

PAUL
BRUNTON

Three Essays

and

a Poem

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ALONG THE MYSTIC ROAD

MY eyes have sought, since I could see,
the things that set the spirit free,
The wondrous magic of the key
To chainless life.

With sweeping glance they hunt and find,
all ecstasy of heart and mind,
All mystic roads that leave behind
The scene of strife.

And oh, the sense of broken bliss,
when I must flee from Dian's kiss
To wander in the black abyss
Where bubbles thrive.

When secret haunts where god-men stray,
whitened lands where fairies play,
Fling me, a stranger, far away
To wear my gyve.

Yet I must thank the Tireless One,
whose hidden heart in the blazing sun
Will rain his love till I have won
The final fight;
For the daily gleam of the far-off goal,
for constant flights of the loosened soul,
And welcome words from Truth's great scroll,
My best birthright!

Ah! let me never lose the line
that leads into the spangled shrine,
And is to me a battle-sign
That flashes hope.

For ages yet will race me by,
before my toil shall fructify
And prove no man can e'er belie
His horoscope.

My bleeding feet shall fail and fall,
 my wincing lip must quaff the gall,
 The days in hell again appal,
 But never a cry.
 For the wakened soul is done with fear,
 and sees behind each sorrow-spear
 A coming brightness shining clear
 Through blackened sky.

And if I meet along the road
 a brother burdened with his load,
 A stumbling soul that feels the goad,
 A heavy heart;
 Then let me give with eager hand,
 all strength he needs upright to stand,
 All love and light that I command,
 Till pain depart.

For every man must sink in slime,
 before he e'er begins to climb,
 Before he pass the bounds of Time
 Where all is one.
 So send me, Lord, on every side,
 that to the blind I come, a guide,
 And bring each soul, a willing bride,
 Unto the Sun!

THE OCCULT VALUE OF THE SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE

THE relations between occultism and modern science have been repeatedly examined for the past half-century. It is not intended to continue the time-worn mode of such discussion here. What is proposed is to present a different aspect of these relations, a somewhat newer treatment of them.

Hitherto, either there has been friction between the followers of these two groups, or some saner soul among the occultists has invited scientists to step across the borderland and sift esoteric doctrines for a shell, worthy of being picked for the pearl of truth.

But what if this invitation is reversed? What if some lover of Hermes strides into the scientists' camp and endeavours to gain something from them? Such an excursion is attempted here.

Every occultist who has been competently trained in any of the sciences along current Western lines knows how great is his indebtedness to such a training. When, after this discipline, he takes up a system of Yoga, such as, for instance, that outlined by Dr. Rudolf Steiner, he discovers how far along that path he has already travelled, albeit wholly unconsciously; how much of the necessary qualifications he has already unfolded.

Take, as a pre-eminently fitting example of this, the particular quality of impersonality.

Serious and profound students of modern science are well aware of the stress laid upon strict impersonality whenever an examination of the phenomena of nature is undertaken. The scientist is taught to train himself in the bringing to bear upon each phenomenon a mind free, for the time being at any rate, from every trace of prejudice and personal emotion. It is necessary only to quote from such a famous authority as Professor Karl Pearson, to indicate how weighty is this stress. He says:

The facts once classified, once understood, the judgment based upon them ought to be independent of the individual mind which examines them... the habit of forming a judgment upon these facts unbiased by personal feeling is characteristic of what may be termed the scientific frame of mind. *(Grammar of Science, p.6)*

In brief, the man of science has to record things as they are, not as he would wish them to be. He must not twist the facts to fit his theory.

Each time he achieves this ideal, he creates that qualification of the occultist described by Dr. Steiner as one which "is the unreserved, unprejudiced laying of oneself open to that which is revealed by human beings or the world external to man." For:

Anyone who wishes to tread the path of higher knowledge must train himself to be able each moment to obliterate himself with all his prejudices. *(Theosophy, p.187)*

This is the supreme secret of occult training. Divorce the personality, and inevitably consciousness shifts to a deeper, subtler centre. From that place of inner peace, it is possible to direct the development and functioning of man's finer vehicles with the utmost precision.

Bertrand Russell declares that "the kernel of the scientific outlook is the refusal to regard our own desires, tastes and interests as affording a key to the understanding of the world." Equally may we retort that it is the occultist's outlook also.

