge*, the louder screams and the deeper groans you put into it, the more you harrow his feelings, the more he will *enjoy* it, if all the while his will can be quiet; if all the while he can feel that his will need not move forth in self-sacrifice and good works. Hence, the drama has always been popular with people whatever their character. Perhaps it has been most popular with the worst

\* “Memoirs and Remains of James Marsh, D.D.,” Boston, p. 621.

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people ; for they have been able to air their good sentiments by means of it, without being forced to any corresponding movement of the will. I do not hesitate to assert that in the same fact lies the reason of the popularity of the sensational preacher. He excites the sensibilities, and leaves the will quiet and passive. Men go to hear him in order to have their feelings harrowed, and to enjoy the harrowing.

And thus we are brought into the presence of its chief, but by no means its sole evil. If a minister finds, however popular he may be, that he has adopted a mode of preaching which, while it enkindles the sensibilities of people, leaves them still untouched at the will, he ought to do what the preacher to whom I referred did—he ought to *stop*. And he ought to pray for deliverance from that mode of preaching, as he would pray for deliverance from a wile of the devil. There is not a more dangerous thing to a lofty religious life than sensibility divorced from the will. Coleridge long ago accurately described it in that great work, which I wish we all knew by heart, “Aids to Reflection.” In his introduction to the moral and religious aphorisms, he has occasion to distinguish sensibility from both prudence and morality. The whole essay is profound and pertinent to our theme. I quote from him, therefore, at some length : “Sensibility, a constitutional quickness of sympathy with pain and pleasure, and a keen sense of the gratifications that accompany social intercourse, mutual endearments and reciprocal preferences, must not be mistaken for morality or even prudence, or be deemed a substitute for either. It is not even a sure pledge of a good heart, though among the most common meanings of that many-meaning and too commonly misapplied expression. So far from being morality, it ought not to be placed even in the same rank with prudence ; for prudence is at least an offspring of the understanding. But sensibility is for the greater part a quality of nerves, and a result of individual bodily temperament. Moreover, prudence is an active principle, and implies a sacrifice of self, though it be a sacrifice to the same self, projected, as it were, to a distance. But the very term sensibility marks its passive nature, and proves little more than the coincidence or contagion of pleasurable or painful feelings. Thus sensibility prompts men to remove those evils alone, which, by hideous spectacle or clamorous outcry, are present to their senses, and disturb their selfish enjoyments. Provided the dung-hill is not before their own parlour window, they are well contented to know that it exists, perhaps as the hot-bed from which their own luxuries are reared. Sensibility is not necessarily benevolence at all, but by rendering us tremblingly alive to trifling misfortunes, it frequently prevents benevolence, and induces an effeminate selfishness instead, pampering the coward heart with feelings all too delicate for use.

“Sweet are the tears, that from a Howard’s eye  
Drop on the cheek of one he lifts from earth ;  
And he who works me good with unmoved face  
Does it but half ; he chills me while he aids.

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But even this, this cold benevolence  
 Seems worth, seems manhood, when there rise before me  
 The sluggard pity's vision-weaving tribe,  
 Who sigh for wretchedness yet shun the wretched ;  
 Nursing, in some delicious solitude,  
 Their dainty loves and slothful sympathies."

It is because the great tendency of sensational preaching is to this "selfish," "dainty," "delicious," and "slothful" excitement of the sensibilities that it ought to be regarded as one of the worst evils that can possibly befall the Church.

Nor is this all. If its influence on the Church is evil, its influence on the preacher is quite as bad. For its tendency is to make him at bottom an untruthful man. I do not now refer to the fact—though that also is important—that when the preacher moves away from oratory to the drama, he moves from the region of living fact and eternal truth to that of past event and evanescent feeling ; but to something very different. Let me have distinctly in view the arousal of another's will to moral action, and I shall be careful of my own will. But let me have in view the excitement of another's feelings, and my scruples will abate. The excitement of the sensibilities being my object, I will not content myself with the statement and enforcement of truth ; I will paint in broader hues and in more glaring contrasts ; I will change positive into superlative adjectives ; I will exaggerate. Let me not give names in this paper ; but I know that I have heard good people—ministers—tell anecdotes for the purpose of exciting the feelings, with a detail of circumstance, and a minuteness and length of dialogue, as both in substance and in form correct, which it would have been impossible for them to hold in their minds. Becoming actors for the purpose of exciting the feelings of their audiences, their veracity lost its bloom. And if a minister of the Gospel will swerve from the exact truth in the pulpit, where can he hope to be veracious ?

