

The Spirit of Opulence
By Thomas Troward

It is quite a mistake to suppose that we must restrict and stint ourselves in order to develop greater power or usefulness. This is to form the conception of the Divine Power as so limited that the best use we can make of it is by a policy of self-starvation, whether material or mental. Of course, if we believe that some form of self-starvation is necessary to our producing good work, then so long as we entertain this belief the fact actually is so *for us*. "Whatsoever is not of faith"--that is, not in accordance with our honest *belief*--"is sin"; and by acting contrary to what we really believe we bring in a suggestion of opposition to the Divine Spirit, which must necessarily paralyze our efforts, and surround us with a murky atmosphere of distrust and want of joy.

But all this exists in, and is produced by, our *belief*, and when we come to examine the grounds of this belief we shall find that it rests upon an entire misapprehension of the nature of our own power. If we clearly realize that the creative power in ourselves is *unlimited*, then there is no reason for limiting the extent to which we may enjoy what we can create by means of it. Where we are drawing from the *infinite* we need never be afraid of taking more than our share.

That is not where the danger lies. The danger is in not sufficiently realizing our own richness, and in looking upon the externalized products of our creative power as being the true riches instead of the creative power of spirit itself.

If we avoid this error, there is no need to limit ourselves in taking what we will from the infinite storehouse: "All things are yours." And the way to avoid this error is by realizing that the true wealth is in identifying ourselves with the *spirit* of opulence. We must be opulent in our *thought*. Do not "think money," as such, for it is only one means of opulence; but *think opulence*, that is, largely, generously, liberally, and you will find that the means of realizing this thought will flow to you from all quarters, whether as money or as a hundred other things not to be reckoned in cash.

We must not make ourselves dependent on any particular *form* of wealth, or insist on its coming to us through some particular channel--that is at once to impose a limitation, and to shut out other forms of wealth and to close other channels; but we must enter into the *spirit* of it. Now the spirit is Life, and throughout the universe Life ultimately consists in *circulation*, whether within the physical body of the individual or on the scale of the entire solar system; and circulation means a continual flowing around, and the *spirit* of opulence is no exception to this universal law of all life.

When once this principle becomes clear to us we shall see that our attention should be directed rather to the giving than the receiving. We must look upon ourselves, not as misers' chests to be kept locked for our own benefit, but as centers of distribution; and the better we fulfill our function as such centers the greater will be the corresponding inflow. If we choke the outlet the current must slacken, and a full and free flow can be obtained only by keeping it open. The spirit of opulence--the opulent mode of thought, that is--consists in cultivating the feeling that we possess all sorts of riches which we can *bestow upon others*, and which we can bestow *liberally* because by this very action we open the way for still greater supplies to flow in. But you say, "I am short of money, I hardly know how to pay for necessities. What have I to give?"

The answer is that we must always start from the point where we are; and if your wealth at the present moment is not abundant on the material plane, you need not trouble to start on that plane. There are other sorts of wealth, still more valuable, on the spiritual and intellectual planes, which you can give; and you can start from this point and practice the spirit of opulence, even though your balance at the bank may be nil. And then the universal law of attraction will begin to assert itself. You will not only begin to experience an inflow on the spiritual and intellectual planes, but it will extend itself to the material plane also.

If you have realized the *spirit* of opulence you *cannot help* drawing to yourself material good, as well as that higher wealth which is not to be measured by a money standard; and because you truly understand the *spirit* of opulence you will neither affect to despise this form of good, nor will you attribute to it a value that does not belong to it; but you will *co-ordinate* it with your other more interior forms of wealth so as to make it the material instrument in smoothing the way for their more perfect expression. Used thus, with understanding of the relation which it bears to spiritual and intellectual wealth, material wealth becomes *one with them*, and is no more to be shunned and feared than it is to be sought for its own sake.

It is not money, but the *love* of money, that is the root of evil; and the *spirit* of opulence is precisely the attitude of mind which is furthest removed from the love of money for its own sake. It does not believe in money. What it does believe in is the generous feeling which is the intuitive recognition of the great law of circulation, which does not in any undertaking make its first question, How much am I going to *get* by it? but, How much am I going to *do* by it? And making *this* the first question, the getting will flow in with a generous profusion, and with a spontaneousness and rightness of direction that are absent when our first thought is of receiving only.

We are not called upon to give what we have not yet got and to run into debt; but we are to give liberally of what we have, with the knowledge that by so doing we are setting the law of circulation to work, and as this law brings us greater and greater inflows of every kind of good, so our out-giving will increase, not by depriving ourselves of any expansion of our own life that we may desire, but by finding that every expansion makes us the more powerful instruments for expanding the life of others. "Live and let live" is the motto of the true opulence.

Beauty

Do we sufficiently direct our thoughts to the subject of Beauty? I think not. We are too apt to regard Beauty as a merely superficial thing, and do not realize all that it implies. This was not the case with the great thinkers of the ancient world--see the place which no less a one than Plato gives to Beauty as the expression of all that is highest and greatest in the system of the universe. These great men of old were no superficial thinkers, and, therefore, would never have elevated to the supreme place that which is only superficial. Therefore, we shall do well to ask what it is that these great minds found in the idea of Beauty which made it thus appeal to them as the most perfect outward expression of all that lies deepest in the fundamental laws of Being. It is because, rightly apprehended, Beauty represents the most supreme living quality of Thought. It is the glorious overflowing of fullness of Love which indicates the presence of infinite reserves of Power behind it. It is the joyous profusion that shows the possession of inexhaustible stores of wealth which can afford to be thus lavish and yet remain as exhaustless as before. Read aright, Beauty is the index to the whole nature of Being.