One of the first tests in certain occult schools, given to the pupil who has succeeded in evoking the early traces of clairvoyance, is that of subjecting him to the vision of astral forms so grotesque, so uncouth and fiendish in aspect, as to be of almost unimaginable horror. Yet the pupil is required to gaze steadily upon them and unflinchingly note their characteristics; he must strive to examine them fearlessly and attempt to grasp their true nature.

Should he be overcome by fear, losing his spiritual balance, and thus fail to pass the test, it would be for one reason alone. That reason is the failure to regard these forms from a standpoint other than his own personal outlook. Such, at least, would be his teacher's judgment.

Through these and other probations, the aspirant gradually becomes inured to an attitude towards hidden nature as strictly impartial as that of the physical scientist towards visible nature.

Hence it is easy to see how the measure of success of the latter in maintaining his rigorous outlook, will be the measure of success in qualifying himself to study the more recondite aspects of the universe. And assuredly, the cyclic currents of evolution will ultimately carry him into such investigations, though it may not be in this particular incarnation.

The great scientist makes the great occultist. Nevertheless it would be quite fallacious to assume that however useful scientific training becomes in occult life, it is thereby rendered necessary as a preliminary. There are other paths. One merely states here the peculiar advantages of this path.

So it is that, conquering personality in the laboratory, the scientist prepares the way for the conquest of personality in the wider domain of life. Dominating mind so that it gives a colourless register of sense-impressions, he is bringing to birth that subtler mastery of thought which is the quintessence of Yoga. And out of this conquest comes the lofty grandeur of spiritual calm-so marked in every yogi, so needed by a world in woe.

Take now, that scientific endeavour after exactitude which reflects itself in the occultist's striving after truth. What the scientist knows he must know *definitely*; what he communicates must be strictly accurate. Huxley was fond of telling students that the very air they breathed should be charged with that enthusiasm for the truth, that fanaticism of veracity which, he said, "is a greater possession than much learning."

It is highly instructive to note how definite, how precise are the statements of every great scientist. We realize that the words are used with a full consciousness of their meaning, with the precision of an expert mathematician. The uttered thought never outstrips its corresponding reality.

Such careful habits are fostered alike by the occult aspirant. Annie Besant says in this connection:

All exaggeration and painting up of a story, everything that is not perfectly consistent with fact, so far as he knows it, everything which has any shade of untruthfulness may not be used by him who would be a disciple.

(Path of Discipleship, p.69)

Moreover the aspirant is taught to apply this effort after truth to every department of his life—feelings and actions equally with thoughts and words. Only when he becomes a self-reliant occultist, equipped with psychic and spiritual powers, does he discover some deeper reasons for this emphasis on veracity.

It is then that he perceives how falsehood has an effect upon the delicately organized psychic bodies of the more civilized man, comparable only to the result of a physical blow upon the body of flesh and blood. Whether in the form of a deliberate lie or whether in the careless utterance of an inaccurate thinker, the indifference of man to the silent pleading of truth is for ever creating mischief and trouble in his inner vehicles.

It may be that the lower and more numerous types of egos do not wreak much harm upon themselves through these vices. It may also be that the finer, more evolved men will bring about certain states of their subtler bodies corresponding to illnesses in the physical. But to the occult disciple, perfect truth and exactness become indispensable qualities for the safeguarding of those ethereal vehicles now fast growing into active life and function. Untruth is here not merely a vice, but a positively dangerous force.

With such facts in his mind, the occultist greets appreciatively what, for example, was said of Lord Kelvin:

He hated ambiguities of language, and statements which mislead by looseness of phrasing. With painful effort he strove for clarity of expression. In that hazy medium of words wherein we all drown, he at least would attempt to observe the proprieties of language. *(Professor Sylvanus Thompson)*

For when, in the unfolded bud of the future, the ego known as Lord Kelvin is led into occultism, qualities such as the above and such as the celebrated scientist notoriously possessed, become guarantees of an extremely promising growth in the once-hidden gnosis.

Thus it has been shown that, though science may not concern itself with the occult specifically, yet the trained scientific student who enters the discipline of occultism soon discovers the high value therein of the attitude he brings along with him. He discovers it by the ease with which he succeeds in certain inner practices set him for exercise; he discovers it, too, in the presence of an occult force evoked within himself by this very control of personality.

