

A Philosophy of Purpose

I.

THE CALL WITHIN

The illimitable forest wilderness of the Laurentian Mountains, the sentinels of the mysterious North, contains a myriad life of ceaseless activity. There, remote for unnumbered ages, without any reference to that recent and temporary intruder Man, each of ten thousand varieties of creature, from the sensitive stag to the microscopic sandfly, pursues its career within the limits marked out for it, asking no questions.

Looking out across a beautiful lake, at the primeval woods clothing a long and lofty mountain ridge, Justus and his friend Chateaucclair exchanged thoughts about Nature and Life.

Justus.—Why have you not put your views into writing.

Chateaucclair.—Because my equipment of information is too meagre. I have never had time to keep thoroughly read, since I published a pamphlet containing a form of these ideas, in 1887. One effect of an education is that we get a respect for the world of learning and its chiefs, so I know well that Philosophy is large and I am small. I feel that I have at most but one little contribution to offer, one little pilaster for the temple—my ethical theory and its corollaries. Has it any value, and would it be understood? My only encouragement is that I do not know anyone who takes quite the same line of argument.

Justus.—But you have always kept some touch with that particular study; you had a university training in philosophy, and were well read as a young man. You were taught by such scholars as Clark-Murray and Osler: and Thomas Davidson and Shadworth Hodgson encouraged you.

Chateaucclair.—A generous friendship no cold medium knows.

Justus.—Look at the drama of independent lives before us here. Each of these wild creatures follows the call of the world spirit, instinct, and plays his little allotted part with confidence. We have the same instinctive call within you—to say your say.

Chateaucclair.—Take the little, fat groundhog. He has his hole under yonder stump. I admit that he is not worried about the fact that he is a clumsy, shortlegged, whistling absurdity. His run is but some yards long, his food common weeds and roots, his fears few and not clever,—is that the analogy?

Justus.—He lives out his assigned life: he makes his few little efforts just as though they were important business. If your views are correct, he is one of the innumerable eyes of the Eternal, and his pleasure part