

THE WATER-STAR



George H. Badger



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THE WATER-STAR



THE
WATER-STAR

BY
GEORGE H. BADGER



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SENT my young friend out one day in the summertime, to find and bring home to me the most beautiful thing he could discover in Nature, and he brought me home a radiant flower. Its petals were white as with the light of ideal purity, and in its heart glowed the glory of the sun. He had found it floating on blue waters, as a star in the firmament, and the broad leaves it rested on reflected the verdure of a thousand hills.

It was, of course, the water-lily, than which perhaps the common earth contains no lovelier blossom. At any rate, my friend thought so. "Here," said he, "is the most beautiful thing that Nature contains!"

I took it and looked at it; gazed into

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its well of noble whiteness, its eye of golden sunshine; noted the perfect lining of each dainty petal, and the soft restfulness of the vesture of green which was behind its color; — and then I turned it over, and said:

“But see! this is only a broken fragment of something, not a whole thing. You have brought me only part, for here is the broken stem.”

“Oh, but the rest was not beautiful,” said he; “it was but a long, monotonous reach of snaky stem, and then the foul clump of dank roots in the ooze of the stagnant pool. I only brought you the beauty part; all that was of any consequence.”

“Of any consequence?” said I. “Will the plant die because you have broken this lily off?”

“No, of course not,” he replied, “the

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plant will keep on growing and put forth more blossoms.”

“Will the plant die if every blossom is picked off as it blooms?”

“No, it will keep on growing still, and next season will be found there in its place to put forth its buds and its leaves anew.”

“Suppose you had torn the root up out of its ooze and brought it to me in its ugliness. Could the lily and the leaf get along without its root?”

“No indeed. All would wither as this flower will wither and die in a day or so.”

“Then the root can get along without the blossom, but the blossom cannot get along without the root. Then the blossom is only a thing of the hour, but the root a continuing source of beauty production. Then, after all the

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most important part of this plant which you have brought me a fragment of, is not the fragment which you have brought, but what you have left behind; not the radiance of white and gold which faces heaven with wide-open loveliness, but the dank, foul tangle of roots, which burrow in the mud, hidden in the shadow of ugly obscurity."

"Well, that may sound all right," my friend replied, "but if these foul roots only brought forth foul blossoms, roots, blossom, and all would be of no consequence to us. It is because the blossom is beautiful, because Nature has this star of loveliness to float on the face of the placid waters, that the water-lily plant has any beauty for us at all. For us the roots have no meaning except that they make the flower possible, — and so we leave them behind

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because in the beauty we have that which we want.”

And saying this (I suppose because he was young), my friend seemed satisfied, and went away.

Here is my parable; crude perhaps, though with its beautiful subject; and at any rate having a practical suggestiveness of its own. Nature makes a whole thing, — a plant; root, stems, leaves and blossoms all together make a unity bound in the vital tie of shared life. And the center and source of the unity, the thing that makes a sisterhood of several radiant blossoms mimic the stars in a snug constellation of beauty points, opening, developing, holding together, is that ugly clump of dank roots down in the mire. They are the source of the unity. Everything with-

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ers if they fail; other parts may fail and that motherhood of roots can replace them all. And yet we have no care for it, no interest in it. The lily on the surface is the whole plant for us. We care not that it is of itself a broken fragment of the larger whole. It is for us complete just in its own surface beauty.

The world has always been partial to flowers and contemptuous of roots. It makes darlings of the loveliness which floats upon the face of the waters; it ignores and despises the tangle of roots in the oozing mud. We like the flowers: flowers of the world's thought, — the exquisite poem or noble essay or wondrous tale which some genius has created; flowers of the world's action, — conspicuous deeds of heroism, saintship, courage, loyalty, which stand forth radiant with the ideal beauty of trans-

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forming memory and tradition. But the roots from which these conspicuous splendors spring, down in life's mud of the commonplace, — the humdrum, patient, crude, awkwardly tangling thought and feeling and experience of common men and women, which are the beginnings and the sources of noblest flights of literature and art: yes, the humdrum, patient, tangling impulses of conscience, feelings after duty, loves begetting sacrifices and neighborships begetting kindnesses, in common, unsequential walks of life, which are the beginnings and causes of great heroisms and martyrdoms; that Shakespeare could not have written his magnificent tragedies, had not clowns first tried to be thoughtful; that Christ on Calvary could not have glorified humanity's superb ideal of sacrifice in his

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world-saving sacrifice, had not generations of plodding Hebrew peasants wrestled and toiled and taken pains over daily problems of duty, love and reverence, back to the days when blood-stained savages yet strove to spell out "God" in plain letters of duty: these humble roots we think little of. They often are ugly and foul, and yet they bear the blossoms.

We are all familiar with Mr. Gannett's wonderful sermon, "Blessed be Drudgery," one of the most honestly inspired words of a prophet of God that our time has produced. *Blessed be drudgery* — the humdrum, treadmill duty of every day. Blessed be the things we do not want to do but have to do. Blessed be the annoyances and troublesome details of life which fill up the commonplaces of day to day living. These are

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the things that save a man's soul unto eternity. It seems hard sometimes to be always down where the roots are; always just doing commonplace things, pegging away at stale duties, as we say. And yet it is just because we are there most of our lives, — honestly there, trying to do a man's or a woman's duty there — that sometimes, in rare intervals, when great tests of life come, when great opportunities of glory come, we can rise on genuine waves of soul-exaltation and feel that we are doing great things — noble things — things to be proud of!

