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THE MAYANS

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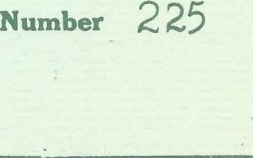
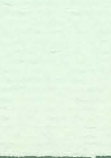
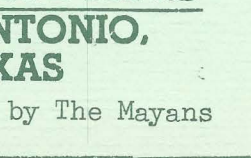
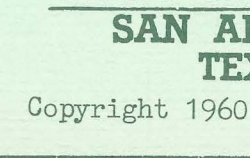
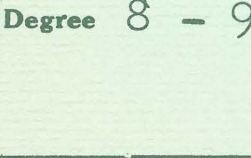
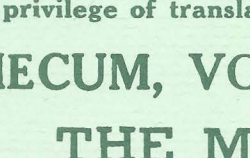
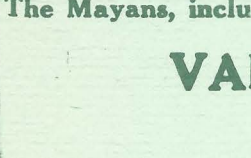
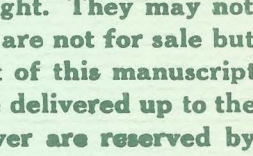
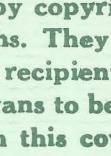
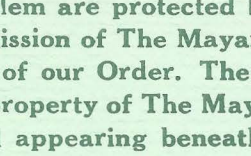
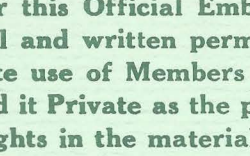
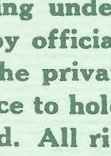
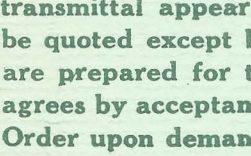
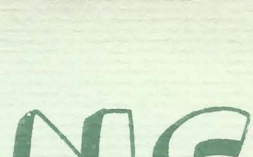
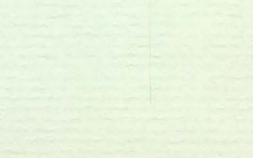
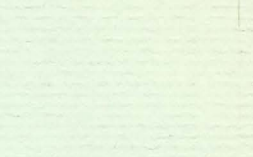
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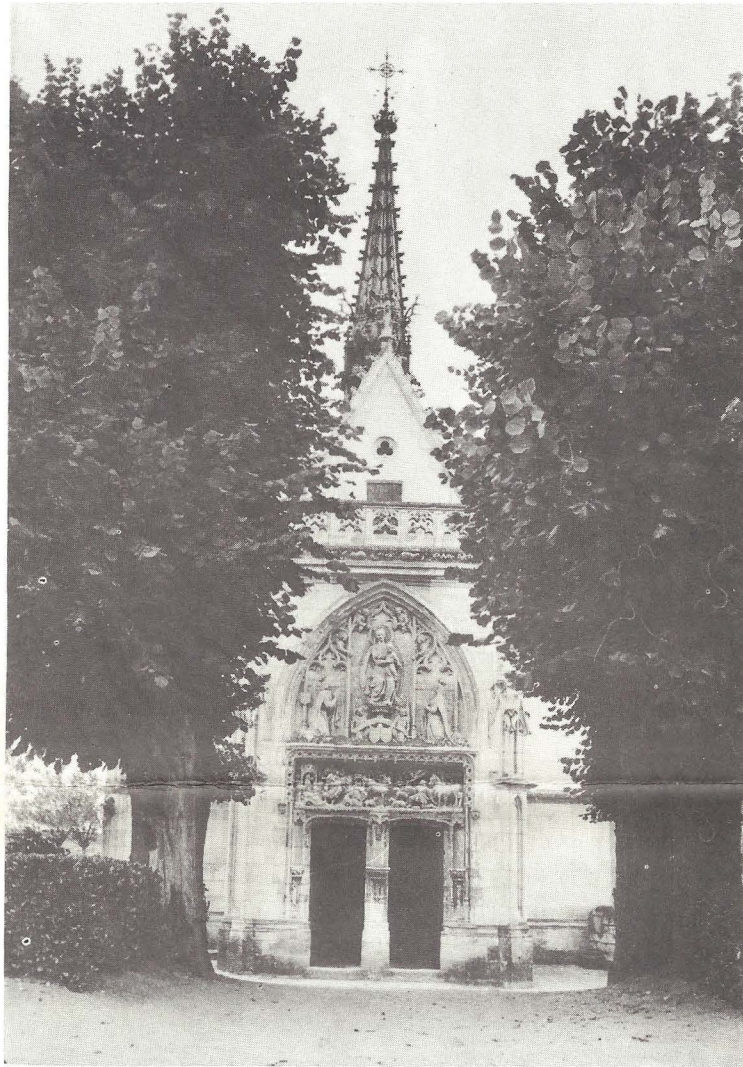
THE MAYANS
 SAN ANTONIO,
 TEXAS

