

**ONE WORLD AT A TIME:
A CONTRIBUTION TO
THE INCENTIVES OF LIFE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649662111

One World at a Time: A Contribution to the Incentives of Life by Thomas R. Slicer

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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BY
THOMAS R. SLICER

How good is man's life, the mere living ! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy !

BROWNING'S *Saul*

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK & LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press

1902

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NEW YORK
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ONE WORLD AT A TIME

CHAPTER I

THE SCEPTIC

THE man who never had a doubt never had a mind. Given a mind, a doubt must at some time or other invade it, for the reason that the sceptic is the inquirer. We do not inquire as to that we already know—we inquire where we are in doubt. The inquirer's business is to find things out; and for the most part, he finds things out for the other man who does not care to find them out. The result is that two classes have been concerned with the bettering of the human mind in its attitude toward the greatest realities,—the sceptic, who has kept the air clear about the fires of devotion, and the mystic, who has fed the fires with fresh fuel that they may flame. These two,—the one who provides the atmosphere of crystalline clearness of inquiry; the

other who provides the sacrifices upon the altars of devotion,—these two have been most concerned with the progress of religious thought.

The sceptic is the inquirer. His inquiry addresses itself to three distinct subjects. For instance, he is conscious of himself. He is a being. Naturally, unless he is content simply to accept his animal sensations, he has to inquire what that being is. He is placed as a being under conditions of life, and unless he is content simply to stay where he dropped, he has to inquire what those conditions are, and whether they can be bettered. He is conscious of himself and his environment. He has a third question pressing upon his attention. It is the question, What is to become of me? He wants to know whether he is to be snuffed out like a candle, never to be relighted; he wants to know whether there is any other world; he wants to know what the conditions are that now guarantee to him a hold on life that cannot be killed. He wants to know these things. So, the sceptic, if he has a mind; if he is not simply a doubting machine. There are intellectual outfits that seem not to be minds; they are mere interrogation points; if you were to take a magni-

fyng glass of great power and take off the skull-cap over the brain of that kind of man, I suppose you would find the grey matter of his brain covered over with little interrogation points; and they would be so knitted together that they would have taken the place of the free matter in his brain. Your chronic doubter is like the chronic complainer. He asks questions for ever as the other man sighs and groans for ever. But the real sceptic—the man who is a real inquirer, who “wants to know,” as the Yankees say—is out on a voyage of discovery; he perhaps does not know whither his ship is going, because we sail the sea of life under sealed orders, and get far out into the deep before we realise which way we are heading, and what our destiny is; presently we pass over some degree of latitude or longitude that indicates whether we are going north or south or east or west and whither our general direction is likely to take us; but if he is a real voyager, he is more concerned with the ship than he is with the destination. He understands, in the first place, that the anchor is not the whole equipment of a ship. There are people who continually say to you, “Why do you go on asking questions, inquiring, raising these doubts?” We do not raise them;