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Wisdom and Destiny

Maurice Maeterlinck

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By the Same Author

THE TREASURE OF THE HUMBLE.
Translated by ALFRED SUTRO. With Introduction by A. B. WALKLEY.
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Wisdom and Destiny

BY

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

Translated by

ALFRED SUTRO

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1898

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TO

GEORGETTE LEBLANC

I OFFER THIS BOOK, WHEREIN HER THOUGHT

BLENDS WITH MINE

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INTRODUCTION

THIS essay on Wisdom and Destiny was to have been a thing of some twenty pages, the work of a fortnight; but the idea took root, others flocked to it, and the volume has occupied M. Maeterlinck continuously for more than two years. It has much essential kinship with the "Treasure of the Humble," though it differs therefrom in treatment; for whereas the earlier work might perhaps be described as the eager speculation of a poet athirst for beauty, we have here rather the endeavour of an earnest thinker to discover the abode of truth. And if the result of his thought be that truth and happiness are one, this was by no means the object wherewith he set forth. Here he is no longer content with exquisite visions, alluring or haunting images; he

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probes into the soul of man and lays bare all his joys and his sorrows. It is as though he had forsaken the canals he loves so well — the green, calm, motionless canals that faithfully mirror the silent trees and moss-covered roofs — and had adventured boldly, unhesitatingly, on the broad river of life.

He describes this book himself, in a kind of introduction that is almost an apology, as "a few interrupted thoughts that entwine themselves, with more or less system, around two or three subjects." He declares that there is nothing it undertakes to prove; that there are none whose mission it is to convince. And so true is this, so absolutely honest and sincere is the writer, that he does not shrink from attacking, qualifying, modifying, his own propositions; from advancing, and insisting on, every objection that flits across his brain; and if such proposition survive the onslaught of its adversaries, it is only because, in the deepest of him, he holds it for absolute

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truth. For this book is indeed a confession, a naïve, outspoken, unflinching description of all that passes in his mind; and even those who like not his theories still must admit that this mind is strangely beautiful.

There have been many columns filled — and doubtless will be again — with ingenious and scholarly attempts to place a definitive label on M. Maeterlinck, and his talent; to trace his thoughts to their origin, clearly denoting the authors by whom he has been influenced; in a measure to predict his future, and accurately to establish the place that he fills in the hierarchy of genius. With all this I feel that I have no concern. Such speculations doubtless have their use and serve their purpose. I shall be content if I can impress upon those who may read these lines, that in this book the man is himself, of untrammelled thought; a man possessed of the rare faculty of seeing beauty in all things, and, above all, in truth; of the still

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rarer faculty of loving all things, and, above all, life.

Nor is this merely a vague and, at bottom, a more or less meaningless statement. For, indeed, considering this essay only, that deals with wisdom and destiny, at the root of it — its fundamental principle, its guiding, inspiring thought — is love. "Nothing is contemptible in this world save only scorn," he says; and for the humble, the foolish, nay, even the wicked, he has the same love, almost the same admiration, as for the sage, the saint, or the hero. Everything that exists fills him with wonder, because of its existence, and of the mysterious force that is in it; and to him love and wisdom are one, "joining hands in a circle of light." For the wisdom that holds aloof from mankind, that deems itself a thing apart, select, superior, he has scant sympathy — it has "wandered too far from the watch-fires of the tribe." But the wisdom that is human, that feeds constantly on the desires, the feelings, the hopes and the

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fears of man, must needs have love ever by its side; and these two, marching together, must inevitably find themselves, sooner or later, on the ways that lead to goodness. "There comes a moment in life," he says, "when moral beauty seems more urgent, more penetrating, than intellectual beauty; when all that the mind has treasured must be bathed in the greatness of soul, lest it perish in the sandy desert, forlorn as the river that seeks in vain for the sea." But for unnecessary self-sacrifice, renouncement, abandonment of earthly joys, and all such "parasitic virtues," he has no commendation or approval; feeling that man was created to be happy, and that he is not wise who voluntarily discards a happiness to-day for fear lest it be taken from him on the morrow. "Let us wait till the hour of sacrifice sounds — till then, each man to his work. The hour will sound at last — let us not waste our time in seeking it on the dial of life."

In this book, morality, conduct, life are

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surveyed from every point of the compass, but from an eminence always. Austerity holds no place in his philosophy; he finds room even "for the hours that babble aloud in their wantonness." But all those who follow him are led by smiling wisdom to the heights where happiness sits enthroned between goodness and love, where virtue rewards itself in the "silence that is the walled garden of its happiness."

It is strange to turn from this essay to *Serres Chaudes* and *La Princesse Maleine*, M. Maeterlinck's earliest efforts — the one a collection of vague images woven into poetical form, charming, dreamy, and almost meaningless; the other a youthful and very remarkable effort at imitation. In the plays that followed the *Princesse Maleine* there was the same curious, wandering sense of, and search for, a vague and mystic beauty:

"That fair beauty which no eye can see,
Of that sweet music which no ear can measure."

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Introduction

In a little poem of his, *Et s'il revenait*, the last words of a dying girl, forsaken by her lover, who is asked by her sister what shall be told to the faithless one, should he ever seek to know of her last hours:

> "Et s'il m'interroge encore
> Sur la dernière heure ? —
> Dites lui que j'ai souri
> De peur qu'il ne pleure . . ."

touch, perhaps, the very high-water mark of exquisite simplicity and tenderness blent with matchless beauty of expression. *Pelléas et Mélisande* was the culminating point of this, his first, period — a simple, pathetic love-story of boy and girl — love that was pure and almost passionless. It was followed by three little plays — "for marionettes," he describes them on the title-page; among them being *La Mort de Tintagiles*, the play he himself prefers of all that he has written. And then came a curious change: he wrote *Aglavaine et Selysette*. The setting is familiar to us:

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the sea-shore, the ruined tower, the seat by the well; no less than the old grandmother and little Yssaline. But Aglavaine herself is strange: this woman who has lived and suffered; this queenly, majestic creature, calmly conscious of her beauty and her power; she whose overpowering, overwhelming love is yet deliberate and thoughtful. The complexities of real life are vaguely hinted at here: instead of Golaud, the mediæval, tyrannous husband, we have Selysette, the meek, self-sacrificing wife; instead of the instinctive, unconscious love of Pelléas and Mélisande, we have great burning passion. But this play, too, was only a stepping-stone — a link between the old method and the new that is to follow. For there will probably be no more plays like *Pelléas et Mélisande*, or even like *Aglavaine et Selysette*. Real men and women, real problems and disturbance of life — it is these that absorb him now. His next play will doubtless deal with a psychology more actual, in an atmosphere

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less romantic; and the old familiar scene of wood, and garden, and palace corridor will be exchanged for the habitual abode of men.

I have said it was real life that absorbed him now, and yet am I aware that what seems real to him must still appear vague and visionary to many. It is, however, only a question of shifting one's point of view, or, better still, of enlarging it. Material success in life, fame, wealth — these things M. Maeterlinck passes indifferently by. There are certain ideals that are dear to many on which he looks with the vague wonder of a child. The happiness of which he dreams is an inward happiness, and within reach of successful and unsuccessful alike. And so it may well be that those content to buffet with their fellows for what are looked on as the prizes of this world, will still write him down a mere visionary, and fail to comprehend him. The materialist who complacently defines the soul as the "intellect plus the emotions" will doubtless

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turn away in disgust from M. Maeterlinck's constant references to it as the seat of something mighty, mysterious, inexhaustible in life. So, too, may the rigid follower of positive religion, to whom the Deity is a power concerned only with the judgment, reward, and punishment of men, protest at his saying that "God, who must be at least as high as the highest thoughts He has implanted in the best of men, will withhold His smile from those whose sole desire has been to please Him; and they only who have done good for sake of good, and as though He existed not; they only who have loved virtue more than they loved God Himself, shall be allowed to stand by His side." But, after all, the genuine seeker after truth knows that what seemed true yesterday is to-day discovered to be only a milestone on the road; and all who value truth will be glad to listen to a man who, differing from them perhaps, yet tells them what seems true to him. And whereas in the "Treasure of the

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Humble" he looked on life through a veil of poetry and dream, here he stands among his fellow-men, no longer trying to "express the inexpressible," but, in all simplicity, to tell them what he sees.

"Above all, let us never forget that an act of goodness is in itself an act of happiness. It is the flower of a long inner life of joy and contentment; it tells of peaceful hours and days on the sunniest heights of our soul." This thought lies at the root of his whole philosophy — goodness, happiness, love, supporting each other, intertwined, rewarding each other. "Let us not think virtue will crumble, though God Himself seem unjust. Where could the virtue of man find more everlasting foundation than in the seeming injustice of God?" Strange that the man who has written these words should have spent all his school life at a Jesuit college, subjected to its severe, semi-monastic discipline; compelled, at the end of his stay, to go, with the rest of his fellows, through

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the customary period of "retreat," lasting ten days, when the most eloquent of the fathers would, one after the other, deliver sermons terrific to boyish imagination, sermons whose unvarying burden was Hell and the wrath of God — to be avoided only by becoming a Jesuit priest. Out of the eighteen boys in the "rhétorique" class, eleven eagerly embraced this chance of escape from damnation. As for M. Maeterlinck himself — fortunately a day-boarder only — one can fancy him wandering home at night, along the canal banks, in the silence broken only by the pealing of church bells, brooding over these mysteries . . . but how long a road must the man have travelled who, having been taught the God of Fra Angelico, himself arrives at the conception of a "God who sits smiling on a mountain, and to whom our gravest offences are only as the naughtiness of puppies playing on the hearth-rug."