These things that men are proud of, let us be sure, are but the blossom points of life which have simply grown out of the humdrum roots of days and days of sturdy, simple living, straight and true and inconspicuous; — one never

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thinks to be proud of them, but they are life's divine sources of abiding pride. It is what a man does when he sells goods over the counter of his store day by day, if he is an honest store-keeper ; or what a teacher does when she goes over that troublesome lesson in arithmetic, the ninth, the tenth, the twentieth time, with that stupid pupil of hers, to make it stick as a factor in his education, as surely as though he were brightest pupil in her class ; it is what the housewife does when day by day she persists in her ideal of neatness and order in her household, that she and those dear to her may have refined and self-respecting comfort in it ; it is what the farmer does when he strives to make his nineteenth or his thirtieth furrow in the field as straight and well-seeded as his first ; or the blacksmith does,

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when he counts on trusting not nearly every nail, but *every* nail that he puts into the horse's shoe, to do a good nail's duty till the shoe comes off: — these are the things which make the world grow in beauty, make it possible that star-points of exceptional heroism and inspiration stud the upper surface of life's sky-reflecting waters.

There is superb significance in the fact that before Jesus of Nazareth attained unto his open Messiahship of preaching and healing, crowding into two short years, beginning with the modesty of John's baptism and ending with the anguish-glory of Calvary, so much of divine living that could be shared with the centuries, he had known how to be a good carpenter in Nazareth, to make each day's work honest, square and true, as the shavings rolled

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before his urging plane and nails leaped to their places before his stalwart hammer.

I doubt not what made it possible for Abraham Lincoln to prove just that rock-like embodiment of a nation's brave, unflinching, consecrated loyalty at a time when tower of manly rectitude and eager conscience was the one resolute fact which the nation needed, was that in days when Abe Lincoln was simply a poverty-mired boy, tangled in temptations to shiftlessness, lowness, and coarse ambitions, which belonged to his heredity, he worked his life out true, — not in brilliant fashion, but in honest, patient fashion to an ideal of rectitude and honor that was the saving of his country.

I do not think we will find a man who has been conspicuous anywhere for he-

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roic service, for exalted loyalty, or devotion to humanity, in exceptional crises of his life, but if we knew the whole story of that life we should find every conspicuous service of heroism closely knit to a lifetime of inconspicuous trying, over and over again, to be true in places where things are common. Out of their commonplace came the strength of the more conspicuous duty.

And then there is another thing. We speak of the ugliness of the mud and mire and the tangled roots that lay therein; but beauty is largely a matter of observation. We pick out the expansive lily, the high-hued rose, the glorified landscape of September mountains, or the infinite beauty of the wide-reaching sea, as amongst Nature's most beautiful aspects; and so they are; but

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the microscope poises over a bit of mould upon a discarded crust of bread, and bids us look and see beauties we had not dreamed could be there; aye, it takes us down even into that slime and mire where the lily roots are, and says, "But pay attention, look hard enough, think hard enough, and you will find beauties here to amaze your eyes"; and as the tiny processes of root-fibre are patiently traced out, and their secret of coaxing nutriment from surrounding matter understood, when the eye through the microscope stops to notice specks, what they are, and how they hold together; — why, there in the mud and mire there is beauty. The loveliness is not all up there where the lily spreads its conspicuous petals. Down where hairlike rootlets twine and toil there is beauty too, which is

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only lost because we have not the patience and the skill to hunt it out in its fine minuteness.

So I imagine it is with these commonplace, humdrum duties and loyalties of life which make the root-fibres of what we call life's more conspicuous glories of heroism, genius and inspiration. It is grand that Savonarola died sublimely true to great principles in days of medieval Florence. It is glorious that heroes met their fate so lustily at Thermopylæ, and Gettysburg, and San Juan, and Fort Arthur for that matter. It is superb that Father Damien died the martyr's death at Hawaii, to the knowledge of the globe, and a Dakota school-mistress made a western blizzard holy by her sublime daring. But I fancy that there are workmen who are making sacrifices just

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as genuine and beautiful every day they live, trying to stand by conscience in their daily duty; there are school-teachers who, week in and week out, do deeds of insignificant loyalty to poor, dull children in their charge, sharing the beauty of that Dakota heroine's service, if we could only trace their sacrifice out. Mothers in their homes live epics, husbands at their trade weave love-lyrics touched with pathos of strong tragedy, all beautiful, all holy, right in the commonplace mud and mire of humdrum drudgery of life; only we have not the delicacy of sight and discerning soul to measure these things. These things count in the making possible of greater heroisms, loyalties, and high steps of progress when great crises demand them. They are the roots, the wondrously minutely fibrous roots of the

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blossoming of humanity's best glories; but then of themselves they are beautiful and true and holy, divine and rich toward God!

Here is life's comfort. We are all parts of the glory. We all live and work day by day among the roots of the world's coming divinity — the roots of its highest and noblest things that are to be; and we cannot take hold of a duty so common but it concerns the best. We help to make to-morrow's best. We are the beginnings perchance of the Savonarolas and Damians and Lincolns that are to be. We are at the roots, — but we are in the beauty spots too, if we could only learn it; and if we saw as God sees, if we could only take long views of things and fine views of things, we should learn, no doubt, that the world's beauty and divinity come most

