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THE
CITY
OF
TAGASTE
—
FRA
ELPERTUS



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Edwin Hubbard

SO HERE THEN ARE THE PREACH-
MENTS ENTITLED THE CITY OF
TAGASTE, AND A DREAM AND A
PROPHECY, BY FRA ELBERTUS

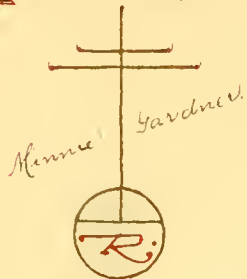
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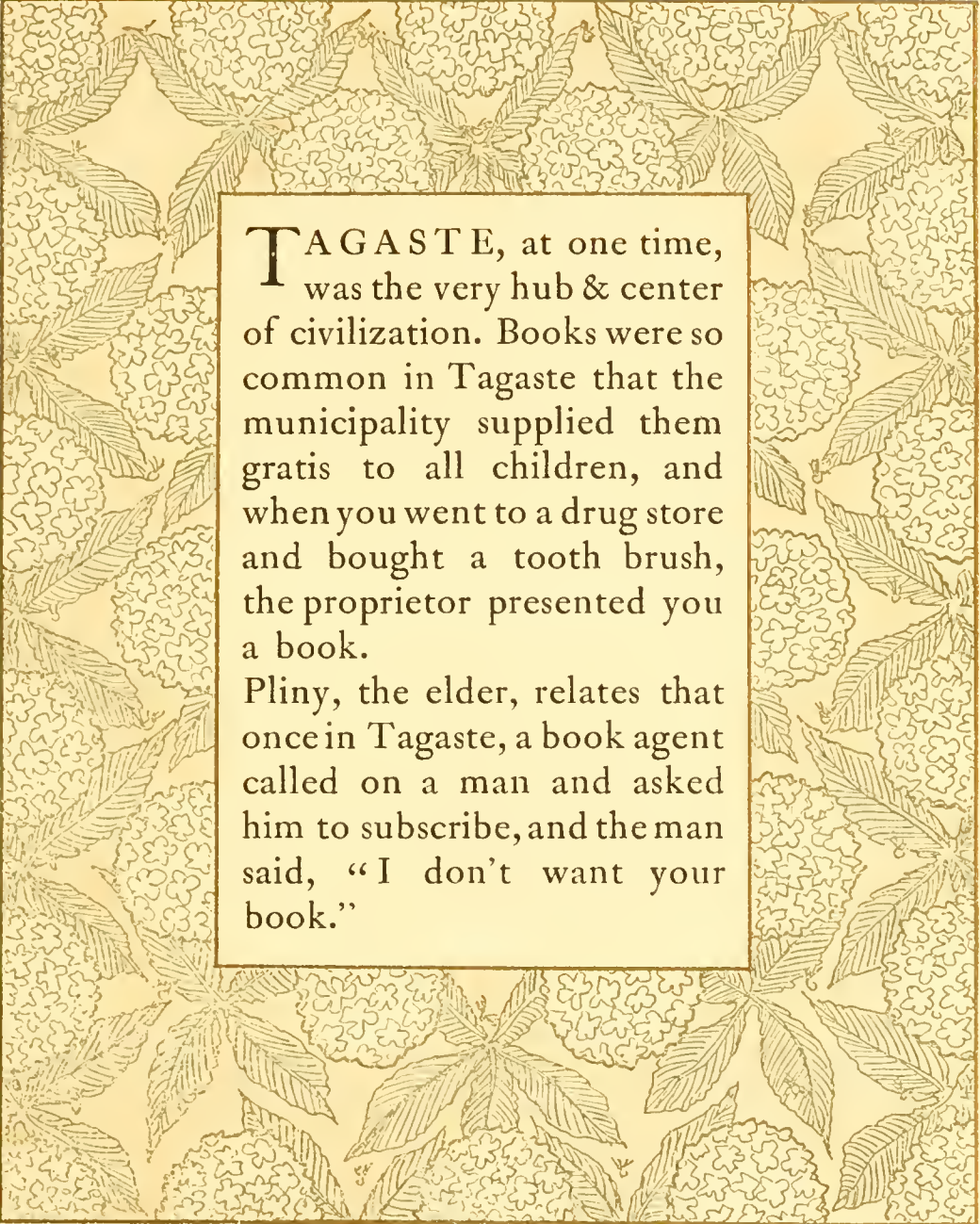
Of this edition there were printed and specially hand
illuminated nine hundred and forty copies, and this
book is Number 537