The stirrings of this force brought him into the half-veiled region of occultism. Yet awhile, and it may lift him far beyond the highest pinnacle in that rocky and mountainous land.

THE TWO FACES OF MAN

THAT many are called but few are chosen is as tritely true in the sphere of the occult as in any other. Every year one hears of those who take up the study of the deeper strata of life, often with glowing enthusiasm. Yet the years slip by and they are no more heard of, save a rare and richly-endowed one here and there. Time has passed them through his sieve, and naught remains for mankind's gathering.

This is as it should be. For an iron law governs the efforts of man. He will get back just as much as he puts forth, and no more. Though his uttered yearnings resound through fathomless space, yet he cannot change the records of that balance, so utter-true, which men in the East call karma.

He who makes a sustained and complete practice of the discipline involved in the deeper life gains a permanent and complete result. He whose hand falters and lets the sands of his strength soon run out may not expect more than a partial result or, it may be, little at all.

Yet it was not called for that so many should fail. Sometimes the fault lies, not in the strength which is lacking, but in the indefinite fog which overhangs and surrounds the initial efforts of a number of aspirants. Because they did not clearly perceive the exact goal upon which they were converging, nor the nature of the route they were travelling, they wandered uncertainly and wasted their energy. It was the failure to make their direction sharply defined and precisely marked out that brought them nowhere.

There is only one cure for such a condition. It is the resolute facing of fact.

The mind of man must be clarified by exact knowledge; his feelings ought to be shaped into surety and certainty. Only so can a cosmos of fruitful effort arise out of the primeval chaos of his former condition.

Here a clear and certain fact emerges. The spirit of human nature is, perhaps, a unity, but not so the different aspects under which that spirit shows itself. And the smallest possible division of these aspects is that into two typical forms.

There is the strongly-marked type of the Occultist on the right-hand side of the shield; there is also the sweetly-gentle figure of the Mystic on the other side. The shield itself, completed, unified, is Perfected Man.

It is for the aspirant himself to decide which of the figures truly represents his ideal. If, after prolonged consideration, regularly repeated for a time, he is unable to place his position, he may do either of two things. Should he have had his horoscope accurately cast by a competent astrologer, he must discover and compare the positions of the planets Uranus and Neptune in his map. A prominent Neptune favourably aspected, fits him for the practice of mysticism. An equally prominent and strong Uranus places him among the occultists. Where both planets are excellently positioned and aspected, he is one of the fortunate few fit to turn to any of the paths. Such a man will either know exactly what to do or will swiftly find any guidance necessary.

The second method for the aspirant who cannot determine his line of growth is to apply to some recognized teacher or leader whose integrity and capacity are undoubted. If he is truly sincere, his answer will be freely given.

It is this clearing-up of confusion by the effort of the neophyte himself, or by the aid of others, that enables him to plant his first steps on the chosen path confidently and correctly. He knows precisely where he wishes to go and how to get there.

Whoso desires to unite with the central Heart of the

universe shall surely unite with it. Whoso seeks to understand and pierce the sevenfold coverings of that Heart shall also do so. The one is the mystic, whose *feelings* are first turned outward in all-embracing love, and then inward in high aspiration. The other is the occultist, whose *thoughts* turn outward in sensory experience and then inward in reasoning upon the sense-impressions received. Here, reference is made not only to the five commonly-accepted senses of normal human beings, but also to any others discoverable by experiment and investigation.

Notice that there is a double activity in each type. It is generally recognized, for instance, that the mystic is the inwardly-turned man; it is not so generally recognized, however, that there is a marked reaction into physical work as a Server, a man of practical love.

There are certain dangers peculiar to each of these paths. They are inevitable. The really earnest neophyte, whose heart is brimming over with love, whose mind is one-pointed towards the great goal, passes through them all unharmed, unhurt. The high gods love him, holding his hand at all the dark places, leading him as one would lead a little child. But the others (and they are many) bear bitter scars to tell of blurred vision and mistaken choice.

Yet the Way is so certain, the signposts so clearly written. There is only one sin. It is the sombre sin of self. There is only one virtue. It is the limitless love that brothers every soul on earth.

