they had eternal life. Not that a knowledge of Scripture was itself eternal life to the Jews, but because they regarded the instructions of Scripture as the means of certainly obtaining eternal life. This pregnant mode of expression is chosen in order to indicate that the means in question is not merely a possible one alongside of other means, but is the sole possible one which fully guarantees the end striven after. Using the same form of speech, St. Paul says (1 Cor. i. 30): "Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," where he means that Christ has been made for us the Mediator, and indeed the sole and perfect Mediator, of those benefits. And in Col. i. 27: "Christ in you, the hope of glory;" that is, Christ who is the sole and perfect foundation and support of our hope of glory. And, finally, when our Lord describes Himself as the Resurrection and the Life, He simply means, says Dr. Wendt, that He and He alone is the perfect *Mediator* of the resurrection-life.

Is there, then, no definition in the Gospels of the nature and essence of eternal life? Yes; and Professor Wendt finds it anew where it was found at the very beginning, in the third chapter of St. John. And more than that, he finds that the very purpose of the definition which is given there is to destroy the notion that eternal life consists in knowledge. Nicodemus came with this idea. "We know that Thou art a *teacher* come from God;" as if he had said (and perhaps did say, for no doubt the conversation is condensed), What increase of knowledge must I gain that I may have eternal life? Jesus replies at once that the necessary condition of participation in the kingdom of God lies not in any new knowledge, but in a new birth. "Except a man be *born* again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

English Literature in its Religious and Ethical Aspects.

James Russell Lowell.

By the Rev. G. Milligan, M.A., B.D., Edinburgh.

> "There is Lowell, who's striving Parnassus to climb
> With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with rhyme,
> He might get on alone, spite of brambles and boulders,
> But he can't with that bundle he has on his shoulders,
> The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching
> Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and preaching;
> His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty well,
> But he'd rather by half make a drum of the shell,
> And rattle away till he's old as Methusalem,
> At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem."

These lines of Lowell's own, half-humorous, half-serious, from "A Fable for Critics," in which he had to mention himself if he was to preserve his anonymity, indicate very clearly what the poet thought likely to be the verdict of posterity regarding him. And, though an author is not usually the best judge of his own works, there has been a wonderful consensus of opinion in the same direction in the numerous notices which have appeared since his death. For it is not as a poet pure and simple, nor even as a satirist and humorist of the first rank, that Lowell seems most likely to be remembered, but rather as a religious teacher, one whose constant aim it was—

> "To write some earnest verse or line,
> Which, seeking not the praise of art,
> Shall make a clearer faith and manhood shine
> In the untutored heart."

To an age which delights in the doctrine of heredity, it is not difficult to explain this in part at least. Descended from that gallant "little ship-load of outcasts who landed at Plymouth two centuries and a half ago," and whose influence upon the future, not only of New England, but of the world, he was never tired of extolling, himself the son of a Massachusetts clergyman, Lowell had as the basis of his character to the last his native Puritanism. Not, of course, that we are to as-

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sociate with him the narrowness or the fanaticism, which to many minds is the chief characteristic of that much-abused form of faith. His Puritanism was of the earliest, the best type—the Puritanism which, as in the case of Milton, was not afraid to combine the highest general culture with the deepest religious earnestness, and which had for its great aim "to make the law of man a living counterpart of the law of God." Were these early Puritans, Lowell himself asks in one of his Prose Essays, too earnest in the strife to save their souls alive? "That is still the problem which every wise and brave man is lifelong in solving. If the devil take a less hateful shape to us than to our fathers, he is as busy with us as with them; and if we cannot find it in our hearts to break with a gentleman of so much worldly wisdom, who gives such admirable dinners, and whose manners are so perfect, so much the worse for us." How strongly indeed Lowell felt his responsibility, and what deep seriousness of purpose underlay all he wrote, is seen at once in the famous "Ode," one of his earliest poems, and which strikes the keynote of most of his teaching. It begins with a vivid contrast between the Poet or Seer of old, "him who hath spoken with the unseen Lord," and the modern

> "Empty rhymer
> Who lies with idle elbow on the grass,
> And fits his singing, like a cunning timer,
> To all men's prides and fancies as they pass."