Beauty is the externalization of Harmony, and Harmony is the coordinated working of all the powers of Being, both in the individual and in the relation of the individual to the Infinite from which it springs; and therefore this Harmony conducts us at once into the presence of the innermost undifferentiated Life. Thus Beauty is in most immediate touch with the very Arcanum (secret known to few) of Life; it is the brightness of glory spreading itself over the sanctuary of the Divine Spirit. For if, viewed from without, Beauty is the province of the artist and the poet, and lays hold of our emotions and appeals directly to the innermost feelings of our heart, calling up the response of that within us which recognizes itself in the harmony perceived without, this is only because it speeds across the bridge of Reason with such quick feet that we pass from the outmost to the inmost and back again in the twinkling of an eye; but the bridge is still there and, retracing our steps more leisurely, we shall find that, viewed from within, Beauty is no less the province of the calm reasoner and analyst. What the poet and the artist seize upon intuitively, he elaborates gradually, but the result is the same in both cases; for no intuition is true which does not admit of being expanded into a rational sequence of intelligible factors, and no argument is true which does not admit of being condensed into that rapid suggestion which is intuition.

Thus the impassioned artist and the calm thinker both find that the only true Beauty proceeds naturally from the actual construction of that which it expresses. It is not something added on as an afterthought, but something pre-existing in the original idea, something to which that idea naturally leads up, and which pre-supposes that idea as affording it any *raison d'être*. The test of Beauty is, What does it express? Is it merely a veneer, a coat of paint laid on from without? Then it is indeed nothing but a whitened sepulcher, (a sepulcher is a burial place or container for relics. Pronounced (sepp'lker)) a covering to hide the vacuity or deformity which needs to be removed. But is it the true and natural outcome of what is beneath the surface?

Then it is the index to super abounding Life and Love and Intelligence, which is not content with mere utilitarianism hastening to escape at the earliest possible point from the labor of construction, as though from an enforced and unwelcome task, but rejoicing over its work and unwilling to quit it until it has expressed this rejoicing in every fittest touch of form and color and exquisite proportion that the material will admit of, and this without departing by a hairbreadth from the original purpose of the design. Wherever, therefore, we find Beauty, we may infer an enormous reserve of Power behind it; in fact, we may look upon it as the visible expression of the great truth that Life-Power is infinite. And when the inner meaning of Beauty is thus revealed to us, and we learn to know it as the very fullness and overflowing of Power, we shall find that we have gained a new standard for the guidance of our own lives.

We must begin to use this wonderful process which we have learnt from Nature. Having learnt how Nature works--how God works--we must begin to work in like manner, and never consider any work complete until we have carried it to some final outcome of Beauty, whether material, intellectual, or spiritual. Is my intention good? That is the initial question, for the intention determines the nature of the essence in everything. What is the most beautiful form in which I can express the good I intend? That is the ultimate question; for the true Beauty which our work expresses is the measure of the Power, Intelligence, Love--in a word, of the quantity and quality of our own life which we have put into it. True Beauty, mind you--that which is beautiful because it most perfectly expresses the original idea, not a mere ornamentation occupying our thoughts as a thing apart from the use intended.

Nothing is of so small account but it has its fullest power of expression in some form of Beauty peculiarly its own. Beauty is the law of perfect Thought, be the subject of our Thought some scheme affecting the welfare of millions, or a word spoken to a little child. True Beauty and true Power are the correlatives one of the other. Kindly expression originates in kindly thought; and kindly expression is the essence of Beauty, which, seeking to express itself ever more and more perfectly becomes that fine touch of sympathy which is artistic skill, whether applied in working upon material substances or upon the emotions of the heart.

But, remember, first Use, then Beauty, and neither complete without the other. Use without Beauty is ungracious giving, and Beauty without Use is humbug; never forgetting, however, that there is a region of the mind where the use is found in the beauty, where Beauty itself serves the direct purpose of raising us to see a higher ideal which will thenceforward permeate our lives, giving a more living quality to all we think and say and do.

Seen thus the Beautiful is the true expression of the Good. From whichever end of the scale we look we shall find that they accurately measure each other. They are the same thing in the outermost and the innermost respectively. But in our search for a higher Beauty than we have yet found we must beware of missing the Beauty that already exists. Perfect harmony with its environment and perfect expression of its own inward nature are what constitute Beauty; and our ignorance of the nature of the thing or its environment may shut our eyes to the Beauty it already has. It takes the genius of a Millet to paint, or a Whitman in words, to show us the beauty of those ordinary work-a-day figures with which our world is for the most part peopled, whose originals we pass by as having no form or comeliness. Assuredly the mission of every thinking man and woman is to help build up forms of greater beauty, spiritual, intellectual, material, everywhere; but if we would make something grander than Watteau gardens or Dresden china shepherdesses, we must enter the great realistic school of Nature and learn to recognize the beauty that already surrounds us, although it may have a little dirt on the surface. Then, when we have learnt the great principles of Beauty from the All-Spirit which is it, we shall know how to develop the Beauty on its own proper lines without perpetuating the dirt; and we shall know that all Beauty is the expression of Living Power, and that we can measure our power by the degree of beauty into which we can transform it, rendering our lives,

**"By loveliness of perfect deeds, More
strong than all poetic thought."**



Find us on your favorite podcast platform:

Apple Podcasts | Google Play | Stitcher