For the mystic the primal danger comes through lack of balance. Read the life of any great saint or devotee. Time after time such a one falls from the heights of spiritual ecstasy into pits that are gloomed with awful darkness. It cannot be helped. He who would climb high must be prepared to fall. The very nature of the mystic fits him for great efforts, but not to sustain them. He is working along the line of feeling, whose normal expression, occultly stated, is the astral; whose supernormal outlet is the buddhic. It is easy to stay in the astral. It is surpassingly

difficult to dwell in the buddhic. And so he swings backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, until at last he homes changelessly in that high world.

Then he is verily a saved one.

There is a very definite way whereby the devoted aspirant can control those profound moods of melancholy that descend on his soul. If, at the high moments of his interior life, he is intuitive enough and strong enough not to dwell in the sensations of bliss and joy, but rather to turn the forces which have given rise to them in a new direction, great shall be his reward. Refusing to revel in the ecstasy of the buddhic but directing its energy into service (love in action), he loses the dark nights while others gain his help.

These shadowed periods in his life may range from mere apathetic depression right up to the terrible sense of being quite alone in the universe. They are reactions. At such times strange sounds may be heard by the aspirant. The raucous cries of animal passion, the subtler voices of the personal self, are more claimant than ever. He suffers terribly. Time, however, is the great healer of all these things. The iron of the man's character turns to tempered steel in the red-hot furnace of trouble. Yet where the need is really urgent help comes in mysterious ways, sometimes with startling suddenness.

For the occultist the path is in every way more difficult, more dangerous, less rapid because it is less direct. The way is strewn with camouflaged pitfalls. Some of these I know; of others I know nothing and care less. There is only one I would record here. For it is the bottomless Abyss itself.

The occultist works along the line of intellect. Now the mind is the seat of individuality. Its tendency has been and will always be towards separateness. Men may prattle of unity and write of brotherhood, but it is one thing to know intellectually and quite another to gain the living experience. Inwardly the occultist seeks his habitat on the higher mental plane (using occult terms again), the first

plane wherein such experience is possible to man. But his normal home is the lower mental. During the process of growth he swings back continually to the cold, contracting, essentially selfish outlook of the lower mind.

Each return is for him an actual probation, whether he knows this or not.

For he comes back filled with impelling force gathered on the loftier plane. His mentality is extraordinarily stimulated. The black flower of personal ambition grows as it has never grown before. Temptations to his vivified self-consciousness meet him in ways that the unheeding ordinary man cannot understand. The indifference he is learning is in danger of being turned, not alone towards his own personal concerns, but towards all humanity.

Here, if anywhere, hides the possibility of entering the very real sphere of black magic, or occult selfishness. One act may easily lead to a worse, and so on, until the whole of the man's aura is icebound with selfishness. A little more and he snaps the last thread of contact with his diviner nature. Then arises a really lost soul, a phenomenon rare yet terribly dangerous.

Let the aspirant but stand firm in his place whilst the tests and ordeals fall upon him, and he shall emerge utterly fearless and perfectly safe. The very intellect which might have slid him down to hell becomes a bridge to heaven itself.

What is required of him to achieve this planting of unslipping feet is the constant scrutiny of motive. That is all. If, in an attitude of ruthless and uncompromising honesty, he makes such examinations of his inner health, it is within his power to stop the inworking of the poison of self ere it ruins his system.

Thus we arrive at the ancient truth, tongued by many a high Initiate, that without love man must perish. We may study the philosophies that represent the highest achievements of human intellect; we may compare all the religions that have left their marks on the race of man, and yet not discover a lamp more brilliantly lit than this, to guide our stumbling feet upon the path of life.

BEYOND THE CUP OF YOUTH

THESE strange and hidden dreams of mine move like a subterranean river through mysterious caverns deep down beneath the rocky surface of my life. I cannot see the secret source whence they take their being, nor follow them in their winding course to that inspired deed which shall be their ending. But some unseen hand dips the golden cup into the ever-flowing stream and gives me to drink of the sacred draught which frees the mind from all that would stand between it and the brighter beauty lost when the youth of the world was lost.

The things that came into our lives with the coming of Time are fit friends of that ancient harridan whose sorry face and slow-moving feet are curses set upon the race of man. All that brings us to the wringing of hands and takes from life the sweetness it should have, is the black gift flung in our face as payment of the servitude we have given her.