To the latter indeed he denies the sacred name of poet altogether—

> "Maker no more,—oh no! unmaker rather;"

and in glowing words goes on to call for the true poet—

> "Whose eyes, like windows on a breezy summit,
> Control a lovely prospect every way;
> Who doth not sound God's sea with earthly plummet,
> And find a bottom still of worthless clay.
>
> Who to the right can feel himself the truer
> For being gently patient with the wrong,
> Who sees a brother in the evil-doer,
> And finds in Love the heart's-blood of his song,—
> This, this is he for whom the world is waiting."

And so, too, in "The Biglow Papers" he puts into Hosea's mouth words which indicate his own attitude—

> "Sence I begun to scribble rhyme,
> I tell ye wut, I hain't ben foolin';
> The parson's books, life, death, an' time
> Hev took some trouble with my schoolin'."

In fact, in trying to understand Lowell's position as a religious teacher, we cannot do better than begin with these same Papers. It may not be the point of view from which they are usually regarded. But however the reader may laugh over their extraordinary fun and humour, or shrink before their trenchant satire and ridicule, even though it has "a button of good nature on the point," or find himself, like Huldy, getting "teary round the lashes" at their touches of pathos, he cannot but be sensible of the deep earnestness which pervades them throughout. They are a call to men how to live. They breathe a holy indignation against wrong, and a passion for righteousness worthy of an old Hebrew prophet. And we feel that it is because he is so sure that God is with him, and that what he utters is the voice of God, that the poet so unhesitatingly denounces the unjust Mexican War, the Fugitive Slave Bills, and all the other political and social demoralisation of the time. The following lines, selected almost at random, will show the lofty ground he took. Thus on the question of war—

> "Ez fer war, I call it murder,—
> There you hev it plain an' flat;
> I don't want to go no furder
> Than my Testyment fer that;
> God hez said so plump an' fairly,
> It's ez long ez it is broad,
> An' you've gut to git up airly
> Ef you want to take in God.
>
> . . . .
>
> Ef you take a sword an' dror it,
> An' go stick a feller thru,
> Guv'ment ain't to answer for it,
> God 'll send the bill to you."

Hear him again, as in "Jonathan to John," he refers every man's right to freedom to the divine purposes—

> "God means to make this land, John,
> Clear thru, from sea to sea,
> Believe an' understand, John,
> The *wuth* o' bein' free.
> Ole Uncle S., sez he, 'I guess,
> God's price is high,' sez he;
> 'But nothin' else than wut He sells
> Wears long, an' thet J. B.
> May larn, like you an' me!'"

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While as to the final issue between Freedom and Slavery, no one, he declares, can have any doubt—

> "Whose faith in God hez any root
> Thet goes down deeper than his dinner."

It is tempting to go on quoting, but these few passages must suffice to show what a living belief in God Lowell had. God was to him the real ruler of men and things; and peace and good-will between man and man God's supreme will upon earth. Not that he, any more than our own Pitt, was a believer in peace at any price. Civilisation, he is driven to admit, "*doos* git forrid sometimes upon a powder-cart." But it is a mode of progress that he would appeal to as rarely as possible; and his cry, at the end of No. X. of the First Series of Papers, for Peace to

> "Come, sech ez mothers prayed for, when
> They kissed their cross with lips thet quivered,
> An' bring fair wages for brave men,
> A nation saved, a race delivered!"

is one of the finest passages in all his writings. That such a future, as there portrayed, was before his country he, for one, never doubted. The millennium, indeed, was not coming "by express to-morrer"; but he knew

> . . . "Good can't never come tu late,
> Though it doos seem to try an' linger."

And

> "*Then* 'twill be felt from pole to pole,
> Without no need o' proclamation,
> Earth's biggest Country's gut her soul,
> An' risen up Earth's greatest Nation!"

