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MORE STATELY MANSIONS
Mayan Revelation Number 189
DECORATION

The Ministry of Beauty

Beautiful Thoughts

Beautiful Conduct

Harmony

Refinement

Reverence

Maintenance

Affirmation

Beloved Centurion:

We are building a "more stately mansion" and of all the work and materials which go into our new home, our new life, we have yet to talk about one of the greatest and most necessary of all assets - beauty. We could not build a life without it.

Socrates said, "I PRAY THEE, O GOD, THAT I MAY BE BEAUTIFUL WITHIN."

There are so many ways to attain beauty and every hour of my life I grow more convinced that it is wisest and best to fix our attention on the beautiful things and the good things of life, never allowing our thoughts to dwell on the dark and baser things which we encounter on life's highway.

There is nothing that brings more complete happiness than the ability to appreciate beauty. The contemplation of beauty in Nature, in art, in literature, and even in human character makes life more joyful and richer. Beauty such as this is often able to cleanse our hearts of many cares.

Your lesson which you have just received, and which you are about to study, is so very important to you as a truth student, because it explains the essential place of beauty in your life. Truth is the foundation and the reason for the perfection of beauty; no matter what the stature of a thing may be it cannot be beautiful or perfect unless it is truly what it should be. That is what you are endeavoring to do as you build a new life - you are striving to make it everything it should be.

There is not a great deal that your instructor needs to say in this prologue, preparatory to taking you into the instructions. There will be much for you to meditate upon in your effort to see what you may do to enrich and beautify the new cathedral in which the new you will live; for in yourself, rather than outside things, lies the true source and life of the beautiful.

The human soul is the sun which brings light on every side of your building. It throws its light with its lovely hues on every facade. Someone has said that exquisite beauty resides with God. Unity and simplicity, joined together in different organs, are the principal sources of beauty. It resides in the good, the honest and in the useful to the highest physical and intellectual degree.

There is another thought I have always loved which goes like this:

"Beauty is a fairy,
sometimes she hides herself
in a flower cup or under a leaf,
or creeps into the old ivy
and plays hide-and-seek with the sunbeams,
or haunts some ruined spot,
or laughs out of a bright young face."

Yes, your instructor feels a person is fortunate indeed who has cultivated a real love of beauty and knows its importance in the finished mansion of life.

As we say the following prayer, know that God will help you to attain beauty of spirit and soul as you build.

PRAYER

Help me, my Heavenly Father, to be wise to build my life well and also to give due attention to making it pleasing and attractive that others, and even Thyself will look on it with favor as well as approval. Amen.

*** PART ONE ***

* * * * * There must be a reason why God has made the world
 * * * * * so beautiful and put so many beautiful things in
 * THE MINISTRY OF BEAUTY * it. In the sky, along the way, in every place,
 * * * * * loveliness waits to inspire and encourage us, and
 * * * * * to plant its pattern in our consciousness where
 it can grow and permeate our beings. Surely it
 is the ministry of beauty to the soul. As a building is erected, beauty is built
 into it, and when it is completed, the decorators begin. There is a ministry of
 beauty to all things, including life.

Here is a beauty hint that is different, but that in countless cases has been demonstrated to be true. It is possible for any man or woman to be handsome and attractive in a real and permanent way, simply by cultivating a beautiful inner life. No one is truly attractive without it, and anyone is truly attractive with it. Beautiful thoughts, motives, feelings, and deeds, show through, and their loveliness neither fades nor wears off. The supply comes from within, and all that is necessary is to keep the sources active.

Emerson, old and broken in body and mind, looked at the face of Longfellow in death and faltered, "I do not remember that man's name, but I know he had a beautiful soul." This was true because Longfellow, like Emerson himself, had lived the kind of life that cultivates it. The noble lines of Longfellow's poetry and the clear, cool heights of Emerson's idealistic philosophy were in their faces, their voices, their manners, and their ways of life.

The beauty of a building is form, color, carvings, trimmings, tints, and designs. They have their counterparts in the house of life. We shall think of a few of them presently.