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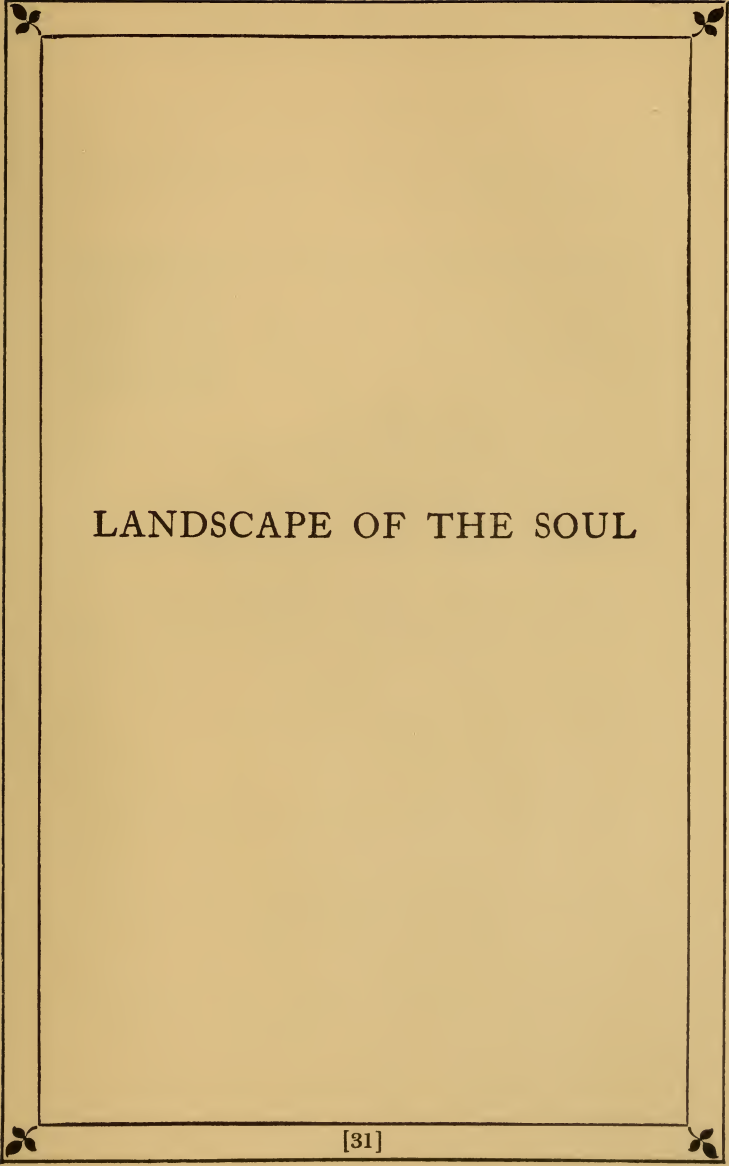
from the massing of life's little loyalties, as in the rainbow arch it is drops of water, not mountain-mimicking clouds, that make the vision possible, because each drop of water answers true when its own sunbeam kisses it, blue, green, or red.

So in the glory of the world's progress, what to-day is for you and me in its drudgery, in its patience, in its duty done and love made loyal, each shares in the whole of it; no part is lost, no part lacking honor, no great, no small in God's fine measure; for all fills out eternity.

“ Let me go where'er I will,
I hear a sky-born music still:
It sounds from all things old,
It sounds from all things young,
From all that's fair, from all that's foul,
Peals out a cheerful song;

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It is not only in the rose,
It is not only in the bird,
Not only where the rainbow glows,
Nor in the song of woman heard:
But in the darkest, meanest things,
There always, always, something sings ;
'Tis not in the high stars alone,
Nor in the cups of budding flow'rs,
Nor in the red-breasts' mellow tone,
Nor in the bow that shines in showers —
But in the mud and scum of things,
There always, always something sings."



LANDSCAPE OF THE SOUL

LANDSCAPE OF THE SOUL



REFERRED a little while ago to Mr. Gannett's noble epistle of common-sense, — "Blessed be Drudgery."

There is a passage in it which has inexhaustible suggestion, and which fills out the measure of our Water Star's parable to surpassing overflow. The passage is this: "*My Real is not my Ideal — is that my complaint? One thing at least is in my power: if I cannot realize my ideal, I can at least idealize my real.*"

Now what does that mean? Of course it may mean several things, and Mr. Gannett plainly sets forth in his sermon what he has first in mind. To find his meaning you must read his sermon; for the thought I have in mind is somewhat different from his, in form at any

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rate: and to make it plain I set forth this parable.

You have gone for beauty-pilgrimage to the seashore. I do not mean fashion's mutilation of the seashore, where huge hotels and pavilions and plank-walks and sprawling piers vulgarize and cheapen the divinity of nature; but to the real sea-shore where there are no crowds, where sea-line is almost wholly unimpeded, and nature's simplicity almost supreme. And yet not quite. Though the crowds have not discovered it, some sturdy, frugal fisherman has. And here on this beach he has built his fisherman's hut: rude, clumsy, misshapen; and a wrecked dory is pulled up before it; and the patched sail is hung out somewhere to dry; and untidy nets and lobster-pots are strewn about. And you come upon this hut in your wan-

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dering along the beach, which before had been unimpeded, and you say, "What an eye-sore! What an ugly blot upon the landscape!" and in disgust you pass it by.

But the artist has been along here too, and you go some later day to his studio in the city to see his paintings of this familiar shore. He has caught the beauty of every picturesque headland, and tranquil inlet bay, and mazy creek, and river-fen of weird expanse. He has in a score of water-colors or bold oil-paintings given back to you better than your memories of the things you have seen, because he has baptized them with the artist's consecration. And amongst all these pictures of the artist there is one which pleases you best of all, and pleases everybody best of all,—the general favorite in the collection: it is a

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picture whose dominating feature is that rough fisherman's hut! The ocean's sweep is there with its divine mysterious marriage of sea and heaven in the dim horizon line, and its genial glimpse of landward hills and meadows; but the fisherman's hut — shall I say it? — is the divine thing in the picture, its central glory. And the fisherman's hut just as it is, — not fixed over with lines made graceful and rents concealed to meet dainty taste; ah, that is not the true artist's way, ever, you know. Every seam there, every rent and weather-stain there, and the clumsy wreck of a dory with its side broken in, and the untidy lobster-pots, and the patched sail, and all of it, there just as it was when you saw it. The artist has not idealized it by making it something other than it was; and yet has ideal-

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ized it. You saw it as something ugly, and he as it were came and laid his hand on your shoulder and said, "See, it is something beautiful"; and you looked — through the magic glass of his painting — you looked, and sure enough it was "something beautiful": part of a divine landscape, without a line changed or detail altered.

