

DUTY AND THAT NOBLER LARGESSE

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SOME time ago I was passing a vacant lot when I noticed several boys urging two dogs to fight. They finally succeeded and seemed to find great delight in watching for blood and hearing the incessant misery of growling and biting. But afterwhile some other boys, apparently owners of the dogs, came along and after somewhat of a scuffle released the poor unknowing brutes and took them home. After having viewed the whole episode I caught myself saying: Such is the World of Life. Much of our struggling, pain and confusion make only a theatrical pastime for those who have no care or interest in what we do. But those more dutiful bring sympathy and understanding to the scene of our tribulation and attempt as best they can to alleviate our suffering and release us from our mistaken squabbling with each other.

I. ERADICATING EVIL THOUGHTS

Oftimes as it may happen in the lives of common men, there is a strange and irrepresible desire to bemoan and execrate the seeming favoritism of others' luck and the unexplainable adversity of our own inborn fate. It is almost too common a condition of modern life to see a people, so otherwise keen to perceive causes and effects, draw down the curtains of their spiritual insight and grope in the darkness of prejudice and disaffection. Do they not sometimes feel the bathos of their ludicrous position? It seems strange to me in the humble and unworldly quiet of my literary solitude that those who so often acclaim a personal fund of ordinary intelligence should still not have the rare common sense to be calm and considerate, and thus give themselves opportunity to partake of what they look upon as fortunate adjuncts in the lives of their neighbors.

However, if we are ever to be saved the trouble and often the disgust of listening to the lack-luster fault-findings of an oppressed and discouraged people, we must right away make preparations and efforts to be their honest teachers and worthy exemplars. We must take immediate and determined steps to eradicate the evil thoughts which supply fuel to our own suspicions and twilight anxieties for personal welfare. For it is morally impossible to be an exemplar of virtue and benevolence to a vulgar and disgruntled world when one is himself a member to the mischief which causes the discontent. It is no satisfaction to the spiritual need if we claim to be trying to allay the maddening poverty, strife and suffering when we are really but so many parties to the clamor and casuistry behind which we work our strategy of exploiting others. Just recently at the international conference to decide on steps for putting an end to the traffic in narcotics the delegates of every single nation but one (Persia) voted to continue the despicable pandering to the dope evil, and that one lonesome delegate was holding off *only in barter for a loan to his government*. The whole conference was rife with mercenary membership in the very evil which they were sent there to eradicate.

Therefore it is a question right now well in hand for us to ask: What are we going to do about such an appalling condition of affairs? Just because we ourselves are innocently "on the outside," just because we ourselves don't happen to be poor dead-souled Chinamen or Hindus weazened to scrawny skeletons with dope addiction, is no just reason to think that we are altogether blameless for or unaffected by the pejorism of the situation. Most of us are a long time starting in any measure of alleviating the world's sorrow, ignorance and delusion.

What are some of the primary parts of our counterpoising apparatus? How are we to proceed in first acquiring the necessary moral discrimination, the cosmic intelligence, the international mind, the public conscience or even the necessary skill in applying *some sort* of spiritual force toward furthering what meagre altruism we do fortunately have? What is the exact nature of the problem which is behind all our problems, social, economic, political or humanitarian, and which is more and more inevitably becoming a crisis in this heedless age of blind and moiling men? And why, oh why, are there so many people who, on learning what is really the world's most dire necessity now as well as in the past, still say that it is useless to try to help or improve the age in which they live, and hence lay down in base submission to the Juggernaut of ignorance, fear,

cupidity and moral cowardice? Their very impotence deprives them of the "nerve" which alone often carries the rogue through his robbery or the villain through the vile consummation of his crime. It is one of drama's undeniable postulates that the hero is as much in need of courage and moral prowess as the villain requires corrupt desire and opportunity to play on others' weakness or misfortune.

The reason is this: Truth and goodness can never have any actual survival value or power to animate and transform the fickle souls of men unless they follow the eternal miracle of rebirth; they must, like the phoenix of Memphis, be immortal enough to arise from the dead ashes of past folly and transgression, and take on the beautiful iridescence of a new and nobler life. People who live phoenix-lives are ever a comfort to their relatives, an inspiration to their friends, and a deathless pattern of loyalty to all posterity. But they can't take up this rebirth like they don a new suit of clothes, all in a few minutes and only at a few dollars' expense. It is a spiritual reorganization and purification, and as such requires long months of seriously determined effort to remodel the inner man. No sudden sophist change of policy can ever carry the same effectual transfiguration that obtains when one gives thorough overhauling to his mind and character.

