

FOREWORD

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done in books for children—but with measures animal or arboreal. Let us once begin to learn what is the veritable, personal good or evil of unconscieus life, and we shall presently be able to formulate our discoveries in terms of art, thus enlarging the borders of human sympathy and understanding for the majority of earth's creatures.

On yet a wider wing we may seek for our heroes and heroines; we may incarnate the seasons and set them moving, mighty and magic-fingered, upon the face of the earth, to tell a story laden with unsleeping activities, mysterious negations and frustrations, battles and plots, tragedies and triumphs. Before such an immense spectacle man's exact significance in the warp and woof will be found to change; his thread becomes relegated to its fair place in the loom, and we discover mightier stories than his hugely outlined on the tapestries that hang between the stars. Given such survey of the forces that control matter, there would awaken a sense of proportion and perspective that, far from killing our enthusiasm for humanity, must increase it, and kindle a growing admiration at our kind. Comparative biology, while enlarging human compassion for all things called to the task of living, will also lift man to a juster estimate of self-conscious life in its greatness and littleness, and wake a wider loyalty to his own race, seen struggling against the immeasurable background of the universe and its multitudinous interests, from the welfare of blade and bud to the fate of suns and systems. Those who still hold with Protagoras that "man is the measure of all things," will differ from such a faith; but there is surely no offence in it.

These final passages, called "Widcombe Fair," attempt to view a village in a stroke; and at the elevation needed for such a survey, only the sound of laughter is heard: Melpomene's self stalks dwarfed out of recognition, as seen by the indifferent gods. To read man's tragedy one must be near enough to read his eyes. Thus my work ends on an ingenuous and human harmony played by the patience of age, the achievement of adult life, the hope and joy of youth. There is no room for a story in such an enterprise: one can only indicate the numberless stories that spring therefrom like fountains, and wind away beyond the confines of the creator's chronicle.

It happens that chance has required me to write more