
Life

Delus parms

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To My Brother Theodore Deles
with Love
from
Stephen. Mason. Reynolds
Life

*Tis a strange world we came to, you and I,
Whence no man knows, and surely none knows why,
Why we remain—a harder question still,
And still another—whither when we die?*

*Into this life of cruel wonder sent,
Without a word to tell us what it meant,
Sent back again without a reason why—
Birth, life, and death—'twas all astonishment.*

—Le Gallienne's Rubaiyat.

"Life is not yet definable in terms that the mind can comprehend, neither is the soul, nor is immortality, nor is God, nor is birth, which in words is the beginning of Life, nor is death, which in equally incomprehensible language is the end of life. Each individual comes to some understanding of what life is, through himself; knows another's joys through his own; knows another's sufferings through what he has himself suffered, but only knows what the soul is through nameless emotions that seem to have relation to his body and to the universe about him, and conceives of God always in his own ways and forms him from his wants and fears. From the

moment of the miraculous birth of the body of man to the moment of strange and mysterious death, man lives physically, mentally and spiritually; suffers and enjoys, and from his experiences gains powers of intellect and vision of soul, or submerges both and postpones the hour of his arrival upon the plane of knowing or complete Life. Physically at birth he is the most helpless of creatures, crying in startled tones as the strange cold atmosphere chills the tender, warm body, so suddenly severed from the flesh of his flesh and the blood of his blood; impressionable, capable, divinely selfish, eligible, he comes. The measurer—man, endowed with powers of perception, recollection, reason, invention, imagination, filled with inherited tendencies, receiving and carrying with him, to help or retard, the environment of his progenitors and theirs and all that preceded them, "he goes forth a child" to battle or submit, to serve or master, not knowing, to know; his body, hungry and naked, must be fed and clothed; his mind, blank and uncultured, must be strengthened and trained; his soul, yearning and passionate, ever reaching for stars and a life beyond, must grope in darkness, schooled by the body and the brain, or be flooded with the knowledge that passeth understanding suddenly, as was Paul and Balzac and Whitman and many others for reasons. Incomplete and only self-conscious, if he lives only upon the physical plane of hunger and thirst and passionate appetites of the body; incomplete and conscious only of his power, if he lives yet higher upon the physical and the intellectual plane combined; but supreme when, complete, he understands his physical needs, supplies and masters them; feels the power of his mental resources, thinks, invents, discovers and controls the

forces about him, and, in time, becomes conscious that above and beyond the logic of philosophy and intellect, Life is perpetual and ever expanding, beautiful if complete and in harmony with the creative will and dominant force of the universe, and that death is not to the soul of him, and that the body has only carried him, the only real and developed and imperishable one, to lofty table-lands of vision and happiness.

Whatever we may say of one man in his time of physical, mental and spiritual experience, may truly be said of all men in any period of time; true of the earliest and most helpless of human races of whatever color or kind; true of those who lived when there were no weapons with which to destroy the hungry beasts that, obeying the law of their natures, sought food to sustain their lives; true of those who lived before tools had been made, with which to make the earth yield foods and fruits, instead of weeds and thorns; true of those who were born when and where kings claimed to have been divinely anointed and appointed, to demand service on conditions of their own making; true of those who lived when feudal lords lived in castles upon the crags and high places and levied tribute from every passer-by and sounded summons to every servile ear to come to fealty or to death; true today in our own or any country, regardless of its form of government, where money and power is the ideal of society and where government itself exists, founded in and sustained by force upon an economic or business basis, for maintaining individual ambitions and possessions; true now when the hoot of the whistle hurries the wage-slave to toil that his master may accrue and enjoy the larger part of the things he produces and surrenders.

On the physical plane man is a simple animal, instinctively and as was divinely purposed, self-seeking, supplying the needs and desires of the body, loving as the lion or the tiger loves, hungering and thirsting, pursuing and pursued; breeding and propagating, in obedience to the laws of his natural being. On this plane he is natural, without sense of sin, unconscious of relationship, divinely selfish, splendidly destined, for he could not otherwise live and advance if he did not take to himself the things he required for his needs and life. His earliest and most natural inquiries were as to his origin, just as they forever are to children, and as he looked upon the earth and upon all its manifold life, he ascribed all life and his own to fire and the sun, and worshipped it, and as naturally peopled the darkness with the terrible creatures of his imagination, and recognizing subordinate forces for good or ill as they benefited or injured him, he deified the objects of the earth, the air, the ocean, and even the organs of the body, worshipping bugs and beetles and men and women, sacrificing and suffering and carrying gifts to the ones who stood always as mediators between him and his altars and his Gods to receive and profit from the willing gifts of his heart and hands; and now as he has passed from one worship to another, he has destroyed his early Gods and avoids mention of very many early symbols of his primitive worship, and in general does not know the origin of the symbols that had a one-time deep significance, but gazes worshipfully upon the church spire, the cross and the mitre-cap and sings in song the story of the Quest for the Holy Grail, without understanding how his spiritual worship goes back to the deepest and most wonderful experiences of his life and longings

