

Masters and Their Material.

Adelaide Frances Wilder.

- I. Who have been the masters of the world?
- II. Why they were masters.
- III. What they used as material to help them become masters.
- IV. The effect of their work on the world.

The student of General History who glances back over the past finds names which stand out in prominence, representing a host of mighty leaders in every department of life, statesmen, warriors, reformers, scientific investigators, inventors, artists, and musicians. Many of these men lived and died without knowing they were leaders destined to change the current of some political or social gulf-stream so that the lives of individuals and nations should be turned into new channels by their expressed thoughts or deeds. They worked at the very same problems over which the people of today are working. They were hungry, or cold, perplexed, or made glad over the very things that annoy or make glad the world today. They sacrificed to win the goal for which they were striving just as the world has to strive for the same success in this age. Sometimes these great masters failed to reach the point for which they set out but their very failure or highest success may have done as much for the world in the way of warning as it would.

have done if they had won and others been encouraged. The men of this age ought to be greater than the men of earlier ages for they have the examples of success and failure which ought to help to win the prize or prevent repeating the mistakes of others.

As the earliest law-makers and rulers have influenced all who have lived since their time, perhaps no man has been a greater master since the world began than Joseph, who helped to shape the destinies of the nation of Egypt and this influence of Egyptian civilization on the Israelites enabled this people to free themselves from slavery and for two thousand years prosper as no other nation ever prospered.

It is not known how long Joseph retained his power as prime minister of Pharaoh, but probably until a new dynasty succeeded the throne. He was second in power and dignity to an absolute monarch but his life was pure and his habits simple. He has been compared with some modern statesmen as Colbert, the minister of Louis XIV, Prince Metternich, who in great simplicity ruled continental Europe.

for a quarter of a century. He had sympathy with the common people, like Gladstone. He had the sagacity, watchfulness, and devotion to public affairs, of Richelieu who ruled France during the latter years of Louis XIII without his defects of character. He upheld the right and condemned the wrong like Edmund Burke who took about the same place in the parliamentary history of England as Cicero took in the Roman senate. Like Alexander Hamilton, Joseph had a financial genius and saved the nation in time of disaster, developed industries and protected them.

Joseph could, perhaps, in some respects, be compared with Moses, but the latter was more original as a legislator and his legislation was of such a nature that it has come down to posterity in a different way. To all enlightened nations and ages Moses, not only as an original legislator, a liberator and leader, stands out as a wonderful man, a master who arose at a great crisis and failed not in his leadership till his work was accomplished.

About the year 327 B.C. the world found a master in the conquering Alexander the Great, as he invaded India, Egypt, and other powerful nations that bowed to his sway.

Other warriors, Darius, Xerxes, Cyrus also made their power acknowledged. Perhaps all, none made a greater impress than Cyrus the Great, the last of the great Asiatic emperors and the first who made Europe acknowledge the power of Asia. Of his history very little is known. That little is very romantic, but of all the Persians, the Greeks speak of this one as an ideal prince and ruler. He was a man of great intellect, noble character, and virtuous habits. No vices nor crimes are laid at the door of Cyrus; a man well prepared to lead a noble nation on to glory and honor.

Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, 1594-1632, - was the greatest hero of the Thirty Years' War and what Burleigh and Cromwell did for England and Richelieu and ~~Cobart~~ did for France, Gustavus did for Sweden. He was a noble man in his private life; no victories greater than his. "The decisive battle of Leipsic" says one writer, "with the passage of the Lech,

the defence of Nuremberg and the great final victory at Lutzen raised the military fame of Gustavus to a height unknown since Hannibal led his armies over the Alps or Caesar encountered the patrician hosts at the battle of Pharsalia. These victories gave him deathless fame as well as broke the Austrian fetters. He ranks with Frederic the Great and Wellington but not, perhaps, with Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon. He did not live to endure the test which often comes to the victorious general. He might have yielded to love of power like Cromwell or he might have triumphed like Washington - but he died as a great warrior as one of the best men who ever wore a crown as well as one of the world's great benefactor.

A seed is planted and after a time the plant springs up, breaks the earth and comes forth. The time underground may have been long or short according to the conditions favorable to the growth of the plant. Who started seeds of reformation in the world it is sometimes impossible to tell. It may have been Abraham among barbarians in the wilderness who, later, tried to save the cities of the plains, who dropped the first seeds of

reform. For Prince Siddhartha who founded Buddhism thus making himself the shaping power of India. St. John or Dante in exile or St. Jerome in his cave, who wanted all to go to heaven in one beaten track.