His environment, no less than his schooling, helped to give a mystic tinge

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to his mind. The peasants who dwelt around his father's house always possessed a peculiar fascination for him; he would watch them as they sat by their door-way, squatting on their heels, as their custom is — grave, monotonous, motionless, the smoke from their pipes almost the sole sign of life. For the Flemish peasant is a strangely inert creature, his work once done — as languid and lethargic as the canal that passes by his door. There was one cottage into which the boy would often peep on his way home from school, the home of seven brothers and one sister, all old, toothless, worn — working together in the daytime at their tiny farm; at night sitting in the gloomy kitchen, lit by one smoky lamp — all looking straight before them, saying not a word; or when, at rare intervals, a remark was made, taking it up each in turn and solemnly repeating it, with perhaps the slightest variation in form. It was amidst influences such as these that his boyhood was passed, almost isolated from

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the world, brooding over lives of saints and mystics at the same time that he studied, and delighted in, Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, Goethe and Heine. For his taste has been catholic always; he admires Meredith as he admires Dickens, Hello and Pascal no less than Schopenhauer. And it is this catholicity, this open mind, this eager search for truth, that have enabled him to emerge from the mysticism that once enwrapped him to the clearer daylight of actual existence; it is this faculty of admiring all that is admirable in man and in life that some day, perhaps, may take him very far.

It will surprise many who picture him as a mere dreamy decadent, to be told that he is a man of abiding and abundant cheerfulness, who finds happiness in the simplest of things. The scent of a flower, the flight of sea-gulls around a cliff, a cornfield in sunshine — these stir him to strange delight. A deed of bravery, nobility, or of simple devotion; a mere brotherly act of kindness; the

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unconscious sacrifice of the peasant who toils all day to feed and clothe his children — these awake his warm and instant sympathy. And with him, too, it is as with De Quincey when he says, "At no time of my life have I been a person to hold myself polluted by the touch or approach of any creature that wore a human shape"; and more than one unhappy outcast, condemned by the stern law of man, has been gladdened by his ready greeting and welcome. But, indeed, all this may be read of in his book — I desired but to make it clear that the book is truly a faithful mirror of the man's own thoughts, and feelings, and actions. It is a book that many will love — all those who suffer, for it will lighten their suffering; all those who love, for it will teach them to love more deeply. It is a book with its faults, doubtless, as every book must be; but it has been written straight from the heart, and will go to the heart of many. . .

ALFRED SUTRO.

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WISDOM AND DESTINY

§ 1.

IN this book there will often be mention of wisdom and destiny, of happiness, justice, and love. There may seem to be some measure of irony in thus calling forth an intangible happiness where so much real sorrow prevails; a justice that may well be ideal in the bosom of an injustice, alas! only too material; a love that eludes the grasp in the midst of palpable hatred and callousness. The moment may seem but ill-chosen for leisurely search, in the hidden recess of man's heart, for motives of peace and tranquillity; occasions for

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gladness, uplifting, and love; reasons for wonder and gratitude — seeing that the vast bulk of mankind, in whose name we would fain lift our voice, have not even the time or assurance to drain to the dregs the misery and desolation of life. Not to them is it given to linger over the inward rejoicing, the profound consolation, that the satisfied thinker has slowly and painfully acquired, that he knows how to prize. Thus has it often been urged against moralists, among them Epictetus, that they were apt to concern themselves with none but the wise alone. In this reproach is some truth, as some truth there must be in every reproach that is made. And indeed, if we had only the courage to listen to the simplest, the nearest, most pressing voice of our conscience, and be deaf to all else, it were doubtless our solitary duty to relieve the suffering about us,

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to the greatest extent in our power. It were incumbent upon us to visit and nurse the poor, to console the afflicted ; to found model factories, surgeries, dispensaries, or at least to devote ourselves, as men of science do, to wresting from nature the material secrets which are most essential to man. But yet, were the world at a given moment to contain only persons thus actively engaged in helping each other, and none venturesome enough to dare snatch leisure for research in other directions, then could this charitable labour not long endure ; for all that is best in the good that at this day is being done round about us, was conceived in the spirit of one of those who neglected, it may be, many an urgent, immediate duty in order to think, to commune with themselves, in order to speak. Does it follow that they did the best that was to be done? To such a question as this who

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shall dare to reply? The soul that is meekly honest must ever consider the simplest, the nearest duty to be the best of all things it can do; but yet were there cause for regret had all men for all time restricted themselves to the duty that lay nearest at hand. In each generation some men have existed who held in all loyalty that they fulfilled the duties of the passing hour by pondering on those of the hour to come. Most thinkers will say that these men were right. It is well that the thinker should give his thoughts to the world, though it must be admitted that wisdom befinds itself sometimes in the reverse of the sage's pronouncement. This matters but little, however; for, without such pronouncement, the wisdom had not stood revealed; and the sage has accomplished his duty.

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§ 2.

To-day misery is the disease of mankind, as disease is the misery of man. And even as there are physicians for disease, so should there be physicians for human misery. But can the fact that disease is, unhappily, only too prevalent, render it wrong for us ever to speak of health? which were indeed as though, in anatomy — the physical science that has most in common with morals — the teacher confined himself exclusively to the study of the deformities that greater or lesser degeneration will induce in the organs of man. We have surely the right to demand that his theories be based on the healthy and vigorous body; as we have also the right to demand that the moralist, who fain would see beyond the present hour, should take as his standard the soul that is happy, or that at least possesses every element of

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happiness, save only the necessary consciousness.

We live in the bosom of great injustice; but there can be, I imagine, neither cruelty nor callousness in our speaking, at times, as though this injustice had ended, else should we never emerge from our circle.

It is imperative that there should be some who dare speak, and think, and act as though all men were happy; for otherwise, when the day comes for destiny to throw open to all the people's garden of the promised land, what happiness shall the others find there, what justice, what beauty or love? It may be urged, it is true, that it were best, first of all, to consider the most pressing needs, yet is this not always wisest; it is often of better avail from the start to seek that which is highest. When the waters beleaguer the home of the peasant in Holland, the sea or the neighbouring river

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having swept down the dyke that protected the country, most pressing is it then for the peasant to safeguard his cattle, his grain, his effects; but wisest to fly to the top of the dyke, summoning those who live with him, and from thence meet the flood, and do battle. Humanity up to this day has been like an invalid tossing and turning on his couch in search of repose; but therefore none the less have words of true consolation come only from those who spoke as though man were freed from all pain. For, as man was created for health, so was mankind created for happiness; and to speak of its misery only, though that misery be everywhere and seem everlasting, is only to say words that fall lightly and soon are forgotten. Why not speak as though mankind were always on the eve of great certitude, of great joy? Thither, in truth, is man led by his instinct, though

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he never may live to behold the long-wished-for to-morrow. It is well to believe that there needs but a little more thought, a little more courage, more love, more devotion to life, a little more eagerness, one day to fling open wide the portals of joy and of truth. And this thing may still come to pass. Let us hope that one day all mankind will be happy and wise; and though this day never should dawn, to have hoped for it cannot be wrong. And in any event, it is helpful to speak of happiness to those who are sad, that thus at least they may learn what it is that happiness means. They are ever inclined to regard it as something beyond them, extraordinary, out of their reach. But if all who may count themselves happy were to tell, very simply, what it was that brought happiness to them, the others would see that between sorrow and joy the difference is but as between

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a gladsome, enlightened acceptance of life and a hostile, gloomy submission ; between a large and harmonious conception of life, and one that is stubborn and narrow. "Is that all?" the unhappy would cry. "But we too have within us, then, the elements of this happiness." Surely you have them within you! There lives not a man but has them, those only excepted upon whom great physical calamity has fallen. But speak not lightly of this happiness. There is no other. He is the happiest man who best understands his happiness; for he is of all men most fully aware that it is only the lofty idea, the untiring, courageous, human idea, that separates gladness from sorrow. Of this idea it is helpful to speak, and as often as may be; not with the view of imposing our own idea upon others, but in order that they who may listen shall, little by little, conceive the desire

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to possess an idea of their own. For in no two men is it the same. The one that you cherish may well bring no comfort to me; nor shall all your eloquence touch the hidden springs of my life. Needs must I acquire my own, in myself, by myself; but you unconsciously make this the easier for me, by telling of the idea that is yours. It may happen that I shall find solace in that which brings sorrow to you, and that which to you speaks of gladness may be fraught with affliction for me. But no matter; into my grief will enter all that you saw of beauty and comfort, and into my joy there will pass all that was great in your sadness, if indeed my joy be on the same plane as your sadness. It behoves us, the first thing of all, to prepare in our soul a place of some loftiness, where this idea may be lodged; as the priests of ancient religions laid the

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mountain peak bare, and cleared it of thorn and of root for the fire to descend from heaven. There may come to us any day, from the depths of the planet Mars, the infallible formula of happiness, conveyed in the final truth as to the aim and the government of the universe. Such a formula could only bring change or advancement unto our spiritual life in the degree of the desire and expectation of advancement in which we might long have been living. The formula would be the same for all men, yet would each one benefit only in the proportion of the eagerness, purity, unselfishness, knowledge, that he had stored up in his soul. All morality, all study of justice and happiness, should truly be no more than preparation, provision on the vastest scale — a way of gaining experience, a stepping-stone laid down for what is to follow. Surely, desirable day of all days were the one when at

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last we should live in absolute truth, in immovable logical certitude; but in the meantime it is given us to live in a truth more important still, the truth of our soul and our character; and some wise men have proved that this life can be lived in the midst of gravest material errors.

§ 3.

Is it idle to speak of justice, happiness, morals, and all things connected therewith, before the hour of science has sounded—that definitive hour, wherein all that we cling to may crumble? The darkness that hangs over our life will then, it may be, pass away; and much that we do in the darkness shall be otherwise done in the light. But nevertheless do the essential events of our moral and physical life come to pass in the darkness as completely,

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as inevitably, as they would in the light. Our life must be lived while we wait for the word that shall solve the enigma, and the happier, the nobler our life, the more vigorous shall it become; and we shall have the more courage, clear-sightedness, boldness, to seek and desire the truth. And happen what may, the time can be never ill-spent that we give to acquiring some knowledge of self. Whatever our relation may become to this world in which we have being, in our soul there will yet be more feelings, more passions, more secrets unchanged and unchanging, than there are stars that connect with the earth, or mysteries fathomed by science. In the bosom of truth undeniable, truth all absorbing, man shall doubtless soar upwards; but still, as he rises, still shall his soul unerringly guide him; and the grander the truth of the universe, the more solace and peace it may bring, the more shall the

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problems of justice, morality, happiness, love, present to the eyes of all men the semblance they ever have worn in the eyes of the thinker.