Lowell's message was thus an intensely real and practical one. On the deeper mysteries of life, "the doubt and struggle towards settled convictions," which is so marked a feature of our time, and of which he found in his friend Clough—

> 'Poet in all that poets have of best,
> But foiled with riddles dark and cloudy aims"—

the truest exponent, he has himself little to teach us. But when it comes to the application of the gospel as a living force to the social questions and needs of the day, no one can speak with a clearer voice. Every great cause was to him, in his own striking phrase, "*God's new Messiah*," offering to men and nations an opportunity of deciding on whose side—the side of Truth or of Falsehood—they would stand. Compromise was impossible. And all who hesitated or denied were reacting the part of the Jews, and crucifying their Lord afresh. Earth's chosen heroes were the souls that stood alone—

> "Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam incline
> To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine."

This is the attitude of a true Seer, who cannot "rest contented with the lies of Time," but who is ever looking beneath the outward show of things to the underlying verities, and proclaiming as his message what he there discovers.

Nor is it only in the crises of history that the poet delights to trace God's presence and power. The whole world is to him God's world—

> "To win the secret of a weed's plain heart
> Reveals some clue to spiritual things;"

and in the exquisite little poem, "A Parable," it is the tender violet springing from the earth's hard bosom, and not the loud burst of thunder, that is given as a sign to the worn and footsore prophet—

> "'God! I thank Thee,' said the Prophet;
> 'Hard of heart and blind was I,
> Looking to the holy mountain
> For the gift of prophecy.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Had I trusted in my nature,
> And had faith in lowly things,
> Thou Thyself wouldst then have sought me,
> And set free my spirit's wings.'"

This last verse indeed strikes an ever-recurring note. Only to those who, by lowliness and love, are prepared for it is the vision granted; but to them it is never denied—

> "For meek Obedience, too, is Light,
> And following that is finding Him."

It is, however, in what may be more strictly called his humanitarian poems that we find Lowell's most characteristic message to his time. "The sympathies, the hopes, the words, that make man truly man"—all were dear to him. Beneath even "the foulest faces" he delighted to see lurking

> "One God-built shrine of reverence and love."

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And the more he proclaimed the native worth and dignity of man, the more keenly did he feel the wrongs committed by man on man, and that too sometimes, as in the well-known case of slavery, in the name of so-called religion. The true tendency of religion as, needless to say, he pleaded, was in the very opposite direction—

> "He's true to God who's true to man,
> Wherever wrong is done,
> To the humblest and the weakest, 'neath
> The all-beholding sun."

And so it came about that the Service of Man for Christ's sake was the subject of many of his best known poems. He burned to bring home to his readers the truth that their love for Christ, if it meant anything, must issue in love for Christ's down-trodden and despised little ones. Or we may put it in this way,—he was continually holding up before every follower of Christ, as their standard of conduct, what Christ Himself would have done if He had been in his place.

Thus, to look at this truth first of all from the side of Christ, in "A Parable," the Lord is represented as saying—

> "I will go and see
> How the men, my brethren, believe in Me."

And wherever He appears, He is welcomed with pomp and state. Great organs surge in praise of Him—

> "And in church, and palace, and judgment-hall,
> He saw His own image high over all."

But the Son of Mary is not satisfied. Not His the building "which shelters the noble and crushes the poor." And the poem concludes with two verses which may well make us pause and think—

> "Then Christ sought out an artisan,
> A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,
> And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin,
> Pushed from her faintly want and sin.
>
> These set He in the midst of them,
> And as they drew back their garment-hem,
> For fear of defilement, 'Lo, here,' said He,
> 'The images ye have made of Me!'"

"The Search" is a reiteration of the same truth; but this time it is man who is the seeker. He seeks in vain for Christ in nature or amidst the power and wealth of the world, but at length accepting Love's guidance, and treading in the "prints of bare and bleeding feet" to which she points, "in a hovel rude" he finds the King—

> "A naked, hungry child
> Clung round His gracious knee,
> And a poor hunted slave looked up and smiled
> To bless the smile that set him free;
>
> . . . . .
>
> I knelt and wept: my Christ no more I seek,
> His throne is with the outcast and the weak."