Living a beautiful life works two ways, both of them beneficent. It brings contentment to the person who knows he is doing his best to live it so, and it

reaches out with inspiration to others. That is, it activates and it radiates. Any quantity of salt dropped into any quantity of water will first make the water extremely salt at the point where it lands, but soon it will spread till all the water is equally salt. The spirit of beauty spreads in a life the same way. Then it begins to reach out to those near it.

We get help from walking in a lovely garden, contemplating the cool, spacious vistas of a lovely building, or being near a well-planned well-lived life. That is a ministry of beauty you can exercise. We need more and more beauty in the world to offset the too abundant ugliness carelessness has spread about, - art, music, culture, literature, building, scenery, and most of all living beautiful lives. Some contribution to it is due from you. See that it is made. It will not reduce your own supply, but enrich it. Make a check and see if your account is paid up. Consider and see if you are giving your share.

*** PART TWO ***

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* * * * *
* BEAUTIFUL THOUGHTS *
* * * * *
* * * * *
One's thoughts are assimilated into his personality as surely as his food is assimilated into his body. They even affect his physical health and appearance. They give him a super measure of strength, health, ability, and attractiveness. "Whatsoever things are lovely, think on these things", said St. Paul. In the same immortal formula he listed some of the chief beauties of thought - the true, the just, the pure, the honest, the lovely, the things of good report, virtue, and praise.

One could hardly hope to find a more adequate formula than that. Of course as one goes along even it will expand, unfold, and widen, into a program that will always hold its interest and value. One will never run out of material or area to occupy. The magic key in it is the word Think. Every good and lovely thing is a thought that has been energized, and every possible but unactualized good and lovely thing is a thought that can be actualized if someone will do so.

The same law applies to about everything among the activities and functions of mind and heart. One of the most effective aids to beauty of life and character, for instance, is wholesome interests. The real secret of beauty is health. Health functions in wholesome interests, and wholesome interests build more health. Wholesomeness is health. That is exactly what the word means. Trace it etymologically, and you will see.

Attitudes tend very strongly to make us like ourselves. No one can harbor resentment, ill-will, and vengeful desires and purposes without its showing through more and more till finally he becomes himself a picture of it. Hawthorne's story The Great Stone Face, is a study of the operation of this principle in the life of a thoughtful and aspiring boy. Experiences like that of Ernest are possible because the principle works both ways. One can take on the appearance of good aspirations as surely as that of wrong ones. Kindness, good will, the habit of contemplating beauty, also build themselves into selfhood.

People who are sensitive to beauty can look at a wildflower in the woods or

a domestic one in the garden till he actually feels a thrill go through him from the vibration given off by the color, a loveliness powerful enough to shake one's very being. Any kind of beauty, physical or spiritual, will do that to one who is sensitive, and anyone can cultivate a love of beauty till he is sensitive. It is a kind of spiritual process of assimilation by which something is taken in from outside one's self and so absorbed that it becomes a part of himself.

This happens especially when you contemplate a beautiful life or any phase of it. You may do it reading, in memory, in letters, in aspiration, in imagination, or in person. Time so spent is well spent if the pattern is a good one. When you are thrilled and shaken by the noble thoughts of a speaker, a writer, or a conversation companion, the miracle is taking place. Do it as much as you can, but be sure it is something worthwhile you are assimilating. A well-trained digestion will automatically reject what is not desirable.

*** PART THREE ***

* * * * * Motives are the roots of purposes, and actions are
 * * * * * their fruits. Conduct is therefore the outward proof
 * BEAUTIFUL CONDUCT * of the loveliness or unloveliness of the inner life.
 * * * * * It shows whether the builder and tenant is the kind of
 * * * * * person who would build a beautiful house of life.
 Earlier generations had an adage we should not lose -
 "Pretty is as pretty does." That is the principle. Action is the test. If inward
 beauty is there, it will show through.

