

Alfred Cope Garrett, "Signs of the Times in Literature: an Address Delivered May 30, 1893, Before the Alumni Association of Haverford College." [Privately published.]

[p 50:]

. . . Browning has enlarged the province of poetic art. Instead of trying to lead men by an ideal of mere "sweetness and light," this art may once more plunge into the darkness of pain, sin, and perversity,—may even appropriate the flat common-place, for the sake of the significance which lies beneath. This is the direction in art which Walt Whitman more fully exemplifies . . .

[p 60:]

wedded may make new life and new music? The movement of individualism is past, and it has not brought a safe democracy. For while there is self-seeking there must be danger of dissolution. I tell you the movement of the future is not for individualism, it is for union—the new union of men's hearts; not for freedom, but for fellowship; not for selfishness, but for comradeship! All society shows the signs of this new-sought union. It has appeared in commerce, and is promised for religion. But the classes who are uniting in themselves must be united with each other or there can be only conflict. They who are above must begin; they must go down to those desponding and discontented laborers and help them; not by their money, not even by legislation — unquestionably, not by revolutionary reforms — hardly even by organized charities; but man to man, face to face; the smile of one to the scowl of the other; one warm hand grasping the other cold one; "for the gift without the giver is bare." That incommunicable transmission of cheer,

that equalization of comfort and hope — these are better than gifts, and better than laws. Truly such things as our College Settlements — the Toynbee Hall of London, the Andover House and the Hull House of Boston and Chicago, and all others of such blessed outposts of reconciliation, are, if they do their right parts, not alone the hope of government; they are also the hope of society, and therefore of literature. The high not only save the low and lift them up, but the high are saved and uplifted by helping the low. Not only does the mission-worker save the fallen ruffian, but through the ruffian is the worker saved. Not only is the artist to teach the pleasures of good taste to the poor and dispirited, but he will receive into his art the reflex of zest and emotion from their sad lives, and a new and more real artistic heart by helping them. If these things be done, once more those splendid results maybe expected which we have twice seen come to life and literature from the fusion of the classes. Heaven grant the solvent and cement may not be, as heretofore, spilt blood!

If you would hear an expression of the right spirit of peace, of the gospel of comradeship, and that arising from below to meet us, listen to a chant of old Walt Whitman's :—

"I dreamed that was the new city of Friends.
I am neither for nor against institutions,
Only I will establish in Manhatta, and in every city of these States,
inland and seaboard,
And in the fields and woods and above every keel, little or large, that
dents the water,
Without edifices or rules or any argument.
The institution of the dear love of comrades."

Humanity — let that be our subject, our study, and our duty — the comradeship of humanity. We ourselves must hasten to this work, or we shall have no part in the new

movement. This country has all before her — both the coming movement of unity and the world-genius who is to record that movement. There is also a great foreign influence now at work for literature in this country — an influence that is making for a new rise of creative power among us. It is simply this English literature that we ourselves have been studying. English literature is now being studied in this country as never before anywhere, and that study must have its results. This must furnish the art models — the comradeship of humanity will furnish the subject matter. I have spoken little of the literature of America, for though it partakes somewhat with England in the movements of mind and life, it must be studied separately; but I leave these thoughts about the mother literature merged in the one thought of this country, which, if we keep it a true nation, must be the land of promise; and I leave these thoughts here at Haverford as an offering if they may be of use to her, always wishing that she, our dear fostering friend, may grow to an ever opener and richer mind, — “Not more learned, but better;” not given too much to lonely scholarship, but given wholly to humanity.