upon the physical plane of existence. Ever going forward from materialism and selfishness to consciousness of an always widening relationship, and coming again to a profounder reverence for the physical bodies and needs of men and women.

And so we find man primitively segregated into family groups and only coming into tribal and national relationships as he slowly learned that by so associating with others he could best protect himself and supply his needs. His early battles were only waged for the supplying of the things he required to satisfy his hunger or his thirst or to shelter or to clothe his body, and as he saw no difference in animals, except in form and appetite, as the stranger was an enemy, he ate his human enemies slain in battle; having no possible use for prisoners, he ate his captives without malice but with an appreciative appetite. As soon as weapons and tools made it possible to supply his wants in a larger way, he naturally found that a live captive at work could do more for him than a dead one, so he instituted slavery, and all through the succeeding ages the institution of slavery found justification by the intellectual brothers, whether in press or pulpit. In a like manner the institution of the divine right of kings found a natural beginning and is still adhered to by very many of those who want the higher things of life and seem honest in believing that the masses were made to serve, and that in some way we are always to have the poor among us. So, too, the feudal system was in order, very natural and not wholly bad, and these and other systems of living only passed away as they became out grown and oppressive enough to rouse the mental activities of a sufficient number of excluded ones and they called aloud for Revolution

and an overthrow of the old was accomplished and a new form of exploitation instituted. The invention of the first weapon and tool revolutionized the physical lives of the early people in a marvelous manner, changed all their thought and philosophy and spiritual concepts. The invention of the steam engine and all the wonderful machinery that so rapidly followed in the nineteenth century, has changed the lives of millions, swept away barriers, destroyed superstitions, and lifted them higher in intellectual life, compelled co-operative industry, and is constantly bringing the workers into that wonderful condition known as class-consciousness, and in unnumbered ways clarified the visions of our prophets and poets, so that the longing for a complete life is now passionately surging as never before in the hearts of men and women throughout the world; but the very fact that man on the physical plane is a child, always lovable and lawless, having no consciousness of relationship, doing the things we call evil because of the good that is within him, rather than because of the total depravity which is *not* in him, and that on the intellectual plane, divinely selfish nature, becomes or tends to become greedy because the incentive is to forge ahead with success as an ideal, the "law of the survival of the fittest" as an excuse, being yet unconscious of relationship, he becomes, instead of a helpful brother of men, a conscienceless exploiter; for in his intellectual pantheon he inscribes the names of patriots who have won battles, heroes who have seen the flowing rivers of the blood of their childlike brothers who, equally ignorant, are easily led and misled. Honor and fame, not love and service, are what he strives for. Glory!—as if glory could come to any one at the cost

of the many. He writes for these things. He teaches these things. He fights for these things. He builds navies for these things and feeds armies to preserve these things. He studies and enters politics for these things. He preaches and pays the preacher for preaching these things. He formulates laws and governments for the protection of his self-asserted right to widen his markets, strengthen his powers and guard the property he mentally or governmentally takes from the natural and rightful owners; but greed destroys the greedy, for as he more and more appropriates to himself property, power and dominion, so must he enlarge his police and army, build more jails and insane asylums, give more charity, serve more Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, bestow upon his brothers and sisters more and more of his cast-off clothing, and so awaken the spirit of the people; for as the physical man, deprived of access to the sources of life, shut out from his natural right to work and be free and independent, is driven to greater and greater suffering, and the less successful ones, striving also for power through the intellect, failing, are driven back to natural intuitions, these begin to deny the divine right of kings and laugh at and overthrow them, or they refuse to contribute to feudal lords or answer their call to fealty, and defy and destroy them, or as now they are everywhere beginning to deny the right of private ownership of the things we need to make and use collectively, and the silent machine itself owned by the exploiters to enslave their brothers is yet to bring about the downfall of the profit system, just as the first machine was first to dishearten, then enslave, and finally is to emancipate the worker from degrading and excessive toil and enlarge his desire

for life in the intellectual and spiritual planes of experience.