We should live as though we were always on the eve of the great revelation; and we should be ready with welcome, with warmest and keenest and fullest, most heartfelt and intimate welcome. And whatever the form it shall take on the day that it comes to us, the best way of all to prepare for its fitting reception is to crave for it now, to desire it as lofty, as perfect, as vast, as ennobling as the soul can conceive. It must needs be more beautiful, glorious, and ample than the best of our hopes; for, where it differ therefrom or even frustrate them, it must of necessity bring something nobler, loftier, nearer to the nature of man, for it will bring us the truth. To man, though all that he value go under, the intimate truth

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of the universe must be wholly, pre-eminently admirable. And though, on the day it unveils, our meekest desires turn to ashes and float on the wind, still shall there linger within us all we have prepared; and the admirable will enter our soul, the volume of its waters being as the depth of the channel that our expectation has fashioned.

§ 4.

Is it necessary that we should conceive ourselves to be superior to the universe? Our reason may prove what it will: our reason is only a feeble ray that has issued from Nature; a tiny atom of that whole which Nature alone shall judge. Is it fitting that the ray of light should desire to alter the lamp whence it springs?

That loftiness within us, from whose summit we venture to pass judgment on

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the totality of life, to absolve or condemn it, is doubtless the merest pin-prick, visible to our eye alone, on the illimitable sphere of life. It is wise to think and to act as though all that happened to man were all that man most required. It is not long ago — to cite only one of the problems that the instinct of our planet is invited to solve — that a scheme was on foot to inquire of the thinkers of Europe whether it should rightly be held as a gain or a loss to mankind if an energetic, strenuous, persistent race, which some, through prejudice doubtless, still regard as inferior to the Aryan in qualities of heart and of soul — if the Jews, in a word, were to vanish from the face of the earth, or to acquire preponderance there. I am satisfied that the sage might answer, without laying himself open to the charge of indifference or undue resignation, " In what comes to pass will be happiness." Many things

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happen that seem unjust to us; but of all the achievements of reason there has been none so helpful as the discovery of the loftier reason that underlies the misdeeds of nature. It is from the slow and gradual vindication of the unknown force that we deemed at first to be pitiless, that our moral and physical life has derived its chief prop and support. If a race disappears that conforms with our every ideal, it will be only because our ideal still falls short of the grand ideal, which is, as we have said, the intimate truth of the universe.

Our own experience has taught us that even in this world of reality there exist dreams and desires, thoughts and feelings of beauty, of justice, and love, that are of the noblest and loftiest. And if there be any that shrink from the test of reality — in other words, from the mysterious, nameless power of life — it follows that

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these must be different, but not that their beauty is less, or their vastness, or power to console. Till reality confront us, it is well, it may be, to cherish ideals that we hold to surpass it in beauty; but once face to face with reality, then must the ideal flame that has fed on our noblest desires be content to throw faithful light on the less fragile, less tender beauty of the mighty mass that crushes these desires. Nor does this seem to me to imply a mere drowsy fatalism, or servile acquiescence, or optimism shrinking from action. The sage no doubt must many a time forfeit some measure of the blind, the headstrong, fanatical zeal that has enabled some men, whose reason was fettered and bound, to achieve results that are nigh superhuman; but therefore none the less is it certain that no man of upright soul should go forth in search

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of illusion or blindness, of zeal or vigour, in a region inferior to that of his noblest hours. To do our true duty in life, it must ever be done with the aid of all that is highest in our soul, highest in the truth that is ours. And even though it be permissible at times in actual, every-day life to compromise with events, and not follow impulse to the ruthless end — as did St. Just, for instance, who in his admirable and ardent desire for universal peace, happiness, justice, in all good faith sent thousands to the scaffold — in the life of thought it is our unvarying duty to pursue our thought right to the end.

Again, the knowledge that our actions still await the seal of final truth can deter from action those only who would have remained no less inert had no such knowledge been theirs. Thought that rises encourages where it disheartens. And to those of a loftier vision, prepared in advance to

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admire the truth that will nullify all they have done, it seems only natural still to endeavour with all might and main to enhance what yet may be termed the justice, the beauty, the reason of this our earth. They know that to penetrate deeper, to understand, to respect — all this is enhancement. Above all, they have faith in "the idea of the universe." They are satisfied that every effort that tends to improvement approaches the secret intention of life; they are taught by the failure of their noblest endeavours, by the resistance of this mighty world, to discover anew fresh reasons for wonder, for ardour, for hope.

As you climb up a mountain towards nightfall, the trees and the houses, the steeple, the fields and the orchards, the road, and even the river, will gradually dwindle and fade, and at last disappear in the gloom that steals over the valley.

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But the threads of light that shine from the houses of men and pierce through the blackest of nights, these shine on undimmed. And every step that you take to the summit reveals but more lights, and more, in the hamlets asleep at your foot. For light, though so fragile, is perhaps the one thing of all that yields naught of itself as it faces immensity. Thus it is with our moral light too, when we look upon life from some slight elevation. It is well that reflection should teach us to disburden our soul of base passions; but it should not discourage, or weaken, our humblest desire for justice, for truth, and for love.

Whence comes this rule that I thus propound? Nay, I know not myself. To me it seems helpful and requisite; nor could I give reasons other than spring from the feelings alone. Such reasons, however, at times should by no means

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be treated too lightly. If I should ever attain a summit whence this law seemed useless to me, I would listen to the secret instinct bidding me not linger, but climb on still higher, till its usefulness should once again be clearly apparent to me.

§ 5.

This general introduction over, let us speak more particularly of the influence that wisdom can have upon destiny. And, the occasion presenting itself here, I shall do well perhaps to state now, at the very beginning, that in this book it will be vain to seek for any rigorous method. For indeed it is but composed of oft-interrupted thoughts, that entwine themselves with more or less system around two or three subjects. Its object is not to convince; there is nothing it professes to prove. Besides, in life books have by no

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means the importance that writers and readers claim for them. We should regard them as did a friend of mine, a man of great wisdom, who listened one day to the recital of the last moments of the Emperor Antoninus Pius. Antoninus Pius — who was perhaps truly the best and most perfect man this world has known, better even than Marcus Aurelius; for in addition to the virtues, the kindness, the deep feeling and wisdom of his adopted son, he had something of greater virility and energy, of simpler happiness, something more real, spontaneous, closer to everyday life — Antoninus Pius lay on his bed, awaiting the summons of death, his eyes dim with unbidden tears, his limbs moist with the pale sweat of agony. At that moment there entered the captain of the guard, come to demand the watchword, such being the custom. *Æquanimitas — evenness of mind*, he replied, as he

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turned his head to the eternal shadow. It is well that we should love and admire that word, said my friend. But better still, he added, to have it in us to sacrifice, unknown to others, unknown even to ourselves, the time fortune accords us wherein to admire it, in favour of the first little useful, living deed that the same fortune incessantly offers to every willing heart.

§ 6.

"It was doubtless the will of their destiny that men and events should oppress them whithersoever they went," said an author of the heroes of his book. Thus it is with the majority of men; indeed, with all those who have not yet learned to distinguish between exterior and moral destiny. They are like a little bewildered stream that I chanced to espy

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one evening as I stood on the hillside. I beheld it far down in the valley, staggering, struggling, climbing, falling: blindly groping its way to the great lake that slumbered, the other side of the forest, in the peace of the dawn. Here it was a block of basalt that forced the streamlet to wind round and about four times; there, the roots of a hoary tree; further on still, the mere recollection of an obstacle now gone for ever thrust it back to its source, bubbling in impotent fury, divided for all time from its goal and its gladness. But, in another direction, at right angles almost to the distraught, unhappy, useless stream, a force superior to the force of instinct had traced a long, greenish canal, calm, peaceful, deliberate; that flowed steadily across the country, across the crumbling stones, across the obedient forest, on its clear and unerring, unhurrying way from its

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distant source on the horizon to the same tranquil, shining lake. And I had at my feet before me the image of the two great destinies offered to man.

§ 7.

Side by side with those whom men and events oppress, there are others who have within them some kind of inner force, which has its will not only with men, but even with the events that surround them. Of this force they are fully aware, and indeed it is nothing more than a knowledge of self that has far overstepped the ordinary limits of consciousness.

Our consciousness is our home, our refuge from the caprice of fate, our centre of happiness and strength. But these things have been said so often that we need do no more than refer to them, and indicate them as our starting-point.

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Ennoblement comes to man in the degree that his consciousness quickens, and the nobler the man has become, the profounder must consciousness be. Admirable exchange takes place here; and even as love is insatiable in its craving for love, so is consciousness insatiable in its craving for growth, for moral uplifting; and moral uplifting for ever is yearning for consciousness.

§ 8.

But this knowledge of self is only too often regarded as implying no more than a knowledge of our defects and our qualities, whereas it does indeed extend infinitely further, to mysteries vastly more helpful. To know oneself in repose suffices not, nor does it suffice to know oneself in the past or the present. Those within whom lies the force that I speak of know themselves in the future too.

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Consciousness of self with the greatest of men implies consciousness up to a point of their star or their destiny. They are aware of some part of their future, because they have already become part of this future. They have faith in themselves, for they know in advance how events will be received in their soul. The event in itself is pure water that flows from the pitcher of fate, and seldom has it either savour or perfume or colour. But even as the soul may be wherein it seeks shelter, so will the event become joyous or sad, become tender or hateful, become deadly or quick with life. To those round about us there happen incessant and countless adventures, whereof every one, it would seem, contains a germ of heroism ; but the adventure passes away, and heroic deed is there none. But when Jesus Christ met the Samaritan, met a few children, an adulterous woman, then did

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humanity rise three times in succession to the level of God.

§ 9.