Now how did it happen? Who can tell? It was the artist's secret, which is a part of God's secret, that he could find a way of looking at that hut and helping you look at it, which should make landscape of it, a part of the glory of the wondrous ocean and the kindly meadowlands; weave it into their beauty till it became one with them, and they one with it, in a rich artistic ideal; — in a high artistic realization; and then it became the most significant fac-

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tor of them all. He could do it because he was an artist. A mere photographer could not do it; it is not a thing of light and shadow reflection which a camera catches, but of thought and feeling reflection which the imagination catches; and thus catching, makes patch and rent, and clumsy wreck, and untidy litter, part of a scheme of soul-satisfying beauty: because it is looked at from its beauty side.

Now it is just so with the things in human experience which seem humdrum, imperfect, seamy, rude, and unpleasing. We stumble upon them suddenly, and we say "They are bad!" We do not like them. We protest against them. We have an ideal of what ought to be which is infinitely different from them. And yet I believe, as I believe there is God, and because I believe it,

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— as I believe in immortality, and because I believe that — I believe there is not one of these harsh, hard, seam-scored factors of human experience which so try our souls in actual being, but, if we can only make spiritual landscape of it, see it in relation, that is, to larger things to which it belongs: have the ocean of God's patience for a part of its background, have the genial sweep of human progress for a part of its setting, — if we could see it in its divine relation and its true aspect, why that hard, clumsy thing would become, with no change of its seams and its rents, — just as it is it would become beautiful and meaningful and holy: a thing to thank God for, when before it had been ugly and bad. It would become, that is, *ideal*, possessed with an *idea*, when before it had been *idealless* in its

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harsh, crude, uncomprehended limitation.

Shall I try to put this in more practical terms? We said it was the artist's gift, a part of that mystery which we call Genius (because we know not what it is), that made him able to transmute an ugly fisherman's hut to a thing of artistic beauty. But now we are dealing not with a matter of genius, but of life's simple secret of spiritual faith, which is the gift of every soul born into the world, if we shall use it. We *idealize the real* when we fill it full of a high and interpreting idea, and thus find its relation to life's supreme and large and abiding ideals.

Now what are life's supreme and large and abiding ideals? Shall I mention two or three of the most fundamental and obvious of them? First amongst them

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perhaps is the thing we call Love:— not a tangible fact, not a thing to be seen or handled, or measured in material dimensions; just a matter of ideas, and yet so real a thing in one sense, and so mighty in its realness! All that human experience has yet attained in all the richness and deepness of heart joyance; in its intensest form the passion of hunger in the soul to live one's life out into the life of other than oneself so supremely that sacrifice is joy and self-forgetting the better part of nature; and in common and more average experience is yet a warmth and a glow and a vitality of sympathy that makes the soul to be feeling itself out ever into the realm of other souls for the normal satisfaction of its own being, — this, I say, is all very real, positive, actual, in every soul's experience; but

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this is only the beginning of the final substance of love. For the great fact of love is that which has not been attained yet, — a power of love greater than the best that you and I have yet felt in noblest love for parent, or wife, or husband, or dearest friend, or the rare child that consecrates the household. Our dream and yearning, our growing aptitude for a quality of love nobler even than the best we have yet made actual; which we believe in supremely, but have not quite consummated, — an ideal that opens out of the actual but as yet transcends it, and that we dimly dream of when we think of the love of the Eternal God, all-embracing, all-understanding, all-suffering, all-rejoicing. This then for the soul's first ideal.

And next that imperative fact which

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conscience insists on,— Righteousness, —the thing that ought to be, not as a dream of happiness, but a reality of Duty: hero's loyalty to the death because of conscience, in extreme form —but then, every day, the loyalty of steadfast honesty, justice, purity, and honor in one's relation to fellow-men; and this an ever-growing passion and ideal of Rectitude that recedes forever in strong alluring challenge; and then Truth, which means utter Sincerity for us, day by day; and ever reverence for the deep verities of God as slowly we grow into their knowledge;— and at our best attainment feel that we know but in part and prophesy but in part: these three, — Love, Righteousness, and Truth, — Sympathy, Honesty and Sincerity, —these are at once the supreme ideals, and the inevitable reali-

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ties of the inner life, which becoming solvents (shall we say) of the concrete details of humdrum, hard, and sin-smirched daily living, may give them in their realness high worth of the ideal and make them divine.

What I mean is this: let any humdrum, trying experience of life's grim reality come upon you, as it is sure to come to-day, to-morrow, some day, in its petty form or its tragic form. You may view it in two ways; you may view it solely from the point of view of utter selfishness, narrow and petty standards of personal comfort and advantage; and then all its ugliness appears. You are like the inartistic man stumbling at random on that fisherman's hut and finding it only an eyesore. Or you may look at it from the point of view of your soul's larger ideal of righteousness,

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sympathy and truth-fidelity; of what you of your own soul's simple conscience, love and sincerity can put into it to make it for its best in the up-building of your greatening soul, and what you can think of God through it, in his eternal patience of love-progress that involves your ceaseless Immortality, — in other words, view it for what you can *be*, to-day, to-morrow, and forever in soul-discipline through it rather than what you must take of passing discomfiture from it as a mere pleasure-seeking mortal, and then you are like the soul-artist: you see in proportions of divinity; you share in the secret of the living of God.

For instance: there is the old shoemaker, pegging and stitching away at his bench, day in and day out, as he has for thirty years perhaps. Very hum-

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drum, mean and paltry his daily task, it may seem, that his humble discontent be sombre as the clinging dullness of a bleak November rainstorm. Where is the ideal to come in there? Why, it comes in certainly for that shoemaker amongst shoemakers who fills every moment's pegging, every inch of shoe-leather cut, every stitch taken, with his ideal of honesty and good workmanship, that makes it become an evergrowing pride to him that every shoe leaving his bench be from top to toe an honest shoe, and a little better shoe than he ever made before; that its wearer at the end of the first month, or at the end of the second month, or at the end of the seventh month, be satisfied that the stitch has hung on as it ought to hang, that the leather has worn evenly as it was expected to wear and that each

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nail and each stitch in the sole or top has been honest to its place, where the shoemaker put it. Humble ambition but holy! With such an ideal glowing into pride, and ambition of fidelity flooding and glorifying every hour's work, every passing moment of humdrum toil, why, I tell you, that shoemaker lives in heaven the day through. The real is with him, but he has found a glory of ideal for it, and it opens its windows straight to God.