Degree 8 - 9

Number 225

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A Chapel in the Chateau Country of France

Beauty for Ashes

MAYAN REVELATION NUMBER 225

The Going Market

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In Personality

The Enchanted Cottage

A Forest Conversation

What is Beauty?

Closing Suggestions

Beloved Centurion:

The world is divided into several classes of people, from the standpoint of beauty. There are some who find beauty in everything they see, even where the average person could see no beauty whatsoever. Then, there are others who see beauty only in those things where it is outstanding - a beautiful picture or a beautiful sunset - only something very spectacular will stir their appreciation of beauty. This, I call "mild" appreciation that needs much to stimulate it. Then, unfortunately, there are those who have absolutely no "eye for the beautiful". These are the people who are to be pitied, for all life takes on different meaning when God has endowed us with this deep appreciation of the wonderful things that Nature has given us. However, if at birth we are not given this quality of appreciation of beauty, it can be cultivated - and should be.

If you are having a particular life problem just now, you probably are wondering what all of this lesson that is to follow has to do with you. But, my Companion and Friend, it has much to do with solving your problems.

Just recently, a lady came to me for an interview about difficulties she was having in her home life. There wasn't anything about the behaviour of her mate, in her eyes, that was not ugly and evil. We talked for quite a while, and then I asked, "Isn't there anything about your husband that is good? Doesn't he have any good characteristics? Doesn't he ever do anything commendable that you can admire?" And she finally, reluctantly, admitted that underneath those things about which she had spoken, he really was a good man - and she went on to tell me of the good things about him from the standpoint of his character, her many years of life with him and the nice intervals during the long life they had spent together. By the time we concluded our interview, she had begun to see some beauty in her life with her husband, the beauty of his character. What had happened with her was that the criticism she had of him had completely overshadowed those things that are good.

And right here, I would like to say that beauty is more than a matter of line or color, or a beautiful face, or a beautiful picture. Beauty is Goodness, Kindness, Honesty, Character.

Many people spend thousands of dollars each year in an endeavor to look younger and more beautiful when, as a matter of fact, it isn't always the lines in the face that indicate age and fatigue - they do not always come from hard work, but, rather, from wrong thinking. It is very much like a sculptor who makes lines in the marble with his chisel. Your habitual thoughts can carve indelible lines on your face. If you will notice, the happy person whose goodness comes from within usually keeps his or her youth many years longer than the person who never sees beauty in anything and creates an expression from thoughts that are filled with unhappiness, bitterness, and criticism of others.

While on this thought, I would also like to add that inward joy and happiness has a tremendous beautifying value. Gloom and depression dry up our life process. If one can only learn to live the joy way, how different life will be. Of course, that doesn't mean to take a flippant attitude toward life's problems, for that cannot always be done, but it does mean to take a hopeful

and optimistic attitude when conditions have reached a point where you feel you cannot cope with them. Find something really beautiful to look at - beautiful flowers, a beautiful picture, a beautiful expanse of countryside, even a beautiful shop window - and you will find it will lift your depression. You can think happy thoughts and about happy things, and you can try in every way to help other people to be happy.