Robert F. Johnson

ILLUMINATED BY



THE CITY OF TAGASTE



TAGASTE, at one time, was the very hub & center of civilization. Books were so common in Tagaste that the municipality supplied them gratis to all children, and when you went to a drug store and bought a tooth brush, the proprietor presented you a book.

Pliny, the elder, relates that once in Tagaste, a book agent called on a man and asked him to subscribe, and the man said, "I don't want your book."

The City And the agent said, "Buy it for your children."
of Tagaste And the man replied, "I have no children!"

"Then buy it for your wife."

"I have no wife—and look here," said the man, "if I bought your book, do you know what I would do with it?"

"No—what would you do with it?" asked the agent.

"I 'd throw it at the cat!"

"Put your name right here!" gleefully cried the book agent.

And so books became so cheap that men utilized them to throw at the cat. Instead of spelling it mis-sal—they spelled it missile.

In Tagaste they used to cut down a tree, saw it into blocks, feed them into a machine, make the sawdust into a dried paste, and print a newspaper on it, all in forty-six minutes by the watch.

The rage for invention increased—typesetting machines came in, and typesetters by the thousand, too old to learn a new trade, were taken from their cases, and walked the streets looking for work, and not finding it, prayed for death.

By the use of photography, the engraver was abolished in many instances, & the illuminator had long turned to dust.

Even the bookbinder got up one morning, and like

Othello, found his occupation gone—paper made to look like leather was pasted by machinery over boards made from wood pulp. Other covers were fed into a machine by a girl, who was paid two boboli a day, and were stamped in gaudy red or blue. *The City of Tagaste*

The books were stitched on specially-made sewing machines, and no sheets of paper were folded by hand—all were fed into a machine. And so in a factory where ten thousand books a day were made, there was neither a printer, an illustrator, an illuminator nor a binder. There were sad-eyed girls and yellow, haggard boys who stood all day & fed sheets into a machine, week after week, month after month, twelve hours a day, and they were paid just enough money to keep them from starvation.

And so to us who view the condition through the dim lapse of time, it seems curious that there should have existed such a mad rage to make books cheap. Was the country so poor that buyers could not afford to pay more than the price of a ham sandwich for a volume?

Not at all—this happened in the richest country in the world, and in cities where there were hundreds of homes that cost upwards of a hundred thousand dinars each. But the rage for cheapness was in the air—not how good can this be made, but how cheap, was the motto.

The City of Tagaste Society had gotten itself separated into two distinct classes—those who worked with their hands & those who worked with their heads. And those who worked with their heads thought it disgraceful (or at least very bad form) to work with their hands. Many of those who used their heads flocked to the cities and called the people who lived in the country, names—such as Hayseed, Rube and Buckwheat.

Those people who used their hands had no energy left nor inclination to use their heads, after the day's work was done; and they often grew dispirited, dissipated and vicious; and those who used only their heads suffered from Bright's Disease, Paresis & Nervous Prostration. Both classes ceased to live in the open air.

