

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE GREAT MIGRATION

NOTHING is more peaceful than the status of the passengers on a great liner after all the space has been assigned to those having the right to it, all conflicting claims adjusted, and the floating community has settled down into stable conditions of the voyage. The little planet goes smoothly on bearing its load of humanity and comes prosperously to its slip in the harbor, with not a breach of the peace, nor a jar in the personal relations of the thousands aboard.

Up to this time in the world's history, the human race, as passengers on the good ship *Earth*, have been working out in blood and flame and tears the questions of the allotment of space. The mystery of creation seems darkest in the fact that there was no booking office through which the matter of accommodations

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could be amicably settled. We came aboard by the fiat of development, only half human, altogether ignorant, knowing naught of the shape or extent of the huge boat on which we sailed; and ever since this emergence into manhood we have been stampeding back and forth, slaying, burning, trampling precious things into the decks in migrations to new and better lands, and flights to new and worse ones. Tartar and Mongol, Hun and Vandal, Goth and Saracen, Angles, Northmen, Normans, Danes, Persians, Romans—a hundred names of dread and terror and romance and high emprise might be mentioned, which have sounded over the earth during the ages which have elapsed from the time when the Children of Israel spied out the land of Canaan, found it good and took it in God-bidden carnage, down to the times when Cortez and Pizarro did impossible things in Mexico and Peru; and on to to-day's onslaught of the Balkan States on Turkey in an incredibly brilliant effort to drive from the soil on which they believe themselves to

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have a just claim the unspeakable Turk who has harried and murdered and corrupted them for five hundred years. All these things are the little bustlings of the passengers on the good ship *Earth* in efforts to find their state-rooms, their berths and their nooks in the steerage.

These disturbances are not over. We are not half through, perhaps. We must decide all the problems which have been so hurriedly sketched in these chapters and many more. The issues of the Seven Perils of Humanity must be solved, by peace or war—and no one can tell how much of the one will suffice or of the other be required. But it seems certain that it will not be all peace.

But the hustle, the bustle and the quarrelling are quieting down. We are getting organized. We know the ship better, now—in fact we have a diagram of the accommodations, and some facts as to the passenger list. There is abroad the spirit of citizenship of the world as against the narrow membership in the tribe, the city, the state, the kingdom,

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or the empire. We have passed in large measure from the family as the largest unit of society, through the tribal state, and on by all intermediate stages into the "trust" phase of government—and the names of the government trusts are the British Empire, the United States of America, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Germany, France and the like. There seems to be good reason to believe that we shall at some time attain the status of the universal trust in government—the parliament of man, the federation of the world—which may or may not be well for us.

Such a federation will be charged with the business of assigning space, conserving resources, eliminating world dangers, and putting an end to those awful tumults and oppressions which have marked the settlement of claims to space heretofore.

Will there ever be a real rest? Will the nations ever be able to accept their quarters as things settled "for all time"?

The conditions can never be permanently settled, because the earth itself is, and always

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must be, in a state of change. These changes will in the future force upon the human race the greatest migrations in its history.

There is good reason to expect that within a thousand years the climate of the whole world will be enormously warmed by the alteration in the air which we are bringing about every day by the burning of coal. There is some reason to believe that this change has already become perceptible. MacDowell, a British investigator, has determined that the last fifty winters have brought fewer frost days in England than any other fifty-year period since 1841—and the discharge of carbonic acid gas into the air from our furnaces which is bringing this change about has scarcely begun. The first great migration, therefore, will be into the now frozen north—Siberia, Finland, Lapland, Canada and Alaska. These will become great agricultural regions—if the expected change comes.

But this will be but an eddy in the stream of change, and will run against the secular change by which the world is cooling off and

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drying up. Sometime the warming process will stop. The cooling process which has been going on with certain alterations and disturbances since the earth was a molten mass—and long before—will reassert itself. Thousands of years hence, the frozen area about the poles will again begin to broaden. The timber line will begin to creep down the mountainsides. The great migration will 'bout-face and turn again from the poles toward the equator. The nations of the earth will perforce move southward from the north, and northward from the south, until at last, the peoples of the world will make their last stand against advancing cold and drought in a narrowing zone which will include Central Africa, Southern Asia, Northern Australasia and the South Sea Islands; and the great rich Amazon, Arinoco and La Plata Valleys in South America—together with the West India Islands.

Along with this secular cooling will be a secular drying up of the earth by the fixing of water in chemical combinations, and its ab-

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sorption into the body of the globe. The deserts which will then overspread the regions now occupied by the United States, and Europe will be not only cold, but dry. The men of that day will again find themselves in a world over vast areas of which no explorer will be able to force his way; and poetry and literature will again be filled with the mystery of the unknown, as it was when Othello told Desdemona's father of the Hyperboreans and men whose heads grow beneath their shoulders.

These migrations are sure to come. They will be very slow—so slow that the movement will be imperceptible. And they will probably take place through ages of world regulation which will eliminate war, and of a decreasing birth-rate which will make poverty unknown, until the last men vanish in a surviving few pinched between the two advancing frontiers of the frost—men who will be great and wise enough to triumph over their fates, even while yielding to them.

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“Extremes meet!”

In this old saying lies one of the deepest of truths. There is a degree of “down” which becomes “up.” Farthest east is the same thing as nearest west. Frost burns the flesh like fire. Great riches develop into a species of poverty. Learning, after long, long climbings, reaches the highest attainments and steps out on the same plane of humility with ignorance.

Emerson confesses to the fact that for years he brooded over the idea of his essay on Composition, and longed to write it. I wish an Emerson would master the deeper meanings of the expression “Extremes meet”, and give us an Emersonian treatment of it.