The intellect dominating, without soul development, is but little higher than the animal or physical plane of life; indeed, men often become more cruel and insatiate and without the animal's natural and excusable motive, for long after every natural desire is supplied the intellectual and soulless man greedily pursues and takes what he can have no possible use for or enjoyment of in owning. The intellect of man without this soul development formulates laws to protect himself in keeping the unenlightened workers of the world in servitude, establishes codes of morals and of law to restrain those whose natural and just needs might make them troublesome to their unintelligent plans of plunder, centralizes the wealth of the many in the hands of the few, monopolizes the natural paths of way across the earth, stores up and in an extortionate way distributes to the masses the very things they produce in such wonderful abundance, and when he protests he teaches him that without the capitalist he, the worker, could not work; forms civic federations and talks of the identity of the interests of employers and employees, forgetting that divine spark of selfishness in our natures which answers the capitalist that his interest is to get as much of the skill and energy of his employee for as little of his money as possible and that the interest of the employee is to get as much of his employer's money for as little privation and toil as possible on his part. He controls the fuel that lights the home and starts the wheels of industry; barter in the foods the people eat; turns a locked faucet on or off to quench the people's thirst, and in a thousand ways legal enough, but ever mean, they drive men

and women to failure, to want, crime, suicide, physical and mental prostitution, even murder and starvation, and in general proudly and honestly though ignorantly applaud themselves as successful business men, teach their children the same ideals, and look upon the ones who fall in the heartless and unequal struggle as weak or inefficient; sanction the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, subscribe freely to charitable institutions, colleges, churches, and libraries, never becoming acquainted with many noble, brave men who languish in prison while great criminals sit in high places and pass for useful citizens. In doing these things men lose all that distinguishes man from the physical beasts of prey, for they destroy in themselves that sweet sense of love and fellowship which alone can make them happy in being, or regretted when their short earthly lives are ended. To these the masterpieces of art are merely objects of ownership. The song of the poet never touches them. The voices of the prophets only annoy, they do not warn them, and the words of eloquence pleading for love and brotherhood among men are only weak, sentimental "sounds that come to them," and only, if ever at all, momentarily disturb their plans for dominion of all that the earth contains or that her children produce by the aid of the complex and intricately wonderful machinery developed through ages of want by the tireless energy of the millions who toil willingly for food, shelter and raiment, patient, unawakened for the most part intellectually, their souls dormant within, but finding expression in real acts of helpfulness and fraternity whenever the sufferings of others are greater than their own. Gentle if even poorly fed and clothed and sheltered, submitting to

the fallacious doctrines of contentment formulated for them by their elder brothers, who thrive because of their goodness in submitting. Dangerous if driven to hunger or if made naked or shelterless, for man, justly, on the physical plane looks for weapons, and obeys the first law of self-preservation. Enslaved as he is by his bodily needs and appetites, he has risen tremendously in recent years, for the machine age has increased his wants wonderfully, has stimulated his mental activities and made him understand in an ever larger way his working-class interest, and as on the plane of intellectual exploitation thousands failing fall back into the ranks of wage earners, they bring with them an intelligent explanation of conditions and find a soil ready for the seeds of an uplifting economic discontent. The futility of brute force is demonstrated to the workers by their failure to win better conditions for themselves and families on the industrial field, through the irrational weapons of boycotts and strikes; enjoined by the courts they participate in creating through their ballots, they are every hour made more accessible to analysis of causes, of conditions that shut them out from the enjoyment of life. They compact themselves into closer unions as wealth centralizes, consider the abandonment of the old plan of trades autonomy, debate economic questions, study political weapons, develop their brains and reasoning faculties and rapidly approach the plane of intelligent control of industry and to a government of things instead of men, and to that time when men industrially free will need little if any restraint from laws, prisons, fines, insane asylums, and other evidences of a lack of genuine social sanity.

When man has gained access to the

sources of life he can supply his physical needs easily and superabundantly and without degrading drudgery, and have then leisure and opportunity to exercise and develop the powers and capacities of his intellect and so be prepared to investigate and know something of the great spiritual truths that are ever, sphinx-like, questioning and not answering, forever retreating as we approach them, but always receding into higher realms of understanding and happiness.