There is one lesson I have learned through the years, and that is just this: The more you do this, the more strength you will be able to give to other people, and the more beauty and help you will be able to give - in addition to beautifying your own life. In this way, we can turn ashes into beauty.

If you do not have the ability to appreciate beauty, you have never looked on a "blue velvet" sky at night studded with a galaxy of stars, you have never seen love in the eyes of a friend or loved one, you have never known the trust in the eyes of a baby when it looks into yours - even a very small baby, you have not heard a congregation singing the great hymns of faith, nor the beautiful chords of a pipe organ played by an artist.

It would be difficult for me to imagine life without an appreciation of beauty. In my garden is a small Juniper tree, growing close to the ground, that is very old and that has lost most of its foliage. And out of that small, dwarfed tree there is a gnarled branch without any foliage whatsoever. There probably are many who would cut this branch off, considering it an eyesore or a defect, but to me it is a thing of beauty. I never look at it without truly enjoying Nature's handiwork, for Nature always tries to remedy the ugly by making it beautiful, which is the reason for the title of this lesson, "Beauty for Ashes".

Before you start to study your lesson, will you please say the following prayer with great earnestness. It can change your life.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, forevermore take away the ugliness of life and give me the grace and wisdom to receive and use the beautiful instead. Amen.

The Going Market

Through nature, life, and providence, God is always offering to trade us the loveliness of living for its unattractiveness, beauty for ashes. That is what is featured at His counter in the great marketplace of existence every day. We get our affairs warped and twisted because we let our thinking get out of line and our sense of values out of order. This results in ugliness where there was only beauty in the first place, but we need not let this sad situation go on. This is one booth where they will always take back spoiled goods, even if it is our own fault, and give us beauty for our ashes again. As Lowell said:

"At the devil's booth are all things sold.

Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold.
For a cap and bells our lives we pay.
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking,
When heaven alone is given away,
And only God may be had for the asking."

The question on which this lesson is based carries a definite suggestion of something that is going on all the time. We not only dispose of the waste of life, but we sometimes let some of its real values get thrown into the fire of day-to-day judgment, and it is always destroying what no one tries to save. The result is that we have received ashes for beauty.

The true plan of Providence in our lives is to keep the true beauty of things from being thrown into the waste and burned, to keep the lovely wings of every moth at a safe distance from the flame. Even when we have traded beauty for ashes, it strives to give us beauty back for our ashes again.

But we have to remember that it takes two to make a bargain. Neither of these trades is forced upon us. Beauty turns to ashes only when we let it, and if the ashes are traded back for beauty, it has to be done with our consent and cooperation. If the process were only automatic, there would be no need for a lesson like this - it would take care of itself. But since it is not, these thoughts are written and read in the hope of being helpful and of lending some encouragement to anyone who has made bad bargains, and to lead those who have failed to make good bargains to begin doing so now. Keep away from the booth where each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold and visit often the one where the reverse is true, where the dross is taken away and the true, the good, and the lovely, are freely given in its place.

One is not likely to do this unless he sees the situation and opportunity clearly, nor is he likely to do it unless he realizes the value of beauty and sees that the creative will is that life shall be not only beautiful but increasingly so.

Ashes have always had a symbolic meaning. People used to put ashes on their heads when they were in sorrow and despair. The Vale of Hinnom outside Jerusalem was the place where the city's waste and refuse was thrown. There it was burned, and was always smoking, so that what once may have been someone's joy became ashes. We have our private Gehennas filled with ruin we could trade in for something better.

In Nature

We can see this going on in nature all the time, and nature is only the divine hand at work. Have you not noticed how it will not let ugliness remain ugly if it can prevent it? The great rugged crags of geological change and earth upheaval have been made so beautiful that people travel far to see them. A vast gully like The Grand Canyon takes on a majesty that seems always whispering to us to see what one patient little stream succeeded in doing by keeping everlastingly at it.

Two men were passing through a swamp. They came upon the snag of a riven

tree there in the water, covered with the tendrils of a flowering vine that gave it a flaming and far-seen loveliness.