I know that this is so, because of something which happened a while ago, when the soft feet of night were creeping into the halls of day. A great light flamed across the horizon of my mind, as a rainbow curves its colours across the sky, and then slowly dipped out of sight. I do not know whether it can be spoken of, for there are some things which the tongue is not equal to telling, and this seems one of them. But I shall try.

I sat among the gold-tinted leaves which lie down to die in such profusion when the life of the year begins to fail. And a white wind came and wooed me with her sweet breath, calling the old glad call of remembrance through

the dim woods of ancestral years with such strange and subtle sweetness that my will was drawn out of the body and went along by her side. In no long time she taught me what hidden fires burn beneath the old phrase:

"The wind bloweth where it listeth. Thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. Of such are those who are born of the Spirit."

For the things of the world fell far away from me, and a great spell was put upon the leaping mind, till I remembered nothing of name or kin or country, or even self, and cared less.

A little while, and I knew that the air I breathed came from the land of immortal youth, whose beauty has lured men on like a dream of unfound gold. For the soul of man has always seemed to me like a grey galleon moving on the sea of thought and seeking this green world of imagination. Some of us who have gone a little way beyond the cup of youth, but have not gone so far as to taste the bitterness that rises into the lives of all who desert the simple instinct for beauty which walked beside them in the childhood years, know that in this world lie all the jewelled hopes of man, waiting, like so many unplucked flowers, for the soft hands which shall garner them for a sightless race.

Then the ichor leapt in my veins, and flung the sluggish blood aside, and a great yellow light shone down on my head.

And one, whose name none seems to know, but who is called *The Child* by the little group that has gathered around him, came and took me by the hand. He is rarely to be seen in his mortal body, for he has work of high moment to do—work which takes him now to one country, and again to another, and he has found the lithe instrument of the soul a readier tool to his will. Mayhap, for aught I know, he leaps from star to star with equal ease.

And *The Child* led me into an ancient temple that lay naked to the soft breath of heaven, for it had no roof. The

vast granite monoliths awed me with their air of aloofness, and chilled the blood, so that I clung to the hand of *The Child* and looked up into his face to reassure myself of the benediction of his presence.

I do not know how long a time passed before I became aware of the soft stirring of many beings who filled the great hall and shaped themselves into a circle of twofold rank. They were men, but bore the bright mien of arcadian gods, while their bodies were clothed in long, delicately-coloured robes, that fell almost to the ground.

And I understood that those in the inner rank were the teachers of those in the outer, and had won more of the secret guerdons of Wisdom. At the far end of the hall upon a raised dais, sat One who appeared to be the Master of this gathering, for the heads of all were turned towards him, and the faces were grave with reverent mood. Then my heart whispered that here was the mightiest embodied Power that I had yet encountered.

One by one the assembled hierophants came forward with their pupils, whose spheres were aglimmer with the blue and golden lights of dawning knowledge. When the time came, *The Child* brought me forward to the Master and said,

"I present him for initiation."

For an instant those sybilline eyes gazed into mine; but all the stained earth of my past, and the white lilies that had begun to spring upon it, were alike seen during that one tinkle of the bell of Time. There, in that seated Being, was a great impersonal force that read the scales of my life with better sight than I could ever hope for. I had slept in the scented bed of Aphrodite, and he knew; I had also lured the gnomes of thought to mine, for strange, enchanted gold, in the depths of my spirit; he knew that too.

Then peace fled out of my heart, like some blown flower, when the answer came.

"Take him away. He is not pure enough. Bring him back in seven years."