II. PURIFYING PERSONAL DESIRE

The very first fact to understand is that purity of one's personal desire is a difficult quality to acquire. This age can boast of very few people who are absolutely habitual in benevolence or virtue. An inclination for doing good and being honest may be partly a natal heritage, but the actual and deliberate effort of soul called being an original Christian and living the exacting life of such is no easy quondam affair. Starting from the usual carnal birth and harassed by all the usual temptations and indiscretions of adolescence, the coming into maturity pure in one's desires, impulses, hopes and ambitions is indeed a very personal and suderiferous achievement. So many people are soulless and inane, weak and vacillating, when the very life and future fortune of their days have inevitable foundation in what they desire, what they wish to do, or how they expect to accomplish what they aim at. The peerless elasticity of their consciences is what impresses me more than the vast hoard of

worldly desires and habits that has been employed to lackey them. Such people use lots of soap and water to look clean, but true spiritual purity they know not of.

It seems a pity that a few little measly ephemeral ambitions are capable of so engrossing a man's attention that he never notices his soul slipping into perdition. But it has been ever thus with this poor old grovelling world, so I guess there will always be a hopeless minority in favor of rehabilitation and betterment. And yet this veery meagre minority holds all our hopes, all our confidence and vicarious realization in man's ultimate transfiguration. Those few courageous souls who are not afraid to be devout and good have ever been the world's exemplars, and have often been called upon to be the heroes of an occasional martyrdom. They try as best they can through counsel, culture and commanding personality to show the righteous way, to give us patterns of what constitutes a noble useful life, and in the gratitude for having their amiable aids and comforts now and then we should appreciate the encouragement of all such benevolence, from whatsoever quarter it may be derived.

Even if we are not able to follow strictly after their devout example, we can at least know they have not served or strived against us, but have tried to be our friends and counsellors, giving freely from the generous vicary of their enviable experience. This would at least show what measure we ourselves had taken of truth and goodness, what little progress we ourselves had made in that truer life which takes record only of the mind and heart. For we never know the full report of this world's spiritual chronicle until we have ourselves taken some measure of decisive action aiming toward the purification of our personal desires. And after some years of such intentional effort our own peculiar manner of living may lay claim to those broad and honorable credentials of innocence and spirituality which saints and sages always offer to the world.

III. GENEROSITY

Another point in the discussion of what constitutes our melioristic apparatus is that of generosity. Here is a spiritual quality which plays an important role in all the affairs of life. At least it shares honors for importance with its great imperious correlative, selfishness. This latter is altogether too common a trait in human nature and is too apparently one of the main factors in what portends to

be a whole world's spoliation and miserable bondage; so I will mention only some of its most precarious situations and try to show why so many people brave the hazards of both local contempt and ultimate damnation while seeking to gain the specious rewards of worldly wealth and material acquisition.

In order to be selfish a person has first to be proud, narrow-minded, and determined on taking more than he gives; being so myopic spiritually that he is set only on ephemeral satisfactions, he requires to hold his aims and wishes in great self-esteem, and yet withal he will seek only the narrow interest of his own individual concern and welfare. Thus also is he shown to be both cowardly and ignorant, for his lack of charity and benevolence springs from lack of courage while his narrowness of viewpoint and the poverty of his interest in the world of life arise from the fact that he values nothing if it does not minister to the finite aims of his own private pleasure or advantage. It is indeed a most dangerous undertaking to try to make mere affability and politeness cover up one's cold-blooded calculations for reward and personal satisfaction. And it is as surely a precarious feat to attempt to gather to one's bosom the wealth and power of a whole nation while assuming the philanthropic and kindly countenance of charitable redistribution through Foundations, Endowments, Monuments or Libraries.

Danger of far greater moment but far less ambitious aims than any of these is braved almost daily in the lives of miners, woodsmen, seamen, explorers and sincere social reformers. It is not selfish reward nor any other private ministration that *they* are living for, but courage, heroism, service and the expansion of man's estate. They have some far off but not necessarily vague ideal and they are anxious to realize it by strict attention to whatever duty lies at hand, by enlarging man's field of knowledge and achievement, by doing pioneer work on new paths, so that those less courageous may have a beaten track to follow. But the selfish man, alas, is little concerned in any matter requiring true courage or idealism for the establishment of a better or happier form of civilization. He looks only toward the day of his own satisfaction and is usually impatient of its slow approach.