"Have you noticed," asked one, "how determined nature is that nothing shall remain ugly? The storm that twisted this tree off and left it to rot there in the water was cruel and uncaring, but nature refused to leave this old splintered snag standing here uncovered. As a housewife throws something over some unattractive spot, nature has thrown over this snag a vine like a flowered scarf so the passing world may see it as a beautiful and not an ugly thing."

You can see the same thing on any old battlefield. Alan Seeger wrote of the glow of flaming poppies growing between the rows of crosses that mark the resting places of the dead of the first world war. Now you would find fields of grain waving on those old scenes of cruelty and death, and new trees putting out branches where the old ones were stripped and killed with shellfire. On battlefields of the Revolution and the Civil War, you can see that nature has done all it could to hide the trenches, breastworks, and unmarked graves. It is the hand of God always striving, even when we do not know it, or appreciate it, or even desire it, to give us beauty for ashes.

In a certain part of America there was once an old road, much of it mountainous. Travel on it was difficult, slow, and even dangerous, so travelers had little chance to enjoy the natural beauty of the landscapes on either side. At last human hands straightened the road, graded it, and put fine tunnels where the forbidding summits had been. Today the traveler knows how beautiful is the country he is passing through because the skill of man has helped the handiwork of the divine to give beauty for ashes.

Unseen powers gave us a beautiful world to be born in and strive always to maintain its loveliness and increase it. It can use help from us in this process of giving beauty for the ashes of human existence. We can help tend the vines that grow about the shattered stumps in the swamp, and to improve the hard roads that run through areas of inaccessible loveliness.

In Personality

Victor Hugo's novel, "The Laughing Man," is about a baby stolen from a noble household by wandering show people. His face was marred and changed with a knife to make him look comical without a mask. As he grew up, everyone laughed at the ugliness of his face. When his noble birth was discovered, he went to take his seat in the House of Lords, and the great soul behind his ugly face expressed itself in one of the world's great orations. It began, "My lords, I bring you news, news of the existence of mankind". You cannot judge the heart by the face. Gwynplaine received beauty for ashes that night.

A New England boy had a sad childhood accident with fire. It left one side of his face a pitiful scar. Knowing the world would tend to look at the scar instead of the man, he resolved early to build a mind so brilliant and a personality so attractive that they would detract attention from the disfigurement. When he died after a long and brilliant career as a scholar, an educational administrator,

and a man, understanding people around the world agreed that he had succeeded in trading the ashes of disfigurement for the beauty of a great life.

A certain man graduated late from the University and entered on the life of a teacher. He had a mop of unruly hair above a long, thin face with a long chin and a protruding lower lip. Wherever he went people called him an incarnation of Irving's Ichabod Crane. Students who went to enroll in his classes were doubtful till they caught the friendly twinkle in his eyes and the meaningful words spoken by his pleasant voice.

They found his class sessions inspiring and helpful. They acquired learn-

An old gentleman and lady boarded a train at a little station. They were plainly dressed. Their faces were contented, but whenever they looked at each other they were radiant.

"Don't you think this is a beautiful girl?" the old man asked when the conductor stopped for the tickets. The conductor had to agree, with formality.

"Well Sir," said the old man, "if you had known her as long as I have, you would know that she is one of the most beautiful women in the world."

The conductor took his word for it, and so did the passengers who saw and heard. The modistes and charm schools might not have agreed; but all who had old mothers and grandmothers, or had shared the heart of someone else so long that their hearts beat in unison, would have agreed. Whether divine or human, love is always giving beauty for ashes. A person who has never loved some other person - parent, child, helpmeet - is not very likely to see much beauty in the rest of the world. He has never lived in an "enchanted cottage."

Think of George Eliot's Silas Marner, whose face and heart were as hard as the coins he kept hidden in his treasure box, till Little Eppie, a helpless child, came into his life. Then his nature took on an attractiveness that others might have thought impossible for him. It changed his old, cold house into an "enchanted cottage."