Moreover, I must believe that if sensational preaching shall become the rule, it will be a symptom of the general decay of religious life. I have shown the close affinity between this mode of preaching and the drama. The drama is a fictitious revival of the past. It is an endeavour to reproduce feelings in association with a representation of past action. But the feelings are only feelings, because the events are ended, and the will is not therefore summoned to action. Of course, sensational preaching could not be, if the feelings it awakens had not at one time been associated with spiritual action. But like the drama, it deals with the past. When it shall be the common mode, the Church will have reached its old age ; its life will be in the past, and it will be ready to die. It will be simply repeating the feelings of its own heroic ages, but divorced from their heroism of will and act. That period, to employ a figure drawn from our climate, will be the Indian summer of Christianity. There will be warmth indeed, and streams will flow again, and birds will renew their songs. But the trees will

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put forth no leaves ; no harvest of good works and self-sacrifice will succeed it. These only will succeed it—winter, and frost, and death.\*

To conclude. This brief opening of the subject may have started in some one's mind this question : Is the preacher of the Gospel not to address the feelings ? Must he, because of these dangers, be calm and cold, merely expository and argumentative ? Is there no place for feeling in preaching ? Is there no feeling to be excited in the audience ? This brings up the whole subject of the nature of religious feeling—a great subject, on which I offer but a single remark.

Whoever inspects man will observe the instructive fact, that the lower the feeling is, the more completely it is separated from the will. Take purely physical feeling. It has absolutely nothing to do with the will ; it is purely constitutional, utterly involuntary. Bruise your finger, and it is hurt. Your will has nothing whatever to do with the feeling of pain. So it is with the appetites of the body. Both the longing for food and the pleasure of eating are involuntary. So it is with the sentiments, and the pleasure of expressing them. Take ten men from the penitentiary and ten consistent members of your church. Let a great actor delineate the story of a great wrong before the twenty. The ten from the penitentiary will heave with indignation quite as quickly as the ten from the church ; for sensibility is constitutional and involuntary. This constitutional sensibility the actor plays upon. And because he makes men cry over a story of wrong, he calls his theatre “a school of morals.” But the truth is, that all this play of the feelings has nothing to do with morality. The will is still inactive. The man cries without any choice of his own, and his tears flow whatever is his character. Even remorse is not a religious feeling, if by a religious feeling we mean one inherently praiseworthy. For it also is constitutional—involuntary. In remorse the man is passive ; and it possesses and stings him, though he would, if he could, destroy it.

But this is not the case with all feeling. There are voluntary emotions. These are the emotions which the elder psychologists included in the term *will*. They believed that in the realm of spirit, desiring and willing are one and indivisible. These active and voluntary feelings can be commanded. “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God ; thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*” This is the feeling which it is the mission of the preacher, as an orator, to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in calling forth. This only is religious feeling. But this feeling is religion in its very essence. It is the feeling of the will. The sensibilities are avenues through which these feelings may be reached. But they are only avenues ; and even as avenues they are by no means so important as the intellect. Truth, declared by the sacred orator and apprehended by the intellect of the hearer—not sights and sounds

\* About mid-autumn in Canada and the United States, there are usually two or three weeks of the weather described above, and called Indian summer. It is as delicious as the British May ; but is followed by snow and ice.

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which excite the sensibilities,—is the means of grace most often selected by the Holy Spirit, to evoke that love to God and man, which is the characteristic life of the regenerate. Hence, I do not say that the preacher must not excite feeling. But I do say that he must take care that the ultimate feeling which he attempts to excite is not constitutional, but voluntary—not the feeling of *nature*, but the feeling of *character*. This is the one kind of emotion that can be called holy. But this is not only holy, it is holiness. This feeling carries martyrs to the stake. This feeling is the one adequate preparation for the enjoyment of the instant vision of the holy God.

JOHN DE WITT.

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## FROM LOG-CABIN TO THE WHITE HOUSE.\*

THE interest connected with the tragical death of President Garfield was unprecedented, but we believe it would have been many times greater in trans-American countries had the public been more familiar with the early stages of his career. For ourselves, we find Mr. Garfield far nearer our heart, and his memory an object of far higher reverence since we read the volume whose title we give below, detailing the noble struggles and victories of his early life. But beyond this, we find the memoir, quaint and comical though it often is, so admirable as an exposition of high aims and lofty principles, of Christian convictions and Christ-like habits and feelings, that it becomes our duty to do our best to bring it under the notice of our readers, and especially of two very important classes in every community—young men, and working men. Mr. Garfield was not a Presbyterian, but in a case of this kind we leap over such secondary barriers; he was a Christian by conviction and deliberate choice; his noble example overshadows every smaller consideration, and makes his life and character the property of the whole Christian Church.

We must first give a cursory outline of his life, in order to make the brief commentary intelligible which we propose to offer upon it.

Some sixty years ago, one Abram Garfield, a descendant of English Puritans, having been seized with what was termed the "Ohio fever," left the State of New York to settle in the woodlands of Ohio. There he married Eliza Ballou, a descendant of a Huguenot refugee, and there, in a very rough log-cabin, his four children were born,—the youngest, James, on 19th November, 1831. One day in the midst of his hard

\* From Log-Cabin to the White House; the Story of President Garfield's Life. By W. M. Thayer. London, 1881. [We take this book as we find it, but we cannot see how it is possible to regard many of the conversations as much better than imaginary. The facts, however, seem to rest on a solid basis, and it is the facts that constitute the great interest of the story.—Ed.]