

**UP STREAM: AN
AMERICAN
CHRONICLE**

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Up stream: an American chronicle by Ludwig Lewisohn

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LUDWIG LEWISOHN

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BY

LUDWIG LEWISOHN



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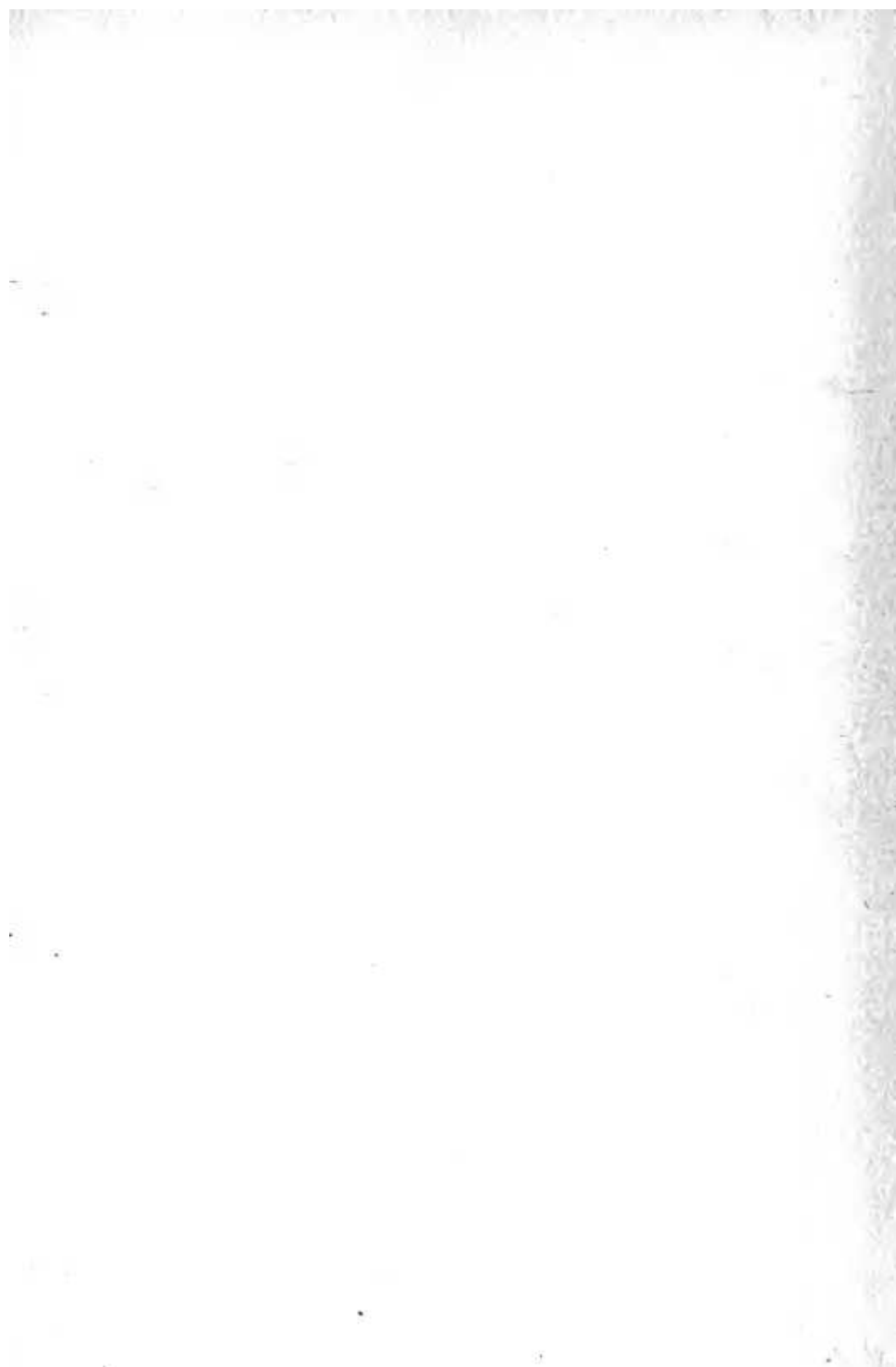
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PROLOGUE

The world is full of stories and many of the stories are true. But they are not true enough. An artistic pattern comes between the teller of the tale and his reality, or a vague fear of stupid and malicious comment or—especially in America—a desire to avoid singularity. Yet, somehow, we must master life or it will end by destroying us. We can master it only by understanding it and we can understand it only by telling each other the quite naked and, if need be, the devastating truth.

Some such perception and some such motive is in the consciousness of every serious novelist and in that of every thinker. But the novelist sacrifices to a form and the thinker to a system. Each has had an anterior vision into which he lets his facts and even his emotions melt. And this anterior vision—of a fable in the one case, of a logical structure in the other—is nothing but a mask. For both the novelist and the philosopher is only an autobiographer in disguise. Each writes a confession; each is a lyricist at bottom. I, too, could easily have written a novel or a treatise. I have chosen to drop the mask.

It is not a simple thing to do. One likes to be decorous. The folds of this mantle of civilization we wear in public, and often enough, in private, are graceful and accustomed. They give a dignity to the figure that the mind may lack. But if no one will ever speak out for fear of wounding his own susceptibilities or

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those of others, this hush of cowardly considerateness and moral stealth in which so much of our life is passed will either throttle us some day or sting us into raw and mad revolt.

In every other country men have spoken out in prose or verse and have recorded their experience and their vision and their judgment on this civilization in which we are ensnared. But no one has spoken out in America. We have not suffered enough, and man is a timid and a patient creature from whom nothing less than the unendurable itself will wring a protest. There are thousands of people among us who can find in my adventures a living symbol of theirs and in my conclusion a liberation of their own and in whom, as in me, this moment of history has burned away delusions to the last shred. But how many will admit that and not rather yield to the insidious fear of those to whom they owe deference or money or a social position in Gopher Prairie or Central City? It is a nice question which must be settled in each conscience. I have done my share.

CHAPTER I

A FAR CHILDHOOD

I

The city that I remember, the Berlin of the eighties, was rugged and grey. But it had nothing forbidding in its aspect, rather an air of homely and familiar comfort. There were few private houses, but people lived in their apartments in large, airy rooms with tall French windows and neat, white tile ovens. The streets were monotonous in appearance but admirably clean. There were no posters, no public advertisements except upon the pillars erected for that purpose, the traffic of horse-cars, omnibuses and cabs was orderly and convenient. The cabs, driven by red-faced, loquacious cabbies in blue-caped coats and top-hats, were cheap. My father and mother, though far from rich, used them constantly, and I remember being driven for hours through the black-draped city on that icy day in 1888 on which the old emperor's body lay in state in the cathedral.

My earliest glimpses of beauty are characteristic of the city. One was the windows of the Royal Porcelain Works on the Leipziger Strasse. With all the exquisite sensitiveness of childhood I saw those wonderful little figures and their porcelain veils and draperies and delicately moulded forms. They were so tiny and yet so perfect, and they thrilled me far more than Rauch's equestrian statue of the great Frederic or the chariot of victory over the city gate.