

THE PLACE OF WILLIAM MALE WHITE (MARK RUTHER-  
FORD, PSEUD.) IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	3
II. WILLIAM HALE WHITE'S LIFE AS RECORDED IN THE EARLY LIFE OF MARK RUTHERFORD BY HIMSELF, ALSO IN HIS OTHER AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS . . .	4
III. VICTORIAN DISSENT AS INTERPRETED BY MARK RUTHERFORD . . . . .	23
IV. MARK RUTHERFORD'S STYLE . . . . .	30
V. RUTHERFORD'S LITERARY BACKGROUND . . . . .	41
VI. CRITICAL OPINION IN REGARD TO MARK RUTHERFORD . . . . .	54
VII. THE INFLUENCE OF MARK RUTHERFORD . . . . .	58
VIII. CONCLUSION . . . . .	60
IX. ACKNOWLEDGMENT . . . . .	65
X. BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	66

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INTRODUCTION

According to William Hale White's conceit, Reuben Shapcott found among the papers of his dead friend, Mark Rutherford, besides the autobiographical writings, certain novels, stories, and essays, which he edited and had published. The name and quiet life of the author, William Hale White, who adopted his double pseudonymity, I have tried to recall and to trace in what respect his experience coincided with that of Mark Rutherford.

I have tried to show that William Hale White's life is but slightly revealed through The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford. It is revealed through his novels: The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, The Deliverance, Clara Hopgood, Miriam's Schooling, the autobiographical notes in Letters to Three Friends, and The Early Life of Mark Rutherford by Himself.

I have read all of Hale White's novels, autobiographical works, short stories, essays and journals, and The Groombridge Diary written by his wife, Dorothy V. White.

I have read the material found in the library of the Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science and of the Kansas University library. Most of the criticisms and appreciations of Hale White are written for British publications not to be found in our libraries.

By evaluating William Hale White's interpretation of Victorian Dissent, his style, and in the light of critical opinion his influence and his literary background, I have tried to find William Hale White's place in Victorian literature.

In speaking of the author I use the following names interchangeably throughout the thesis: William Hale White, Hale White, and Mark Rutherford. I do not refer to him as Reuben Shapcott, as he used this term only as the name of the assumed editor of the Autobiography.

WILLIAM HALE WHITE'S LIFE AS RECORDED IN THE EARLY  
LIFE OF MARK RUTHERFORD BY HIMSELF, ALSO  
HIS OTHER AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

With a shrinking from publicity characteristic of his whole life and work, the author known as Mark Rutherford sought the refuge of a double anonymity, the autobiographical fragments known as Rutherford's being generally presented to the public under the supposed editorship of his

friend, Reuben Shapoott. The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford and its sequel, The Deliverance, are specimens of a rare type of spiritual revelation.

In The Early Life of Mark Rutherford by Himself, William Hale White says:

"I have been asked at 78 years old to set down what I remember of my early life. A good deal of it has been told before under a semi-transparent disguise, with much added which is entirely fictitious. What I now set down is fact!"<sup>1</sup>

The life of William Hale White, regarding the fictitious material as such, I have attempted to follow.

William Hale White was born in Bedford High Street on December 22, 1831. He had two sisters and a brother. This brother promised to be a painter of distinction, and was valued by Ruskin and Rossetti, but he died young. William Hale White's grandmother lived in Queen Street, Colchester, in a house dated 1619 over the doorway. He had also an aunt in Colchester, a woman of singular originality, who married a baker, a good kind of a man, but tame. The survival in his memory of her cakes, gingerbread, and kisses did Hale White more good--moral good--he says, than sermons or punishments. It is easy to see that this lady supplied one of

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<sup>1</sup> The Early Life of Mark Rutherford by Himself, p. 5.

the most striking characters in the Deliverance, as Miss Leroy, daughter of a French officer who remained in England after the French war. Miss Leroy was a lady who would not fall into one of the holes used by her neighbors to classify their fellow creatures. She surprised, shocked, and attracted all the people in her circle. She married George Butts, a big, soft, quiet, plump-faced, awkward youth, very good, but good for nothing. The solution to this was impossible. But throughout her marriage to George, who held a responsible place in the community, she was able to live among her neighbors as an Arabian bird might live in a barnyard with the ordinary fowls. Mark Rutherford was never happier as a boy than when he was with Mrs. Butts at the mill, which George had inherited. His love for her grew, despite his mother's scarcely suppressed hostility to her. Mrs. Butts was one of the very, very few people in the world who knew how to love a child.<sup>1</sup>

William Hale White was very fortunate in his early home and associates. His father, William White, a member of the non-conformist community of the Bunyan meeting, kept a book-shop in Bedford, which he had opened in 1830. Both

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<sup>1</sup> The Deliverance of Mark Rutherford, p. 59.

then and later he showed himself a man of wit and character, a speaker and pamphleteer, remarkable, says his son, for the purity of the English he wrote and spoke, the leader of a local revolt against an attempt to close an educational charity of Dissenters. The father removed to London. He was appointed assistant door-keeper of the House of Commons by Lord Charles Russell. He soon became door-keeper and held office for 21 years, retiring in 1875. While door-keeper he won in a very marked degree the admiration and friendship of the members. He died at Carehalton on February 11, 1893. The chief obituary notice of him declared with truth that he was the best public speaker Bedford had had, and the committee of the well-known public library resolved unanimously:<sup>1</sup>

"That this institution records with regret the death of Mr. W. White, formerly and for many years an active and most valuable member of the committee, whose special and extensive knowledge of books was always at its service, and to whom the library is indebted for the acquisition of its most rare and valuable books."

Half White lived a happy boy's life in a fine boy's country. The Ouse River ran through the middle of the High Street, and at Bedford the navigation for barges stopped. There were a few pleasure boats, one of which was his. The water above the bridge was strictly preserved, and the fishing

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<sup>1</sup> The Early Life of Mark Rutherford, p. 39.

was good. His father got leave for him, and more delightful days than those spent at Kemston Mill and Oakley Mill cannot be imagined. Hale White was a good swimmer, and in the winter fishing and boating and swimming gave way to skating. He had an old flint musket which he loaded with peas and once killed a sparrow.

On dark November afternoons, when the fog hung heavily over the brown, plowed furrows, he says:

"We gathered sticks, lighted a fire, and roasted potatoes. They were sweet as peaches. After dark we would 'go a bat-following' with lanterns, some of us on one side of the hedge and some on the other."<sup>1</sup>

In early manhood came a sharp trial of character. He was brought up in what he often calls a "moderate Calvinism." He wanted to become an artist. But his mother imagined for him that he had received a "call" to the Independent Ministry. The result was his entry as a student of Lady Huntington's College at Cheshunt and later, in 1851 to 1852, of New College, St. John's Wood. In White's day every student of divinity received, among other things, the Sacred Canon as a divinely sealed institution. He and two other students of New College had their doubts. But their mouths were stopped by an edict worthy of the Holy Office.

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<sup>1</sup> The Early Life of Mark Rutherford, p. 64.



The principal said:

"I must inform you that this is not an open question within these walls. There is a great body of truth received as orthodoxy by the great majority of Christians, the explanation of which is one thing, but to doubt it is another, and the foundation must not be questioned."<sup>1</sup>

The Early Life of Mark Rutherford gives, in brilliantly ironical narrative, the story of his expulsion, which was effected without an attempt at justification or even debate. He was never told what the charge against him was, nor whether what he had said or thought was a breach of the trust-deeds of the college. His father wrote and published a defense of the expelled students entitled, To Think or Not to Think (1852).

Hale White was a little over 20 when this event took place. It left a shadow, but Wordsworth and a Wordsworthian sense of natural beauty brought with them the vision of a living God. Spinoza's philosophy, a wide and serious culture, and an impassioned pursuit of astronomy did the rest. But the Puritan home and the Bedford meeting house had left him endowed with an abundant store of moral energy, also with a pretty firm consciousness of the intellectual strength of Calvinism. To the end of his life he maintained that Puritanism gave the closest expression of

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<sup>1</sup> The Early Life of Mark Rutherford, p. 55.

the truth about life that he knew.

After his expulsion he engaged himself to a schoolmaster at Stoke Newington. The story of his brief stay with him is told in the Autobiography.<sup>1</sup> He says:

"Then there fell upon me what was the beginning of a trouble which has lasted all my life."<sup>2</sup>

He got a substitute, as he could not break his engagement at the beginning of a term of school. He called upon several publishers. John Chapman, of the Westminster Review, gave him employment as a subscriber of books, that is to say, as a publisher's canvasser. At Chapman's house in the Strand he also met George Eliot, who lodged there. Chapman, a charlatan of parts, with the appearance of a seer, is slightly sketched as Wollaston in the Autobiography, and in Theresa, his niece, there are indubitable touches of George Eliot. She and White were friends; she played to him and was interested in him, but he let the friendship drop.