But the wealth drifted into the possession of those who used their heads. They lived in a sort of barbaric splendor like Turkish Pashas, and were much given to buying things. They were unhappy & restless, and always in search of some new thrill which might make them forget the misery of their condition. To kill time, the women did what they called "Shopping." That is, they passed through the streets where the shop windows were temptingly filled with things, and the rich women whose husbands worked with their heads clawed over things & bought things—they bought things to put in their mouths, to put

on their heads, and on their backs. And then they ordered other things put into bundles and sent to their homes. Of course they did not need all these things, and the result was that their houses got so full of things that many servants had to be employed to take care of them. And these servants were more of a care than the things. Then the owners still finding themselves uneasy, restless and discontented—not knowing what was the matter—concluded they had not bought the right things. So they went out and bought more things. And the husbands of these women who bought the things schemed eternally with their heads to get money to pay the servants who looked after the things, and to buy more things; and sometimes these men noticing that in the library a shelf was not quite full, telephoned down to a Dry Goods Store thus: “Send me up three dozen books—all discounts off—rush!”

These people who worked only with their heads often drove horses with half a tail; the women bought birds to decorate their bonnets, and no one seemed to know that a bird in the bush is worth two on a woman's hat. And the men so conducted the civil engineering of the cities, that the sewage and filth of the factories were run into the rivers and the fish all killed. To talk of bathing in a river was a big joke to them. They also polluted the air so that a

The City of Tagaste city could be located fifty miles away by the clouds of soot that hovered over it; and so thick was this dust, dirt and poisonous vapor that no valuable work of art could be safely kept in the municipality. Then they sent out gangs of men to devastate the forests, to get wood to make books and things.

At last in desperation, certain fanatics got laws passed to preserve the forests, to protect the fish in the rivers, the birds in the air, and the horses' tails, and to do away with the dust and dirt and vapor, so the works of art would not be ruined and the peoples' lives shortened or dimmed by the absence of sunshine.

But these laws were executed only every little while—and not always then—for the fish in the river were all dead—dead as Reconcentrados—and the birds had mostly been caught, and the forests were gone, and as for the gas and soot and smoke, why the people were getting used to it—who cares!

And all the while sad-eyed girls bent over machines, and yellow, humpbacked boys, Polynesians and Abyssinians, fed book covers, made of paper to look like leather, into hoppers, and the din of wheels and pulleys and the jangle and roar of machinery nearly drowned the voice of the Proprietor who only worked with his head, as he called over the telephone to his Foreman, "Have those fifty thousand

books ready for Segull-Kuper Company, Saturday night!"

*The City
of Tagaste*

And in a hundred cities, five hundred publishers printed on great rolls of the wood paper, records of the murders, stealings, scandals and vile doings of the day. These records were called newspapers and they were in size and extent actual books, containing on an average about forty thousand words each. And on the Holy Day or Seventh Day, called by many the Lord's Day, the paper was five times as large and ten times as nasty—it was a tale of crime and grime and blood and woe and death. And if the things did not really happen, they were invented.

I have said these papers were equal in size to books, and this was so, for a novel of one hundred thousand words is a good-sized book. But in a city called Gotham, there were newspapers printed on the Lord's Day which contained over two hundred thousand words. It was a giant volume and was given away for a pittance, for the profit to the publisher was in the advertisements of bargain-day things. Of course it was not bound, for there was no time for that, as the people wanted it hot and smoking from the press, and then as it was thrown away after dinner, there was no need to preserve it. And so it could not even be used to throw at the cat. These papers were taken into most of the homes and were also

The City of Tagaste read by children, young girls and women. And when at long intervals some man spoke of the uselessness of such records of ephemeral happenings, he was regarded by his neighbors as a mild lunatic. But no one knew the worthlessness and uselessness of the papers better than the men themselves who made them. And they only made them because they had to get bread and butter whereby they might exist; they never expressed themselves—they simply expressed the things the Proprietor thought would sell the paper. Possibly a few of these newspaper workers were deluded by the vain idea that the facility in writing acquired in a newspaper office would lead to literature. But once caught in the mesh they seldom escaped until all the ambition and life were squeezed out of them; and when they were thrust out into the streets they were like the typesetters—too old to learn another trade, and without the vim and buoyancy to succeed in something else. ¶ Into the maw of the newspapers and commercial sweat-shops were fed the bright, ambitious country boys, and heat, fever, unrest and broken hours did their work. And the toilers came out crippled, poor in purse, broken in health and spirit; or better, they died and received, at last, the rest that life denied. ¶ The city of Tagaste, centuries ago, turned to dust and ruin. Over its walls now creep the ivy and cling-

ing wild flowers ; serpents make their homes among
its broken columns ; and crawling lizards bask in the
sun where once royalty and boundless wealth held
sway. *The City
of Tagaste*

