

**SOME SOCIAL AND  
POLITICAL PIONEERS OF  
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

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Some social and political pioneers of the nineteenth century by Ramsden Balmforth

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**RAMSDEN BALMFORTH**

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SOME  
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OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

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OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

RAMSDEN BALMFORTH

Author of "The New Reformation," "The Evolution  
of Christianity" etc.

"Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is Heaven,  
and lack of fellowship is Hell: fellowship is  
Life, and lack of fellowship is Death: and the  
deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fel-  
lowship's sake that ye do them."

*William Morris.*



LONDON:  
SWAN SONNENSCHN & Co., LIMITED  
PATERNOSTER SQUARE  
1900

## P R E F A C E

THE following chapters, with the exception of the one on William Morris, originally appeared in the *Co-operative News*. They are now reprinted in a permanent form in the hope that they will be of service to those who are interested in social questions, and especially to those who wish to make themselves acquainted with some of the most important social and industrial movements of the nineteenth century.

An attempt has been made to give not merely a series of short, detached biographies, but to connect, with each person and movement dealt with, a sort of historico-biographical narrative, showing the development of social and political ideas during the course of the century. The reader will thus be enabled to estimate, to some extent, the vast change in thought and outlook which has taken place during the past eighty years.

I have to thank my brother Owen for kindly undertaking the tedious task of correcting the proof-sheets of this book.

R. B.



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# SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PIONEERS.

## INTRODUCTORY.

### BIOGRAPHY AND ITS RELATION TO HISTORY.

"THE history of the world," says Carlyle, "is but the biography of great men." The great man, either as soldier, prophet, priest, statesman, philosopher, poet, artist, or inventor, seems to dominate human life, and shape the ever-advancing movement of humanity. A few great soldiers like Alexander, Cæsar, Charles the Great, Napoleon, and Wellington periodically re-shape the map of the world. In philosophy, a few great thinkers—Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Kant, Hegel, Spencer—largely determine the course of the world's thought, and mould the opinions of the best students. A few great poets tower above all others like mountain peaks, to which all minor poets can only aspire. In science, a few great minds determine the tendency of scientific investigation. In religion—perhaps the greatest formative influence in human life, with the exception of industry—the influence of the great man is apparently paramount. The whole story of the Bible is a story of the lives of great men, from Moses and David down to Jesus, Paul, and John. Even in industry, where we seem to depend upon the mass rather than upon the few, one or two great inventors may alter the daily habits and customs of a people's life. Looked at in this way, the history of the world, as Carlyle says, is the biography of great men.

But, like many of Carlyle's sayings, the dictum is one-sided, and needs correcting by a view of human life as a whole. The great mass of humanity are not the mere quips and sports of intellectual and military giants. If we look below the surface of history, we shall find that the achievements of great men are largely dependent on the lives of the people by whom they are surrounded. The great man is often the expression, the creation

of the spirit of his age. That spirit no one can account for. No one can say why, at some periods of history, humanity seems gifted with preternatural energy, at others, seems lulled into unnatural indifference and repose. Each age thus produces its own type of greatness. A Darwin or a Spencer would have been impossible in the Middle Ages. A St. Augustine or a St. Francis would be impossible in the nineteenth century. A certain type of life is necessary to produce a certain type of greatness, which really means that we are all workers together, each in our own separate ways and places. Just as a great commander is dependent on his battalions of soldiers for the carrying on of a great campaign, so every great mind is dependent on innumerable lesser minds for the building up and carrying out of some great design. Plato had his teachers and his fore-runners, on whose teachings he had to build his theories. Jesus was indebted to the Jewish doctors, and probably to the Essenes; Augustine was indebted to Paul and to the Fathers of the Church; Erasmus and the Reformers were indebted to the scholars of the Renaissance. Every great investigator and explorer simply carries on the work of hundreds who have gone before. We shall see this the more clearly if we consider the many things, small in themselves, but having great and far-reaching consequences, which have been slowly built into the fabric of our civilised life. The invention of fire, for example, of paper, of glass, of chimneys—which did not come into use in England until the fourteenth century, and were not commonly used until much later—of many implements of domestic use, the discovery and use of iron and coal, the art of writing and printing, the invention of figures and their use in numeration and arithmetic, the growth and manufacture of wool, silk, and cotton, the manufacture of clothing and other fabrics, the application of steam power and electricity, the discovery of the relation of the laws of sound to music, of light to optics, of proportion and geometry to architecture, of the higher mathematics to astronomy, of the chart and the compass to geography, of chemistry to the analysis of inanimate nature, of physiology and anatomy to the wondrous processes of life itself. In all this vast round of investigation, of discovery, of advancing knowledge, countless workers have added