It might almost be said that there happens to men only that they desire. It is true that on certain external events our influence is of the feeblest, but we have all-powerful action on that which these events shall become in ourselves — in other words, on their spiritual part, on what is radiant, undying within them. There are thousands of men within whom this spiritual part, that is craving for birth in every misfortune, or love, or chance meeting, has known not one moment of life — these men pass away like a straw on the stream. And others there are within whom this immortal part absorbs all; these are like islands that have sprung up in the ocean; for

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they have found immovable anchorage, whence they issue commands that their destiny needs must obey. The life of most men will be saddened or lightened by the thing that may chance to befall them — in the men whom I speak of, whatever may happen is lit up by their inward life. When you love, it is not your love that forms part of your destiny; but the knowledge of self that you will have found, deep down in your love — this it is that will help to fashion your life. If you have been deceived, it is not the deception that matters, but the forgiveness whereto it gave birth in your soul, and the loftiness, wisdom, completeness of this forgiveness — by these shall your life be steered to destiny's haven of brightness and peace; by these shall your eyes see more clearly than if all men had ever been faithful. But if, by this act of deceit, there have come not more

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simpleness, loftier faith, wider range to your love, then have you been deceived in vain, and may truly say nothing has happened.

§ 10.

Let us always remember that nothing befalls us that is not of the nature of ourselves. There comes no adventure but wears to our soul the shape of our every-day thoughts; and deeds of heroism are but offered to those who, for many long years, have been heroes in obscurity and silence. And whether you climb up the mountain or go down the hill to the valley, whether you journey to the end of the world or merely walk round your house, none but yourself shall you meet on the highway of fate. If Judas go forth to-night, it is towards Judas his steps will tend, nor will chance for betrayal be

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lacking; but let Socrates open his door, he shall find Socrates asleep on the threshold before him, and there will be occasion for wisdom. Our adventures hover around us like bees round the hive when preparing to swarm. They wait till the mother-idea has at last come forth from our soul, and no sooner has she appeared than they all come rushing towards her. Be false, and falsehoods will haste to you; love, and adventures will flock to you, throbbing with love. They seem to be all on the watch for the signal we hoist from within: and if the soul grow wiser towards evening, the sorrow will grow wiser too that the soul had fashioned for itself in the morning.

§ 11.

No great inner event befalls those who summon it not; and yet is there germ of great inner event in the smallest

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occurrence of life. But events such as these are apportioned by justice, and to each man is given of the spoil in accord with his merits. We become that which we discover in the sorrows and joys that befall us; and the least expected caprices of fate soon mould themselves on our thoughts. It is in our past that destiny finds all her weapons, her vestments, her jewels. Were the only son of Thersites and Socrates to die the same day, Socrates' grief would in no way resemble the grief of Thersites. Misfortune or happiness, it seems, must be chastened ere it knock at the door of the sage; but only by stooping low can it enter the commonplace soul.

§ 12.

As we become wiser we escape some of our instinctive destinies. There is in us all sufficient desire for wisdom to

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transform into consciousness most of the hazards of life. And all that has thus been transformed can belong no more to the hostile powers. A sorrow your soul has changed into sweetness, to indulgence or patient smiles, is a sorrow that shall never return without spiritual ornament; and a fault or defect you have looked in the face can harm you no more, or even be harmful to others.

Instinct and destiny are for ever conferring together; they support one another, and rove, hand in hand, round the man who is not on his guard. And whoever is able to curb the blind force of instinct within him, is able to curb the force of external destiny also. He seems to create some kind of sanctuary, whose inviolability will be in the degree of his wisdom; and the consciousness he has acquired becomes the centre of a circle of light, within which the passer-by is secure from the caprice

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of fate. Had Jesus Christ or Socrates dwelt in Agamemnon's palace among the Atrides, then had there been no Oresteia; nor would Œdipus ever have dreamed of destroying his sight if they had been tranquilly seated on the threshold of Jocasta's abode. Fatality shrinks back abashed from the soul that has more than once conquered her; there are certain disasters she dare not send forth when this soul is near; and the sage, as he passes by, intervenes in numberless tragedies.

§ 13.

The mere presence of the sage suffices to paralyse destiny; and of this we find proof in the fact that there exists scarce a drama wherein a true sage appears; when such is the case, the event needs must halt before reaching bloodshed and tears. Not only is there no drama wherein sage is in

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conflict with sage, but indeed there are very few whose action revolves round a sage. And truly, can we imagine that an event shall turn into tragedy between men who have earnestly striven to gain knowledge of self? But the heroes of famous tragedies do not question their souls profoundly; and it follows therefrom that the beauty the tragic poet presents is only a captive thing, is fettered with chains; for were his heroes to soar to the height the real hero would gain, their weapons would fall to the ground, and the drama itself become peace — the peace of enlightenment. It is only in the Passion of Christ, the Phædo, Prometheus, the murder of Orpheus, the sacrifice of Antigone — it is only in these that we find the drama of the sage, the solitary drama of wisdom. But elsewhere it is rarely indeed that tragic poets will allow a sage to appear on the scene, though it be for an instant. They are

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afraid of a lofty soul; for they know that events are no less afraid, and that a murder committed in the presence of the sage seems quite other than the murder committed in the presence of those whose soul still knows not itself. Had Œdipus possessed the inner refuge that Marcus Aurelius, for instance, had been able to erect in himself — a refuge whereto he could fly at all times — had he only acquired some few of the certitudes open to every thinker — what could destiny then have done? What would she have entrapped in her snares? Would they have contained aught besides the pure light that streams from the lofty soul, as it grows more beautiful still in misfortune?

But where is the sage in Œdipus? Is it Tiresias? He reads the future, but knows not that goodness and forgiveness are lords of the future. He knows the truth of the gods, but not the truth of

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mankind. He ignores the wisdom that takes misfortune to her arms and would fain give it of her strength. Truly they who know still know nothing if the strength of love be not theirs; for the true sage is not he who sees, but he who, seeing the furthest, has the deepest love for mankind. He who sees without loving is only straining his eyes in the darkness.

§ 14.

We are told that the famous tragedies show us the struggle of man against Fate. I believe, on the contrary, that scarcely a drama exists wherein fatality truly does reign. Search as I may, I cannot find one which exhibits the hero in conflict with destiny pure and simple. For indeed it is never destiny that he attacks; it is with wisdom he is always at war. Real fatality exists only in certain external disasters—as

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disease, accident, the sudden death of those we love; but *inner fatality* there is none. Wisdom has will power sufficient to rectify all that does not deal death to the body; it will even at times invade the narrow domain of external fatality. It is true that we must have amassed considerable and patient treasure within us for this will power to find the resources it needs.

§ 15.

The statue of destiny casts a huge shadow over the valley, which it seems to enshroud in gloom; but this shadow has clearest outline for such as look down from the mountain. We are born, it may be, with the shadow upon us; but to many men is it granted to emerge from beneath it; and even though infirmity or weakness keep us, till death, confined in these sombre regions, still we can fly thence at times on

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the wings of our hopes and our thoughts. There may well be some few over whom Fate exerts a more tyrannous power, by virtue of instinct, heredity and other laws more relentless still, more profound and obscure; but even when we writhe beneath unmerited, crushing misfortune; even when fortune compels us to do the thing we should never have done, had our hands been free; even then, when the deed has been done, the misfortune has happened, it still rests with ourselves to deny her the least influence on that which shall come to pass in our soul. She may strike at the heart that is eager for good, but still is she helpless to keep back the light that shall stream to this heart from the error acknowledged, the pain undergone. It is not in her power to prevent the soul from transforming each single affliction into thoughts, into feelings and treasure she dare not profane. Be her empire never so

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great over all things external, she always must halt when she finds on the threshold a silent guardian of the inner life. And if it be granted her then to pass through to the hidden dwelling, it is but as a bountiful guest she will enter, bringing with her new pledges of peace: refreshing the slumberous air, and making still clearer the light, the tranquillity deeper — illuming all the horizon.

§ 16.

Let us ask once again: what had destiny done if she had, by some blunder, lured Epicurus, or Marcus Aurelius, or Antoninus Pius into the snares that she laid around Œdipus? I will even assume that she might have compelled Antoninus, for instance, to murder his father, and, all unwittingly, to profane the couch of his mother. Would that noble

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sovereign's soul have been hopelessly crushed? Would the end of it all not have been as the end of all dramas must be wherein the sage is attacked — great sorrow surely, but also great radiance that springs from this sorrow, and already is partly triumphant over the shadow of grief? Needs must Antoninus have wept as all men must weep; but tears can quench not one ray in the soul that shines with no borrowed light. To the sage the road is long that leads from grief to despair; it is a road untravelled by wisdom. When the soul has attained such loftiness as the life of Antoninus shows us that his had acquired, then is each falling tear illumined by beautiful thought and by generous feeling. He would have taken calamity to him, to all that was purest, most vast, in his soul; and misfortune, like water, espouses the form of the vase that contains it. Antoninus, we say, would have

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brought resignation to bear; but this is a word that too often conceals the true working of a noble heart. There is no soul so petty but what it too may believe that it is resigned. Alas! it is not resignation that comforts us, raises and chastens; but indeed the thoughts and the feelings in whose name we embrace resignation; and it is here that wisdom doles out the rewards they have earned to her faithful.

Some ideas there are that lie beyond the reach of any catastrophe. He will be far less exposed to disaster who cherishes ideas within him that soar high above the indifference, selfishness, vanities of everyday life. And therefore, come happiness or sorrow, the happiest man will be he within whom the greatest idea shall burn the most ardently. Had fate so desired it, Antoninus also, perhaps, had been guilty of incest and parricide; but his inward

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life would not have been crushed thereby, as was that of Œdipus; nay, these very catastrophes would have given him mightier strength, and destiny would have fled in despair, strewing the ground by the emperor's palace with her nets and her blunted weapons; for even as triumph of dictators and consuls could be celebrated only in Rome, so can the true triumph of Fate take place nowhere save in our soul.

§ 17.

Where do we find the fatality in "Hamlet," "King Lear," in "Macbeth"? Is its throne not erected in the very centre of the old king's madness, on the lowest degree of the young prince's imagination, at the very summit of the Thane's morbid cravings? Macbeth we may well pass by; not need we linger over Cordelia's father,

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for his absence of consciousness is all too manifest; but Hamlet, Hamlet the thinker — is he wise? Is the elevation sufficient wherefrom he looks down on the crimes of Elsinore? He seems to regard them from the loftiest heights of his intellect; but in the light-clad mountain range of wisdom there are other peaks that tower far above the heights of the intellect — the peaks of goodness and confidence, of indulgence and love. If he could have surveyed the misdeeds of Elsinore from the eminence whence Marcus Aurelius or Fénelon, for instance, had surely surveyed them, what would have resulted then? And, first of all, does it not often happen that a crime which is suddenly conscious of the gaze of a mightier soul will pause, and halt, and at last crawl back to its lair; even as bees cease from labour when a gleam of sunshine steals into the hive?