Tagaste died because she sacrificed her brightest and
best in the mad rush to gain wealth by making cheap
things that catered to the whims, depraved tastes and
foolish tendencies of the worst.

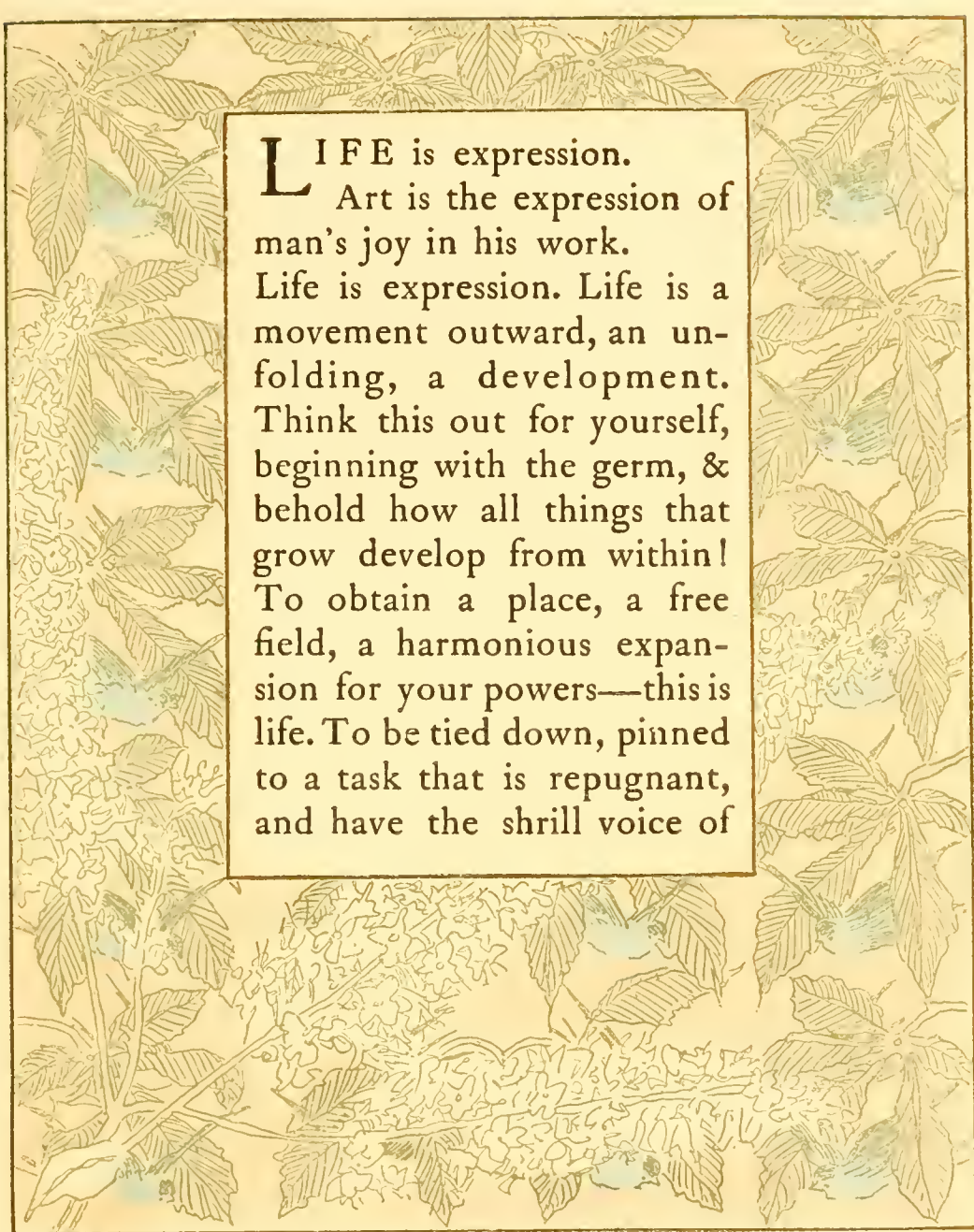
Where once proud Tagaste stood, green weeds wave
in the empty casements ; the chance-sown seeds of
thistles sprout and blossom and bloom from between
the mosaics of her courtways ; on the deserted
thresholds lichens and brambles cling in a brother-
hood of disorder ; while the filmy ooze of a rank
vegetation steals over the interlaced spider-threads
that covers all.