The generous man, on the other hand, is almost totally estranged from any motive, wish or resolution which is merely private in interest or which in any way smacks of the ephemeral. He is devoutly concerned for universal aid of all who suffer, toil or weep. He longs to grow erect in virtue and the rare ability to feel no mean

regrets at the giving of his time or treasure. This is his one great spiritual credential in the world of life. It is his happiness to know of goodly deeds well done, of worthy causes helped; and when the sun of many summers has bleached his hair pure white he still can revery over his younger days of ready helpfulness and amiable acquaintance. Such things as these are the generous man's only anticipated rewards, but he considers them sufficient and well worth his effort. It would be a reversal of his whole moral apparatus, creed and conscience if he should descend to the level of feeling that he should have had *something more*. The primary effort of generosity is to give freely, not begrudge the gift nor calculate what might prove to be the return benefit.

To be really generous then requires that there shall be present a certain decision of spirit to share with others what we have or to cheerfully do what our abilities enable us to do properly, thus helping them perhaps to get what we do not ourselves have. It is just as the term originally meant: a generating or productive sort of activity. And a generous man truly enough produces what the moral situation of the world most needs: every deed of benevolence produces something which did not exist before. Be it only the feeling of want supplied or of mercy shown, a recollection of friendly counsel or of sympathy in one's sorrow, it is still one of the various little tokens of generosity and humble service.

We have little obscurity of vision when we keep the mind's eye open, and we would likewise have but little spiritual blindness were we just once in a while capable of keeping the heart's eyes open. This is another world to some people and they never know its sweet reflexes from a generous effort until they have left their crabbed shell and sought out at least in some measure the newer life of Gethsemane. The fruits of *that* garden are never altogether sour or bitter.

IV. THAT NOBLER LARGESSE

Looking back over the many centuries that mark the world's slow progress out of savagery, I find that the spirit of man has been ever groping after the light of goodness and truth, and just as constantly has he been ever harassed and persecuted by the evil intrigues of clever sophists whose folly has thus pledged their souls to the devil. But I am solaced with the often emaciated fact that, even though

the latter number the far greater majority of the world's populace, there are still enough good and generous souls to keep us from dropping into a mood of total and irreclaimable pejorism. It is a quite common maxim of many thinkers that we cannot conceive of any world having the least vestige of a moral order and a divine dispensation, which does not also have some sort of a melioristic system whereby its life, its loves, hopes, efforts and aspirations may be built up and in a degree, at least, partially satisfactory. realized. An absolute lack of such a code or melioristic possibility in the Universe would spell an eternal discord, a desolate vale of doubt and death; and all our fond affections, both the joy of good things relished and the grief of broken faith, both the dream of high hopes realized and the incubus of futile effort for long-cherished happiness—all would be lost in the chaos of a wild and vulgar degradation.

Fortunate indeed are we to live under the protecting canopy of Heaven, relying upon the plain but wholesome nurturing of Mother Earth. Our lives are no more miserable than we ourselves consent to make them; our souls are no more atrophied or dead than we ourselves have slowly smothered them. But oh, what a fine and rejuvenating token of the Divine Handiwork this poor old world would be if everyone but saw the folly of their spiritual death! We are so little given to seeing clearly into the causes and effects of everyday life that most of us totally miss the beauties and the warmth of any finer-woven garment than that of selfishness and material ambition. I sometimes think that these two defects in the mind and character of man are the arch-enemies of all true culture and civilization. It is certainly a remiss system of education which fosters keen commercial perception but almost totally overlooks the development of honesty, generosity and *that nobler largesse* of mind and heart which so far have all too completely been sheltered only within the cloistered walls of mysticism and romantic morality. Why should there not be a more popular patronage and pursuit (if not able emulation) of their obscure but worthy heritage? Resurgent souls will always flee the sordid and risqué, the fickle and inane; and we can only ask that they but take us by the hand and we will share the fascinating and courageous emprise of their flight.