The life of slavery to clerical work, whose terrors color some of the darkest pages in the Deliverance, is not thought to be his, as in the Autobiography the shadow which descended so heavily on Mark, the hero of the book, did not descend so heavily on White. He passed into the civil ser-

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<sup>1</sup> The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, pp. 187-192.

<sup>2</sup> The Early Life of Mark Rutherford, p. 80.

vice, first at Somerset House, in the Registrar-General's office, and began his literary career with a contribution to Chambers Journal, which cradled so many eminent writers of its day. The article was entitled Births, Deaths, and Marriages, and appeared in the issue of March 6, 1858. The articles arose out of his experiences in his work at Somerset House. Of the Archives of Somerset House he said that the real history of the English people for the last 20 years lay there. He said that the history of the nation might be in Macaulay or in the columns of the Times, but the history of the people is in the Registrar-General's vault at Somerset House.

Hale White gave his experiences of house building in a letter to the London Spectator January 27, 1877, and Mr. Ruskin reprinted this letter in the Fors Clavigera, styling it "admirable."

Hale White went into the Admiralty, from which he retired with distinction. He passed the rest of his life, mostly in Carshalton, in a certain retirement, but not by any means as a recluse. He was married twice and was happy with his children and his friends. He had wide interests, the lighter ones including bicycling and cricket, and he had friendships among the distinguished men of his time.

White's first wife was ill for a number of years before her death in June, 1891. Her sickness and death saddened him and

"if a personal cause must be sought for the gloom of the Autobiography other than the artist's sympathy with a theme of poverty and of the travail of the spiritual life, it may be found in the prolonged illness of his first wife."<sup>1</sup>

In Letters to Three Friends we become personally acquainted with Hale White's family, as he writes of them to his friends. We feel that with his family he was a companionable and affectionate man. He had three sons and an only daughter, Molly, who lived with him after his wife's death. What more affectionate scene can be imagined than the following:

A grand entertainment was given at the Sutton Public Hall by the Sutton Girls' High School. Molly was asked to take Malcolm in a scene from Macbeth. I hesitated, but at last consented. The little mite appeared on the stage before all the people, and declaimed and acted to perfection . . . But I!! I sat and listened in a cold sweat of terror."<sup>2</sup>

His sons are industrious, useful men whose interests their father always has at heart. Willie, his eldest, is elected house surgeon to the Eveline Hospital for Children in preference to 35 other candidates. This position was

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<sup>1</sup> H. W. Massingham, Memorial Introduction to the Autobiography, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Letters to Three Friends, p. 26.

his first paid appointment. He mentions Jack's having started for Chile to take charge of building a railway there which will cross the Andes at a height of 12,000 feet. Jack has lived in Spain for the past 15 years.

Ernest is the third son. The two elder boys and their families often spent their vacations with their father and Hale remarks that his grandson's chatter is more enjoyable than politics.

In letters to all of the three friends we may read of a Miss Dorothy Vernon Horace Smith who had been visiting at Hale White's home. I quote from a letter to Philip Webb written September 22, 1906:

"You will find here a Miss Dorothy Vernon Horace Smith . . . Her father is the police-magistrate for Westminster. Molly met her at Ashstead two years ago, and soon afterwards she came here. Directly I saw her I was struck with her. She possesses singular genius and she is an artist, not in any particular province, but--what is perhaps better--in her way of looking at life and the world. She is religious and her religion is her own . . . For eight years she has worked hard amongst young men of the poorest and roughest class in Beckenham, striving to introduce them to a better world than that in which they live."<sup>1</sup>

We read of Dorothy's sending her piano down, and her playing to him. She begins coming every week to see them. And we read that Hale White and she were married April 8, 1911.

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<sup>1</sup> Letters to Three Friends, p. 360.

Hale White had during the last years of his life often complained of a terrible depression and complete nervous exhaustion, taking the form of all kinds of distressing forebodings and delusions. After his marriage he wrote more cheerfully. He was ill much of the time during the last few years of his life, but his mind was active and he read widely and wrote up to his last illness.

The Groombridge Diary, published in 1923, is also lovingly edited, giving personal glimpses into Hale White's life. The book contains extracts from a diary Dorothy V. H. Smith had kept, never supposing it would be printed in her lifetime. Extracts from her husband's letters were copied into it. She began the diary in 1908, saying she had been to see William Hale White at his cottage at Groombridge. The publication of Miss Mona, her first published story, gained her invitation to the cottage. The diary ends with an account of her husband's death in 1913.

Dorothy V. White also edited his Last Pages from a Journal and His Letters to Three Friends, which were published posthumously with a preface by the editor. She said that nothing more orderly could be conceived than his papers when he died. His desk and table were uncluttered and the narrow wash-stand drawer contained little bundles of recent

answered and unanswered letters. The cabinet in the dining room held certain of his treasures and curiosities, among them a letter from Carlyle which is now in the museum at 5 Cheyne Row.

Letters to Three Friends gives Hale white's philosophy of life which is not different from that uttered in The Deliverance. Here we find the proof of the following quotation:

"It would be a mistake to suppose that the creed in which I had been brought up was or could be forever cast away like an old garment. The beliefs of childhood and youth cannot be thus dismissed. I knew that in after years I found that in a way they revived under new forms."<sup>1</sup>

William Hale White died with an attack of pneumonia at the Cottage Groenbridge March 14, 1913. Full funeral directions had been made out by himself before his illness to save his wife and family trouble. The funeral was in every way in keeping with the simple life of the author who had shrunk from publicity. His body was cremated at his death and his ashes laid to rest in the Groenbridge Cemetery.

"A simple tombstone, with no ornament or moulding, a plain upright slab with a semicircular head"<sup>2</sup> marks his resting place.

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<sup>1</sup> The Early Life of Mark Rutherford, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> The Groenbridge Diary, p. 453.

In The Letters to Three Friends we read of Mrs. White's being reminded of her husband's "sailor-like look," that of an arctic explorer, by an obituary notice which describes him as being "a ruddy apparently robust almost sailor-like man." This is the only bit of physical description I find of Hale White any place. His portraits in youth and later manhood all show a singular fineness and nobility of outline, with the prevailing expression of sadness which is in tune with his life as expressed in The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford.

The Autobiography, with its sequel, the Deliverance, is not an entirely personal record. Mark Rutherford, the hero of the book, though, is not Hale White, but

"he is a Euphorion shape, close begotten of his creator's brooding, introspective spirit. The light is all focused on his figure. He is the romantic of a faltering hour, self-inquirer and self-torturer, fine and frail."<sup>1</sup>

In the Autobiography Mark Rutherford is supposed to have been a son of a well-to-do shop-keeper in the Midlands. He was trained for the ministry, in a college where not a single problem of faith or religion has ever been stated honestly. His instructor was an elderly gentleman, with a pompous degree of Doctor of Divinity. He read his prim little tracts to the students, directed against the shallow infidel.

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<sup>1</sup>H. W. Massingham, Memorial Introduction to the Autobiography, p. 34.



"About a dozen of these tracts settled the infidel and the whole mass of unbelief from the time of Celsus downwards."<sup>1</sup>

Mark Rutherford became the minister of a stagnant church in Water-Lane, in the stagnant little town of Cowfold. He gives several satirical observations of the people he met there. His intellectual speculations grow into a certain laxity of doctrine through his affection for Wordsworth and his friendship with an atheistical composer, Hardon. Mark Rutherford promoted a movement for a better water supply for the Cowfold, which, like Hale White's Bedford, was undermined with cesspools. A tradesmen's and ratepayers' opposition led by his most influential deacon, Mr. Snale, leads to Mark Rutherford's resigning his charge in Water-Lane. Snale's letter to the local paper is a good example of Hale White's ironical method of presentation. This humor of Mark Rutherford's style often subdues the tragic intention of his books. The main cause of his separation from his church is the discrepancy between his ardent intentions and the sedate unloving calm of his congregation. A deep melancholy and, quite incidentally, a rupture with Ellen, whom he was to have married, follow his

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<sup>1</sup> The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, p. 61.

disappointment and growing insincerity. Then he spent a year in ministering to a tiny Unitarian congregation no less frigid and unloving than the first.

"I determined to leave, but what to do I could not tell. I was fit for nothing, and yet I could not make up my mind to accept a life which was simply living."<sup>1</sup>

He went to London, called on an agent somewhere near the Strand, and was engaged by a gentleman who kept a private establishment at Stoke Newington. His own diffidence and the gloom of his surroundings were too strong. At last he found employment with a publisher and book-seller, and although deprived of leisure and condemned to menial labors, he was happier under the kind treatment of his employer, Wollaston, and his niece, Theresa.