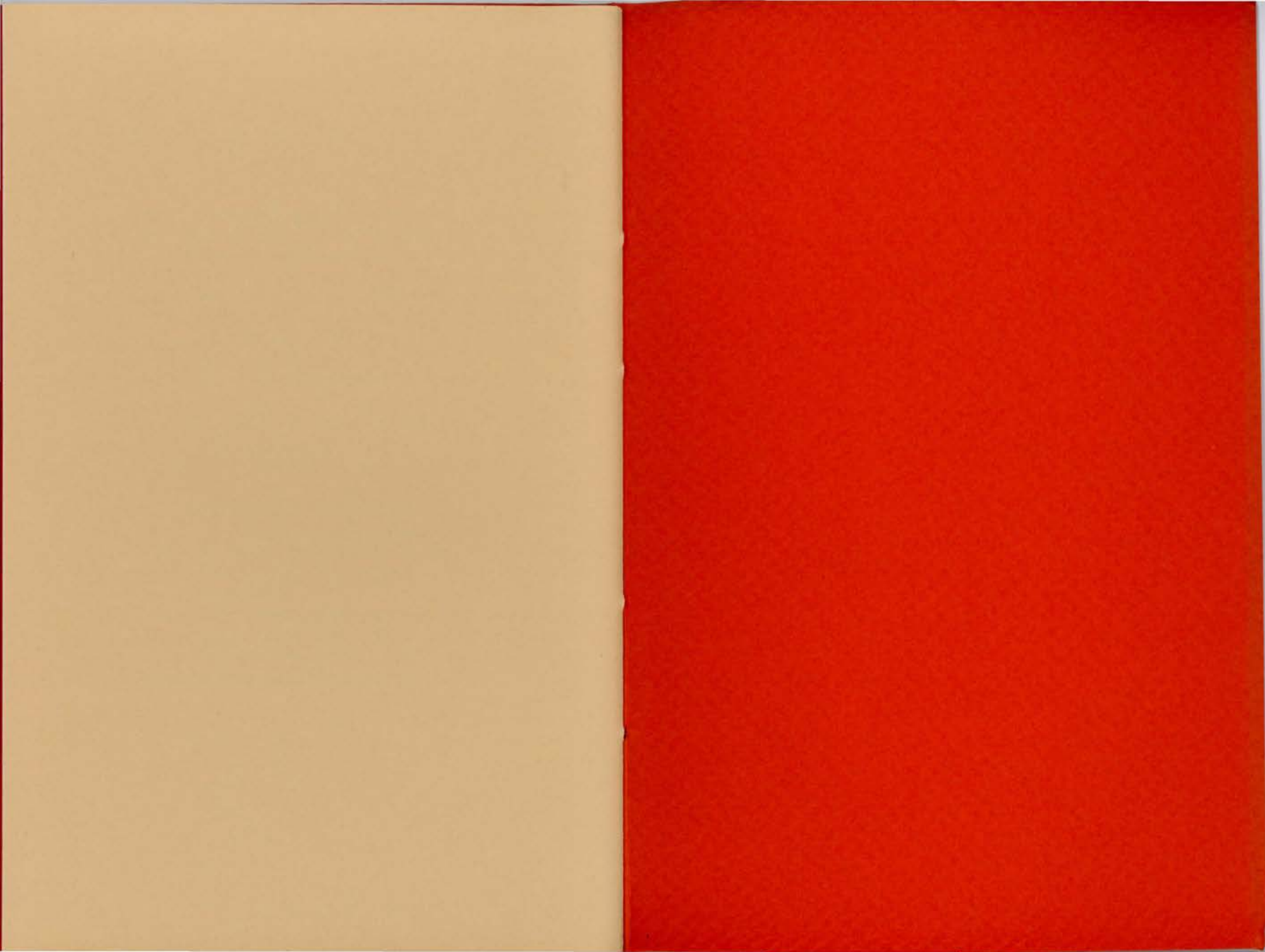
So the high accolade which I had claimed was not for me, and I was led out of the temple and put back to wander upon the long, bitter roads of Time.

A great darkness fell upon the mind soon after, and the hand that had guided me heretofore was seemingly withdrawn. Where once the soul lay on the shore of some strange golden sea, it now gazed into a fading well strewn with dead leaves. For six weary years I fought the green snakes of lust that come crooning to the feet of man. The bitter sin which had come into my life turned the gold of my days into the hue of stone.

Thus I waited at the door of Time, listening for the slow steps of that seventh year which shall raise my life beyond all reach of the talons of desire, or else fling me farther down the abyss of awful night.

Yet to-day some friendly prayer must have found its way to the gods; for my boat floats calmly upon the still waters of a curious peace, while in the distance, near the desert shore, are strange waving palms that bear the fruit of some Eastern land. Are they the bright augurs of the high moods which shall grow up once more amid the barren waste of my life?

Perchance, O palms, your outstretched leaves are calling me to some secret dell, where I may build anew dim temples for the holy guest, and tie once more the earthless bonds that yoke the soul of man to God.





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