Think of Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean in "Les Miserables", a son of misfortune who changed from a rebellious-hearted criminal first into a good man and then into a saintly one by taking motherless Little Cosette under his protection and struggling to give her a good life and a chance for happiness. Wherever they lived and where he died was an "enchanted cottage" where beauty had been given for ashes.

If there is anything unattractive in your personal world, you cannot paint it over, or patch it, or cover it up. Why not build some beautiful and selfless quality in its place? Whether in an enchanted cottage or just the old home place, that may prove the secret of beauty for ashes.

A Forest Conversation

Deep in the woods, not far from each other, grew a poison vine and a wild rose. The poison vine clung to a big oak tree and flung its three-leafed branches brazenly to the wind. All who saw them took warning from them and kept away. The rose bush grew by a woodland path made by people who were attracted by its loveliness. The oak tree knew them both very well.

One day the poison vine was complaining to the oak. It did this a great deal of the time, for it was of a sullen, unloving disposition; but that day it was more petulant than usual. The trouble was that day, as on many days, it was jealous of its neighbor, the rose.

"I don't see what there is about that rose plant that is so attractive to people," it said. "Everyone who comes through the woods takes that path and stops

and says nice things about that rose bush and they always smile at it. What is there about it that attracts them so? I am an old resident here too, and I think my green leaves and regularly shaped branches have a certain beauty about them, yet people avoid me. They do not treat the other green plants hereabout that way. I don't think it is fair, and I think they are very foolish."

While the poison vine was saying all these bitter things, the rose bush was nodding gently in the sunshine. Someone who came by noticed that it had put out some new buds and that a fresh bloom or two had opened. This seemed to make the poison vine more resentful than ever.

The oak tree waited a bit to see if the rose wanted to speak, but it was busy brightening the day for some people who had just come down the path, and pretended not to hear. There was nothing it could have said anyway. All its lovely life it had let its beauty speak for itself. After a pause, the oak tree spoke.

"It may not be of much comfort to you," it said to the vine, but also for the rose to hear, "but perhaps I can tell you something that probably neither of you know, something that I have only heard from my ancestral trees, which had heard it as it was passed down from yet older oaks that grew here, yet something that may answer your question.

"They told me that once two of your ancestors grew here, and that they were just alike. No one made any difference, because there was no difference. But one of them fell into the habit of hurting everyone who touched it, and even some who only came near. Then it refused to sustain itself, and attached itself to a tree to live on its sap. That plant became a poison vine, and so has remained to this day. People avoid it because they do not want to be hurt.

"The other plant made its own way, and cultivated the habit of smiling and nodding at everyone who came near. It grew lovelier and more attractive each passing year, till it began to grow buds and blossoms increasing in size and loveliness. The plant, dear rosebush, became yourself, and here you are still beautifying the woods with your beauty and good will.

"You have thorns, to be sure, but you never attack anyone with them, using them only to protect yourself so you can go on making the woods beautiful. Each of you came to look like what you were, for all outward beauty starts within."

What is Beauty?

We all know what ashes are because we make them. They are the debris of something that has been destroyed. It may have been something lovely, valuable, or important; but its ashes are just the same as though it had been the most useless and unimportant thing in the world. That is all the consideration we need give to ashes, save that they are a fitting symbol of loss and regret.

But beauty, prized and treasured as it is, deserves some comment on what gives it its name and nature, why some seeming beauty is not real, and why some beauty is only temporary while some is lasting.

We can turn to nature for the beginning of our inquiry, for it was the first and remains the greatest expert in making lovely things. Take a snow crystal, for instance. Under a magnifying glass, it is seen to be made in one of many patterns equaling or excelling the finest lacework. Though in great variety these crystals are found to have exactly six sides. Any piece of ice falling through a current of air cold enough to burst it will break into fragments with the same number of sides mathematically calculated. There is a unity here showing that a law prevails in the making of this beauty. It is based on truth, and so through nature and life at any level, the true is beautiful and the beautiful is true. By this law, God gives us beauty or trades it to us for the ruined fragments of our failures.

