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The Way of Words

"WORDS ARE THE ONLY THINGS THAT LIVE FOREVER." So spoke Winston Churchill thirty-seven years ago at a writers' dinner in London. Looking back, as I am doing now, trying to untangle the threads of life, and weave them into a pattern, I see how true this is.

People utter words without knowing their full power. When the barons at Runnymede put the pen in King John's grubby hand and forced him to sign the Magna Charta, they thought they were speaking only for themselves in that great document in which these words are written:

"To no one will we deny; to no one will we delay; to no one will we sell justice."

But as the years rolled on, and the barons and King John returned to dust, these words gathered strength and power far beyond the meaning the gentlemen of Runnymede intended.

Prior to the first Great War we thought we were firmly set on our way to peace and prosperity. Everything was coming our way. If our souls are like the boles of trees, that period will show a thick smooth ring, good to behold. We were a simple-minded, hopeful people, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson, was our poet. We believed there was an inherent quality in the Cause of Right which would give it the victory and that was a pleasant doctrine which went well with chenille hang-