The damp and the dust, the frost and the sun, the
fret of flooded waters, and the slow, patient inroads
of the mosses have combined to obliterate the work
of man & make his name but as a sound blown
upon the breath of the winds.

Tagaste is gone—gone like time, gone past recall.

Tagaste is but a memory, tinged by a dream.

A DREAM AND A PROPHECY



LIFE is expression.
Art is the expression of
man's joy in his work.
Life is expression. Life is a
movement outward, an un-
folding, a development.
Think this out for yourself,
beginning with the germ, &
behold how all things that
grow develop from within!
To obtain a place, a free
field, a harmonious expan-
sion for your powers—this is
life. To be tied down, pinned
to a task that is repugnant,
and have the shrill voice of

A Dream and Necessity whistling eternally in your ears, “Do this
A Prophecy or starve,” is to starve—for it starves the heart, the soul—and all the higher aspirations of your being pine away and die.

Art is beauty, and beauty is a gratification, a peace and a solace to every normal man and woman. Beautiful sounds, beautiful colors, beautiful proportions, beautiful thoughts—how our souls hunger for them! Matter is only mind in an opaque condition; and all beauty is but a symbol of spirit.

Art is the expression of man’s joy in his work. You cannot get joy from feeding things all day into a machine. You must let the man work with hand and brain, and then out of the joy of this marriage, beauty will be born. And this beauty mirrors the best in the soul of man—it shows the spirit of God that runs through him.

Once a letter was sent by the Queen of Italy to every reigning queen of Europe, asking that the recipient make a promise to wear upon her clothing no lace except that which was made by hand. Every person who received this letter responded; & a letter from Queen Victoria was one of the first answers to the appeal.

Schools were established where girls were taught to make beautiful things with their hands. When they acquired the necessary deftness of fingers, and the

right taste and judgment, materials were supplied *A Dream and*
them, and a market promised for the product. Then *A Prophecy*
the Queen of Italy herself established an exchange
for the sale of the beautiful lace.

And we find Mr. Robert Barrett Browning—a man
with kingly pedigree, the only child of Robert
Browning and Elizabeth Barrett—following the idea
of the gracious Queen. Mr. Browning established &
endowed a manufactory for the making of hand-
made lace, as a loving monument to his father and
mother. This institution gives work to five hundred
women. I've called it a manufactory, but it is not
just that, for the work is mostly done at the homes
of the workers, who live in the villages scattered
about Venice. Each worker is paid according to the
quality of her work. It is quality, not quantity, that
counts—and so the constant incentive is held out
for each woman to do her best.

To this factory once came an old woman past eighty.
Her husband had been drowned at sea; her sons
had been killed in the war; and she was alone with
two grandchildren to care for. She came with a piece
of elaborate lace on which she had worked three
months. The work was very uneven, for the woman
was old, her fingers stiff, and her eyesight faulty.
The superintendent showed the work to Mr. Brown-
ing and asked: "What shall we do?"