As scientists reach farther and probe deeper into the mysteries of the universe, they find mathematical exactness everywhere in creation. We find it in music, in the microscopical processes of our bodies, and in the reaches of space among galaxies and nebulae. By some inspired understanding, Albert Einstein reduced all energy contained in matter to one equation - that the energy bound up in anything equals its mass times the speed of light per second squared, or multiplied by itself. That is the principle underlying all our talk about atomic power. This shows that the beauty and wonder of all creation was accurately figured out before it was made.

Near the end of his earthly life, Doctor Einstein announced another inspired conclusion - that the universe is not a vast, disorganized commotion of matter, but a unified arrangement operating in one great plan. That means that one Mind planned it all, and one Power brought it into being.

There are many things that make beauty, but they are all facets of truth. Among them are love, goodness, justice, kindness, understanding, hope, and faith. You see they are all interrelated, parts of one great completeness.

Truth is beautiful because it is true, and beauty is true because it is beautiful. This law applies in everything we are and do - our thoughts, words, and deeds; our makeups, our natures, and our destinies. Truth is actualized right, right is actualized truth; and both are beautiful. Along the road marked by these things, there are not many ashes.

Closing Suggestions

Do your best to keep any of the beauty in your life from going to ashes. It will not do so if you guard, treasure, and cultivate it. Think often how your life is beautified and enriched by its true values, and do not let any destructive influence rob you of them. Remember that failure to realize and appreciate them is losing them just as truly as letting something take them from you.

If through any accident or error of neglect, any of the beauty of your life has been or should be destroyed, give God a chance to take its ashes from you and give you beauty for them. That beauty may be of a riper and more understanding kind, but after your loss it may be even more precious than what you had before.

Nurture loveliness in your life. Shun the liking for the ugly that seems at times to obsess the human mind - ugliness in art, music, literature, thinking, speech, and action. It passes, and in time its results may also pass; but think of the human loss in damage done before it goes. God will in time give the race beauty for all these ashes, but that will not change the pity that so many blossoms withered on the stem for people who needed them. A beautiful life lived by you, no matter how many people seem to admire the opposite, will do that much to save the situation and make ours a more creditable chapter of history for the future to read.

Notice the animals and birds and observe the loveliness of the good will they try to show. Notice the swayings and listen to the whisperings of the stately trees. Notice the beauty in a normal human life, and when you see a life that has for the time lost the charm of its personality, or one that is trying to cling to loveliness of mind and character in spite of handicaps, give it any sympathy and encouragement you can, especially if others are passing it by. Beauty of life is the greatest beauty there is. Possibilities that lie in ashes are the most pitiful, but if you help one to exchange those ashes for beauty, you will draw a dividend of loveliness for yourself.

Plant beauty wherever you can. Do not be affected by the world's sneers at sweetness and light. Think of Abraham Lincoln's wish to have it said that he never failed to pluck a thorn or plant a rose where he thought a rose would grow, and remember that the places where a rose will not grow are very few.

Once in a school in a slum section of a large city, this happened. The teacher placed a beautiful white lily in a bud vase on her desk before classes began. A little girl from a poor home fastened her gaze on it. She wore a dirty dress, her hands and face were unwashed, and her hair was uncombed - all signs that poverty sometimes gets so discouraged that it makes the worst of itself.

The child looked awhile at the fresh, pure flower on the teacher's desk, then rose and left the room. After a while she returned with face and hands clean, wearing a fresh dress, and with her hair neatly combed. She even had a happy little smile on her face. God has various ways of giving beauty for ashes.

An artist was working before a heap of ashes and a pile of junk beyond which ran a happy little stream and a beautiful wooded hillside. When the picture was done it was of the stream and the hillside. He had eliminated the ashes and the junk. God tries to do that with the pictures of our lives, but remember that it takes two to make a bargain.

AFFIRMATION

I love, think, and seek beauty; and as I do, I often find it where before there were only ashes.

Blessings,

Your Instructor.