Here the Autobiography ends. In the Deliverance we find him adding to his income by writing descriptive accounts of the debates given in the House of Commons. He meets McKay, also a newspaper contributor. Together they labor in the Drury Lane neighborhood, trying to bring about a civilization out of the chaos of life. They did not convert Drury Lane, but saved two or three. He gives interesting character sketches of the people with whom they worked, and interesting religious discussions. In Drury

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<sup>1</sup>The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, p. 187.

Lane Mark Rutherford gains a religion of his own and his deliverance.

Chapter seven of the Deliverance tells of Mark Rutherford's marriage. He wedded, not Mary, whom he had sought when a mature and still vigorous man, but Ellen, engaged to him when he was a boy, and now after many years a widow with one daughter. They meet in High Street, and here is pictured what is called one of the most beautiful love scenes in English literature.<sup>1</sup> The consummation of his love is painted with one sentence:

"My arm was around her in a moment, her head was on my shoulder, and my many wanderings were over."<sup>2</sup>

Characters in the two books nod to us casually, like McKay who roared so loudly, in a purely professional way, down the columns of provincial Tory papers. The desperate little mission in Drury Lane, doomed to failure as it was, sounded the reveille to whole armies of social workers of today. Out of it all the man's soul struggles to the light, passionless and serene, and yet deeply, intensely human.

London at its best is no place for dreamers, beaten down by the drive of monotonous work under Egyptian taskmasters, frightened of its loneliness, or lost in the sticky mire of its poverty. For the shadow of unemployment lay

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<sup>1</sup>"The Great English Novelists." Love scenes. The Readers' Library, vol. I, pp. 138-145.

<sup>2</sup>The Deliverance of Mark Rutherford, p. 132.

over the unable or the unadaptive. Hale White, always sympathetic to labor, discovered what a curse this phase of industrialism had brought with it, and he painted more than one impressive picture of its havoc.

The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, though cast as an historical novel, has an autobiographical touch in that Zachariah Coleman is subjected to a heart-searching quest for the universal and finally makes his own religion, based on God. Zachariah still went to Fike Street Chapel and

"He listened to Reverend Bradshaw preach with the faith of thirty years ago. He also believed in a good many things he had learned without him, and perhaps the old and the new were not so discordant as at first sight they might have seemed to be."<sup>1</sup>

The story in The Revolution in Tanner's Lane curiously repeats Mark Rutherford's relations with Mardon and Mary, in the life of Zachariah Coleman and his spiritual relationship with Jean and Pauline Gaillaud.

Zachariah Coleman is a working man and a Calvinist, and under the influence of a French Republican refugee and his daughter, Pauline, his faith becomes gradually weakened. He has married a woman who has neither elasticity of mind nor warmth of heart nor nobility of soul. Three months after his marriage Zachariah finds out that he does not love his wife. When he meets Pauline he is more aware that fate has

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<sup>1</sup>The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, p. 269.

been unjust to him in giving him a wife who cannot sympathize with his intellectual life. Pauline shares all of her father's ideas, and has sympathy for the poor and hatred for the rich. Jean Caillaud persuades Zachariah to join the Revolutionary Society to which he belongs, and one day invites him to his rooms.

Through the visits at the Caillaud home Zachariah becomes close friends with Pauline, who, like Mary in the Autobiography, is one of those quick, rich, and vigorous natures habituated to perfect frankness of speech and the constant companionship of a thinking mind, such as her father possessed.

Mark Rutherford did not marry Mardon's daughter, as she died of consumption a few months after her father's death. She had written to him saying that she could never leave her father or suffer any affection to interfere with that which she felt for him. In The Revolution in Yanner's Lane, Zachariah and Jean Caillaud are involved in one of the murders perpetrated by the revolutionary Blanketeers. The account of this movement and the Radicalism preached by such men as Major Cartwright are described in a forcible and brilliant way.

Jean Caillaud is sentenced to death. Zachariah Coleman is imprisoned for two years and is forced to flee for

his life after his release. His wife dies during this time, and he marries Pauline, whom he had promised to protect.

The last part of the book records the life of Coleman and his daughter, Pauline, after his wife's death.

There is a breadth and surpassing richness of color in the personality of Pauline and the deep nature of Zachariah, his spiritual recovery and enjoyment of life through the love for his child. The pathos of their relationship preserves the beautiful human interest of a story that, as elsewhere, has a profound religious evolution.

Zachariah, in turn, guides George Allen out of narrow ways of thinking into spiritual revolution and final freedom.

In Miriam's Schooling, 1890, a great passion suddenly inflames a big dark-haired, black-eyed girl, inexperienced and impulsive, a passion for an unworthy lover. She learns his true nature in a midnight scene too poignant to repeat, but through all the tragedy of betrayal goes the discipline of a spiritual nature. Tender, bitter, and intense is the portrayal of Miriam. There is poetic allegory, too, serving as accompaniment, where the girl finds forgetfulness in study of the silent stars, a note recalling the novelist's love of astronomy.

Hale White was a good amateur astronomer, a member of an astronomical society, and he constructed two observato-

ries for his own use. Science was one of the refuges of his mind.

#### VICTORIAN DISSENT AS INTERPRETED BY MARK RUTHERFORD

All of Hale White's writings come fresh from his soul colored with the religious experience of his youth, and influenced by his later culture. As a youth, he had suffered under non-conformity and the little chapel. Sunday was not a happy day for him. He was taken to religious services morning, afternoon, and evening and understood nothing. He sat as did many a frightened, half-asphyxiated little boy or girl in the ill-ventilated chapel, in weekly terror of hell-fire. Hale White filled his books with these religious experiences and their influence on him. Many of his observations in the Autobiography are marked by sharp notes of the company he met on the way. The account of Mrs. Snale's Dorcas meeting is a good example of his satirical observations. A Dorcas meeting when he was young, he says, was a mild form of charity, devoted by the ladies of the chapel to making clothes for the poor. These meetings were flavored with a thin brew of local and denominational gossip. The picture of Mrs. Snale's gathering<sup>1</sup> he so harshly draws is of a dis-

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<sup>1</sup>The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, pp. 82-85.



PORTRAIT OF MARK RUTHERFORD  
AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-FOUR



mal, vulgar society. Mr. Snale, who was reader the first time Mark Rutherford went to Mrs. Snale's Dorcas meeting, represents Dissent at its lowest in Hale White's mind. Mark Rutherford could not endure these meetings, and was frequently unwell on Dorcas evenings.

He has written of mid-Victorian London, but he is provincial, and he is at home in his native Bedford, in the small market town, the meadow-flats and slow bordered stream of the eastern Midlands. In Catherine Furse Eastthroe is his own Bedford, in the eastern Midlands:

"It was an ancient market town, with a six-arched bridge, and with a High Street from which three or four smaller and narrower streets connected by courts and alleys diverged at right angles. In the middle of the town was the church, an immense building, big enough to hold half Eastthroe, and celebrated for its beautiful spire and peal of eight bells. . . . All this made up a landscape, more suitable perhaps to some persons than rock or waterfall, although no picture had ever been painted of it, and nobody had ever come to see it."<sup>1</sup>

The insight his books give into the religious atmosphere of the Free Churches during the epoch of Reform has no near rival in the whole sphere of English literature. Hale White was himself trained for the ministry, but the horizon of the Baptists was too restricted in those days for a man of his restricted profound religious sympathy and un-

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Furse, p. 9.

derstanding and Mark Rutherford was to communicate his message happily in a more permanent form than would have been possible in any kind of non-conformist assembly.

White was brought up in a district in which, as he says:

"Dissent had been strong ever since the Commonwealth. The meeting house held about 700 people, and was filled every Sunday. It was not the gifts of the minister, certainly after the days of my early childhood, which kept such a congregation steady. The reason why it held together was the simple loyalty which prevents a soldier or a sailor from mutinying, although the commanding officer may deserve no respect."<sup>1</sup>

The Dissenter was not considered an heroic figure in the time of Mark Rutherford. The battle his forefathers had begun with the state, as a spiritual or a secular tyrant, was almost over. Non-conformity was becoming an unreal religion practiced by men who had had a real religion handed down to them. This is the theme of the sketches of Calvinists and the Independent ministry which we find in The Revolution in Fanner's Lane. Middle-class England was in the making, and in the place of the Republican Clubmen and red-hot Calvinists of England during the rebellion, 1814, we have the dull receding tide of life in Cowfold, which is Hale White's Bedford 20 years after the rebellion, 1834. This is the study of religious decadence. The ardent early

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<sup>1</sup> The Early Life of Mark Rutherford, p. 16.

Calvinists represented by the Reverend Thomas Bradshaw were being replaced by coarser professionals like the Reverend John Broad. For a great many years the congregation at Tanner's Lane had apparently undergone no change in character.