It is sometimes said that beauty is only skin deep. That is not true of the real, lasting, all-weather, time-defying kind. Real beauty is not assumed for some purpose or other. Sustained beauty of conduct comes from an inner and deeper source. It is not like decorating paint that washes off or breaks up with weather and time. It is the natural color of the wood, or of the life. Anything will be and remain beautiful if it is its nature to be so. That is why beauty of conduct, motivated within, is dependable and lasting.

They are mistaken who say that anyone can make it appear that he cherishes only loveliness in thought and feeling, or that one can consistently perform that which does not truly represent him. One may attempt it intermittently, or haphazardly, or temporarily; but not constantly and permanently. Beautiful thoughts and purposes make beautiful deeds, and beautiful deeds make a beautiful life. You can take nothing from a box that isn't in it, and you can find nothing in a life that isn't there. True loveliness is not applied, it emerges. It is not added to, it is built in.

Ours is a beautiful world in general, though life has been so marred or so lacking in loveliness for some that its beauty needs to be repaired or replenished for them. One life is made beautiful, and increasingly so, by doing these things for another life that needs it. One's gain is measured more by what he gives out than by what he takes in. This is no fanciful guess. It is one of the principles of the teaching of Jesus.

Said Abraham Lincoln, "I want it said of me that I never failed to pluck a

thorn or plant a flower where I thought a flower would grow." That is a wonderful principle for the beautification of life. There is one thing, however, that might be added to it, one that the life of Mr. Lincoln abundantly demonstrates that he understood and carried out in action. There are no places where a flower will not grow, or that cannot be made into places where one will grow. Some of the finest crops are produced in what was once very unpromising soil.

A repair job on a building is usually hard and expensive; but on an injured, hungry, or tired heart, it may be very easy and inexpensive. A helping hand and the assurance that someone cares is usually all it takes. Perhaps unconsciously all of this is constantly building a beautiful nature, a beautiful outlook, a collection of beautiful memories; in short, a beautiful life.

You do not have to take this for granted. Look about you and see the demonstrations of it. Try it yourself and learn by experience how true it is, and how rewarding.

*** PART FOUR ***

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* HARMONY *
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* * * * *
In the realm of sound harmony is beauty and discord is ugliness. These are both made by relating vibrations, and vibration is the basis of almost everything. Color, substance, light, sound, consciousness, thought, indeed each and all the manifestations of energy, are manifestations, gradations, and varieties of vibration. Vibration harmoniously related has constructive power, Discordantly related the power becomes destructive.

To keep the forces of life in harmony, to keep the elements of existence such as thought and work composed and related, to keep one's own life harmoniously adjusted to the universe and its Maker, is a beautiful thing.

The discords of life are costly and wasteful. They mar, divide, and destroy, where harmony would build and preserve. Creation was and is a process based on harmony. So is its preservation and progress. So are the worth and character of human existence.

Think of history as a vast symphony with players finishing their parts and leaving while others come to take their places. Each of us has a part to play and an instrument with which to play it, while God is the Director. Each must have a correctly written score and a good instrument in good condition. He must play his part well, one part of which is musicianship and one part of which is keeping his playing harmoniously related to the total composition. Only thus is the music rendered beautiful.

Love, friendship, cooperation, home life, citizenship, are all forms of harmony. They break up into something unlovely if discord is allowed to prevail, but they are beautiful and valuable if no lack of harmony is allowed to scatter them. As harmony makes beauty in music so it also makes beauty in the building of a life, which is done of course by the endeavors of every day, for in all beauty of every kind and character harmony in one way or another is found to prevail.

For instance, duty is a form of harmony. It is harmony between us and a

challenge, a need, an ideal, or a law. It seeks to preserve the harmony we have, to gain the harmony we need, and to restore the harmony we have lost in our efforts to live worthily and well. The divine commandments and all the truth we have discovered about living are vast scores with all the parts and variations written in harmony, symphonies of action and of life. The written score shows how we may relate them, and duty helps us really to do it.

