

SOME EMOTIONS AND A MORAL

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649033355

Some Emotions and a Moral by John Oliver Hobbes

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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JOHN OLIVER HOBBS

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AND A MORAL**



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THIRD EDITION

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
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PART I.

I.

"IDEALS, my dear Go-
lightly, are the root of
every evil. When a man
forgets his ideals he may
hope for happiness, but
not till then."

"And if he has none to forget?"

"That he has none to forget,"
said the first speaker slowly, "simply
means that he has not yet been
disappointed."

"You think he cannot escape
them?"

"I know he cannot. Of course I

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am speaking of the Thinking Man—not a human machine.”

The man who had been addressed as Golightly bent back in his chair, and did not reply immediately. He had a pleasant, rest-giving face—rest-giving in its strong suggestion that he was not the man to under-estimate his fellow-creatures, or himself.

“You say that a Thinking Man cannot escape ideals,” he said at last, “and yet you add he cannot be happy till he forgets them. Is not that a little hard on the Thinking Man?”

“Is not everything hard on him?” said the other. “Who can use his eyes and not wonder whether it may not be better to live a satisfied hog than a dissatisfied philosopher? Some days I have almost succeeded in not feeling—almost persuaded myself that after all there is nothing either good or honest—almost doubted my own sincerity in hoping I was mistaken. I suppose that because it has only been a case of ‘almost’ I have not felt happier.”

“Everything depends on what you call being happy,” said Golightly. “The word ‘happiness’ seems to play the writing on the wall to each

man's Belshazzar, and each Belshazzar thinks himself a Daniel. From your point of view, Provence, I should say it simply meant the craving for a new sensation. As for myself—at the risk of appearing frigid—I think there is much to take hold of in the Greek notion : that man is happiest to whom from day to day no evil happens."

Provence rose from his chair and began to pace the floor.

"If I could tell you what I meant by happiness," he said, "I should not want it. I have no pretty talent for definitions. There are some men, I know, who can analyze their first love and wonder with Hume if their passion is the appetite for generation sandwiched between the appreciation for beauty and a generous kindness. They can reduce their God to a diagram and their emotions to a system. If that is philosophy, I have not the first makings of a philosopher. But I know this : I cannot be happy merely because I am not unhappy. It is this unending evenness, this everlasting dulness, which overwhelms me. If I may have nothing better, give me seven devils : one could not be dull with seven devils!"