"The fervid piety of Cowper's time and of the Evangelical revival was a thing almost of the past. The Reverend John Broad was certainly not of the revival type. He was a big, gross-feeding, heavy person with heavy ox-face and large mouth, who might have been bad enough for anything if Nature had ordained that he should have been born in a hovel at Sheepgate or in the Black Country."<sup>1</sup>

John Broad and the Snares of the autobiography are real figures who had a spiritual ancestry as fine as anything in English history and

"They were the product of social and economic changes which must be realized if we would discover how great masses of middle-class English life came to be what they are."<sup>2</sup>

Hale White interpolates several sermons in his novels. He also describes sermons of the old Methodist type which once impressed Lord Chesterfield.

"The preacher spoke a broad Lancashire dialect and was very dramatic. He pictured God's efforts to save a soul. Under the pulpit ledge was the imaginary bottomless pit of this world—not the next. He leaned over and pretended to be drawing the soul up with a cord. 'He comes! he comes!' he cried; 'God be praised—he is safe!' and he landed him on the Bible. The congregation gave a great groan of relief.

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<sup>1</sup> The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, pp. 206-9.

<sup>2</sup> H. W. Massingham, "The Memorial Introduction to the Autobiography," p. 34.

'There he is on the Book of Ages. Ho! Ho—he slips; the Devil has him!' he said again with the most moving pathos, and was still for a moment!<sup>1</sup>

Mark Rutherford, though he had been badly treated by the Dissenters, remained a fervent Dissenter. He thought that the older Dissenters were of a finer quality than the newer. He was a constant student of the Bible, and came to feel that among Dissenters there was far too little of the Bible and too much of the preacher. He thought the dissenting laity would be greatly improved if a thorough systematic instruction in the Bible was substituted a little more frequently for flights of oratory dependent upon an isolated text.

He had small patience with those who complained about the introduction of politics into preaching. Cromwell and Milton were political and were supposed to have a few religious beliefs. The political dissenters, he would say, were more political than their descendants and more pious. Many of them were almost Republican.

Mark Rutherford's grandfather lived in Bedfordshire beyond memory, and sleeps in Wilstead Churchyard. He was a godly elder of the church, a Radical, and almost Republican.

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<sup>1</sup> The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, p. 116.

"With two of his neighbors he refused to illuminate for our victories over the French and he had his windows smashed by a Tory mob."<sup>1</sup>

Mark Rutherford believed that it was impossible for a man to have ardent beliefs on religion without having beliefs equally imperious and ardent on a subject so important as politics.

Mark Rutherford could do justice to the church of England, especially in his later years, and when he was a young man he made a pilgrimage to Hursley to hear Mr. Keble preach. The day was never forgotten. He walked over to Hursley from Romsey with an uncle at whose house he was staying.<sup>2</sup> Everybody was at church who could go, and the sermon preached was one that went to everyone's heart. It was harvest time and Mr. Keble seized the opportunity of enlarging upon the relationship between master and servant, that of course being the season of the year when the farmers had to make the greatest demand upon their men. The precise deficiencies both on the side of the masters as well as of the men which had been observed through the week were exposed and denounced, and then they were told of a higher

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<sup>1</sup> The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford by Himself, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> The Groombridge Diary, p. 333.

Master whose dealings with them were forever just and merciful. Altogether it was a noble Christian doctrine such as Mark Rutherford had not often heard since.

He could not, however, be anything but a Dissenter, and he had small patience with dissenting ministers who went over to the Church. He tells of a person calling herself a churchwoman who wrote to one of the church newspapers protesting against the reception of dissenting ministers into the Church because they were so uncultivated, so intolerable in polite society. She told a story of a dissenting minister converted to the Establishment who, appearing in a drawing-room one evening, produced a pair of working slippers and proceeded to change his boots there and then. When the boots were taken off they were stowed under a chair and the owner resisted attempts on the part of the servants to remove them. Mark Rutherford thinks this is perfectly credible, because a dissenting minister who is good enough to present himself to the Establishment would be likely to take off his boots, and for aught one knows, his coat or his shirt.

#### MARK RUTHERFORD'S STYLE

Mark Rutherford has no gift for plot making. Charming tales are interwoven with the main theme, and he often

leaves great interstices in the story to the imagination. But Mark Rutherford's art is not spoiled by the lack of plot. The interest in his books lies in his veracity of statement, the sobriety of his expectations from life and the truth and harmony of his general design. Catherine Furse exceeds his other novels in beauty and in unity and directness of emotional appeal.

The novels of Mark Rutherford are as objective as the Autobiography. The scene is laid out in a few simple strokes and then left, without a line in excess.

His perfect ease of presentation is shown by almost any passage which might be chosen from his works. The following is from the talk of the farmer-gossips in Furse's parlor in Eastthorpe:

"Old Bartlett's widow still a-livin' up at the croft!"  
 "Yes," said Mr. Gosford, after filling his pipe again and pausing for at least a minute, "Bartlett's dead."  
 "Bartlett wur a slow-coach," observed Mr. Chandler, after another pause of a minute, "so wur his ware. I mind me I wur behind his ware about five years ago last Michaelmas, and I wur well-nigh perished. I wur a-goin' to give her a poke with my stick, and old Bartlett says, 'Doan't hit her, doan't hit her; yer can't alter her!'"  
 The three worthy farmers roared with laughter, Mr. Furse smiling gently.<sup>1</sup>

Rutherford's art has a faint derivation from George Eliot and does not lend itself to description easily. A del-

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<sup>1</sup>Catherine Furse, p. 13.

icote shade of greys is blended with characters and surroundings as it arises from the touch of his pen. He comments and moralizes; but the intervening voice is quiet and meditative.

Rutherford, like George Eliot, believes that every sin has its penalty. Rebels are wanted, but rebels must pay the price or submit. Miriam does submit, Catherine dies, exalted by her love and genius. Madge Hopgood, in Clara Hopgood, alone of these rebellious sisters conquers by virtue of her realist temper, acting on her fastidious taste and superior culture, which bids her reject an imperfect lover, even after she has made the last surrender to him. And Madge Hopgood is appealing. With her the great refusal comes not of high spirit or of defiance, but of inspirational truth. Throughout her trial, this sublime courage never wavers. One is reminded of a similar situation in Middlemarch. Dorothea Brooke felt bound to submit to duty because of her religion. She said it was her life. She followed on, never looking just where she was, seeing what nobody else saw, yet what she saw was never quite plain. Madge's single vision of duty, like the one upon the Damascus road, suffices for the convictions of a lifetime. Here, as again and again in his novels, Rutherford holds fast to faith in this instant inner light:



"Precious and rare are those divine souls, to whom that which is aërial is substantial, the only true substance; those for whom a pale vision possesses an authority they are forced unconditionally to obey."<sup>1</sup>

Like George Eliot, Rutherford is an imaginative artist, working upon a small canvas and within definite limitations. They are intense because of concentration of all the powers in which they excel upon the type of character that most attracts and which gives the most vivid and mastery of portraits. There is an intensity of vision that accompanies the narrowness of field which each focuses upon, and the emphasis upon moral outcomes which in the two are the same.

Mark Rutherford has the creative gift. Like Turgenev he can paint a breathing, living figure in half a dozen lines, by sketching the deeply felt moral or spiritual experiences of certain types of character, or phases of character. Scarcely any details are given of them.

He paints tragedy of lives outwardly insignificant and of no account, but capable of the finer forms of suffering, of loneliness, of comprehension. Again and again under varying types he draws their portraits and their environment in a few striking, poignant lines.

Rutherford, like Gissing, is more interested in women than men. In all of his books we find striking pictures of women.

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<sup>1</sup>Clara Hopwood, p. 197.

The character of Jean Coleman in The Revolution in Tanner's Lane is perhaps his subtlest achievement in the sphere of direct delineation. She is depicted with a Dutch naturalness, quietism, and absence of exaggeration.

"She was the born natural enemy of dirt, dust, untidiness, and of every kind of irregularity, as the cat is the born natural enemy of the mouse. The sight of dirt, in fact, gave her a quiet kind of delight, because she foresaw the pleasure of annihilating it."<sup>1</sup>

Scarcely two or three pages are given concerning Theresa and Mary in the Autobiography, but their temperaments stand revealed with surprising clearness. Theresa, the book-seller's niece, is a girl with yellowish hair which was naturally waved, a big arched head, greyish-blue eyes, and a mouth which, although it had curves in it, was compressed and indicative of great force of character. Theresa is the second young woman to be brought before the reader in this book. Mary died of consumption a few months after her father. Before this Rutherford's heart, which hungered and thirsted for affection, had gone out to Mary as if dragged by the force of a loadstone. She was not, however, to be his. Writing to him, she tells him, with sweetness and tenderness, that she could never leave her father or suffer any affection to interfere with that which she

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<sup>1</sup> The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, p. 123.

felt for him. The love felt for her by Mark Rutherford is contrasted instinctively by the reader with the emotion, the rush of feeling, which he afterwards feels for Theresa.

