

expresses the will of the community as do legislative or executive acts. It is customary, in certain quarters, to sneer at "court-made law;" but it is certain that court-made law is a more important and probably a more beneficent factor in our National history than legislative-made law. The present tendency is toward biennial, or even triennial, sessions of the legislature. But no one proposes to diminish thus the sessions of the courts.

It is not, however, enough to formulate the will of the people in accordance with the essential principles of justice; these principles, as expressed in and by that will, must be applied to the complicated affairs of modern life. That also is the function of the lawyer. He is not an idealist. He is not to formulate his own ideals of justice in law, nor to apply his own ideals to commercial and industrial life. This is the function of the moral and religious teacher, who is, or always ought to be, an idealist. The lawyer is to take these ideals in so far as they have been accepted by the people, and only so far, and formulate them in laws—that is, in expressions of the popular will—and apply them to the individual problems of society. It is as great a mistake to attempt to turn a statute into a sermon—that is, to make it represent some ideal of righteousness not yet recognized by the public conscience—as it would be to turn a sermon into a statute—that is, to make it a mere reflection of ideals already recognized and resolved upon by the community. Law must always be imperfect from the idealist's point of view, because it necessarily is, and of right ought to be, not an expression of a moral ideal, but the expression of that ideal which the popular conscience has recognized and the popular will has determined on. And, as between man and man, it is not the expression of absolute justice, and cannot be; it is the expression of that measure of social justice which the existing community in the existing epoch recognizes as right and decrees as law.

Thus the function of the lawyer is to transmute ideals into actualities, creed into deed, castles in Spain into homely but substantial dwellings in America. And it is by the actuality, the deed, the homely dwelling, that the community is judged. The state of liberty enjoyed in the United States was to be measured in 1854, not by the Declaration of Independence and the Fourth of July orations, but by the Fugitive Slave Law. We are what we do; the Nation is what it does. If the poets and prophets are the architects of the Nation, the lawyers are its makers and builders.



Guardian Angels

Beset by banditti or beasts on wild roads, or creeping by wild coasts in frail barks, old-time travelers piously committed their safe-keeping to the invisible powers of their guardian deity. With the increasing organization of life in modern progress, God's life-preserving powers are increasingly revealed to sight. The ancient form of hope is still retained: "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." But the heavenly powers to which this hope looks up become more and more manifestly embodied around us.

The Biblical thought which reckons the winds among the angels of God reckons as equally such all the human servants of mankind. The man on the lookout, the commander on the bridge, the engineer amid the machinery, are among the angels to whom Providence gives charge over us to keep us in the ocean way. And over these are guardians of higher rank—archangels, let us say—the manager of the line, the government inspector, the Board

of Trade, engaged in enforcing the conditions of our safety. We speed along the rails in the darkest night with confidence, for the track-walker has gone before us; the eye of the engine-driver, with hand on lever, is watching over the road in the headlight's glare; and the work of these watchers also is watched by those above them. At every port of entry stands for us a guardian angel at quarantine, under the direction of his superior at the seat of government, and the angel of pestilence retreats before him.

This life-preserving process of civilization is the issue of the all-energizing Spirit of God, embodying an ever-increasing measure of knowledge and skill, prudence and vigilance, in the developing organization of life and its service. We depend no more on celestial angels to lift us over stones, but require terrestrial angels to roll the stones away. Divine Providence, as we learn, is not to be seen or sought in emergencies so much as it is in the forestalling of emergencies through the increasing orderliness of life, and its rule by more and more of that law which secures the order of the universe.

The besetting error of our thought is in separating the currents of human agency from their divine springs. Our constant need is the habitual recognition of God in his world and his immediate agency in all that tends to the better regulation of personal or social life. In this view of things is a practical lesson of self-respect and conscience in duty for every one who is filling even the lowest place among those angels of God who keep ward over human welfare; a lesson also of respectful regard for their persons and their functions on the part of all who find safety under their charge.



The Teaching of Tragedy

No characters appeal more powerfully to the imagination than those impressive figures about whom the literature of tragedy moves—figures associated with the greatest passions and the most appalling sorrows. The well-balanced man, who rises step by step through discipline and work to the highest place of influence and power, is applauded and admired; but the heart of the world goes out to those who, like *Œdipus*, are overmatched by a fate which pursues with relentless step, or, like *Hamlet*, are overweighted with tasks too heavy or too terrible for them. *Agamemnon*, *Œdipus*, *Orestes*, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Père Goriot*, are supreme figures in that world of the imagination in which the poets have endeavored both to reflect and to interpret the world as men see it and act in it.

The essence of tragedy is the collision between the individual will, impulse, or action, and society in some form of its organization, or those unwritten laws of life which we call the laws of God. The tragic character is always a lawbreaker, but not always a criminal; he is, indeed, often the servant of a new idea which sets him, as in the case of *Giordano Bruno*, in opposition to an established order of knowledge; he is sometimes, as in the case of *Socrates*, a teacher of truths which make him a menace to lower conceptions of citizenship and narrower ideas of personal life or he is, as in the case of *Othello* and *Paoli*, the victim of passions which overpower the will and throw the whole life out of relation to its moral and social environment. The interest with which the tragic character is always invested is due not only to the exceptional experience in which the tragic situation always culminates, but also to the self-surrender which precedes the penalty and the expiation.