Socrates and Mohammed and Luther were reformers divinely commissioned, perhaps with heavenly grace and power to lift the world from a lower to a higher plane of thinking and living. As a reformer of the morals of his people, Savonarola is classed as a leader, though his reform in his own age seemed to have been unsuccessful. He lived in an age of scandalous vices and religious apathy but when the world seemed to be arousing itself to greater intellectual life and artistic pleasures. Savonarola lived at Florence and as a reformer broke the ground so that the seed which Luther planted was able to spring up and bear fruit. Born in 1452 at Ferrara, he belonged to a good family, was well educated and studied to be a physician. Like Dante, his love for a beautiful girl led him to a changed life. He was not an original thinker but wanted to live the best he knew how and wanted others to live in the same way.

His downright desire to do his best, led him on until he became a leader of others. He was like Chrysostom at Constantinople when he denounced the vanities and pomps of the world and of the great people of the world. He was not artistic in his language like Bourdaloue but touched the heart and conscience of his listeners like Wesley or Whitefield. He was a kind of Peter the Hermit, preaching to stir the souls of men to a great crusade against sin and evil. Some of the greatest reformers have been martyrs and among these, was Savonarola - one whose influence was felt not only in the age in which he lived but reached on to Luther and Kraemer and men of this age who are striving to cleanse and make pure the hearts and lives of men.

Lamartine said that great benefactors of the world have seldom been able to accomplish their work unless aided by saints or women. When taking up the thought of those who have been the great discoverers or scientific investigators of the world perhaps we might go back to Marco Polo who, excited by the restlessness of the crusading age, left Europe for the Orient and after many years returned to Venice loaded with honors,

gold, silver, and precious stones as well as with reports of the wonders of his voyage which took three years of time. Whatever the ancients may have known of science or of whatever maritime discoveries they may have made had been forgotten. They did not know the way to the Cipango, now known as Japan, or the Tarshish of the Scriptures, that land of gold and spices of which Solomon wrote. But there was one man of knowledge and intellect who wanted to go out and discover these countries of which nothing was definitely known. For seventeen years, Columbus endured ridicule, disappointment, neglect, poverty, and deferred hopes before he found one who would help him to a way whereby he could make his glorious visions a reality. Of the patience, the perseverance, the result and reward we are familiar. The result of his discovery cannot be estimated. For himself he won undying fame and a name that is sung in all lands. It is sometimes forgotten who discovered a star but never who discovered America. It may be forgotten by the great world who solved the first problem in Geometry or first sang the odes Homer arranged in his "Iliad." Who was the architect of a great

cathedral or gave the alphabet to a people but always and everywhere from sage to infant, it is known that "Columbia" is what she is because in the mind of one man in the fifteenth century this most extraordinary inspiration of genius was created that Asia could be reached by going west. This was clear to this scientific mariner and, because he lived on a scanty fare and was cold and weary as he went from city to city, from court to court, from country to country to beg help for his enterprise — because he persevered through great discouragements, he has made it easier for all the world to toil and labor and persevere and win success in any enterprise that needs be undertaken. Galileo, with his genius for mathematics, teaches the doctrines of Copernicus who revolutionized astronomy by proving the sun to be the center of motion to our planetary system.

Of Ptolemy, Kepler, Newton, Laplace, and their fertility of invention, patience in working out their problems, we have not space to elaborate.

Of Bacon, Darwin, Huxley, and their influence in the world as masters of scientific

thought the end is not yet.

From Gutenberg, whose invention caused a revolution in the world of scholarship, when books could become the property of the poor as well as the rich, to the time when the telegraph and the telephone comes to every man's house, the scientist has always been a master in the world; his work a benefit to all mankind. According to Herbert Spencer, ethics comprehends the laws of right living. If this be true all scientific discoverers and inventors have brought into the world a new school of ethics. Books represent thought but invention is the embodiment of thought.

Franklin, Fulton, Edison, as well as Huxley, Darwin, Tyndall, Proctor, Wooley, and Braxton have had a marked influence upon the minds, morals, and every day life in the work-a-day world of the human race.

Blessed is the person who lives in the enjoyment of an art. Thrice blessed he who has become master of that art.

Anything which produces delight when the higher faculties are employed, takes one out of himself, makes even drudgery a pleasure, whether as musician, sculptor, artist,

or caterer of savory dishes for the comfort of the loved ones, — any work that implies creation, that is alike a test and a reward of genius, is one of the greatest gifts God has bestowed upon mortal. Among such master-minds, men who have made peoples and nations better or happier because they have lived, we would briefly mention what the early artists did for the world.

The Greeks, with their free and joyous spirit broke away from the rigid styles of Egyptian and Oriental art, and gave the symmetry and beauty and grace to architecture, painting, and sculpture which have delighted artists and lovers of beauty in all ages since their time.

Phidias was a painter before he was a sculptor, Zeuxis was a pupil of Apollodorus and excelled his master. While Parrhasius was a rival of Zeuxis and both were esteemed masters in their time which was a most glorious age of painting.

Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian from Italy, Rembrandt, Rubens, and Van Dyck from Germany, Gainsborough, Turner, and Landseer from England, Velazquez and Correggio

from Spain have been masters with the brush.