Many a mother could teach us our lesson here: has she one or a dozen children clamoring about her for constant care. We all idealize the mother's function; in the large it is so sweet and beautiful, — oh, how sweet and beautiful as we come to look back to it through a vista of long years! And yet the mother can tell us that even with best of chil-

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dren (and we were not all of us the best), the details of motherly duty are often so humdrum, so wearisome, so unattractive, so filled with things that try the patience and discourage the heart, that seem wholly unnecessary and wasted effort. And yet the true mother is she who weaves each detail of such duty into the large and glowing ideal of her mother-love and her mother-hope; all her ambitions and dreams and longings and yearnings for her child, which look forward to days far future, when as a man among men, a woman among women, her child shall make her proud and glad, shall help the world and enrich humanity, because of what she, the mother, can do to-day, to-morrow, to mould its little life, develop character, ensure health of body and of soul, and make growth

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a glory, not a shame,— all this, the mother's ideal, wedding love with hope's fidelity, becomes background, love's boundless ocean, hope's encircling mountains and meadowlands, for the glorifying of each most insignificant duty and task and trial of patience, and agony of worry, in the seamy real of present responsibility. The difference between a good mother and a bad mother is not so much usually that one is wiser than the other, or that one loves better than the other: the one has power of persistent ideal in each day's actuality of motherly duty; nothing so trifling or hard or humdrum or patience-taxing in what she has to do for her child but has its landscape setting, it is idealized, filled with the divine ideas, the holy expectancies of motherhood, — love, fidelity,

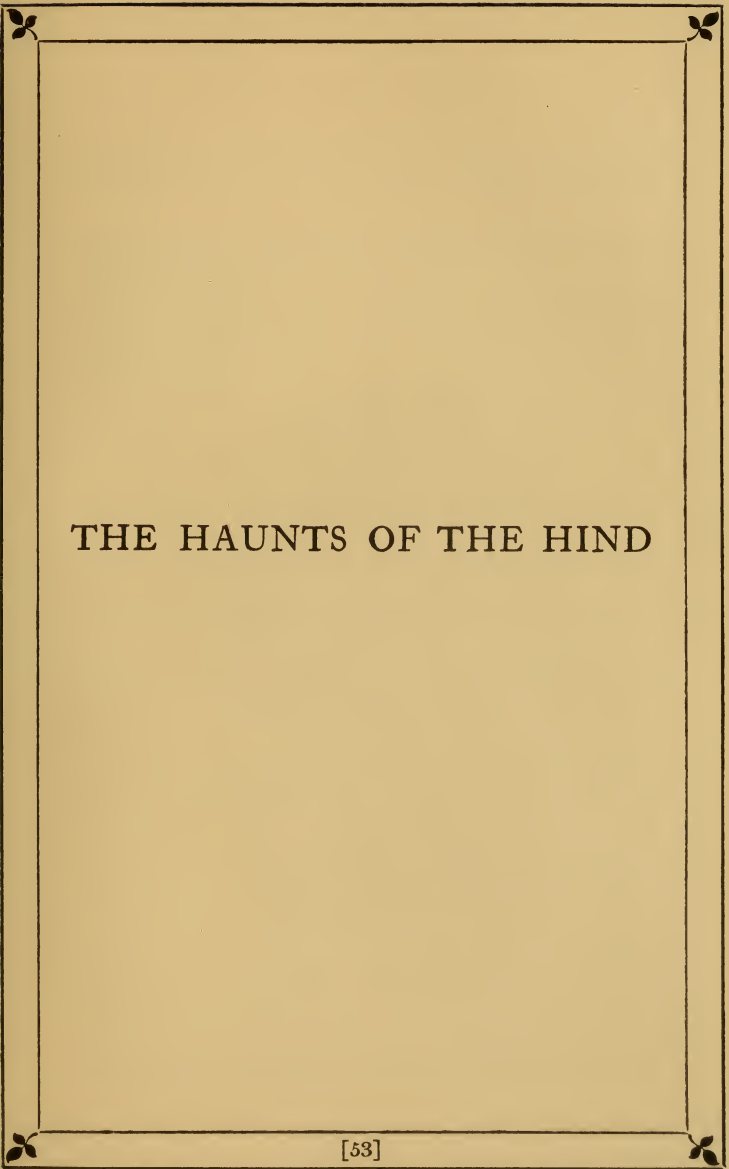
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hope, and loyalty, which have ever their future-look.

This world is a pretty mean world to live in, — for mean souls. No doubt of that. But for souls that have large visions, for souls that know the deep reality of love, duty and sincerity, it is a world crowded to the shreds of common happening with meanings of divinity. It is a small and unsatisfactory world for him who is shut in, day by day, by the dreary, monotonous walls of life's little but uncompromising actualities. The real to such a man is not pleasant. But to the man who can see in divine proportions, through the soul's clear lenses of Conscience, Love, and Verity, — to him who knows the realities of life's ideals, every day has ideal beauty for its landscape-setting of divine reality.

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And to such a soul God is real, for He is the eternal mystery of divine ideal which holds each particle of daily happening in his abiding Beauty. He is the Eternal Love, the Eternal Righteousness, the Eternal Truth, we can never get away from. He is the soul's comfort and the soul's restfulness: for He is the soul's Reality of Ideal.



THE HAUNTS OF THE HIND

THE HAUNTS OF THE HIND



SET forth yet another parable to fulfil our thought. This too shall be a parable of the out-door world; but as a hero-poet of long ago taught it.

