

THE ADVENTURE OF LIFE

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The Adventure of Life by Robert W. Mackenna

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ROBERT W. MACKENNA

**THE ADVENTURE
OF LIFE**



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THE ADVENTURE OF LIFE

BY

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Author of "The Adventure of Death"


Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
"Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid!"
BROWNING: *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

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TO
MY WIFE

"What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes."

E. B. BROWNING

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PREFACE

THE life of every one who will read these words has been influenced in some way by the war. It has rudely broken many old and sacred ties; it has touched with calamitous finger innumerable homes; it has altered life-long habits and shattered many a fondly cherished belief. It has introduced a ferment into human thought, and men who had accepted without questioning and with little understanding the mysteries of existence are finding their beliefs challenged and their faith shaken by the iron discipline of events. They are asking, as they watch civilization ablaze in the furnace, if there is any answer to the riddle of the universe; if there is any righteousness in the scheme of things; if there is any purpose in life: or if it is all nothing but an ugly delusion or a hideous dream.

There is a danger that some will find in a crude doctrine of materialism the sole resting-place for their feet; but the materialistic creed is a creed of pessimism — a foundation from which no useful and enduring edifice of belief can ever arise. That humanity may spring from the ashes of civilization with vigor renewed and vision purified, we must cultivate an invincible spirit of optimism. For such an attitude of mind we have good grounds: we have none for the sterilizing dogmas of materialism.

It is given to the physician to see much of human life. He has many opportunities of beholding its sordidness. He is the daily witness of its high heroism. He is con-

stantly faced by its problems; he can never get away from its mysteries; his knowledge of its adaptations is intimate, and though there is still much about it that is hidden from his inquiring eyes, he is aware of some of its potentialities.

Personally, I cannot bring myself to believe that life can ever be explained in the terms of sheer materialism, and reduced to mere chemical equations, or expressed entirely in the language of the physical or physiological laboratory. The indomitable logic of facts has driven me to the conclusion that behind all and above all there is an intelligent and beneficent Mind, immanent in nature and in the life of man. If this is true we have good reason to hail the future with a glad confidence.

The chapters which follow have been written in the hope that they may help to illumine with a ray of light, however feeble, the clouds of perplexity with which many an earnest seeker after the truth finds himself surrounded.

The book is neither a scientific monograph nor a philosophical treatise, and will be easily comprehended by all. As far as possible I have endeavored to avoid the use of technical terms. My aim has been to impress upon all who care to read the wonder and the harmony of life, and the complete interdependence that subsists between all forms of life. I believe that the goal of Nature is Life; the aim of Life is the development of Intelligence, and the object of Intelligence is a knowledge of God.

It is not my desire to disarm criticism, but some of the defects in the chapters which follow — of whose existence I am fully conscious — are due to the conditions under which the book has been composed. It was begun on a winter night in a little bell-tent in the