Rutherford's women interest the reader in and through and eventually because of their womanhood in what they love, feel, and hope. Neither Miriam nor Theresa nor Pauline of The Revolution in Tanner's Lane ever uttered an epigram in her life, but still they interest us.

The reader feels that Theresa should not have been allowed to drop out of Mark Rutherford's life. Her individuality, her courage and vigor, would have given to Mark Rutherford's life a color and fullness and richness which the woman he afterwards marries, whom he loved so devotedly, nevertheless lacked.

Rutherford's, like Turgenev's, gallery of Russian women is essentially modern. Mary, Mardon's daughter, in the Autobiography has read deeply of literature, and has skeptical ideas. Raphael or Shakespeare would not have chosen to paint either Irene in Smoke or Miriam in Miriam's Schooling.

In the group of portrait studies the description of Pauline in The Revolution in Tanner's Lane is unforgettable. There are one or two scenes in imaginative fiction which impress and captivate the imagination by their dramatic

quality, while at the time revealing the essence of character. Readers of Henry Edmond will recall the scene in which Beatrice Castlewood, that bright radiant vision, gives for a moment a glimpse into her hard cold nature; and as picturesque and unforgettable is the scene in which Pauline dances before Zachariah Coleman.

There also is a passage in the same book which exhibits White's capacity for portraying human character; also there is a moment of profoundest emotion and environment almost in dynamical relationship. This high wrought emotion of noble hearts is written in a language that is fitting for an occasion so sacred. It is a passage of moving accent and deep tenderness, yet restrained.

"The three friends spoke not a word for nearly five minutes. Zachariah was never suddenly equal to any occasion which made any great demands upon him. It often made him miserable that it was so. Here he was, in the presence of one whom he had so much loved, and who was about to leave him forever, and he had nothing to say. That could have been endured could he but have felt and showed his feeling, could he but have cast himself upon his neck and wept over him, but he was numbed and apparently immovable. It was Calilaud who first broke the silence.

"It appears I shall have to console you rather than you me; believe me, I care no more about dying, as mere dying, than I do about walking across this room. There are two things which disturb me, the apprehension of some pain and bidding good-bye to Pauline and you, and two or three more."

"There was, after all, just a touch needed to break up Zachariah and melt him.

"You are happier than I," he cried. "Your work is at an end. No more care for things done or undone; you are discharged, and nobly discharged, with honor. But as for me!"

"With honor!" and Caillaud smiled. "To be hung like a forger of banknotes, not even to be shot--and then forgotten. Forgotten utterly! This does not happen to be one of those revolutions which men remember."

"No! Men will not remember," said Pauline, with an elevation of voice and manner almost oratorical. "Men will not remember, but there is a memory in the world which forgets nothing."

"Do you know," said Caillaud, "I have always loved adventure, and at times I look forward to death with curiosity and interest, just as if I were going to a foreign country."

"Tell me," said Zachariah, "if there is anything I can do."

"Nothing. I would ask you to see that Pauline comes to no harm but she can take care of herself. I have nothing to give you in parting. They have taken everything from me."

"What a brute I am! I shall never see you again, and I cannot speak," sobbed Zachariah.

"Speak! What need is there of speaking? What is there which can be said at such a time? To tell you the truth, Coleman, I hardly cared about having you here, I did not want to imperil the calm which is now happily upon me; we all of us have something unaccountable and uncontrollable in us, and I do not know how soon it may wake in me. But I did wish to see you, in order that your mind might be at peace about me. Come, good-bye!"

"Caillaud put his hand on Zachariah's shoulder.

"This will not do," he said. "For my sake, forbear. I can face what I have to go through next Monday if I am not shaken. Come, Pauline, you, too, my child, must leave me for a bit."

"Zachariah looked at Pauline, who rose and threw her shawl over her shoulders. Her lips were tightly shut, but she was herself. The warden opened the door. Zachariah took his friend's hand, held it for a moment, and then threw his arms round his neck. There is a pathos in parting which the mere loss through absence does not explain. We all of us feel it, even if there is to be meeting again in a few months, and we are overcome by incomprehensible emotion when we turn back down the pier, unable any longer to discern the waving of the handkerchief, or when the railway train turns the curve in the cutting and leaves us standing on the platform. Infinitely pathetic, therefore, is the moment when we separate forever."<sup>1</sup>

This is the language of feeling without a touch of rhetoric, and having kinship in its simplicity and intensity with the language of the Bible. And it has much the same effect as that derived from many intensely subjective passages in the Bible. The deep imaginative emotion transfers itself to the reader, the invariable stamp of great art.

I have chosen the following passage as a fair representative of the high-water mark of Rutherford's style.

"She put on her clothes silently, went downstairs and opened the back-door. The ever-watchful dog, hearing in his deepest slumbers the slightest noise, moved in his kennel, but recognised her at once and was still. She called to him to follow her, and he joyfully obeyed. He would have broken into tumultuous barking if she had not silenced him instantly, and he was forced to content himself with leaping up at her and leaving marks of his paws all over her cloak. Not a soul was to be seen, and she went on undisturbed till she came to her favorite spot where she had first met Mr. Armstrong. She paced about for a little while

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<sup>1</sup> The Revolution in Fanner's Lane, pp. 188-190.

and then sat down and once more watched the dawn. It was not a clear sky, but barred toward the east with cloud, the rain-cloud of the night. She watched and watched, and thought after her fashion, mostly with incoherence, but with rapidity and intensity. At last came the first flush of scarlet upon the bars, and the dead storm contributed its own share to the growing beauty. The rooks were now astir, and flew, one after the other, in an irregular line eastwards, black against the sky. Still the color spread, until at last it began to rise into pure light, and in a moment more the first glowing point of the disc was above the horizon. Miriam fell on her knees against the little seat and sobbed, and the dog, wondering, came and sat by her and licked her face with tender pity.<sup>1</sup>

This simplicity and intensity having kinship with the language of the Bible are characteristics of Bunyan's charm of style. In seeking out standards by which to measure Rutherford, the name of Bunyan is inevitable.

In his back work of articles, translations, and editions, the one title of peculiar significance is The Life of John Bunyan (1905). Rutherford was well prepared to tell this life. His father was a trustee of the famous Bunyan meeting at Bedford, and Bunyan's books were his childhood companions in the dingy printing shop. All the spiritual intensity, and all the miserable period of doubts and fears, self-torture and melancholy, ill health, and depression that we read of in Grace Abounding were repeated in his humble disciple. Bunyan's spiritual conflict and his return to repose in faith were a part of Rutherford's experience. Be-

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<sup>1</sup> Miriam's Schooling, pp. 151-152.

yond this, however, Bunyan's power of depicting his own states of mind, his intimate spiritual confessions, written without a trace of self-consciousness or pose, and his way of suggesting a world beyond the bare recital were inherited by Mark Rutherford. He had all Bunyan's love of allegory which gives significance to more than one of his stray pieces in Last Pages from a Journal. There is the story of the clock-maker of Cornhill (Faith), of whom people used to say:

"Ah, if you can only get one of the watches or clocks made before he begins to fail a bit."<sup>1</sup>

He was caught once on a spot of land, surrounded by the incoming tide. Unable to swim, he should be drowned if the water rose past the hour of nine. All his security of mind depended on the faithfulness of his watch, the product of his own faithful work;

"Again and again he tried to repeat the reasons in favor of his watch. They were overwhelming, but his nerves shook, his brain was in confusion, and he made sure he should faint and drop . . . At 8:50 the tide was round his neck, but he was undisturbed. He threw back his head a trifle; at 8:58--it was within a minute--the slow, upward, unruffled creep had ceased.

" . . . Parsons, when he told the story, used to say the adventure was a trial of his faith. It was rightly named. If he could have been asked in the midst of his terror whether he believed in his watch, he would have assent-

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<sup>1</sup> Last Pages from a Journal, p. 338.



ed without hesitation. He must believe it. How could he mistrust hundreds of tests? . . . Faith is not belief in fact, demonstration, or promise. It is sensibility to the due influence of the fact, something which enables us to act upon it, the susceptibility to all the strength there is in the fact, so that we are controlled by it. Nobody can precisely define it. It was faith, asserting itself, which saved the watch-maker . . . If you ever see a Farsone watch, buy it. Sell something for it if you have not got the ready money. When you have bought it, stand by it; train yourself by never doubting it. Do not alter it. On the authority of any other watch nor of any clock; no, not even if it be church or cathedral."<sup>1</sup>

#### RUTHERFORD'S LITERARY BACKGROUND

"If we are to form a just estimate of a man's greatness, we must be thoroughly familiar with the sphere in which he moves."<sup>2</sup>

William Hale White passed the greater part of his life in the Victorian period. His first remembrances are of the coronation of Queen Victoria and a town's dinner in St. Paul's Square. He says:

"I belong to the Tennyson-Carlyle-Ruskin epoch. When I was a boy, these men were the appointed channels through which the new life was poured into me . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Hale White had friendships among the distinguished men of his time, including John Ruskin of whom Hale White saw a great deal, Philip Webb, of the Pre-Raphaelites, and Caleb

<sup>1</sup> Last Pages from a Journal, pp. 330-333.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Rutherford, "James Bradley and the Stars." Last Pages from a Journal, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Letters to Three Friends, p. 170.