From this brief study of man as he lives on the physical plane, the intellectual plane and the spiritual plane, we find that his life is wholly incomplete if he is deprived of the essentials of life upon either plane; that his life is limited by the ideals he seeks. If it narrows to the earth, then the earth is what he struggles to possess. If it widens to enclose the universe of life, then his life rises to limitless heights out of plummetless depths, is perpetual and ever-expanding and radiates as a sun to illumine the pathway of humanity towards its superb destiny; and then, too, we find that the life of the individual is completely circumscribed by the lives of all, that the individual cannot escape, that he must take part, that he must in a measure suffer and enjoy as others suffer and enjoy, that he can only go from one plane to another, that if he does not live physically he dies physically; that if he does not live mentally he remains upon the animal plane; if he does not live spiritually he cannot become conscious of immortality, and so must grope in fear and doubt, since immortality is understandable by the body or the mind.

Therefore the growing soul of man enlarges as he lives, widens his vision and reveals to him the relationship of all the physical, mental and spiritual needs of his

brothers, impels him to reach his strong hands back through the planes of life and help bring forward those who loiter or do not understand. Condemnation no longer falls from his lips. He knows why justice can never come from a law of vengeance. He knows why his brothers falter and fall. He understands. He utters truth about life, knows that the physical appetites are good, each one; that the right of fatherhood and the right of motherhood are equally great and divine; does not call one woman a fallen woman and another a risen woman, but sees multitudes behind each of them; throws no stones, and knowingly forgives those who do; sees the one accused of crime rendering perhaps a greater service to the world than his accuser or his judge or the jury that condemns; knows that in the presence of the creative will he alone is guilty that injures another, and that it is not sinful to breathe the air, nor to drink the water, nor to use the bounties of the earth made for all, nor to protest by a physical taking that which was made in such superabundance for the needs of the children of the earth, which should and does belong to them, as was intended by the Creator. Education, Love, Truth, these are the words of those who know the scheme of the universe, and for these words they do not make excuses. They keep up the warning cry. They are poets and prophets. They have lived all lives, experienced all experiences. Literature is everywhere now being filled with the cry for better things for human needs. Art, music and the drama are voicing the spirit of our day more and more fearlessly, for the people are being prepared.

We go forward to revolution, which is not an overthrow of government but a restoration of rights. It may be peaceful

if we use our minds and act intelligently; beautiful if we study and understand and guide the forces that flow steadily from the three planes of life and compel a new adjustment in the order of progress; frightful if conditions proceed far enough to enrage an excluded multitude, robbed by public officials, crushed by extortionate exploiters, who, after the manner of the indifferent ones, cry, "After us the deluge." Horrible, if from political supremacy among the nations of the earth we descend and become greedy and heartless market-grabbers, miserable if we attempt much longer to fool the working man with questions of money or tariffs or taxes or suppression and control of Trusts. Already the worker knows what the Civic Federation means to do to him. He knows who August Belmont is and what he represents, and he is explaining, he is thinking, he is uttering truths, he is living more than ever before in the history of the races upon the intellectual plane. It promises well if he so proceeds and is not unjustly interfered with, and how the day shall proceed depends upon what pressure may be put upon man upon the physical plane of his necessities, before he has become sufficiently educated to bear patiently his part in handling the problem, depends upon what the men of great mental and financial power may do, when in the near future they have, as they must have, in their complete control, every source of life. For even now every one knows they may make and unmake Presidents as well as Senators, and that we have in fact an oligarchical plutocracy, depends even more perhaps upon what the great multitude of teachers, writers, journalists, and preachers, may say or do, or not say, or not do, for men left to supply their

physical wants, will supply them in a physical way, and, if intellectual weapons are not offered, they will choose physical ones.

Intellectually he will, if he knows, or is taught how to, choose an intelligent weapon, the ballot; governmental exercise of rightly used power. But are there men and women enough? physically, mentally and spiritually brave and free enough? to see and teach the truth about life in all its completeness to the hungry millions; or shuffling about in their shackles, will they, too, await the shock which great economic changes always bring?

The spirit of our day asks the question. Men and women everywhere know now that there is but one question, and that is Life. All the multitudinous problems society wrestles over today are but the accusing manifestations of a badly founded society; unjust and unreasonable; and these problems can never be solved; they are as they should be—unsolvable.

What shall we do? We cannot go thoughtlessly on. Evolution arrested produces death, corruption, disaster; aided, it leads to better life. Each one cannot answer for himself; he is himself a social being. He can only persuade others to answer for all. Until all are saved, no one is saved. The ones worthy of salvation do not seek it; they wisely seek it for others, to secure it for themselves. In losing life they find it.

*"No one could tell me where my soul might be;
I sought for God, but God eluded me,
I sought my Brother out, and found all three."*

—Ernest Howard Crosby. †