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Booklover: #nobelliteraturelaureates

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If you are not living on the edge, you are taking up too much space — an interesting concept and one that prevails in the academic world. I lived in this world my entire career, a world where the cutting edge of ideas, technology, and theories are born. A heady space and much different from the world where these ideas, technology, and theories are put into practical use. The distance between idea and popular acceptance can be long and time consuming. I learned that “new ideas” on the front page of a newspaper could be decades old by my standards. Embracing new technology, change, and the learning curve that came with it was daily life, until now. Retirement is a new animal and with it a desire to sometimes be comfortable in old shoes of thought. So excuse me when I am ignorant of new stuff and how it works. One example is Twitter, tweets, hash tags and the effective minimalistic use of words to deliver an electronic message. Directness is easy, but the subtleties of humor,

and/or emotion sometimes need more than 140 characters. Which brings me to **Bjørnsterne Bjørnsen**, the Norwegian author who was awarded the third **Nobel Prize for Literature** in 1903. His short story “The Father” is the perfect study for conveying an intense emotional message with a minimum of words.

Bjørnsen, born in Kvikne Norway on 8 December 1832, is considered with **Henrik Ibsen**, **Jonas Lie**, and **Alexander Kielland** as one of “The Four Great” (De Fire Store) Norwegian writers. Poetry was an early passion, and he pursued this discipline in his studies. Like **Deledda**, the subject of the previous **Booklover** column, he wished to use his literary skills to describe the life of the peasant for the national readership. His pen was not limited to poetry as he matured. **Bjørnsen’s** words influenced the arenas of drama, theater, prose, politics, and even lyrics to the national anthem. He lived in a time of political and social transition for Norway

and used his words to further the Left-wing movement. His affection for the life of the peasants and farmers heavily influenced his writings. Interestingly, **Bjørnsen** was one of the original members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee. His tenure on this committee that awards the **Nobel Peace Prize** was from 1901-1906.

“The Father” was originally published in 1881. The story unfolds on four pages in an 8 x 6.5-inch hardback book or 62 lines on this Website: <http://www.bartleby.com/195/14.html>. It is a powerfully emotional story, one that I reread several times, embracing the minimalist use of words and yet the depth of understanding, and the complete life that was portrayed.

From the first request of the father to the priest: “I have gotten a son,” said he, “and I wish to present him for baptism.” To the last consoling statement of the priest to the father after the loss of his son: “Yes, I think so myself,” said Thord, “looking up while two big tears coursed slowly down his cheeks.” The reader knows in the fewest of words the life of this boy and the pride the father has in him. #skillfullycraftedwordsmakemehappy. 🌿