A fiery but sensitive-souled prophet of righteousness lived amongst a people all too given to evil and wrong; and sweeping down upon them were coming ruthless invaders of the north, with horror in their track. He knew what hostile invasion meant in those days: the destruction of crops, the wasting of fields, the slaughtering of people, and the anarchy of social despair. He realized it all with a sensitive imagination's keenest poignancy; and he knew that he, the poet, as well as the coarsest, grossest sinner in the land,

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must suffer cruelly in the evil day. And yet he sings, for his own soul—and I think too in his better hope of what his people had in them for faith in adversity;—he sings in what I sometimes think to be the most beautiful passage of lyric poetry that Hebrew literature contains:

“For though the fig-tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines,
The labor of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat,
The flocks shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls,—
Yet will I rejoice in the Eternal.

I will joy in the God of my salvation . . .
Jehovah, the Eternal, is my strength,
*And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet ;
And will make me walk upon mine high places.*

What is the significance of that allusion to the “hind’s feet”?

Why, the hind is one of those mem-

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bers of the deer family whose home is amongst the crags and precipices of the mountain districts. Down along the plains the sheep and cattle graze in easy luxury over their boundless pastures; life is easy for them, and food always to be had for the nibbling of it. But it is not so with the hind in her mountain-haunts. She clammers over dizzy heights, and along beetling cliffs, and takes her scant-growing food where she finds it. But life for her is not therefore all hardship. She clammers over rough places, and threads her narrow passes, and leaps along her crags and precipices as easily and joyously as the plodding bullock passes along his fattening pastures: — why? Why, because the God of Nature has adapted her just to her kind of life; has made her feet nimble and sure and firm, — strong for

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the beating against rocky ways, and supple for the leaping along dizzy heights. God has made her *good* for just that sort of thing; and so she does not mind it; she finds life's joy and satisfaction and peace amongst just such conditions,—because she is a hind.

“Now,” says the poet, in effect: “life as I find it in my serious manhood is not always broad and fertile meadowland of fat prosperity; sometimes there are the rough, rocky places in it; sometimes my way lies along dizzy heights of baffling adversity, sometimes amid the narrow and steep passes of harsh vicissitude; sometimes that is the story of human life, as I have to live it. But I am not going to give up finding joy in life, because of that; my chance to live in substantial satisfaction of soul is not to be spoiled because of that. Let

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the worst come, in outward vicissitude — although fig-trees shall not blossom for me any longer, neither shall there be fruit for me upon the vine, and all the forms of outward prosperity be taken from me, and the dizzy barrenness of bleak misfortune be the way that I must go, — yet will I rejoice still in the splendid might of my confidence in Eternal God; I will joy in the sure support of his inner saving: for He had in mind just such places as these when He brought me into being; His creative energy goes along with me in my going. And when the way is along dizzy heights and rough, harsh rocks, why, He makes me good for it. He has fashioned my humanity just to meet such crises: He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and will make me to walk — not falter helplessly and fail and stumble

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and sink in weak despair—but make me to *walk*, with firm and agile and sure-stepping feet, along mine high places. That is the prophet's thought; and we may find it splendidly, wholesomely inspiring.

For this is a very good parable for those who are in the midst of great afflictions and trials; but then it is a peculiarly good parable for those of us who are just in ordinary, average ways of life. For average, ordinary ways of life are checkered ways. There come neither the overwhelming tragedies of woe, nor the dazzling riches of exceptional prosperity; but there are forever the little alternations of life that goes quite easily and life that comes a little hard. And sometimes the fat pastures of prosperity are a little more extensive than at other times, and some-

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times the bleak high-places of mountain-adversity are a little more steep and dizzy than at other times. But if we want to carry the burden of our life right through it all, with the swing, and the eagerness, and the substantial weight of soul-comfort that can make the soul solidly worth the best of its own manhood powers, we must catch the spirit of this prophecy and sing to the music of this psalm, feel the abiding joy of confidence in the sure fact of the Eternal, that it is altogether good, though in ways that we cannot always understand; and that at any rate He understands us and has made us good for the ways we are called upon to go. And if the dizzy heights are before us, and narrow crags, then He makes the feet of our spirit's going just right for that sort of going, — makes

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our feet like hinds' feet, that we may walk sure-footed along our high places.

It is so in matters of religious faith. Sometimes it is our good fortune just to be in faith's broad pasture-lands. Religion's faith is life's easy, comfortable experience. The sun floods the world for us, every morning, with the warm passion of its soul-assuring glow; and the afternoon showers water our souls to sweet confidence in things the world has ever trusted; and the silent stars at night are threaded on tender reverences; and the joys of home-life, and friendships, and the poetry of lovers, and the calm cadences of daily duty, all strengthen and sweeten and fructify the soul's abiding confidence in the things that Religion stands for, and has stood for with our fathers.

But that does not last always for all

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souls. There come the bleak places of religious doubt; there come the rough, jagged rocks of spiritual questionings and skepticisms; there come the dizzy heights of perplexity and daring speculation; and then, perhaps, it seems to the soul as though it must give up; it cannot go any further; it must stumble and fall along such courses. But if the soul will only have the prophet's courage and the poet's vision, — ah, but if the soul will only have the honest recognition of its own inherent powers, — there is always the undertow of faith, may I say? or, better, the oversweep of spiritual confidence, brooding over the soul, even in its seeming chaos of doubt and perplexity — (the Holy Spirit of the Eternal moving over the face of troubled waters); and it makes the soul good for its hard places; maketh

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its feet like hinds' feet, that it may walk along dizzy courses of its high places, and find at last the joy of so walking.

For the souls in the world to-day that are finding religion most virile, most positive, fullest of the fine exhilaration of splendid purpose and holy power, are the souls not who have found religion a way of placid ease, but have clambered over Faith's dizzy places and leaped its jagged crags, and learned God's gift of spirit's virile adaptation, — that the feet of their souls were made like hinds' feet to walk in confidence along Faith's sheer high places.