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The real destiny, the inner destiny, would in any event have followed its course in the souls of Claudius and Gertrude; for these sinful ones had delivered themselves into its hands, as must needs be the case with those whose ways are evil; but would it have dared to spread its influence abroad if one of those sages had been in the palace? Would it have dared to overstep the shining, denouncing barrier that his presence would have imposed, and maintained, in front of the palace gates? When the sage's destiny blends with that of men of inferior wisdom, the sage raises them to his level, but himself will rarely descend. Neither on earth nor in the domain of fatality do rivers flow back to their source. But to return: let us imagine a sovereign, all-powerful soul — that of Jesus, in Hamlet's place at Elsinore; would the tragedy then have flown on till

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it reached the four deaths at the end? Is that conceivable? A crime may be never so skilfully planned — when the eyes of deep wisdom rest on it, it becomes like a trivial show that we offer to very small children at nightfall: some magic-lantern performance, whose tawdry imposture a last gleam of sunshine lays bare. Can you conceive Jesus Christ — nay, any wise man you have happened to meet — in the midst of the unnatural gloom that overhung Elsinore? Is not every action of Hamlet induced by a fanatical impulse, which tells him that duty consists in revenge alone? and does it need superhuman effort to recognise that revenge never can be a duty? I say again that Hamlet thinks much, but that he is by no means wise. He cannot conceive where to look for the weak spot in destiny's armour. Lofty thoughts suffice not always to overcome destiny; for against these destiny can oppose thoughts

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that are loftier still; but what destiny has ever withstood thoughts that are simple and good, thoughts that are tender and loyal? We can triumph over destiny only by doing the very reverse of the evil she fain would have us commit. For no tragedy can be inevitable. At Elsinore there is not a soul but refuses to see, and hence the catastrophe; but a soul that is quick with life will compel those around it to open their eyes. Where was it written that Laertes, Ophelia, Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, should die — where, save in Hamlet's pitiful blindness? But was this blindness inevitable? Why speak of destiny when a simple thought had sufficed to arrest all the forces of murder? The empire of destiny is surely sufficiently vast. I acknowledge her might when a wall crashes down on my head, when the storm drives a ship on the rocks, when disease attacks those whom I love; but into

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man's soul she never will come, uncalled. Hamlet is unhappy because he moves in unnatural darkness; and his ignorance puts the seal upon his unhappiness. We have but to issue commands and fate will obey — there is nothing in the world that will offer such long and patient submission. Horatio, up to the last, could have issued commands; but his master's shadow lay on him, and he lacked the courage to shake himself free. Had there been but one soul courageous enough to cry out the truth, then had the history of Elsinore not been shrouded in tears of hatred and horror. But misfortune, that bends beneath the fingers of wisdom like the cane that we cut from the tree, becomes iron, and murderously rigid, in the hand of unconsciousness. Once again, all depended here, not on destiny, but on the wisdom of the wisest, and this Hamlet was; therefore did he, by his presence, become the

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centre of the drama of Elsinore; and on himself only did the wisdom of Hamlet depend.

§ 18.

And if you look distrustfully on imaginary tragedies, you have only to investigate some of the greatest dramas of authentic history to find that in these too the destinies of men are no different: that their ways are the same, and their petulance, their revolt and submission. You will discover that there too it is a force of man's own creating that plays the most active part in what it pleases us to term "fatality." This fatality, it is true, is enormous, but rarely irresistible. It does not leap forth at a given moment from an inexorable, inaccessible, unfathomable abyss. It is built up of the energy, the desires and suffering, the thoughts and passions of our brothers; and these

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passions should be well known to us, for they differ not from our own. In our most inexplicable moments, in our most mysterious, unexpected misfortunes, we rarely find ourselves struggling with an invisible enemy, or one that is entirely foreign to us. Why strive of our own free will to enlarge the domain of the inevitable? They who are truly strong are aware that among the forces that oppose their schemes there are some that they know not; but against such as they do know they fight on as bravely as though no others existed; and these men will be often victorious. We shall have added most strangely to our safety and happiness and peace the day that our sloth and our ignorance shall have ceased to term fatal, what should truly be looked on as human and natural by our intelligence and our energy.

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§ 19.

Let us consider one noteworthy victim of destiny, Louis XVI. Never, it would seem, did relentless fatality clamour so loudly for the destruction of an unfortunate man; of one who was gentle, and good, and virtuous, and honourable. And yet, as we look more closely into the pages of history, do we not find that fatality distils her poison from the victim's own wavering feebleness, his own trivial duplicity, blindness, unreason, and vanity? And if it be true that some kind of predestination governs every circumstance of life, it appears to be no less true that such predestination exists in our character only; and to modify character must surely be easy to the man of unfettered will, for is it not constantly changing in the lives of the vast bulk of men? Is your own

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character, at thirty, the same as it was when you were ten years younger? It will be better or worse in the measure that you have believed that disloyalty, wickedness, hatred and falsehood have triumphed in life, or goodness, and truth, and love. And you will have thought that you witnessed the triumph of hatred or love, of truth or of falsehood, in exact accord with the lofty or baser idea as to the happiness and aim of your life that will slowly have arisen within you. For it is our most secret desire that governs and dominates all. If your eyes look for nothing but evil, you will always see evil triumphant; but if you have learned to let your glance rest on sincerity, simpleness, truth, you will ever discover, deep down in all things, the silent overpowering victory of that which you love.

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§ 20.

It is scarcely from this point of view, however, that Louis XVI. should be judged. Let us rather imagine ourselves in his place, in the midst of his doubt and bewilderment, his darkness and difficulties. Now that we know all that happened it is easy enough to declare what should have been done; but are we ourselves, at this moment, aware of what is our duty? Are we not contending with troubles and doubts of our own? and were it not well that they who one day shall pass judgment upon us should seek out the track that our footsteps have left on the sands of the hillock we climbed, hoping thence to discover the future? Louis XVI. was bewildered: do we know what ought to be done? Do we know what we best had abandon, what we best had defend? Are we wiser than he as we waver betwixt the

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rights of human reason and those that circumstance claims? And when hesitation is conscientious, does it not often possess all the elements of duty? There is one most important lesson to be learned from the example of this unfortunate king: and it is that when doubt confronts us which in itself is noble and great, it is our duty to march bravely onwards, turning neither to right nor to left of us, going infinitely further than seems to be reasonable, practical, just. The idea that we hold to-day of duty, and justice, and truth, may seem clear to us now, and advanced and unfettered; but how different will it appear a few years, a few centuries later! Had Louis XVI. done what we should have done — we who now are aware of what had been the right thing to do — had he frankly renounced all the follies of royal prerogative, and loyally adopted the new truth and loftier justice that had

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sprung into being, then should we to-day be admiring his genius. And the king himself, perhaps — for he was not a foolish man, or wicked — may have for one instant beheld his own situation with the clear eye of an impartial philosopher. That at least is by no means impossible, historically or psychologically. Even in our most solemn hours of doubt it is rare that we know not where we should look for the fixed point of duty, its unalterable summit; but we feel that there stretches a distance too wide to be travelled between the actual thing to be done and this mountain-peak, that glitters afar in its solitude. And yet it is proved by man's whole history — by the life of each one of us — that it is on the loftiest summit that right has always its dwelling; and that to this summit we too at the end must climb, after much precious time has been lost on many an

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intermediate eminence. And what is a sage, a great man, a hero, if not one who has dared to go, alone and ahead of the others, to the deserted table-land that lay more or less within sight of all men?

§ 21.

We do not imply that Louis XVI. should necessarily have been a man of this stamp, a man of genius; although to have genius seems almost the duty of him who sways in his hands the destiny of vast numbers of men. Nor do we claim that the best men among us to-day would have been able to escape his errors, or the misfortunes to which they gave rise. And yet there is one thing certain: that of all these misfortunes none had superhuman origin; not one was supernaturally, or too mysteriously, inevitable. They came not from another world; they were

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launched by no monstrous god, capricious and incomprehensible. They were born of an idea of justice that men failed to grasp; an idea of justice that suddenly had wakened in life, but never had lain asleep in the reason of man. And is there a thing in this world can be more reassuring, or nearer to us, more profoundly human, than an idea of justice? Louis XVI. may well have regretted that this idea, that shattered his peace, should have awakened during his reign; but this was the only reproach he could level at fate; and when we murmur at fate ourselves our complaints have much the same value. For the rest, it is legitimate enough to suppose that there needed but one single act of energy, absolute loyalty, disinterested, clear-sighted wisdom, to change the whole course of events. If the flight to Varennes — in itself an act of duplicity and culpable weakness — had

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only been arranged a little less childishly, foolishly (as any man would have arranged it who was accustomed to the habits of life), there can be not a doubt that Louis XVI. would never have died on the scaffold. Was it a god, or his blind reliance on Marie Antoinette, that led him to entrust de Fersen — a stupid, conceited, and tactless creature — with the preparations and control of this disastrous journey? Was it a force instinct with great mystery, or only his own unconsciousness, heedlessness, thoughtlessness, and a kind of strange apathetic submission — such as the weak and the idle will often display at moments of danger, when they seem almost to challenge their star — that induced him again and again, at each change of horses, to put his head out of the carriage window, and thus be recognised three or four times? And at the moment that decided all, in that throbbing and sinister

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night of Varennes — a night indeed when fatality should have been an immovable mountain governing all the horizon — do we not see this fatality stumbling at every step, like a child that is learning to walk and wonders is it this white pebble or that tuft of grass that will cause it to fall to right or to left of the path? And then, at the tragic halt of the carriage, in that black night: at the terrible cry sent forth by young Drouet, "In the name of the Nation!" there had needed but one order from the king, one lash of the whip, one pull at the collar — and you and I would probably not have been born, for the history of the world had been different. And again, in presence of the mayor, who stood there, respectful, disconcerted, hesitating, ready to fling every gate open had but one imperious word been spoken; and at the shop of M. Sauce, the worthy village grocer; and, last of all, when

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Goguelat and de Choiseul had arrived with their hussars, bringing rescue, salvation — did not all depend, a hundred times over, on a mere yes or no, a step, a gesture, a look? Take any ten men with whom you are intimate, let them have been King of France, you can foretell the issue of their ten nights. Ah, it was that night truly that heaped shame on fatality, that laid bare her weakness! For that night revealed to all men the dependence, the wretched and shivering poverty of the great mysterious force that, in moments of undue resignation, seems to weigh so heavily on life! Never before has she been beheld so completely despoiled of her vestments, of her imposing, deceptive robes, as she incessantly came and went that night, from death to life, from life to death; throwing herself at last, like a woman distraught, into the arms of an unhappy king, whom she besought till

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dawn for a decision, an existence, that she herself never can find save only in the depths of the will and the intellect of man.