Morris. He called at five Cheyne Row, Chelsea, in 1868 and visited Carlyle, and he knew personally George Eliot.<sup>1</sup>

Hale White had met and visited with Robert Browning,<sup>2</sup> Emerson,<sup>3</sup> E. V. Lucas,<sup>4</sup> Francis Newman,<sup>5</sup> brother to the Cardinal, and Swinburne.<sup>6</sup>

Hale White lived until it became popular to condemn the Victorian era. It is interesting to note what he says in this regard:

"Whatever may be the justice of the scorn poured out upon it by the superior persons of the present generation, this Victorian age was distinguished by an enthusiasm which can only be compared to a religious revival."<sup>7</sup>

The religious chord is one of the common chords of humanity, and in England, a nation much given to religious thinking and in the main profoundly sincere in its desire for truth, it is inevitable that religion should be constantly expressed in its fiction. So far as English fiction is concerned, there is much in the national temperament and

<sup>1</sup>Mark Rutherford, "George Eliot as I Knew Her." Last Pages from a Journal, pp. 131-137.

<sup>2</sup>The Groombridge Diary, p. 372.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 413.

<sup>6</sup>Letters to Three Friends, pp. 90-91.

<sup>7</sup>The Early Life of Mark Rutherford, p. 87.

history to explain the existence of what may be called the religious novel. It can escape no student of history that all the great causes which have most powerfully moved the English mind have been in essence religious causes. The greatest series of battles ever fought on English soil were struggles between antagonistic religious creeds. The Puritan stood primarily for certain spiritual truths; it was an accident of his time that these truths involved the cause of political liberty. His antagonist also claimed the consecration of a creed which, beginning with certain ecclesiastical convictions, was found to involve the entire theory of monarchy. Twice in her history England has got rid of a king, but the original cause of offence in each instance was as much religious as political. With such antecedents it is nothing more than might be expected that English fiction should reflect in an unusual degree the religious temper of the race.

Into most really good novels religion enters as one among many composite qualities, or a sense of religion is more or less accidental, even if the author has had no special training for the discussion of religious problems. There are passages in both Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot which might have been written by a religious poet,

the close of Villette, the preface to Middlemarch, and the spiritual experiences of Maggie.

A religious novel is not one into which religion enters as one of many composite qualities, or one in which a sense of religion is more or less doubtful. Most really good novels would answer to this description. They touch the religious chord because it is one of the common chords of humanity. A novelist intends to sweep the full compass of life. A religious novel centers itself on the exposition of religious ideas, or the statement of a theological problem.

"The religious novel is a novel in which the faculty of creative imagination is definitely devoted, and in some instances subordinated, to the exposition of religious ideas."<sup>1</sup>

Putting aside novels which appeal to religious sentiment, there are few names which stand for high achievement in this realm of literature. W. J. Dawson names George MacDonald, J. Henry Shorthouse, Mrs. Humphry Ward, and Mark Rutherford as having excelled in the religious novel. The most widely known of these writers is Mrs. Humphry Ward.

Mrs. Humphry Ward's chief claim as a religious novelist is Robert Elsmere. Two figures absorb the attention in this book, Langham, an atheistic Oxford tutor, and Robert

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<sup>1</sup>W. J. Dawson, The Makers of English Fiction, p. 255.

Elmore, a peculiarly sensitive and not very robust-minded young clergyman. This clergyman thinks that the entire cause of Christianity depends upon the date at which the Book of Daniel was written, and upon questions which seem contradictorily answered in the Bible.

Mrs. Humphry Ward is sincere in the examination of religious problems, and she is an accomplished writer. Yet her message seems shallow, and almost insincere in comparison with the message of Mark Rutherford. The most memorable parts of Robert Elmore are the social functions and the political gossip.

The purpose of all Hale White's books is a heart-searching quest for the universal and an acceptance of God. His subject received from him a treatment that sets him apart from all other writers of his day. The philosophy of Mark Rutherford resembles that of George Eliot and in the emphasis upon moral outcomes the two are also close, but George Eliot does not definitely devote her creative imagination to the exposition of her philosophic ideas.

Mark Rutherford stoutly defended George Eliot against those who passed judgment on her for mixing up philosophy with fiction:

"George Eliot was chosen to write as she did in Middlemarch, and I am profoundly grateful . . . . The people

I most wish to know in actual life are those who think and talk a little upon subjects like those, for example, which interested Lydgate, and I do not see why I should object to meet with them in a story."<sup>1</sup>

George Eliot's early books are those which give the best account of the life and doings of country life in the Midlands, and the outward conditions are best described in Adam Bede and Middlemarch. But Dissenters are not prominent in her books. Hale White is the only great modern English writer knowing and caring enough for provincial Dissent to give it a serious place in fiction.

In Middlemarch Mr. Bulstrode's first wife was a

"Dissenter, and in other ways probably of that disadvantageous quality usually perceptible in a first wife if inquired into . . . and while true religion was everywhere saving, honest Bulstrode was convinced that to be saved in the Church was more respectable."<sup>2</sup>

The second wife of Mr. Bulstrode

" . . . so much wished to ignore toward others that her husband had ever been a London Dissenter, that she liked to keep it out of sight, even in talking to him."<sup>3</sup>

Born into Bunyan's heritage, nourished upon the hopeful romanticism of Wordsworth and Carlyle, eager to share in the large freedom of the soul which was to come in a

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Rutherford, "George Eliot as I Knew Her." Last Pages from a Journal, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> George Eliot, Middlemarch, vol. 3, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

great mid-century, Hale White used material for his fiction that has one subject set in a scene which he saw when he was young, hardly revisited, but drew upon as if he still breathed his native air. Fielding, Sterne, Jane Austin, Trollope, Mrs. Gaskell, the Brontes, and George Eliot answer between them for the greater powers in picturing English life in rural and semi-rural England for the last two centuries. But these greater artists of rural English life picture the world of the well-to-do, the land of the squire and the parson. Hale White writes of the souls that lie between these great spiritual estates and the actual tillers of the soil.

With his deep sense of religion Rutherford combined, like Milton, a keenly felt sorrow for the religious aberrations of suffering humanity. He recognized the subject matter of true religion in the patiently-borne woes of the down-trodden, the abject, the crushing slaves of modern civility, the poor. Prolonged and intense reflection on this subject made a revolutionist of him and he wrote:

"Talk about the atrocities of the Revolution! All the atrocities of the democracy heaped together ever since the world began would not equal, if we had a gauge by which to measure them, the atrocities perpetrated in a week upon the poor, simply because they are poor; and the marvel rather is, not that there is every now and then a September massacre at which the world shrieks, but that such horrors are so infrequent. Again I say, let no man judge communist or an-

archist till he has asked for leave to work and a 'Damn your eyes!' has rung in his ear."<sup>1</sup>

Life to the typical mid-Victorians was an earnest, solemn fact. The great upheaval which followed the French wars and culminated in the Industrial Revolution had left its mark upon many Englishmen, young as well as old. Novelists came to think of the lessons they had to teach, an idea not prominent in the minds of Walter Scott and Jane Austin. Dickens taught his "lessons"; his morals were obvious to the most careless reader. Thackeray's teaching was more subtle and was mainly conveyed by satire, but it was present.

I find a tendency among critics to compare Hale White's works with those of Anthony Trollope's. These writers deal with the same general subject, namely, the way in which religious thought and worship were organized in provincial England 50 or 60 years ago. Yet there is a sharp contrast between them. Both writers possess the same quietness of method, the same distaste for imposing dash and picturesque romance of words, but they were no doubt widely different men. Trollope was, above all, a humoristic writer but an impassive observer of life, but Rutherford was passionately interested in his topic. Trollope's sense of fun, like Charles Dickens', overflowed when he worked on characters so purely comic as Mrs. Proudie or the Signora Neroni in

<sup>1</sup>The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, p. 114.



Barbaster Towers. As Mark Rutherford speaks of himself he thrills his readers with his story. Not only is the first-hand knowledge more intimate, but the past is pictured untroubled by literary waywardness, and steeped only in the softening light of memory and emotion.

Trollope was fair-minded and interested in Anglicanism, but he could hardly bring himself to discern any special spiritual texture in the life of the average church dignitary of his time. In Barbaster Towers no especial spirituality is discernible in the life of Trollope's average church dignitary. He was sensible of the dignity, self-restraint, and propriety of bearing of the clergy. Doctor Grantly never comes down from his high church pedestal to the level of a mortal man only within the walks of Plumstead Episcopi.