It is so, too, with the experiences of our inner heart-life. How every friendship, no matter how noble, is checkered with its pasture-lands of abounding joy in confidence and understanding

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and genial sympathy, and its dizzy heights of trial and misunderstanding and harsh test of affection! How every love-story is a story of vicissitude! How that great commonplace of human life, — which is at once its great consecration and its great mystery, — the married life, tangling love of children and their bafflements with the wedded love of man and wife, — how all of these bring their inevitable alternations of easy places and hard places for love! smooth, rich meadow-lands, and beetling heights of trial and perplexity! And everything is splendid so long as it is all meadow-land; then we sing for the poetry of it, and even have smooth gladness for the prose of it. But then the little crises of misunderstanding — then the little tragedies of stinging doubt and suspicion and perplexity, —

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then the narrow, steep passes of personal patience put to straining test, and sympathy sorely over-tried, and the hard, grim crags of uncomfortable sense of justice and duty-exaction made aggressively stern, instead of easily joyous: these surely come; the way goes hard; the path gets dizzy; there is a chance to weaken in discouragement, to give it all up, and stumble and fall.

But oh, the prophet's message and the poet's song! If the way is hard and steep and baffling for love to walk, where it used to be smooth and easy, doubt not the Spirit of Eternity knows it; He had it in mind when He created the mystery of human love and friendship; He had it in mind when He formed the human soul, and to-day is continuing in the divine processes of its higher creation through social evolution. And

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He made the soul just right for meeting just such experiences: He maketh its feet like hinds' feet; He maketh you that you may walk along your own soul's peculiar high places. And don't we know, every soul of us, that we have never begun to dream even of the finest joy of splendid friendship or enter the holy of holies of deepest love, until beyond the flat pastures of smug comfort and placid agreements of amiability, there have been some crags to clamber, some beetling heights to grow dizzy over, some things to suffer and ache for in love's hard service;—some things just wrong, we would think them; but they were there in love's pathway. And if we failed before them we simply lost our pallid friendship and our pretty love, and there all ended. But if we found that our feet were

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made like hinds' feet, fit for just that sort of climbing and scrambling and toiling and scaling in love's dizzy high places, why *then* the triumph of love's deepest potency, and then the satisfaction of the heart's finest gifts: *then* the ultimate attainment of something that trembles not nor fears, but *knows* the worth of human sympathy, in the passion of human love.

And so in other ways of life, in the peculiar trials which business men encounter, and social relations bring; in the catastrophe of the soul's ambitions shattered, and sweet dreams dashed to earth; and in those woefully hard places when there suddenly comes as it were the utter cave-in of the solid mass of what had made life good for love, when some dear one—very dear one, whom we had loved so much and needed so

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much, and felt so much to be the inevitable part of our being's completeness, — is snatched away in death, and the aching chasm of our loss yawns desolately before us; in all of these hard places, in all of these steep, dizzy mountain-climbs of personal trial, the law of life reads inevitably the same: the eternal scheme of things is framed by the Eternal to contain such things (we know not why); but then the human soul is fashioned by the same Eternal One to fit this eternal scheme, and triumph in it.

Some souls never seem to find it out; and they are the discouraged souls who make a failure of life. Some men, indeed, seem to make their life successes with great ease, and we envy them. And I do not insist that there is not much which does not seem quite even-handed

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in the way in which what we usually call success is distributed, in this peculiar world of ours. But then that is not our life-concern, for your problem and mine in life is just to find our way of *making* the letters of our lives spell "success," however they get jumbled up, and to trust that there is a divine Fact of God in the universe as interested in this endeavor of ours as we, who is ever working with us. But however that may be, the more I study success as any man may measure it, the more surely do I find that the men who have succeeded in any substantial fashion are men who have not had pasture-lands all along their way, but have had their dizzy heights to scale and their rocky, narrow passes to scramble through. And they have done it, and found some joy in doing it! And they have done it because

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they have had confidence that they could do it; that they were good for it: they were made that way,—they had “feet like hinds’ feet,” they could walk along their own high places.

Now, was there a sense in which these men were “good for it” in which some other men have not been “good” for their hard places? Yes,—no; the thing has two aspects. For the secret of the success of these successful men, it seems to me, is simply self-realization and the confidence and the faith and the joy that comes with it. Here is the supreme religious fact of life. God is with us, every one. The Eternal works for every soul that is born into the world; the universe is good for every individual in his individuality, and not simply for all men in the mass: it is a universe to *meet* the possibilities of every human

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soul; and the secret of essential religion is just the discovery of the soul that it is made *good* for whatever it is called to meet and endure in life, step by step, day by day. And when the hard places come, and the high places must be scaled, and the bleak, rough crags must be leaped, and the steep and narrow passes clambered through, He who made the crags is there to make our crag-climbing feet like hinds' feet, that we need not stumble, but, like the hind, walk upon our high places and feel at home,—for God has made it so.



DO WE SEE NATURE?

DO WE SEE NATURE?



HERE comes a time of year when it is the good custom of people everywhere to take their little trips or plan their longer sojourns away from home to visit where they think the face of Nature is most beautiful and pleasing. They go among the mountains, or to the banks of some beautiful lake, or amid the wooded islands of some picturesque stream, or wait in the ennobling presence of the infinite sea. For nearly everybody is in love with Nature in these latter times; the passion of Nature-admiration is well-nigh universal.

And yet, hard as it is to realize it, the love of Nature is a comparatively modern sentiment. The ancients and me-

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diævals knew scarcely anything of it. In the days when the most exquisite statues were chiselled, and when almost the loftiest poems were written, yes, even in the days when the most artistic pictures were painted and the grandest masterpieces of architecture raised their sublime heights of entrenched beauty throughout Europe, the realization that Nature had a beauty too of her own was almost wholly unattained. The most gifted geniuses and greatest minds caught no message there of beauty; the sublime, the grand, the graceful, spoke no word to them out of mountains, or rushing streams, or lashing ocean, or extending plains: — though it spoke so plainly from the handiwork of man.