There is a fallacy at the bottom of the admiration we feel when a rich nature throws restraint of any kind to the winds and gives itself up wholly to some impulse or passion—

the fallacy of supposing that by a violent break with existing conditions freedom can be secured; and the world loves freedom even when it is too slothful or too cowardly to pay the price which it exacts. That admiration arises, however, from a sound instinct—the instinct which makes us love both power and self-sacrifice, even when the first is ill-directed and the second wasted. The vast majority of men are content to do their work quietly and in obscurity, with no disclosure of originality, freshness, or force; they obey law, conform to custom, respect the conventionalities of their age; they appear to be lacking in representative quality; they are, apparently, the faithful and uninteresting drudges of society. There are, it is true, a host of commonplace persons in every generation, who perform uninteresting tasks in a mechanical spirit; but it must not be inferred that a man is either craven or cowardly because he does not break from the circle in which he finds himself and make a bold and picturesque rush for freedom; it may be that freedom is to be won for him in the silent and faithful doing of the work which lies next him; it is certain that the highest power and the noblest freedom are secured, not by the submission which fears to fight, but by that which accepts the discipline for the sake of the mastery which is conditioned upon it.

There are, however, conditions which no man can control and which are in their nature essentially tragic, and men and women who are involved in these conditions cannot elude a fate for which they are not responsible and from which they cannot escape. This was true of many of the greatest characters in classical tragedy, and it is true also of many of the characters in modern tragedy. The world looks with bated breath on a struggle of the noblest heroism, in which men and women, matched against overwhelming social forces, bear their part with sublime and unfaltering courage, and by the completeness of their self-surrender assert their sovereignty even in the hour when disaster seems to crush and destroy them. To these striking figures, isolated by the greatness of their fate, the heart of the world has always gone out as to the noblest of its children. Solitary in the possession of some new conception of duty or of truth, separated from the mass of their fellows by that lack of sympathy which springs from imperfect comprehension of higher aims or deeper insight, these sublime strugglers against ignorance, prejudice, caste, and power become the heroes and martyrs of the race; they announce the advent of new conceptions of social order and individual rights; they incarnate the imperishable soul of humanity in its long and terrible endeavor to bring the institutions and the ideas of men into harmony with a higher order of life.

The tragic element has, therefore, many aspects—sometimes lawless and destructive, sometimes self-sacrificing and instructive; but its illustration in literature in any form is not only profoundly interesting, but profoundly instructive as well. In no other literary form is the stuff of which life is made wrought into such commanding figures; in no other form are the deeper possibilities of life brought into such clear view; in no other form are the fundamental laws of life disclosed in a light at once so searching and so beautiful in its revealing power. If all the histories were lost and all the ethical discussions forgotten, the moral quality of life and the tremendous significance of character would find adequate illustration in the great tragedies. They lay bare the very heart of man under all historic conditions; they make us aware of the range of his experiences; they uncover the depths by which he is surrounded. They enable us to see, in lightning flashes, the undiscovered territory which incloses the

little island on which we live; they light up the mysterious background of invisible forces against which we play our parts and work out our destiny.

To the student of literature, who strives not only to enjoy but to comprehend, tragedy brings all the materials for a deep and genuine education. Instead of a philosophical or ethical statement of principles, it offers living illustration of ethical law as revealed in the greatest deeds and the most heroic experiences; it discloses the secret of the age which created it, for in no other literary form are the fundamental conceptions of a period so deeply involved or so clearly set forth. The very springs of Greek character are uncovered in the Greek tragedies; and the tremendous forces liberated by the Renaissance are nowhere else so strikingly brought to light as in that group of tragedies which were produced in so many countries, by so many men, at the close of that momentous epoch. When literature runs mainly to the tragic form, it may be assumed that the spiritual force of the race has expressed itself afresh, and that a race, or a group of races, has passed through one of those searching experiences which bring men again face to face with the facts of life; for the production of tragedy involves thought of such depth, insight of such clearness, and imaginative power of such quality and range that it is possible, on a great scale, only when the springs of passion and action have been profoundly stirred. The appearance of tragedy marks, therefore, those moments when men manifest, without calculation or restraint, all the power that is in them; and into no other literary form is the vital force poured so lavishly. It is the instinctive recognition of this unveiling of the soul of man which gives the tragedy such impressiveness even when it is haltingly represented on the stage, and which subdues the imagination to its mood when the solitary reader comes under its spell. The life of the race is sacred in those great passages which record its sufferings; and nothing makes us so aware of our unity with our kind in all times and under all circumstances as the community of suffering in which, actively or passively, all men share.

In the tragedy the student of literature is brought into the most intimate relation with his race in those moments when its deepest experiences are laid bare; he enters into its life when that life is passing through its most momentous passages; he is present in those hidden places where it confesses its highest hopes, reveals its most terrible passions, suffers its most appalling punishments, and passes on, through anguish and sacrifice, to its new day of thought and achievement.



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