This is a simple exercise in the repudiation of worldliness, but it is the first necessity of all who aspire to generosity and purity of private desire. We are already well on the road to enlightened thought, so if we will only brighten up the pathway of our spiritual progress, if we but have the bold and irrepressible ambition to help

others instead of the vicious cunning for enslaving or exploiting them, we will soon bring on the millennium and find our aspirations being gradually reified above the muddy stream of worldliness. It is the first true indication of generosity and largesse which, if given pure and adequate exercise throughout the workaday world, relieve just that much the strain of mortal existence in a soulless and vulgarian age. Who is so dull or conscience-less that he has no feeling of urgency to join in this eternal procession of torch-bearers, at least not help the vandal hoodlum mob to slander or impede them?

V. THE VOYAGE OF LIFE

Speaking from a purely personal viewpoint, I must confess that whatever I say or try to make exemplary to others is soaked through and through with my own pet theories, prejudices, hopes and fears. It is not to be expected that any particular writer himself should be a perfect adept at everything he mentions or discusses, nor a model of spiritual excellence in all that he tries to advise others to do. It is to be held reasonable or at least sufficient if he is only able to hold up the mirror of life and lend his flickering torch to his neighbors who, in the occasional illumination of its light, can see at least the true proportions of their own reflection, and thence make their way a little clearer and more hopeful.

This is something which I have never been fortunate enough to do for others, but have enjoyed such service many times from those who were *unfortunate* enough to be *my* friends. Still it is not so far beyond my power that I cannot aspire to shuffle off my gnarled shell of low desire and take to the high seas of Life where those great mariners of time sail bravely on, regretting not their past and fearing not their future. The Voyage is all that is important, and whether some fail and some succeed in its proper navigation, the port of Destiny is there and toward the journey's end appears faintly visible in the distance. I am afraid we too often make the sad mistake of fearing to embark, clinging apprehensively to our little patch of earth as if the relative security of our private lives could shield us from the omnipresent reach of fate. That fear alone is worse than the merely human impotence which, when in mid-voyage our ship runs into the storm of Avarice and Intolerance, puts us on the weaker side and we go down in dismal failure to our death. There

is an argument of defense for failure while courageously trying to pull through with faith and honor, but there is no excuse whatever for not even trying, forgetting faith and honor in the cowardly fear that anything but idle ease is rash.

What a delight it is to meet a man or woman who is not set on realizing any of the common passions of the day. It shows that they are free of at least some of the ephemeral worldliness which so engrosses our modern life. Such acquaintances are a veritable nourishment to the soul. They quench our famishing thirst for the cooling waters of friendship, and they allay the gnawing hunger of our hearts for something good to cherish. It is indeed an item of rare good fortune to be temporarily lost in the desert of worldly desolation and have someone to come along with a camel-load of provisions and take us to the oasis of an inexhaustible relish and delight. It is in this world a most rare thing to have a friend in need who does not barter his friendship for what it will bring in material or even more tangible returns. A palm tree at the equator or a stove in the arctic are feeble comforts to the various lives of men when compared with the occasional but undeniable necessity of generosity and friendship in the prosecution of their daily affairs. They both depend upon purity in one's personal desires and this is a trait of character more noble and enduring than ambition or love because it is less personal in its attentions and more free-hearted in its conventional "rights." It is a token of Heaven's own tranquility and clear infallible perception that we are even capable of having friends, for true friends are never jealous or envious, they never covet what we have nor take umbrage over things they cannot understand.

VI. LIFE'S NOBLER DUTIES

Much as we cherish the little personal tokens of kindness and affection they very often are elected our best means of nobler sacrifice and security. The feeling of sure faith and the counsel of pure comradeship have higher demands upon our time and treasure than the simple relish of their innocent pleasure. And where the circumstance is one of trouble or distressed relationship, it is still sometimes a manner of good fortune to be not so crude of soul that what we hold most dear cannot be given up. Grief and sorrow may well attend, but the nobler function is to make our sacrifices freely and

magnanimously, for nothing aggravates a strained condition of life more than the obstinate refusal or the ignoble disinclination to act agreeably or serve humbly in time of need. It is the one sure sign of sober souls to use this coin of commonsense for it is the only adequate piece of evidence we have in proof of a person's innate kindness of spirit.