A Dream and "Pay her for it, pay her for it," said Mr. Browning,
A Prophecy "and give it to me—she has done the best she could."

And so, for several years, has come each three months, hobbling on her cane, this old woman who deposits her work and joyfully carries away her silver knotted in a handkerchief.

But most of the work that passes through the Browning Memorial is rarely beautiful and goes to those who covet it. And strangely enough (or not) the quality of the lace made is no better nor more beautiful than that made by the nuns in the convents of the Middle Ages. There are things you cannot improve upon. You cannot better the work of Praxiteles. The marbles of the Greeks are at once the inspiration and hopeless tantalization of every man who models in clay or puts chisel and mallet to stone. In ethics you cannot better the Golden Rule. "In philosophy," says Emerson, "say what you will—it is all to be found in Plato."

And in book-making we cannot improve on the work of the Venetians or that of the Monks of the Middle Ages. All we have gained has been in speed—and what we have gained in speed we have lost in power.

So we find William Morris, that sanest of all men of modern times, that man who could do more things

and do them well than any man of the Nineteenth *A Dream and*
Century, going back to the method of the Olden *A Prophecy*
Time in making books. He made the matrices for
his type himself, and with his friend, Burne-Jones,
cut initials and ornaments in wood for head-bands,
tail-pieces and title pages, and these books were
printed on paper made from pure linen rags, made
just as paper was made in the Thirteenth Century.
And the helpers who made these books found a joy
in their work; & something more than a living wage.
And behold, the people who loved good books
proved more numerous than was at first supposed—
and they bought the books and paid for them. In
making these books, it was the constant motto:
“How good can they be made?—not how cheap.”
¶ Once upon a day, a woman of noble birth in
England showed a friend a lace scarf made at
the “Browning Memorial,” and this woman said,
“I would rather have this one piece of good lace
than a house full of lace made by a machine.” Then
she held up a Kelmscott Book, printed on Vellum,
and said, “I would rather have this one book than a
thousand forty-nine-cent books bought at a haber-
dasher’s!” And there were many of like opinion.
And so the manufacturers of furniture and laces
and cloth and books, gradually awoke to the fact
that there were some people who preferred to have

A Dream and a few good things, than a great many cheap ones.

A Prophecy ¶ Art is the expression of man's joy in his work.

When you read a beautiful poem, that makes your heart throb with gladness, you are simply partaking of the emotion that the author felt when he wrote it.

¶ To possess a piece of work that the workman made in joyous animation, is a source of joy to the possessor. Carry this idea one step further, & you see why the painting done by the hand of a man with soul and spirit, can never be replaced by the work of a chromo-lithograph press.

When you look upon a beautiful painting you in some way catch the spirit of the artist who did the work; and the armless marbles of Greece, done five hundred years before the birth of Christ, yet subdue us into silence and tears.

And this love of the work done by the marriage of hand and brain can never quite go out of fashion—for we are men and women, and our hopes and aims and final destiny are at last one—where one enjoys, all enjoy, where one suffers, all suffer.

Say what you will of the coldness and selfishness of men, at the last we long for the companionship and the fellowship of our kind. We are lost children, & when alone and the darkness begins to gather, we sigh for the close relationship of the brothers and sisters we knew in our childhood, and cry for the

gentle arms that once rocked us to sleep. We are homesick amid this sad, mad rush for wealth and place and power. The calm of the country invites, & we fain would do with less things, and go back to simplicity and rest. *A Dream and A Prophecy*

And so it came about, that about the year 2001 men began to think, and they saw that to work all day with your head, and never with your hands, failed to bring content. The most successful man was the most unhappy; and they turned at last from the city to the country.

They said, "Let us go home—all is so quiet there." They found, having taken a little time, that there was a beauty in the country they had quite forgotten, and the melody of the water running over the pebbles, hastening to the sea, was a song of gladness. They saw, too, that animals and birds that lived in the open air, never went into decline—that the chipmunk's health did not fail, nor the quail have nervous prostration.