"He has all the dignity of an ancient saint with the sleekness of a modern bishop; he is always the same; he is always the archdeacon; unlike Homer, he never nods."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Slope is his nearest approach to a clerical villain, but he is not very bad.

Trollope conceived the establishment as an institution resting on endowments, the landed gentry, the state, and the diocesan system. Clericalism was a profession like any

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Trollope, The Warden, p. 17.

other, and the great thing in it was the race for preferment. A Bishopric was a good thing, a Deanery less good, a Canonry not to be despised. But the best of all was for your side to win; if you were of the Dean's party to see that he triumphed, if of the Bishop's to see that he won. Neither did Trollope paint saints, unless it be the rather negative Mr. Harding. His books end with marriage and preferment, as if these were the main prize for which to work in life. There is scarcely one of his stories in which a young lady is not engaged, formally or practically, to two men at the same time, or one man more or less committed to two women; yet no story repeats exactly the situation or raises the problem of honor and duty in quite the same form as it appears in the stories that went before.

Trollope's presentations are delightfully humorous, but the play of morals is of the faintest and most ironical kind. For example, Archdeacon Grantly in Barchester Towers almost wishes his father, the Bishop, to die before the Tory government goes out, and his chance of succession disappears, but he doesn't really express his wish. All of Anthony Trollope's circle of secluded clericals know neither vice nor virtue nor does he give any visible cause for such a church as he pictured to exist. Anthony Trollope's characters are the same people we meet in the street or at a

dinner party; and they are mostly seen under no more exciting conditions than those of a hunting meet or a lawn tennis match or an afternoon tea. They are flirting or talking for effect, or scheming for some temporary end. They are not under the influence of strong passions, or forced into striking situations, like the leading characters in George Eliot or Mark Rutherford's novels. For this reason again they represent faithfully the ordinary surface of English upper and upper middle-class society, its prejudices, its worship of conventionalities, its respect for honesty and straightforwardness, its easy friendliness of manner toward all who stand within the sacred pale of social recognition.

Anthony Trollope does not present either grand characters or tragical situations. He is a realist, but he is not able to pierce the bedrock of human nature in rendering the primal passions.

In Mark Rutherford's pictures of the villages and market towns of the eastern Midlands, the types are at once lower and more exalted while the "professional" outlook is entirely changed. Mr. Crawley in Bartholomew Towers warred with Mrs. Proudle and public opinion, not with the vulgar malignity of the more stupid arrogance which flows from the petty masters in Mark Rutherford's books. In Mark Ruther-

ford's books we have struggle against the cramping fetters devised by the old Calvinist theology.

Anthony Trollope's clerics are all, or nearly all, gentlemen. They are rarely even poor and they are not sinners, but no two faces are exactly alike and yet all are such people as one might see any Sunday in the pulpit. Mark Rutherford's are set in a much grosser frame of things--the frame of the shop parlor, the ill-lit, half-deserted county chapel, the "Dorcas meeting," the heavy mid-day dinner, and the ceremonial tea. They serve little circles of gossip and spite and fussy domination and average stolid human nature, here and there visited by a strain of pure aspiring thought and sentiment, or of defiance and revolt. Here we find gross vulgarians, like Mr. Broad, in The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, or sly sensualists like Mr. Broad's son, or stern, self-disciplined souls like the Calvinist minister in The Revolution in Tanner's Lane. Then, too, we meet heroic figures struggling to the light amid incredibly mean surroundings, casting off one form or creed after another, beset by passion, weakness, sentimentalism, the craving for sympathy and self-revelation.

There is a contrast between Anthony Trollope and his French contemporaries such as Alphonse Daudet. The French novelists studied their characters with more care than En-

English writers had usually shown. The characters were few as in a classical drama; and the whole action of the story is carefully subordinated to the development of these characters, and the placing of them in a critical position which sets their strength and weakness in the fullest light. There was more of a judicious adaptation of the parts to the whole in French fiction and therefore more unity of impression was informed.

Rutherford has unity of impression, obtained through a general design of truth and harmony. His characters are few, but they are distinctive, memorable human beings. He analyzes them, with a deep, steady, penetrating gaze which goes to the roots of things. He knows what is in men, because he knows what is in himself, and he exposes the secrets of his own heart with merciless accuracy.

He admits that he had few friends at the Dissenting College, that his education was mostly external, and that he had a desire for self-expression, but

"I was always prone to say things in conversation which produced blank silence in the majority of those who listened to me, and immediately opportunity was taken by my hearers to turn to something trivial."<sup>1</sup>

Mark Rutherford tells us things about himself which most men would be unwilling to reveal to an intimate friend.

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<sup>1</sup> The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, p. 74.

Thomas Secombe stresses the confessional value of Mark Rutherford's works:

"All his books have a high confessional value; his greatest book, the Autobiography, ranks with the greatest confessions of literature."<sup>1</sup>

He is perfectly frank in his analysis of his actions, and all that he says is interesting. Mark Rutherford of all English men of letters comes nearest to Rousseau in his power to make personal experience real, to speak of himself and to thrill his listeners with the story. We are thrilled as we follow Mark Rutherford through his spiritual doubts and struggles that he reveals with perfect honesty.

He is as honest as Cellini and like St. Augustine he finally arrived at an acceptance of faith that restored him to at least partial happiness. Mark Rutherford's search for universal truth is a moving account of what serious and earnest young manhood passed through in the latter part of the Victorian century, a momentous period of heart-searching. Through his honesty and understanding Hale White has interpreted to the world the inwardness of the intellectual and religious life of his time.<sup>2</sup>

#### CRITICAL OPINION IN REGARD TO MARK RUTHERFORD

In England with the passing of the years a large amount

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Secombe, *Living Age*, vol. 377, p. 500.

<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth S. Haldane, George Eliot and Her Times, p. 79.

of Mark Rutherford's former appeal has been lost. In America he never lived. However, an article in the *Yale Review*<sup>1</sup> says that Mark Rutherford's position in literature is as secure as any man's in the last quarter century and that few writers of real eminence have come to their own by less obtrusive means. H. W. McCracken states that, although it is perhaps more perilous to forecast the future of books than of nations, it would not be surprising if the writings of Mark Rutherford, or at least his Autobiography, should take rank with the famous classics and the imperishable treasures of English literature.

Later in speaking of Rutherford's hearing in America, with its "full-fed" novel readers, the same critic prophesies that within a small circle of artists in literature Mark Rutherford is sure to become to us what he has been for a generation in England--one of the strong formative influences of our day.

Mark Rutherford's influence over his readers is great. Sir William Robertson Nicholl in the *British Weekly* proclaims that the works of Mark Rutherford have done more for him a great deal than the works of any other living writer. To many Mark Rutherford's is a voice calling them to rise out of the dead and live.

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<sup>1</sup>Pages from a Journal with Other Papers. Review, *Yale Review* N. S. 3:189-940. 1913.

Mark Rutherford's books have always had a curious grip upon their readers because of their honesty, delicacy, and simplicity of portraiture. A writer for *Everyman* avows that, although Mark Rutherford writes of the realities of poverty and labor, disappointment and defeat, he writes of them in a way which makes his books not only great literature, but the stuff of life. Every reader recognizes the works as true pictures of life and feels that, "I must have passed this way before, and thus thought."

Critics agree that the philosophical quality of Mark Rutherford's books gives them a deep and abiding significance and value. According to W. J. Dawson in the book, Religion in Fiction, there are numerous novels which appeal to religious sentiment, some of them only fairly meritorious, most of them poor in theme and faulty in construction. But there are not more than three or four names which stand for high achievement in the realm of religious literature, and Mark Rutherford is one of these few.

Mark Rutherford stands apart as a writer of religious expression. A quotation from the Academy confirms the above statement that the novels of Mark Rutherford are different from other religious novels. They are often placed on the same shelf with Spinoza's Ethics but are referred to a good deal oftener. They are informed with a wisdom



austere and sweet, a magnetic sympathy, an altruism which rejoices in contact with life.

The appropriation or rejection of Mark Rutherford's philosophy depends on temperament but his art appeals to all who aesthetically understand the English language.

Thomas Secombe in an article in *The New Witness* considers that Mark Rutherford possesses the art of omission to perfection. Therefore, his style is apparently the simplest is the most difficult to imitate, because it has no peculiarities. It has the purity and severity of perfect light. He calls Mark Rutherford's style lucid, and places him above all writers of our time in excellence in the art of the packed and pregnant phrase, without the use of artifice.