§ 22.

And yet this is not the entire truth. It is helpful to regard events in this fashion, thus seeking to minimise the importance of fatality, looking upon it as some vague and wandering creature that we have to shelter and guide. We gain the more courage thereby, the more confidence, initiative; and these are qualities essential to the doing of anything useful; and they shall stand us in good stead, too, when our own hour of danger draws nigh. But for all that, we do not pretend that there truly is no other force—that all things can be governed by our will and our intellect. These must be trained to act like the soldiers of a

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conquering army; they must learn to thrive at the cost of all that opposes them; they must find sustenance even in the unknown that towers above them. Those who desire to emerge from the ordinary habits of life, from the straitened happiness of mere pleasure-seeking men, must march with deliberate conviction along the path that is known to them, yet never forget the unexplored regions through which this path winds. We must act as though we were masters — as though all things were bound to obey us; and yet let us carefully tend in our soul a thought whose duty it shall be to offer noble submission to the mighty forces we may encounter. It is well that the hand should believe that all is expected, foreseen; but well, too, that we should have in us a secret idea, inviolable, incorruptible, that will always remember that whatever is great most often must

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be unforeseen. It is the unforeseen, the unknown, that fulfil what we never should dare to attempt; but they will not come to our aid if they find not, deep down in our heart, an altar inscribed to their worship. Men of the mightiest will — men like Napoleon — were careful, in their most extraordinary deeds, to leave open a good share to fate. Those within whom there lives not a generous hope will keep fate closely confined, as they would a sickly child; but others invite her into the limitless plains man has not yet the strength to explore, and their eyes follow her every movement.

§ 23.

These feverish hours of history resemble a storm that we see on the ocean; we come from far inland: we rush to the beach, in keen expectation; we eye the

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enormous waves with curious eagerness, with almost childish intensity. And there comes one along that is three times as high and as fierce as the rest. It rushes towards us like some monster with diaphanous muscles. It uncoils itself in mad haste from the distant horizon, as though it were bearer of some urgent, complete revelation. It ploughs in its wake a track so deep that we feel that the sea must at last be yielding up one of her secrets; but all things happen the same as on a breathless and cloudless day, when languid wavelets roll to and fro in the limpid, fathomless water; from the ocean arises no living thing, not a blade of grass, not a stone.

If aught could discourage the sage — though he is not truly wise whose astonishment is not enlightened, and his interest quickened, by the unforeseen thing that discourages — it would be the discovery, in this French Revolution, of

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more than one destiny that is infinitely sadder, more overwhelming, more inexplicable, than that of Louis XVI. I refer to the Girondins: above all, to the admirable Vergniaud. To-day even, though we know all that the future kept hidden from him, and are able to divine what it was that was sought by the instinctive desire of that exceptional century — to-day even it were surely not possible to act more nobly, more wisely, than he. Let fortune hurl any man into the burning centre of a movement that had swept every barrier down, it were surely not possible to reveal a finer character or loftier spirit. Could we fashion, deep down in our heart, out of all that is purest within us, out of all our wisdom and all our love, some beautiful, spotless creature with never a thought of self, without weakness or error — such a being would desire a place by the side of

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Vergniaud, on those deserted Convention seats, "whereon the shadow of death seemed already to hover," that he might think as Vergniaud thought, and so speak, and act. He saw the infallible, eternal, that lay the other side of that tragical moment; he knew how to be humane and benevolent still, through all those terrible days when humanity and benevolence seemed the bitterest enemies of the ideal of justice, whereto he had sacrificed all; and in his great and noble doubt he marched bravely onwards, turning neither to right nor to left of him, going infinitely further than seemed to be reasonable, practical, just. The violent death that was not unexpected came towards him, with half his road yet untravelled; to teach us that often in this strange conflict between man and his destiny, the question is not how to save the life of our body, but that of our most beautiful feelings, of our loftiest thoughts.

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"Of what avail are my loftiest thoughts if I have ceased to exist?" there are some will ask; to whom others, it may be, will answer, "What becomes of myself if all that I love in my heart and my spirit must die, that my life may be saved?" And are not almost all the morals, and heroism, and virtue of man summed up in that single choice?

§ 24.

But what may this wisdom be that we rate thus highly? Let us not seek to define it too closely; that were but to enchain it. If a man were desirous to study the nature of light, and began by extinguishing all the lights that were near, would not a few cinders, a smouldering wick, be all he would ever discover? And so has it been with those who essayed definition. "The word wise," said Joubert, "when used to a child, is a word that each child understands, and that we need never

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explain." Let us accept it even as the child accepts it, that it may grow with our growth. Let us say of wisdom what Sister Hadewijck, the mysterious enemy of Ruijsbroeck the Admirable, said of love: "Its profoundest abyss is its most beautiful form." Wisdom requires no form; her beauty must vary, as varies the beauty of flame. She is no motionless goddess, for ever couched on her throne. She is Minerva who follows us, soars to the skies with us, falls to the earth with us, mingles her tears with our tears, and rejoices when we rejoice. Truly wise you are not unless your wisdom be constantly changing from your childhood on to your death. The more the word means to you, the more beauty and depth it conveys, the wiser must you become; and each step that one takes towards wisdom reveals to the soul ever-widening space, that wisdom never shall traverse.

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§ 25.

He who knows himself is wise; yet have we no sooner acquired real consciousness of our being than we learn that true wisdom is a thing that lies far deeper than consciousness. The chief gain of increased consciousness is that it unveils an ever-loftier unconsciousness, on whose heights do the sources lie of the purest wisdom. The heritage of unconsciousness is for all men the same; but it is situate partly within and partly without the confines of normal consciousness. The bulk of mankind will rarely pass over the border; but true lovers of wisdom press on till they open new routes that cross over the frontier. If I love, and my love has procured me the fullest consciousness man may attain, then will an unconsciousness light up this love that shall be quite other than the one whereby commonplace

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love is obscured. For this second unconsciousness hedges the animal round, whereas the first draws close unto God; but needs must it lose all trace of the second ere it become aware of itself. In unconsciousness we ever must dwell; but are able to purify, day after day, the unconsciousness that wraps us around.

§ 26.

We shall not become wise through worshipping reason alone; and wisdom means more than perpetual triumph of reason over inferior instincts. Such triumphs can help us but little if our reason be not taught thereby to offer profoundest submission to another and different instinct — that of the soul. These triumphs are precious, because they reveal the presence of diviner instinct, that grows ever diviner still. And

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their aim is not in themselves; they serve but to clear the way for the destiny of the soul, which is a destiny, always, of purification and light.

§ 27.

Reason flings open the door to wisdom; but the most living wisdom befinds itself not in reason. Reason bars the gate to malevolent destiny; but wisdom, away on the horizon, throws open another gate to propitious destiny. Reason defends and withdraws; forbids, rejects, and destroys. Wisdom advances, attacks, and adds; increases, creates, and commands. Reason produces not wisdom, which is rather a craving of soul. It dwells up above, far higher than reason; and thus is it of the nature of veritable wisdom to do countless things whereof reason disapproves, or shall but approve hereafter. So was it

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that wisdom one day said to reason, It were well to love one's enemies and return good for evil. Reason, that day, tiptoe on the loftiest peak in its kingdom, at last was fain to agree. But wisdom is not yet content, and seeks ever further, alone.

§ 28.

If wisdom obeyed reason only, and sought nothing more than to overcome instinct, then would wisdom be ever the same. There would be but one wisdom for all, and its whole range would be known to man, for reason has more than once explored its entire domain.

Certain fixed points there well may be that are common to all classes of wisdom; but there exists none the less the widest possible difference between the atmospheres that enwrapped the wisdom of Jesus Christ and of Socrates, of Aristides and Marcus Aurelius, of Fénelon and Jean Paul. Let

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the same event befall these men on the self-same day: if it fall into the running waters of their wisdom, it will undergo complete transformation, becoming different in every one; if it fall into the stagnant water of their reason, it will remain as it was, unchanged. If Jesus Christ and Socrates both were to meet the adulterous woman, the words that their reason would prompt them to speak would vary but little; but belonging to different worlds would be the working of the wisdom within them, far beyond words and far beyond thoughts. For differences such as these are of the very essence of wisdom. There is but one starting-point for the wise — the threshold of reason. But they separate one from the other as soon as the triumphs of reason are well understood; in other words, as soon as they enter freely the domain of the higher **unconsciousness.**

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§ 29.

To say "this is reasonable" is by no means the same as to say "this is wise." The thing that is reasonable is not of necessity wise, and a thing may be very wise and yet be condemned by over-exacting reason. It is from reason that justice springs, but goodness is born of wisdom; and goodness, we are told by Plutarch, "extends much further than justice." Is it to reason or wisdom that heroism should be ascribed? Wisdom, perhaps, is only the sense of the infinite applied to our moral life. Reason, it is true, has the sense of the infinite also, but dare not do more than accord it bare recognition. It would seem opposed to the very instinct of reason to regard the sense of the infinite as being of importance in life; but wisdom is wise in the measure

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that the infinite governs all she procures to be done.