In a way it is not so much our attention to big things which makes us great, but our diligence and sincerity in properly disposing the small things, the daily affairs of life. Here is the domain of our habitual practices far oftener than that less immediate world wherein we seek some colossal puruit of fame, wealth, power or social position. Therefore, with this thoroughness in attending the personal and particular, we can closely approach the happiness of those who are wise and content with life. For life at its best is only a place to work faithfully and well, a period of spiritual analysis and cultural decision, a sort of mystic grotto full of trash and trees, bricks and buttercups, moor-wort and mullen-weed, where we must grope our way toward the light. With us as we are at present constituted, the chief and proper idea is how to get away from the mean, the sordid and ignoble, choosing rather to house our souls among the dreamy surroundings of peace and goodwill, or at least as near to such a rarely found congenial neighborhood as our poor crooked natures will allow us to get. Sir Humphrey Davy very nicely summed up the proposition when he once remarked that "Life is made up, not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things in which smiles and kindnesses and small personal obligations, given habitually and above all generously, are what win and preserve the heart and secure comfort to us."

In the first place we seldom find ourselves able to either understand or acknowledge our proper duties to each other; we are conscientious enough in regard to conventional things but little concerned to take a spontaneous interest in any of those many *informal* opportunities for altruism and benevolence which present themselves to us every day. And in the second place, provided we do possess this primary credential, we are equally seldom capable of giving to our daily practice that element of calm and benign generosity which is balm to the slow hours of sorrow and myrrh to the fleeting moments of joy. In order to be whole, life's nobler duties always require both a thorough understanding and an honest exercise of the daily obligations to which all of us are or should be subject as intelligent social beings.

VII. MASQUE-FIGURES, ALL

So few of this old mottled world's masque-figures really know the proper way to act their chosen parts. The play is constantly being interrupted and misread by someone unmindful of his lines or downright negligent of his appropriate makeup; and still, if we but take the drama seriously, we will also notice here and there a misplaced 'scutcheon or some lying gonfalon, a privy-counsellor with milady's boudoir-cap on, or a plodding hostler-boy with poorly promised mimicry of the cunning jester's whimsical foils. The whole effect is sprawling and bestrewn with clumsy scenes which grate the finer tastes of the elect. No wonder the critics are so fulsome, so incorrigibly amazed at the false exotics, and so implacably opposed to all the vast array of namby-pamby ironies. And when the critics disagree, how much less can the galleries be expected to know aught of the stage proprieties? Nay, whether they are witnessing the least essential form of tragedy or burlesque! Only this winter have practically all the preparations and efforts of Melchoir Vischer been in vain when he produced his somewhat farfetched drama at the Lubeck Theatre in Berlin trying to show that Charley Chaplin's antics fundamentally present, not comedy, but grotesque tragedy and hence compose a problem in the philosophy of social relations. And we American movie-patrons have recently had some few demonstrations that Charley himself thought something along this line, and had been devoting considerable time to dramatic aspirations.

Any dramatic experiment requires more than a lot of scenery and the adjuncts of the costumer's art: all these flourishes only make up the atmosphere, the setting of the play. The most inadequate production on the stage of life is still a masterpiece compared with that pitiful but not yet altogether hopeless attempt of the histrionic gauchiereux who try to "put it over" on what they think is a foolish if not unsophisticated public. They should, by some rare art of counter-suggestion, be made to recall Ringling's amendment to old P. T.'s shrewd conceit: "The circus game is not for private boodle but public amusement; your fool requires to be entertained not swindled."

But alas, so long as the false conception of life's purpose is maintained and given unscrupulous application, the all-suffering public

will be the helpless victim, and the cunning knave will continue to be the avidious spoliator. I often think that it takes both fools and knaves to keep the ball of evil rolling, for if the world had no morbid appetites to serve, its selfish panderers would soon die of inanition, or at least be forced to turn to more honest industry. But to be a member to the mischief of helping pander, be it ever so commercially shrewd and daring, to the depraved appetites of fools—this is the only shameless offense against our better hopes for this bickering and often blasphemous world. Whatever be the special privilege or device that serves to effect the putrid aim which invariably looks toward some sort of culpable denouement, it is indeed a direct support to the already despotic power of our moral dilemma, that *froissement honteux* of our worldly finitude and selfishness. Most all ages are about the same in moral stamina and heroism, so I often wonder if our raucous age has any more real heroes than Talleyrand thought could be found in his when he told Napoleon's young son that if he killed off all the rogues there would be no one but fools left.

