

# **THE TREASURE OF THE HUMBLE**

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The Treasure of the Humble by Maurice Maeterlinck & Alfred Sutro & A. B. Walkley

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**MAURICE MAETERLINCK & ALFRED SUTRO & A. B. WALKLEY**

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**The Treasure of  
the Humble**

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# The Treasure of the Humble

By Maurice Maeterlinck

*Translated by Alfred Sutro*

*With Introduction by A. B. Walkley*



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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	Page	ix
SILENCE . . . . .		i
THE AWAKENING OF THE SOUL . . . . .		23
THE PRE-DESTINED . . . . .		43
MYSTIC MORALITY . . . . .		59
ON WOMEN . . . . .		75
THE TRAGICAL IN DAILY LIFE . . . . .		95
THE STAR . . . . .		121
THE INVISIBLE GOODNESS . . . . .		147
THE DEEPER LIFE . . . . .		169
THE INNER BEAUTY . . . . .		197



## INTRODUCTION

WITH M. Maeterlinck as a dramatist the world is pretty well acquainted. This little volume presents him in the new character of a philosopher and an æsthetician. And it is in some sort an 'apology' for his theatre, the one being to the other as theory to practice. Reversing the course prescribed by Mr. Squeers for his pupils, M. Maeterlinck, having cleaned w-i-n-d-e-r, winder, now goes and spells it. He began by visualising and synthetising his ideas of life; here you shall find him trying to analyse these ideas and consumed with anxiety to tell us the truth that is in him. It is not a truth for all markets; he is at no pains to conceal that. He appeals, as every mystic must, to the elect; M. Anatole France would say, to the *âmes bien nées*. If we are not sealed of the tribe of Plotinus, he warns us to go elsewhere.

## The Treasure of the Humble

‘If, plunging thine eyes into thyself’—it is this same Plotinus that he is quoting—‘thou dost not feel the charm of beauty, it is in vain that, thy disposition being such, thou shouldst seek the charm of beauty; for thou wouldst seek it only with that which is ugly and impure. Therefore it is that the discourse we hold here is not addressed to all men.’ If we are to follow him in his expedition to a philosophic Ultima Thule, we must have the mind for that adventure. ‘We are here,’ as he tells us elsewhere of the ‘stiff’ but, it seems, ‘admirable’ Ruysbroeck, ‘all of a sudden on the borderland of human thought and far across the Arctic circle of the spirit. There is no ordinary cold, no ordinary dark there, and yet you shall find there naught but flames and light. But to those who arrive without having trained their minds to these new perceptions, the light and the flames are as dark and as cold as though they were painted.’ This means that the intelligence, the reason, will not suffice of themselves; we must have faith. There are passages in the book which may provoke a sniff from Mr. Worldly Wiseman; but we must beware of the Voltairean spirit, or this will be a closed book to us. ‘We live by

## Introduction

admiration, hope, and love,' said Wordsworth. And we understand by them, M. Maeterlinck would add. I fear we are not all of us found worthy of the mystical frame of mind. But it is a psychological fact, like another; and if we can only examine it from the outside, we can at least bring patience and placidity to the task. The point is: has M. Maeterlinck anything to say? It will be found, I think, that he has.

All men, the world has long been assured, are born Aristotelians or Platonists. There cannot be a doubt about M. Maeterlinck's philosophic birthright. He may say, as Paul Verlaine sang:

Moi, j'allais rêvant du divin Platon,  
Sous l'œil clignotant des bleus becs de gaz.

More strictly, he is a Neo-Platonist. His remark about the Admirable Ruysbroeck's idea is equally true of his own. 'I fancy that all those who have not lived in the intimacy of Plato and of the Neo-Platonists of Alexandria, will not go far with this reading.' He quotes Plotinus, 'the great Plotinus, who, of all the intellects known to me, draws the nearest to the divine.' He cites Porphyry and the Gnostics and Swedenborg.