I am now seeking the secret of a perfect organization of the relations of the passengers on the good ship *Earth*—in other words, I am feebly questioning the heart of things as to the possibility of a millennium—not a millennium in which the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, save in metaphor, but merely a reign of justice and love in which there

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shall be no want, and no greed, no plutocracy, no labor question and no idleness.

The millennial principle is found in the perfection of human selfishness. The universal law of human conduct is that all human beings seek to satisfy their desires along the lines of least resistance. In other words, every person tries to get what he wants in the easiest possible way. This was true when the wisest man was the one who knocked fruit from the tree with a club rather than to climb for it or wait for it to fall, or speared fish with a sharp stick, rather than to seize them with his hands. These sought to satisfy their desires in the easiest possible way. It is equally true of the missionary who dares disease and death for the heathen, or the millionaire who builds libraries, or that other one who donates his wealth to the spread of single-tax. It is equally true of the mother who drudges that her daughter may have lessons in piano or singing. It is true of the friend who takes obloquy and assumes undeserved guilt to shield his friend. It was true of Bishop Myriel-Bienvenu when

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he gave the candlesticks to Jean Valjean. It was true of Jean Valjean when he ceased to be a beast of prey, and because he had been so much lower than the bishop, had to rise so much higher. Each sought to satisfy his desires in the easiest possible way. Each man who does an act of unselfishness chooses it because he could not otherwise—or so it seems to him—find so close an approach to happiness.

The whole matter of popularization of justice lies not in a less avid struggle of men to attain their desires but in the changing character of those desires. When Jean Valjean set his foot on the little boy's coin, after having been given life and freedom by the bishop, he wanted that money; but when he felt the torture of the memory of what had been done to him and what he had done to others, and went running up and down the highways seeking the little boy that he might restore the thing stolen, calling, "*Petit Gervais! Petit Gervais! Petit Gervais!*" and finally breaking down in the awful cry, "What a wretch I am!"

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he wanted something else than money—something quite as necessary to human happiness as any material satisfaction. In both cases he sought to satisfy his desires in the easiest way open to him.

Unselfishness in the ordinary sense of the term, is as common as selfishness. Altruism is a quality of beasts as well as of men. The wolf who devours even his wounded fellow must practise a wolfish altruism when he hunts in the pack, and drags down the deer—he must not eat individually what has been hunted collectively. The cock calls his hens to the food he has scratched out, and does not eat until they come. The partridge flutters on pretending to be wounded, daring danger to save her chicks. And when one comes to the socialized animals, he discovers that the ruling passion of the individual is the service of others. If the word happiness may be properly applied to these little brothers and sisters of ours, who shall say that the highest happiness of the ant is not found in the public service? If so, the ant would be miserably

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unhappy if it served itself first. It also seeks to satisfy its desires in the easiest way open to it.

Human unselfishness rose to a higher plane and took on a steadier character than it seems to reach in the animal world, because of the long infancy of the young human being. Parenthood made altruism a habit with men, while it remained only an occasional passion with most animals. Thus the family was founded, and out of the family grew the tribe. The helpless baby has been the great civilizer of the world. It extended the passion for service beyond the limits of sex devotion. It made brotherhood and sisterhood a fixed relation. It opened to the human soul the unimaginable possibilities for happiness found in the service of others. Still men sought always to satisfy their wants in the easiest possible way—but as altruism developed, a new sort of want arose—nothing less than the desire for the welfare of others.

Unselfishness, therefore, is nothing but the satisfaction of a higher sort of selfishness. The

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instinct for it is deeply rooted and fully developed in all men. No long period of race-development is necessary for its flowering as the ruling passion of the race. Tyrants, criminals, monopolists, aristocrats and all who live on the labor of others appeal to the general good as their own reason for existence; and in doing so, they not only address themselves to a universal instinct, but they account for themselves to themselves in the only way that makes life tolerable to the normal mind.

There are many who take as their guiding political philosophy the creed that every man will serve his own interest when he knows what it is. They are right—he will; but his own interest lies in being happy. And his happiness is every day less and less capable of being satisfied with his personal prosperity, or the welfare of his family, or of the achievement of justice for his class. Class-consciousness is a good thing; for it spreads over a wider field than did self-consciousness, or sex-consciousness, or family-consciousness, or tribe-consciousness, or nation-consciousness, or

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empire-consciousness. But it is still too narrow to satisfy the human soul; and it does not satisfy even those who preach it. Most of them in preaching class-consciousness to the working people, step over the lines of their own class that they may find greater happiness in serving the largest class.

Selfishness is the universal rule of human conduct; and it attains its perfection in that wonderful flowering-out which denies happiness to enlightened man save in the happiness of all men. The type of narrow selfishness is found in the Hindu rajah who rides on his elephant "mad with pride" through streets filled with famishing people, and does not care. He keeps his wealth for himself, and carries "collops of fat upon his flanks" while their bones prick through the flesh. The higher type is the man who would feel such torture in the sufferings of others that he would die if he did not "sell all he had and give to the poor". Our millionaires are now writhing in agony—many of them—at the poverty which they see, and which many of

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them are beginning to admit, they cause. They begin to desire deliverance from the body of this death. The highest selfishness impels them to work for, or at least plan for, social justice. They are beginning to see the profound wisdom in that other old saying, "Right wrongs no man." They are beginning to see that when Jesus went to the cross He did the only thing possible from the standpoint of even the highest selfishness—as any one may see if he will try to imagine the Nazarene's acceptance of life at the sacrifice of his message to the world.

Society moves irresistibly on to its own perfection through selfishness raised to the plane of altruism. Through a perfected society, we shall achieve eternal social life. Out of the mud of selfishness grows through perfectly natural causes the redemptive lily of altruism.