The only really disheartening feature of all our mad wrangling for contentious gain is that both sides of every public dispute and private debate *want to win*. That is their first and foremost aim, consequently each thinks and claims to be in the right. While they are so closely concerned with presenting and justifying their own view of life, little opportunity is given any disinterested philosopher to bring conciliation into their controversy. About the only encouraging feature is that some few people here and there expect that these disputes and debates will somehow and someday be the means of discovering the proper estimate and utility of the beautifully good and true. Let us sincerely hope so; but we somehow remind ourselves that the judges of combat are always placed *outside* the dust and gore of the arena. At any rate we will do well to be of open mind and good cheer, taking humble sides with those who make courageous emprise toward the Future.

VIII. YE OLDEN PASTIME

One of the oldtime substitutes for the reckless and extravagant wasting of life's rarest treasures on vain profits and fickle pleasures was the love of Nature, of books, art, music, friends. And it was a goodly substitute too, as beneficial and uplifting as it was

ingenuous and fascinating. To do one's daily duty to the best and sincerest advantage to all concerned was the law of honest livelihood. And at evening to hie oneself with joyous expectation to "the blessed bosom of Nature where rest and sweet caresses would restore the soul's spent force." Or else quite meekly, but with no less of keen anticipation, to seek the path of constancy leading home to "that unbroken circle of one's books and friends, few and choice" around a genial firesid  where could be had the amiable discussion of things both in and beyond this present world, where soft-played chords of melody would wrap the mind and soothe the weary heart away from petty cares and fears. Then was a time of personal restraint; then was the heyday of men's sincerity and simple industry, of love and faith and benediction, although indeed an age as finely nerved and full of sorrow as our own. Where are those beautiful *slow* days of serenity and contemplation in this mad age of bungling and billingsgate, these speedy days of stratagem and spoils broken here and there with passing penny-plays for risqu  delight?

The *old* has lost vast playgrounds to the cramped mechanical pastimes of the *new*. But those who still delight in simple aims and pleasures find no relish in loose repetitions of this Modern Muse's mad resort to folly. No comfort is afforded them by this fevered age of syncopated jazz and easy virtue, this Nature-less world with all its female cigarettes, pocket-flasks and urban artifice, its calculating friends and irresponsible scandal-mongers. True friends devote no time to idle prospects of some private exploit or requital, for they are bound by faith and amiable converse, not that vulgar creed of modern days which has no conscience and no loyalty. Good measure is always *given*, not calculated in return. Gentle converse with Nature is the mystic hospice of the soul which knows no base conciliation with depravity or fear seeks no destruction nor malicious intervention, but has purpose only to aspire toward the goodly things of life. Surely no stratagem or spoils can figure in the hearts of those who love the concord of sweet sounds. Nor can there be any element of literary *nerf f rure* in the minds of those who love good books. Life is a gorgeous fabric patterned after the Divine Handiwork, but if we crumple or reverse its proper design how can its soft harmonies of line or its fascinating balance of colors be in any adequate measure appreciated?

It is always with sad regret that I look upon this modern disaffection for amiable discussion, good books, Nature-love, music-with-meaning, resurgent art and constant friendship. It does not

now portend anything of encouraging promise to a world already half infernal, or to an age two-thirds submerged in the bog of profit-slime and growing ever more burdened and weary with the oppression of unequal toil and care. Still it is not a sufficient label to my mood to say that total failure shall swallow up this poor crude thing called modern civilization, for my argument is that anyone holding such a brief for man's disaster cannot be considered a pejorist. The simple but quite sufficient reason being found in that subtle scheme of Providence that some things, by their own very sterility, are doomed to end in some manner of delinquency and despair. And we who only mention this fate for things inane and fickle, even though insatiably pursued and unreasoningly valued by the modern world, are yet well established on the way to optimism and regeneration if we but reflect sensibly on the issues of the day and take no umbrage to becloud the morrow's dawn. Change from bad to worse is pejorism; but change from bad to better is no true revolt except as all allegiance to sin is flatly repudiated and joyously expunged from Life's itinerary. 'Tis just such revolt as this which should alone be ever welcome to our house of pain by all who seek to be in sensible accord with any code of betterment which can be made to affect this vacillating age. All hope and godspeed to those few happy souls who brave the stormy tides to bring back luscious fruits from foreign lands!