In reason no love can be found — there is much love in wisdom; and all that is highest in wisdom entwines around all that is purest in love. Love is the form most divine of the infinite, and also, because most divine, the form most profoundly human. Why should we not say that wisdom is the triumph of reason divine over reason of man?

§ 30.

We cannot cultivate reason too fully; but by wisdom only should reason be guided. The man is not wise whose reason has not yet been taught to obey the first signal of love. What would Christ, all the heroes, have done had their reason not learned to submit? Is each deed of the hero not always outside

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the boundary of reason? and yet, who would venture to say that the hero is not wiser by far than the sluggard who quits not his chair because reason forbids him to rise? Let us say it once more — the vase wherein we should tend the true wisdom is love, and not reason. Reason is found, it is true, at the root-springs of wisdom, yet is wisdom not reason's flower. For we speak not of logical wisdom here, but of wisdom quite other, the favourite sister of love.

Reason and love battle fiercely at first in the soul that begins to expand; but wisdom is born of the peace that at last comes to pass between reason and love; and the peace becomes the profounder as reason yields up still more of her rights to love.

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§ 31.

Wisdom is the lamp of love, and love is the oil of the lamp. Love, sinking deeper, grows wiser; and wisdom that springs up aloft comes ever the nearer to love. If you love, you must needs become wise; be wise, and you surely shall love. Nor can any one love with the veritable love but his love must make him the better; and to grow better is but to grow wiser. There is not a man in the world but something improves in his soul from the moment he loves — and that though his love be but vulgar; and those in whom love never dies must needs continue to love as their soul grows nobler and nobler. Love is the food of wisdom; wisdom the food of love; a circle of light within which those who love clasp the hands of those who are wise. Wisdom and love are one; and in Swedenborg's Paradise the wife is "the love of the wisdom of the wise."

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§ 32.

"Our reason," said Fénelon, "is derived from the clearness of our ideas." But our wisdom, we might add — in other words, all that is best in our soul and our character, is to be found above all in those ideas that are not yet clear. Were we to allow our clear ideas only to govern our life, we should quickly become undeserving of either much love or esteem. For, truly, what could be less clear than the reasons that bid us be generous, upright, and just; that teach us to cherish in all things the noblest of feelings and thoughts? But it happily so comes to pass that the more clear ideas we possess, the more do we learn to respect those that as yet are still vague. We must strive without ceasing to clarify as many ideas as we can, that we may thus arouse in our soul more and

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more that now are obscure. The clear ideas may at times seem to govern our external life, but the others perforce must march on at the head of our intimate life, and the life that we see invariably ends by obeying the invisible life. On the quality, number, and power of our clear ideas do the quality, number, and power depend of those that are vague; and hidden away in the midst of these vague ones, patiently biding their hour, there may well lurk most of the definite truths that we seek with such ardour. Let us not keep them waiting too long; and indeed, a beautiful crystal idea we awaken within us shall not fail, in its turn, to arouse a beautiful vague idea; which last, growing old, and having itself become clear (for is not perfect clearness most often the sign of decrepitude in the idea?), shall also go forth, and disturb from its slumber another obscure idea, but loftier, lovelier far than it had been itself

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in its sleep; and thus, it may be, treading gently, one after the other, and never disheartened, in the midst of those silent ranks — some day, by mere chance, a small hand, scarce visible yet, shall touch a great truth.

§ 33.

Clear ideas and obscure ideas; heart, intellect, will, and reason, and soul — truly these words that we use do but mean more or less the same thing: the spiritual riches of man. The soul may well be no more than the most beautiful desire of our brain, and God Himself be only the most beautiful desire of our soul. So great is the darkness here that we can but seek to divide it; and the lines that we trace must be blacker still than the sections they traverse. Of all the ideals that are left to us, there is perhaps only one that we still can accept; and that one is to gain full

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self-knowledge; but to how great an extent does this knowledge truly depend on our reason — this knowledge that at first would appear to depend on our reason alone? Surely he who at last had succeeded in realising, to the fullest extent, the place that he filled in the universe — surely he should be better than others, be wiser and truer, more upright; in a word, be more moral? But can any man claim, in good faith, to have grasped this relation; and do not the roots of the most positive morals lie hidden beneath some kind of mystic unconsciousness? Our most beautiful thought does no more than pass through our intelligence; and none would imagine that the harvest must have been reaped in the road because it is seen passing by. When reason, however precise, sets forth to explore her domain, every step that she takes is over the border. And yet is it the intellect that lends the first touches of

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beauty to thought; the rest lies not wholly with us; but this rest will not stir into motion until intellect touches the spring. Reason, the well-beloved daughter of intellect, must go take her stand on the threshold of our spiritual life, having first flung open the gates of the prison beneath, where the living, instinctive forces of being lie captive, asleep. She must wait, with the lamp in her hand; and her presence alone shall suffice to ward off from the threshold all that does not yet conform with the nature of light. Beyond, in the regions unlit by her rays, obscure life continues. This troubles her not; indeed, she is glad. . . . She knows that, in the eyes of the God she desires all that has not yet crossed her arcade of light — be it dream, be it thought, even act — can add nothing to, can take nothing from, the ideal creature she is craving to mould. She watches the

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flame of her lamp; needs must it burn brightly, and remain at its post, and be seen from afar. She listens, untroubled, to the murmur of inferior instincts out there in the darkness. But the prisoners slowly awake; there are some who draw nigh to the threshold, and their radiance is greater than hers. There flows from them a light less material, softer and purer than that of the bold, hard flame which her hand protects. They are the inscrutable powers of goodness and love; and others follow behind, more mysterious still, and more infinite, seeking admission. What shall she do? If, at the time that she took her stand there on the threshold, she had still lacked the courage to learn that she could not exist alone, then will she be troubled, afraid; she will make fast the gates; and should these be ever re-

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cinders at the foot of the gloomy stairs. But if her strength be unshaken; if from all that she could not learn she has learned, at least, that in light there can never be danger, and that reason itself may be freely staked where greater brightness prevails — then shall ineffable changes take place on the threshold, from lamp unto lamp. Drops of an unknown oil will blend with the oil of the wisdom of man; and when the white strangers have passed, the flame of her lamp shall rise higher, transformed for all time; shall shed purer and mightier radiance amidst the columns of the loftier doorway.

§ 34.

So much for isolated wisdom; now let us return to the wisdom that moves to the grave in the midst of the mighty crowd of human destinies; for the

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destiny of the sage holds not aloof from that of the wicked and frivolous. All destinies are for ever commingling; and the adventure is rare in whose web the hempen thread blends not with the golden. There are misfortunes more gradual, less frightful of aspect, than those that befell Œdipus and the prince of Elsinore; misfortunes that quail not beneath the gaze of truth or justice or love. Those who speak of the profit of wisdom are never so wise as when they freely admit, without pride or heart-burning, that wisdom grants scarcely a boon to her faithful that the foolish or wicked would prize. And indeed, it may often take place that the sage, as he moves among men, shall pass almost unnoticed, shall affect them but slightly; be this that his stay is too brief, that he comes too late, that he misses true contact; or per-

chance that he has to contend with forces

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too overwhelming, amassed by myriad men from time immemorial. No miracles can he perform on material things; he can save only that which life's ordinary laws still allow to be saved; and himself, it may be, shall be suddenly seized in a great inexorable whirlwind. But, though he perish therein, still does he escape the fate that is common to most; for at least he will die without having been forced — for weeks, or it may be for years, before the catastrophe — to be the helpless, despairing witness of the ruin of his soul. And to save some one — if we admit that in life there are truly two lives — does not of necessity mean that we save him from death and disaster; but indeed that we render him happier, inasmuch as we try to improve him. Moral salvation is the greatest salvation; and yet, what a trifle this seems, as everything seems that is done on the loftiest summits of soul.

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Was the penitent thief not saved; and that not alone in the Christian sense of the word, but in its fullest, most perfect meaning? Still had he to die, and at that very hour; but he died eternally happy; because at the very last moment he too had been loved, and a Being of infinite wisdom had declared that his soul had not been without value; that his soul, too, had been good, and had not passed through the world unperceived of all men.

§ 35

As we go deeper down into life we discover the secret of more and more sorrow and helplessness. We see that many souls round us lead idle and foolish lives, because they believe they are useless, unnoticed by all, unloved, and convinced they have nothing within them that is worthy of love. But to the sage the hour

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must come when every soul that exists claims his glance, his approval, his love — if only because it possesses the mysterious gift of existence. The hour must come when he sees that falsehood and weakness and vice are but on the surface; when his eye shall pierce through, and discover the strength, and the truth, and the virtue that lie underneath. Happy and blessed hour, when wickedness stands forth revealed as goodness bereft of its guide; and treachery is seen to be loyalty, for ever astray from the highway of happiness; and hatred becomes only love, in poignant despair, that is digging its grave. Then, unsuspected of any, shall it be with all those who are near the good man as it was with the penitent thief; into the humblest soul that will thus have been saved by a look, or a word, or a silence, shall the true happiness fall — the happiness fate cannot touch; that brings to all men the oblivion

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it gave unto Socrates, and causes each one to forget, until nightfall, that the death-giving cup had been drained ere the sun went down.

§ 36.