As time passes, with living done under the baton of the God of harmony, historians will be able oftener to say that a given age was a beautiful period, and biographers to say of more and more careers that they were beautiful lives. It is a highly worthy objective for each and all of us to seek. Beauty is not just merely window dressing. It is part and substance of living at its best, the result of building a beautiful mind, a beautiful spirit, expressed in beautiful deeds, and contributing to the making of a beautiful world.

*** PART FIVE ***

* * * * * * * * * * Another highly important element of personal attractiveness
 * * * * * * * * * * is refinement; not just shallow affectation or pretense, but
 * REFINEMENT * * * * * truly cultured manners, speech, and actions, growing from a
 * * * * * * * * * * truly refined nature. Some inclination toward this may be
 * * * * * * * * * * born with one, but the actual expression of it has to be ac-
 quired. One may learn it in childhood, or later in life, or
 both; but anyone can do so and in doing so make his mansion of life more pleasing
 and attractive to more people and a better grade of them.

The result is something like what takes place in a rough chunk of hardened carbon when skill, understanding, and effort change it into a cut and polished diamond. Part of it is nature and part of it is process, the work of patient and skillful hands; but both are genuine and in the case of a really polished diamond or life, both have been well done. Some of these human diamonds in the rough remain so, while others realize they can do better with themselves and do so.

A large part of refinement is good taste. It too is both born and learned. It is not real until it becomes a habit, and it becomes a habit only through long and diligent practice. It applies in both speech and conduct as it becomes ingrained in nature. It applies in human attitudes too, and affects friendships and family life. Whatever the area of life in which it appears, it is the opposite of coarseness, rudeness, crudeness, and offensiveness. It is kindness, unselfishness, and considerateness, expressed in the acts and relationships of life.

In former days so-called good manners may have been a little stiff and formal. They have been made less artificial, but they are no less important. There is danger that the law of reaction, socially applied, might cause a period of very refined manners to be followed by a contrasting period of roughness and coarseness. We should not let that happen. We can prevent it by avoiding roughness on the one hand and artificiality on the other.

Another important element in refinement is courtesy. Rudeness of speech or manner toward others is ugly, offensive, without excuse, and hurtful. It is a bad commentary on the person who is guilty of it, and it makes and fosters much

of the strife of the world. One cannot continue, however, to act in a refined way in public unless he also does so in private, nor toward some people and not all. It is not put on and off. It is a matter of one's nature.

Knowledge should be one basis of refinement, but it is not the whole of it. It is like a seed that fails to come up unless it is applied, and rightly applied, before it is wholly worthy of its name. But some form and measure of understanding, obtained in some way, and carried into effect, is a very pleasing and useful adornment to make a life good to see and know.

Excess and extravagance in speech, voice, dress, or manner, is definitely unrefined. It detracts from the appeal of a personality to people of intelligence and taste. It repels desirable associates and attracts undesirable ones. Like pleasing patternings, soft and harmonious color tones, and proportionings that are adequate without being excessive, good taste makes a structure good to see.

*** PART SIX ***

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* REVERENCE *
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An all-pervading and glorifying decoration of life and its interests is reverence. By this we mean not only the recognition of God and the way of faith, but also the recognition of the sacredness of things, the recognition that all God's work is holy and to be revered and kept worthy to be revered. This one attitude deeply ingrained in human nature could alone transform the world into the pattern of redemption.

When we think of the word Reverence we naturally think first of reverence for the Eternal One Himself. One has not ascended the holy hill of experience until he has stood in hushed and worshipful silence before his Maker. But the extent of what this implies and becomes is infinite. Abraham listening to The Voice, Moses gazing at the burning bush, Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road, turned from these experiences never to be the same again.

Next in importance to reverence for the Divine, and very much akin to it is reverence for life, God's greatest miracle. This is the spirit that recognizes the divinity in all life of every kind. For instance, it is a major part of the life philosophy of Albert Schweitzer. He says it is the explanation of his life and work, especially his work for others as a missionary, physician and surgeon.