Modern civilization, as Bertrand Russell has shown, is apparently on the brink of disaster as a cultural achievement because it is being fast corrupted and enslaved by the tricky procurations of industrialism and the insane race after financial hegemony and power. In nations whose majority of individuals have sacrificed the culture of spiritual energy and expression to the insistent exploits of mechanism and material expansion we do not have to look very closely in order to see signs and omens of deterioration. And when this worldly sacrifice has gone so far that practically every activity of the citizenry becomes warped and vulgarized with the same diabolical tendency we can be quite sure that the demoralization is complete and that the nation presenting such a corrupt condition is well started on the road to decay and death. No sham psychologism will save it, no hypocritical veneer of paternalism or democratic propaganda will for long successfully cover up the fact that it is internally rotten and cankered. The only hope for redemption is for the leaders of such a nation to catch the omenous prospect in time for melioristic action, change the spiritual horizon and lay down patterns of activity

which aspire to have eternal value rather than ephemeral utility and profit. I believe America to be at just this stage of her career today, and think with some anxiety that if she does not turn back to those olden pastimes of philosophy and art, religion and Nature-love, her future will not be worth a two-cent mortgage in another century.

IX. TWO DESTINIES AWAIT US

Anyone who makes the least pretense to an intelligent and generous conduct of life will sooner or later in his career adopt those items of wisdom and virtue which have an immortal prestige in the minds and hearts of honest men. Saints and sages the world over have copied these precepts and practices from their genial predecessors, and we can only accept the advice which they invariably give (if our own failure and misfortune do not offer such counsel): that mere policy of honor is hypocritical and hopelessly inadequate to effect any durable degree of personal integrity. One must be *made whole*, reborn and regenerated from inner frame to outward countenance before these spiritual functions can be given their full unhampered exercise. And yet in the first few stages of this subtle transformation we find both fascination and regret, both pleasure in gradual progress and remorse over occasional relapses. But withal it is a pursuit bordering on the magnificent to have the intelligence, the courage and the energy to make such noble awards to one's better nature. It is an exertion requiring perennial attention, hope, faith, diligence and discretion, else we know not whether our labors be more a comfort to the Devil than a supplication to the Grace of God.

No one should say his life is spent in vain who still has mind to think and heart to feel, who still is warm with the fire divine and has some feeble far-off dream of good-deeds-seldom-done. That is the first foundation stone of his redemption, that is the open sesame to his occult world of personal choice and public usefulness. The only vice and tragic decision is to constantly desert this dream-born world, repudiating its soft insistence as a voice of no material worth, no tangible personal reward, and lay one's soul at the vulgar altar of worldliness and material ambition. Surely he who lives for Matter's sordid sake, valuing no effort which is not of transient sense or fickle recompense, is already a prize candidate for Failure's gloomy office. He has not even started to have a soul, and such a one

would be poor prospect for any other service to his age than that of selfish exploits after private satisfaction and enlargement. The proper thing for him is to be set adrift with nought but gold and finery to feed and clothe his flabby flesh. But even then the fates would soon grow lenient, and we would all turn beachcombers in the vague hope of some day finding an old derelict raft washed ashore bearing a naked carcass with the mottled bones engraved: *Tardif je repentir!*

That is the pattern of one sort of destiny, and I can't see how anyone with the least spark of spiritual power (not to say of commonsense or self-respect) can drive madly through a whole lifetime of such degenerate vulgar days and not once feel the tug of conscience or at least disgust and disaffection. Another and more noble pattern, far removed from the Mammon-worshipper's wicked creed, is that which Maeterlinck has tried to vision in that vast destiny which is eternal as the stars. He sees man's life as passing beyond this petty world of personal programs and desires, reaching out into the Universe where his little selfish measures will not fit, and where he will be forced to grow more generous and just, more worthy, wakeful and wise. The general condition of such a life begins right now if we will only try to see that "it is very possible that our loftiest wishes of today will become the law of our future development. It is very possible that our best thoughts will welcome us on the other shore and that the quality of our intellect will determine that of the infinite which crystallizes around it." But no man can see even this much until he has taken some preliminary surveys of his own nature, his own loves and fears, his own motives, aims, theories and ambitions. With these well in hand some intelligent prospect may be had looking forward to that memorable day when he will choose wisdom and Life instead of worldliness and Death. At least he will understand that there are *only two sorts of destiny*, and knowing something about what each has to offer he will certainly choose the one that saves him from disaster and destruction.