Critics agree with the sentiments of the following quotation which presents Mark Rutherford's novels as historically valuable:

"I know of no fiction which presents so wonderfully vivid and faithful a picture of provincial bourgeois life in the 'forties as is depicted in Catherine Purse, and the few passages in which light is thrown upon the condition of the peasants' life are worth volumes of historical documents."<sup>1</sup>

H. W. Massingham in the Memorial Introduction to the Autobiography gives historical significance to The Revolu-

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<sup>1</sup>Mark Rutherford, An Appreciation. *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 34, p. 463. 1908.

tion in Tanner's Lane. He says there are no more perfectly drawn pictures of English life in its recurring emotional contrast of excitement and repose more valuable to the historian, or more stimulating to the imaginative reader. But the interest in the novels as a whole comes from the truth and harmony of their general design, and from its tragic intention, subdued by humor.

"Since Bunyan, English Puritanism has produced one imaginative genius of the highest order."<sup>1</sup>

#### THE INFLUENCE OF MARK RUTHERFORD

Hale White is never forgotten once he is read.

"But he is not yet approached through the highways of English letters. To those who love his work, nothing can be more attractive than the delicacy and truth of his art, and the pure and serene atmosphere of thought in which it moves."<sup>2</sup>

Neither is he detached from the intellectual movement of his time.

He touches the Victorians at three characteristic points--their science, their romantic melancholy, and their revolt from traditional religion. But he is not for the crowd. His mood is quietish, and his special quality of

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<sup>1</sup> H. W. Massingham, Memorial Introduction, The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

depth in simplicity makes small appeal to a literary taste which is neither deep nor simple.

It was Mr. R.'s opinion that one should cultivate the habit of pondering fairly every thought in a book antagonistic to one's tendency, regarding such thoughts as deserving special attention, and one cannot ignore his power of forcing one to contemplate the way of justice as he conceived it.

His circle of readers is ever growing and to them his books seem to be wells of truth and poetry.

His growing popularity is recognized by most of his biographers: The task undertaken by an admirer in a certain magazine was

"to seek to show the reasons entertained by some amongst us that 'Mark Rutherford' is the profoundest writer of fiction of his day."<sup>1</sup>

One of the reasons given in the above article is the large circulation which has been given to "Mark Rutherford's Autobiography" and "Rutherford's Deliverance."

"The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford (1881), Mark Rutherford's Deliverance (1885), and The Revolution in Tanner's Lane (1887) were at first coolly received, but their literary quality and other merits brought later a more general and generous appreciation."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Appreciation of Mark Rutherford. Fortnightly Review, p. 458. September, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> New International Encyclopedia. 2nd ed. Vol. 20. By Dodd, Head and Co., Inc. New York. 1916.

These volumes have attained what is usually regarded as an incontestable proof of popularity, publication in the form of a cheap shilling edition.

But non-recognition is discernible in many quarters, because Mr. Rutherford has appealed to the few and the discriminating rather than to the general public. Probably his books will never be popular in the wide sense of the term. His compensation is that those who are able to receive his message invariably come to regard him with a peculiar depth of affection.

#### CONCLUSION

Hale White is a realist, but a realist who deals not with matter but with spirit. All his books have a high confessional value; his greatest book, the Autobiography, ranks with the greatest confessions of literature: The Confessions of St. Augustine, The Confessions of Rousseau, and The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini. St. Augustine's aim was religious and didactic, but Hale White has no pet antipathy to put before the world. The Autobiography is as frank as Rousseau, as honest as Cellini, but it is absolutely unlike either, because it is a spiritual confession.

The gross facts of life are not avoided--no confession would be worth anything that did not include these facts--

but they are seen solely in relation to an inner life. For Hale White all facts are spiritual phenomena, or have their root in spiritual soil. Hence he tells us more about life than a Rousseau or a Cellini. He goes deeper than they.

The purpose of all the books is a heart-searching quest for the universal and a final acceptance of God. This is the message and meaning under various circumstances of all the books, the achievement of Mark Rutherford, and his Deliverance, the schooling of Miriam, in Miriam's Schooling; the "saving" after much anguish of soul and travail of spirit of Catherine Purze and Clara Hopgood.

But the books are philosophical rather than theological if we derive from them the message that the writer never fails to deliver in his books, and interpret its import as a real philosophy of life. It is gained from the knowledge of the people with whom he makes his readers familiar, or their feelings, passions, thoughts, and activities, as our philosophy of life is derived.

A certain type of mind in every age experiences the agonies of doubt and disbelief, not upon mere points of doctrine, but as to the very existence of God, and an inability to find any solution to the enigma of their own place in the scheme of human destiny. This problem must be an-

seered, if only partially, and some vision of the eternal truth gained, if the individual is not to be ship-wrecked. This theme--the evolution of the soul through doubt and despair into something, which, if not a complete solution of the enigmas or perfect peace, is at least restorative, has an abiding fascination for Mark Rutherford, and receives from him a treatment that sets him apart from all other writers of his day.

Mark Rutherford was a scholar as his translation of Spinoza's Ethics, his broad and serious culture, and an impassioned pursuit of astronomy all proclaim him to be. He approaches speculative problems, not alone with the old intellectual difficulties, but with all the new elements that have been introduced into them by scientific discoveries, the inventions of the arts, the orderly evolution of the race.

Hale White's most characteristic touch as observer and philosophic writer appears in the Autobiography, with its sequel, The Deliverance.

Of his mission in Drury Lane he tells us:

"Our main object was to create in our hearers contentment with their lot, and even some joy in it. That was our religion; that was the central thought of all we said and did, giving shape and tenderness to everything."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Deliverance of Mark Rutherford, p. 111.

The chapter in the Deliverance in which these words occur, from which the quotation that follows is taken, is the keynote of the book. It is uttered by one who has sought truth to the uttermost depths. It sums up a philosophy as significant and vital today as it will be a hundred years to come, and has been a hundred years ago:

"For my own part, I was happy when I struck that path. I felt as if somehow, after many errors, I had once more gained a road, a religion, in fact, and one which essentially was not new but old, the religion of the reconciliation, the reconciliation of man with God; differing from the current creed in so far as I did not lay stress upon sin as the cause of estrangement, but yet agreeing with it in making it my duty of duties to suppress revolt and to submit calmly and sometimes cheerfully to the Creator. This surely, under a thousand disguises, has been the meaning of all the forms of worship which we have seen in the world. Pain and death are nothing new, and men have been driven into perplexed skepticism and even insurrection by them, ever since men came into being. Always, however, have the majority, the vast majority of the race, felt instinctively that in this skepticism and insurrection they could not abide, and they have struggled more or less blindly after explanation . . . I cannot too earnestly insist upon the need of our holding, each man for himself, by some faith which shall anchor him.

"It must not be taken up by chance. We must fight for it, for only so will it become our faith. The halt in indifference or in hostility is easy enough and seductive enough. The half-hearted thinks that when he has attained that stage he has completed the term of human wisdom. I say go on; do not stay there; do not take it for granted that there is nothing beyond; incessantly attempt an advance, and at last a light, dim it may be, will arise . . . So theory of the world is possible. The storm, the rain slowly rotting the harvest, children sickening in cellars are obvious; but equally obvious are an evening in June, the delight of men and women in one another, in music, and in the exercise of thought. There can surely be no question that the sum of satisfaction is increasing, not merely in

the gross but for each human being, as the earth from which we sprang is being worked out of the race, and a higher type is being developed . . . Nature is Rhadamanthine, and more so, for she visits the sins of the fathers upon the children; but there is in her also an infinite pity, healing all wounds, softening all calamities, ever hastening to alleviate and repair. Christianity in strange historical fashion is an expression of nature, a projection of her into a biography and a creed."<sup>1</sup>

The actual message which he has to deliver may be brief, but it is vital because it has been tested and sanctified by experience. He writes also with a curious pregnancy of phrase. The tragic intention of his books is often subdued by humor. His style is austere and simple, shorn of all redundancy, of all deliberate eloquence or laborious novelty, yet it is the most suggestive of styles. It is a triumph of severity and compression. Those who read his books once find themselves returning to them again and again; they hold the mind with an incomparable charm; they quicken thought, they reveal the deep things of life, and, in spite of their quiet rejection of orthodox faith, they have a strange power of creating that larger faith which is based on the universal instincts of humanity. Other writers of religious fiction represent certain phases of thought and feeling peculiar to their time; Mark Rutherford deals with the great secular thoughts of humanity.

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<sup>1</sup> The Deliverance of Mark Rutherford, p. 113.



The writings of Mark Rutherford have qualities which give them a place apart in later literature. He speaks as one who has greatly suffered, and hence he speaks as no other can to the suffering heart. He is the interpreter of inarticulate natures.

Mark Rutherford is the only writer with sufficient knowledge and interest in provincial Dissent to give it a serious place in fiction. The Dissenters had a good inheritance. At the time of Cromwell their forefathers were leaders in the rebellion, but in Mark Rutherford's time the Dissenters who had remained in England were not heroic figures. The pictures of English life in contrast of excitement and repose given in The Revolution in Tanner's Lane are valuable to the historian and stimulating to the imaginative reader.

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