Then there is reverence for beauty, at which we have already hinted, but which cannot be overemphasized. Beauty is beautiful because it is an energized, actualized, divine thought. True beauty is a holy thing because it is a thought of God made visible. Beauty is perceptible only to those who have an answering beauty within themselves which serves as a mirror to reflect the beauty they see.

Then there is reverence for the sacred relationships of life. Reverence for personality preserves unbroken the bonds of marriage, parenthood, friendship, and the like. It makes them beautiful, just as the lack of it often leaves them ugly or even sordid. All this contributes to beautiful living, and beautiful living is what makes a beautiful world and a beautiful future. Citizenship, business contacts, the sharing of labor, and the everyday fellowship of common

humanity, are all beautified by reverence one for another.

Then there is reverence for truth, for all truth of whatever nature, wherever found, and however expressed. Jesus said in the Seventeenth Chapter of the Gospel of John that truth is the word of God. That makes it the basis of right. In fact, truth is the principle of right, and right is the expression of truth. Truth is worthy of reverence because it is as enduring as eternity, and nothing can change or destroy it.

Then there is reverence for our own humanity - body, mind, and spirit. It is the irreverent who damage and destroy themselves. If we revere God we must revere His image in our own existence and not mar our lives or endanger ourselves. What right have we to take lightly our responsibility to ourselves who are created only a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor?

*** PART SEVEN ***

* * * * * We have two responsibilities toward a house or a life. One
 * is to build it well, and the other is to maintain it well.
 * MAINTENANCE * This applies to both appearance and condition. Building a
 * strong and beautiful structure lays upon us the obligation
 * * * * * to keep it so. Neither a building or a life is ever really
 finished. Like ourselves, we have to keep doing what we can
 - and that is much - to keep either from growing old. Nature attends to this for
 the chambered nautilus. It does for us too - but we have to help build and main-
 tain the nature.

The finest building will begin to look shabby if neglected. Maintenance problems are developing by the time it is completed. The better it is built and decorated, the worse any shabbiness will look by contrast. What develops must be repaired, but it is better not to let it develop. Frequent inspection is important to locate needs for repairs and replacements before they have passed beyond the possibility of concealment. You must remember, of course, that all this is an analogy of character and personality.

A certain great bridge in America keeps a crew of sixty painters at work the year round keeping its surfaces protected against the ravages of fog and weather. Over and over they work their way across the long structure, then go back and begin again. Some structures may need less attention, but they need it regularly. Any mansion of life needs protection against breakdown even more than a material structure does. The qualities that make it strong, beautiful, and good, need to be constantly maintained.

As we have said, the qualities that give a life its strength and beauty are built in, but we have to help build them in. That is why the materials for it are always at our command and why we have been given the intelligence to know what to do and the will power to do it. Anyone knows that a strong life cannot be built of weak elements, nor a beautiful life constructed of ugly materials. So whatever is lovely, good and true, think on it - then do it.

All this is a part of our preparation to live adequately and eternally, to

have built into our lives an adequate and eternal kind of loveliness, some of the qualities of which we have recounted. Beauty built into character and personality is something we can use in this world and any other world in which we may ever find ourselves, with no maintenance requirement except to see day by day that we are not losing ground.

Meeting this responsibility, and thinking and working along these lines may seem like a burdensome responsibility at first; but it gets easier; at length becomes a joy, and finally is found to be as much a part of life as breathing. At the beginning the planter has the labor of sowing his seed. Later on the master of the harvest has the pleasure of gathering his fruit.

These are the broad outlines of the story of what we can learn from the chambered nautilus and what we can do with it. It opens up one of the most rewarding of all possible opportunities, - one that involves the making of a finer life and a more favorable world in which to live it.

AFFIRMATION

I build, and what I build I keep in
good order, so its strength and beauty
may encourage others in the building
of their more stately mansions.

May this lesson be blessed for the fulfillment of your ambition to build a better life.

YOUR CLASS INSTRUCTOR.