No, Nature was then as now brim full of her grand messages of beauty; she

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was running over with her gospels and prophecies of sublimity and grace and earnest loveliness; but only when men learned to listen in her direction, and had the attention of their souls turned that way; — only when they lifted up their eyes to look her reverently in the face and say, “Speak, O Nature, for thy servants hear,” could she speak to tell them that she was beautiful, worthy of their love and reverence. And so only in modern times the bold headlands and barren sand-plains along the coast, which were once but dangerous points for sailors to avoid, have become famous resorts to which our people flock in thousands; and mountains that were only barriers to trade and commerce make themselves shrines to which great multitudes pay their annual pilgrimages. Our ancestors had these things,

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but knew them not; and all the intenser is our love and admiration for them because so late developed.

And now we gain but a fragment of the message. We are only half listening. We vaunt ourselves on our more refined appreciativeness of the beauty of Nature, and yet we only repeat the childishness of Samuel in the old story: we hear the voice and then run back to our Elis, — our lower, narrower conceptions of the world and its enjoyments, and seek the whole of the interpretation there. In a measure we have learned to listen so as to hear the message of Beauty which Nature has to speak; but don't we most of us miss a higher voice which is there too, — how it speaks a message not simply of more developed grandeur and sublimity of beauty, but how, too, it may have a

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gospel of exalting truth which may be converted into terms of loftier character and life? Have many of us trained our ears to hear the holier voices of what is beautiful about us; to catch glimpses of the face of God shining through it, — the things that accord with true and manly life, and discord with mean and dishonorable life? Have many of us learned to live better lives because we see nobler nature? Have many of us learned to feel purer instincts of heroism because God towers before us in the grandeur of the mountain, or has waited before us in the abiding patience of the wide-spread sea? I think it is there: this sure, firm, unmistakable voice of divineness in Nature, this thing that suggests loftiness and elevation of soul, that manifests God. It *is* there, though so few of us see it; just as the

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beauty is there which we all recognize to-day, though the ancients were so unconscious of it. It is there calling to us, the voice of heaven, not earth; the voice of God, not of Eli; but we miss it because we are not listening.

I remember a friend of mine who made a good deal of fuss when the German Opera first came to Boston, of going to hear one of Wagner's grand masterpieces. She adjusted all her social engagements for a month ahead that they should not interfere with this event; she had a messenger boy out overnight at the sale of the tickets in order to secure a good seat, and paid a high price for it when it was obtained; she got herself with a good deal of trouble to the opera-house half an hour before the curtain rose, so anxious was she not to miss a note; she equipped

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herself with great array of *libretti*, opera glasses, and orchestra score: — and came away, after the performance was over, highly pleased with the gorgeous scenery of the second act, quite in raptures over the smoothness and finish of Alvari's phenomenal tenor, and not a little enthusiastic over the beauty of one of the minor singers! She seemed to have not the faintest consciousness in the world of the almost religious impressiveness of the motif of the great artist's masterpiece; its wonderful interpretation of strong, earnest, human passion. The grand art of musical poetry, profound in its reaches of emotion and aspiration, was entirely lost on her. They were there, but she was not listening for them; she had no ear for their message. She was admiring painted canvas and vocal execution and

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pretty faces; a greater voice spoke in her presence and she knew nothing of it.

I fear that some of us who make such a fuss over our love of Nature—who worship at her shrine so piously, who give of our money and of our time, often at so much of personal sacrifice, every year, that we may see some rare new phase of ocean or mountain, or forest or river loveliness—are a good deal like this foolish young woman at the opera: we don't really get our money's worth, we don't get paid for all our fuss, because we do not listen, we do not look for the best and grandest and truest of what we have paid to see and hear. Its higher voice is there, a divine message, a holy inspiration of life. It is there; we might hear it; we do hear at any rate the calling of its voice, but we turn so soon away.

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And so in other things in life; in the profound things and sublime things which come in contact with our experiences elsewhere: the high voices of literature, the revelations of science, the divine memories of childhood, the holy of holies of the home, in all these relations of life the voices are there which are the voices of God; but they are there to us only if we have learned the secret of listening for them as for the voice of God.

I do not mean to make any intangible mysticism of this; I am not referring to any occult presence of God in Nature or life. I only want to call every voice that summons us to worthier living, everything in life that has uplifting power, that suggests nobler and truer ways of being manly and womanly, everything in life that may open

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a way out of a narrower and meaner mode of character into a larger and more exalted one, — a voice of God. I think that is the truth of it; and life about us fairly rings with such voices. They speak from every corner, they mingle with the experiences of every day. They are voices of God summoning us to new destinies, and it is our fault if we mistake them for voices of earth, only calling us to old duties and visions of life. Perhaps after all those old prophets of Israel who could say so confidently “Thus saith the Lord”; who could stand on the mountain-tops of prophecy and so grandly speak the oracles of divine truth as though they looked into heaven and saw with the eyes of angels: perhaps after all they only differed from other men in knowing better how to recognize the voice

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of God when He spoke, and made not the mistake of calling high things low things, or confusing Elis with the Almighty Presence.

However that may be we may be sure of this, that there are enough "thus saith the Lords" lavished about us every day, were we only ready to discern them; there are enough visions of heaven, enough prophecies of divine life, right in sight of all of us, to make us all Samuels and Elijahs if only we could learn the secret of listening and looking for them and catching their eternal message.

"Not only around our infancy," sings our American poet in answer to the immortal words of the great English singer, Wordsworth, —

"Not only around our infancy
Doth heaven with all its splendors lie :

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Daily with souls that cringe and plot
We Sinais climb and know it not.
Over our manhood bend the skies;
Against our fallen and traitor lives,
The great winds utter prophecies;
With our faint hearts the mountain strives;
Its arms outstretched, the druid wood
Waits with its benedicite,
And to our age's drowsy blood
Still shouts the inspiring sea."

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