The thought came to them that life is expression, & art is the voice of joy that the workman finds in his work. So they worked with their hands. They carved in wood and made useful furniture, or they printed books and illumined them, and illustrated them after the manner of the Monks of the olden time. And others became skillful in working with leather, and

A Dream and bound the books in a most artistic & beautiful way.

A Prophecy And these people found that the best joy in life comes from work well done. The women were no longer the mere pets or playthings of the men—all worked, and worked with heads and hands. And the women were the comrades and companions of the men.

So, though a man were rich, he did not feel ashamed to wear the garb of a workingman. And working with his hands, he came to understand and comprehend the needs of the poor. And a right understanding and brotherhood sprang up between them. And those who had formerly worked from daylight until dark, now found that a few hours' work a day sufficed. In the past, as a great many never worked with their hands at all, others had to work all the time. So the toilers had time to think, to read and enjoy; and as those who had formerly only used their heads now used their hands, nervous prostration took wing, and Dr. Bright and his pet disease became obsolete.

And they planted trees, and forests grew; the birds came back and made the boughs melodious with their songs of love. The sewage was used to fertilize the land instead of to pollute the rivers; and fishes played hide and seek in the bright waters; and as ways had been found to consume the carbon instead

of liberating it in a cloud of soot, the sun's rays fell in golden beams, carrying health and healing.

*A Dream and
A Prophecy*

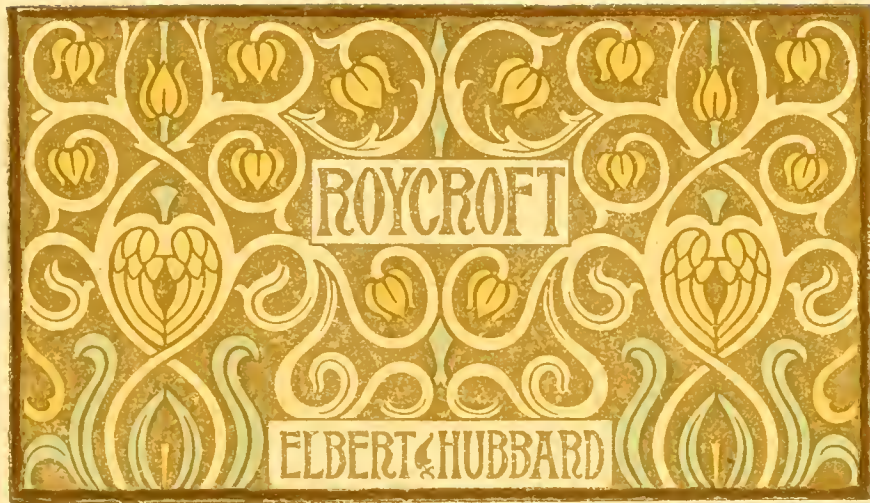
And the people found that happiness and a reasonable content followed a just and proper exercise of one's faculties. They further discovered that man had a triple nature: physical, mental and spiritual, and that to work a certain number of hours daily, with one's hands, is the part of wisdom, in that it gives zest to the exercise of the mental and spiritual natures. They further found that the exercise of the spiritual or emotional nature through music, or the contemplation of beauty, was a necessity as much as food and drink.

They also discovered that the unrest & ruin wrought through overtaxed nerves in days ago, came largely from owning too many things. So they simplified and found after all that the best of life is not to be gotten through the ownership of many things: it comes from doing the duty that lies nearest thee.

They said, "Life is expression, and we are endeavoring to express the beauty that is in our hearts. This life is full of gladness, and mayhap it is the gateway to another; and to live well here, is surely the best preparation for a life to come. God is good and we are not afraid."

So here then endeth the preachments “The City of
Tagaste” and “A Dream and a Prophecy,”
as written by Fra Elbertus, and
done into a book by the Roy-
crofters, at the Roycroft Shop,
which is in East Aurora,
New York,
M C M

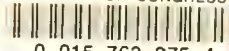




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