But perhaps the most striking, as also the best known, of all Lowell's humanitarian poems is "The Vision of Sir Launfal." Sir Launfal is a knight of the North Countree, who has devoted himself to the search for the Holy Grail; but, before he starts, he sleeps, and in vision beholds the future, He sees himself "in his maiden mail" riding forth through his castle-gates, beside which crouches a leper "foul and bent of stature." A loathing comes over him at what is "the one blot on the summer morn," and scornfully he tosses the poor man a piece of gold. And now to the dreamer the years seem to pass, and he is returning from the quest "an old bent man, worn out and frail," to find his castle in the possession of his heir. But—

> "Little he recked of his earldom's loss,
> No more on his surcoat was blazoned the cross;
> But deep in his soul the sign he wore,
> The badge of the suffering and the poor."

The reality of his pity is quickly tested; for, as he seats himself outside his own castle in the cold and snow, and muses on "the light and warmth of long ago," he is conscious of "the gruesome thing" by his side, the leper, who again, "for Christ's sweet sake," begs an alms—

> "And Sir Launfal said, 'I behold in thee
> An image of Him who died on the tree.'"

And cheerfully he parts in twain his single crust, and breaking the ice on the stream gives the leper to eat and drink. Then a wondrous change takes place—

> "The leper no longer crouched at his side,
> But stood before him glorified."

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And from "the voice that was softer than silence," the knight learns that—

> "The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
> In whatso we share with another's need;
> Not what we give, but what we share,
> For the gift without the giver is bare:
> Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
> Himself, his hungering neigbour, and Me."

Many other poems might be quoted to practically the same effect; but these are enough to prove what an eloquent preacher Lowell was on the text—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

And here perhaps is the true place to mark another favourite note in the poet's message, namely, his faith in work; for it springs naturally from that faith in man and his destiny which we have just been considering. "No man," he assures us—

> "Is born into the world whose work
> Is not born with him."

And the true man will always do his work with all his might—

> "Folks that worked thorough was the ones thet thriv,
> But bad work follers ye ez long's ye live."

How much, too, even the humblest may accomplish, if only faithful, the stirring lines "To W. L. Garrison" will at once recall; while, as an example of the opposite — the awful penalty that awaits neglected talents and opportunities, it is sufficient to point to the poem, entitled "Extreme Unction." We have room only for two stanzas—

> "Men think it is an awful sight
> To see a soul just set adrift
> On that drear voyage from whose night
> The ominous shadows never lift;
> But 'tis more awful to behold
> A helpless infant newly born,
> Whose little hands unconscious hold
> The keys of darkness and of morn.
>
> Mine held them once; I flung away
> Those keys that might have open set
> The golden sluices of the day,
> But clutch the keys of darkness yet:
> I hear the reapers singing go
> Into God's harvest; I, that might
> With them have chosen, here below
> Grope shuddering at the gates of night."

But we must draw to a close. "Faith in God, faith in man, faith in work"—the short formula in which he sums up the teaching of the founders of New England — may be taken as summing up Lowell's own religious teaching. There is indeed much else in it to which, had space permitted, we would gladly have referred at greater length, such as—his love of nature and sympathy with the brute creature—

> "Why, th' ain't a bird upon the tree,
> But half forgives my bein' human;"

his recognition, as in "Rhoecus," that "each form of worship . . . infolds some germs of goodness and of right;" his wide toleration as evidenced in "Ambrose;" and his love for children—

> "God's apostles, every day
> Sent out to preach of love and hope and peace."

But these and other kindred points readers must investigate further for themselves. We can only promise them a rich reward for their search. For, to return to the point with which we started, if Lowell cannot in the usual acceptation of the words be termed a great poet, he was, to apply to himself his own description of Dryden, "a strong thinker who sometimes carried common sense to a height where it catches the light of a diviner air, and warmed reason till it had well-nigh the illuminating property of intuition." His teaching is essentially invigorating. "To read him is as bracing as a north-west wind. He blows the mind clear." And "he has this in common with the few great writers, that the winged seeds of his thought embed themselves in the memory and germinate there.

> "To know the heart of all things was his duty,
> All things did sing to make him wise,
> And, with a sorrowful and conquering beauty,
> The soul of all looked grandly from his eyes.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And still his deathless words of light are swimming,
> Serene throughout the great deep infinite
> Of human soul, unwaning and undimming,
> To cheer and guide the mariner at night."

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