The inner life, perhaps, is not what we deem it to be. There are as many kinds of inner lives as there are of external lives. Into these tranquil regions the smallest may enter as readily as he who is greatest, for the gate that leads thither is not always the gate of the intellect. It often may happen that the man of vast knowledge shall knock at this gate in vain, reply being made from within by the man who knows nothing. The inner life that is surest, most lasting, possessed of the uttermost beauty, must needs be the one that consciousness slowly erects in itself, with the aid of all that is purest in the soul. And he is wise who has learned that this life should be

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nourished on every event of the day: he to whom deceit or betrayal serves but to enhance his wisdom: he in whom evil itself becomes fuel for the flame of love. He is wise who at last sees in suffering only the light that it sheds on his soul; and whose eyes never rest on the shadow it casts upon those who have sent it towards him. And wiser still is the man to whom sorrow and joy not only bring increase of consciousness, but also the knowledge that something exists superior to consciousness even. To have reached this point is to reach the summit of inward life, whence at last we look down on the flames whose light has helped our ascent. But not many can climb so high; and happiness may be achieved in the less ardent valley below, where the flames spring darkly to life. And there are existences still more obscure which yet have their places of refuge. There are some that instinctively fashion

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inward lives for themselves. There are some that, bereft of initiative or of intelligence, never discover the path that leads into themselves, and are never aware of all that their refuge contains; and yet will their actions be wholly the same as the actions of those whose intellect weighs every treasure. There are some who desire only good, though they know not wherefore they desire it, and have no suspicion that goodness is the one fixed star of loftiest consciousness. The inner life begins when the soul becomes good, and not when the intellect ripens. It is somewhat strange that this inner life can never be formed out of evil. No inner life is for him whose soul is bereft of all nobleness. He may have full knowledge of self; he may know, it may be, wherefore he shuns goodness; and yet shall he seek in vain for the refuge, the strength, the treasure of invisible gladness, that form

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the possessions of him who can fearlessly enter his heart. For the inward life is built up of a certain rejoicing of soul; and the soul can never be happy if it possess not, and love not, something that is pure. It may perhaps err in its choice, but then even will it be happier than the soul to which it has never been given to choose.

§ 37.

And thus are we truly saving a man if we bring it about that he loves evil somewhat less than he loved it before; for we are helping that man to construct, deep down in his soul, the refuge where-against destiny shall brandish her weapons in vain. This refuge is the monument of consciousness, or, it may be, of love; for love is nothing but consciousness, still vaguely in search of itself; and veritable

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consciousness nothing but love that at last has emerged from the shadow. And it is in the deepest recess of this refuge that the soul shall kindle the wondrous fire of her joy. And this joy of the soul is like unto no other joy; and even as material fire will chase away deadly disease from the earth, so will the joy of the soul scatter sorrow that malevolent destiny brings. It arises not from exterior happiness; it arises not from satisfied self-love; for the joy that self-love procures becomes less as the soul becomes nobler, but the joy of pure love increases as nobility comes to the soul. Nor is this joy born of pride; for to be able to smile at its beauty is not enough to bring joy to the soul. The soul that has sought in itself has the right to know of its beauty; but to brood on this beauty too much, to become over-conscious thereof, were perhaps to detract somewhat from the unconsciousness of its

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love. The joy that I speak of takes not from love what it adds unto consciousness; for in this joy, and in this joy alone, do consciousness and love become one, feeding each on the other, each gaining from that which it gives. The striving intellect may well know happiness beyond the reach of the satisfied body; but the soul that grows nobler has joys that are often denied to the striving intellect. These two will often unite and labour together at building the house within. But still it will happen at times that both work apart, and widely different then are the structures each will erect. And were this to be so, and the being I loved best of all in the world came and asked me which he should choose — which refuge I held to be most unattackable, sweetest, profoundest — I would surely advise him to shelter his destiny in the refuge of the soul that grows nobler.

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§ 38.

Is the sage never to suffer? Shall no storm ever break on the roof of his dwelling, no traps be laid to ensnare him? Shall wife and friends never fail him? Must his father not die, and his mother, his brothers, his sons — must all these not die like the rest? Shall angels stand guard at each highway through which sorrow can pass into man? Did not Christ Himself weep as He stood before Lazarus' tomb? Had not Marcus Aurelius to suffer — from Commodus, the son who already showed signs of the monster he was to become; from Faustina, the wife whom he loved, but who cared not for him? Was not destiny's hand laid heavy on Paulus Æmilius, who was fully as wise as Timoleon? did not both his sons die, one five days before his

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triumph in Rome, and the other but three days after? What becomes of the refuge, then, where wisdom keeps watch over happiness? Must we take back all we have said? and is wisdom yet one more illusion, by whose aid the soul would fain conciliate reason, and justify cravings that experience is sure to reject as being opposed to reason?

§ 39.

Nay, in truth, the sage too must suffer. He suffers; and suffering forms a constituent part of his wisdom. He will suffer, perhaps, more than most men, for that his nature is far more complete. And being nearer to all mankind, as the wise ever must be, his suffering will be but the greater, for the sorrows of others are his. He will suffer in his flesh, in his heart, in his spirit; for there are sides in all these

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that no wisdom on earth can dispute against destiny. And so he accepts his suffering, but is not discouraged thereby; not for him are the chains that it fastens on those who cringe down before it, unaware that it is but a messenger sent by a mightier personage, whom a bend in the road hides from view. Needs must the sage, like his neighbour, be startled from sleep by the shouts of the truculent envoy, by the blows at the door that cause the whole house to tremble. He, too, must go down and parley. But yet, as he listens, his eyes are not fixed on this bringer of evil tidings; his glance will at times be lifted over the messenger's shoulder, will scan the dust on the horizon in search of the mighty idea that perhaps may be near at hand. And indeed, when our thoughts rest on fate, at such times as happiness enfolds us, we feel that no great misfortune can be suddenly burst upon us. The proportions

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will change, it is true, when the blow falls; but it is equally true that before the misfortune can wholly destroy the abiding courage within us, it first must triumph in our heart over all we adore, over all we admire, and love. And what alien power can expel from our soul a feeling and thought that we hurl not ourselves from its throne? Physical suffering apart, not a single sorrow exists that can touch us except through our thoughts; and whence do our thoughts derive the weapons wherewith they attack or defend us? We suffer but little from suffering itself; but from the manner wherein we accept it overwhelming sorrow may spring. "His unhappiness was caused by himself," said a thinker of one whose eyes never looked over the brutal messenger's shoulder — "his unhappiness was caused by himself; for all misery is inward, and caused by ourselves. We are wrong in believing that it comes

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from without. For indeed we create it within us, out of our very substance."

§ 40.

It is only in the manner of our facing the event that its active force consists. Assemble ten men who, like Paulus Æmilius, have lost both their sons at the moment when life seemed sweetest, then will the misfortune appear to vary in every one. Misfortune enters within us, but must of necessity yield obedience to all our commands. Even as the order may be that it finds inscribed on the threshold, so will it sow, or destroy, or reap. If my neighbour, a commonplace man, were to lose his two sons at the moment when fate had granted his dearest desires, then would darkness steal over all, unrelieved by a glimmer of light; and misfortune itself, contemptuous of its too

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facile success, would leave naught behind but a handful of colourless cinders. Nor is it necessary for me to see my neighbour again to be aware that his sorrow will have brought to him pettiness only; for sorrow does merely restore to us that which our soul had lent in happier days.

§ 41.

But this was the misfortune that befell Paulus Æmilius. Rome, still aglow with his triumph, waited, dismayed, wondering what was to happen. Were the gods defying the sage, and how would the sage reply? Would the hero be crushed by his sorrow, or would sorrow acknowledge this day's Mankind, at moments like these, seems aware that destiny is yet once again making trial of the strength of her arm, and that change of some kind must befall if her blow crush not where it

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alights. And see with what eagerness men at such moments will question the eyes of their chiefs for the password against the invisible.

But Paulus Æmilius has gathered together an assembly of the people of Rome; he advances gravely towards them, and thus does he speak: "I, who never yet feared anything that was human, have, amongst such as were divine, always had a dread of fortune as faithless and inconstant; and, for the very reason that in this war she had been as a favourable gale in all my affairs, I still expected some change and reflux of things. In one day I passed the Ionian Sea, and reached Corcyra from Brundisium; thence in five more I sacrificed at Delphi, and in other five came to my forces in Macedonia, where, after I had finished the usual sacrifices for the purifying of the army, I entered on my duties, and in the space of fifteen days

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put an honourable period to the war. Still retaining a jealousy of fortune, even from the smooth current of my affairs, and seeing myself secure and free from the danger of any enemy, I chiefly dreaded the change of the goddess at sea, whilst conveying home my victorious army, vast spoils, and a captive king. Nay, indeed, after I was returned to you safe, and saw the city full of joy, congratulating, and sacrifices, yet still I distrusted, well knowing that fortune never conferred any great benefits that were unmixed and unattended with probabilities of reverse. Nor could my mind, that was still as it were in labour, and always foreseeing something to befall this city, free itself from this fear, until this great misfortune befell me in my own family, and till, in the midst of those days set apart for triumph, I carried two of the best of sons, my only destined successors, one after another to their funerals. Now,

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therefore, I am myself safe from danger, at least as to what was my greatest care; and I trust and am verily persuaded that, for the time to come, fortune will prove constant and harmless unto you; since she has sufficiently wreaked her jealousy at our great successes on me and mine, and has made the conqueror as marked an example of human instability as the captive whom he led in triumph, with this only difference, that Perseus, though conquered, does yet enjoy his children, while the conqueror Æmilius is deprived of his."

§ 42.

This was the Roman fashion of accepting the greatest sorrow that can befall a man at the moment when sorrow is felt the most keenly — at the moment of his greatest happiness. And there are many ways of accepting misfortune — as

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many, indeed, as there are generous feelings or thoughts to be found on the earth; and every one of those thoughts, every one of those feelings, has a magic wand that transforms, on the threshold, the features and vestments of sorrow. Job would have said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord"; and Marcus Aurelius perhaps, "If it be no longer allowed me to love those I loved high above all, it is doubtless that I may learn to love those whom I love not yet."

§ 43.

And let us not think that these are mere empty words wherewith they console themselves, words that in vain seek to hide the wound that bleeds but the more for the effort. But if it were so, if empty words could console, that surely

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were better than to be bereft of all consolation. And further, if we have to admit that all this is illusion, must we not, in mere justice, also admit that illusion is the solitary thing that the soul can possess; and in the name of what other illusion shall we venture to rate this illusion so lightly? Ah, when the night falls and the great sages I speak of go back to their lonely dwelling, and look on the chairs round the hearth where their children once were, but never shall be again — then, truly, can they not escape some part of the sorrow that comes, overwhelming, to those whose suffering no noble thought chastens. For it were wrong to attribute to beautiful feeling and thought a virtue they do not possess. There are external tears that they cannot restrain; there are holy hours when wisdom cannot yet console. But, for the last time let us say it, suffering we cannot

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