Among the ancients, some of the masters in sculpture were Phidias, of whom we have spoken as a painter, Polycletus, Praxiteles, Myron, and Scopas, the latter excelling as architect as well as sculptor. The work of their hands has created a love for the beautiful ever since their time.

Of the scholars, from Plato and Aristotle to the masters in these lines of thought in the present age, their influence on the world could not be measured or weighed.

The impress made by the scholarly teacher on the soul and character of his pupil can only be estimated when time is no more and the deeds of this life are measured and weighed before an assembled universe.

The masters in art and literature who have been mentioned are but the vanguard of a host who followed in the later years. George Willis Cooke says that "art never is an object of pure enjoyment alone. It modifies thought, influences moral action, affects motives and changes the whole tone of the emotional life." This being true, everyone who has composed music or song, painted a

picture, or produced a fine piece of architecture or sculptor which has been given to the world, has made his power felt. Carlyle says that great poets are also prophets to guide men. So not only such men as Homer, Vergil, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton have stamped indelibly upon human thought their conception of its nature and its higher issues but others from Chaucer to Tennyson have also been teachers & masters.

Shall Spenser, who wrote the "Fairie Queene", and who fills the greatest place between Chaucer and Shakespeare, be left out? Shall Ben Jonson, the master who, as a dramatist, stands next to Shakespeare, be forgotten?

Perhaps no writer of the seventeenth century has interested and been of real help to more people than Bunyan with his beautiful allegory. Shaw, in his "English Literature", places Bunyan above Dante in the power of realizing the conceptions of the imagination. He says that "thousands of readers, from the child to the accomplished scholar have smiled and wept with Bunyan's pilgrims." Then, beside being a master in instruction in the way of life, he is a master in English, for no book

has a greater charm in this particular.

And the influence this one book has had upon all the nations of the world where it has been translated and circulated is beyond the power of mind to calculate. Other writers have occupied an immense space in the intellectual horizon but their influence may not be so directly traced to its source. Defoe influenced Scott, and Scott, with his vigorous genius, influenced by Defoe and Bishop Percy, influenced Thackeray, Dickens, and other novelists, as well as modified in the form and coloring of their poetical productions. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and even Tennyson, Carlyle, and Emerson stand out by themselves in the world of letters and the result of the call to fight against sham and pretense by their high-tones has not yet been estimated for the answer to the call is yet going on.

Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning have made the world better, purer, happier because they have put soul into their work. Of our own poets, if in a home where literature is read at all, that home has been comforted and enriched by Longfellow; strengthened for the right, by Whittier; and helped to see the world of nature in a truer light by Bryant.

While those who have made life richer, grander, more beautiful by the chords of harmony produced, are such musicians as Mendelssohn, Chopin, Weber, Rubinstein, Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Bach, Pleyel, and Schumann. No one can listen to well rendered music written by these masters without a thrill of deepest emotion, and life, ever after, takes on new aspirations and hopes. New comfort and new joy comes into life. No one is aware of the silent working influence of all the masters of the world on civilization and progress.

Why have these rulers, statesmen, scientific workers and artists been masters? Man is the only living creature who has the power to make advance. Man's tomorrow is always better than his today, but always, "in tomorrow walks today." With the brute world tomorrow is as today. The dog cannot teach other dogs to talk and write; to become carpenters or masons. The horse and the cow have added nothing to their brain power in all the ages. The cat, which has been a household pet and associated with man for hundreds of years, has never shown a talent for poetry or given promise of becoming an

artist or sculptor. The cat in the home of refinement and taste has never shown a love for the house-plants or the music of the piano.

The reason why man is a master over all other created things in the world as well as over his fellow creatures is because he was created with a God-given force which he has cultivated by making the most of himself in the environment in which he found himself.

There men who have been "masters" were made of no different earth from other men, but there was a divine spark which we call genius, within the soul, and with this live spark, unique, unlike any other divine spark, there also, has been a latent talent for work. Genius is a power, which will make a human being, when he also has a talent for persistent effort in making the most of his opportunities, a "master" in the world.

Without this talent, without this ability to apply the force to the divine life, the spark of genius only flashes, lightens, kindles, and then sputters and dies out.

What is the effect of masters on the world?

The effect produced on the world by masters is the same as that produced on the day by the

warmth and heat and light of the sun. It would be darkness, stagnation and death without them.

Those who are to be the Masters of the future must be like the masters in the past ages in having this divine spark, called genius, to which must be added the talent of work. They must be those who will bend every energy to reach the goal set before them. Those who will be ready to meet toil and hardships if they but win the race at last.

Masters are born masters, and Lowell says a true word about them when he writes:
 "No man is born into the world, whose work
 Is not born with him."

The masters of the future must be like Shelley's "Prometheus":

"Hope till hope creates
 From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
 Neither to change, to flatter, nor repent;
 This, like thy glory
 Titan is to be
 A master, great and joyous,
 beautiful and free;
 This is alone life, joy,
 empire and victory."