

**MY
DEVON YEAR**

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My Devon year by Eden Phillpotts

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EDEN PHILLPOTTS

1916

"I AM IN HARMONY WITH ALL THAT IS A PART OF THY HARMONY, GREAT UNIVERSE. FOR ME NOTHING IS EARLY AND NOTHING LATE THAT IS SEASONABLE TO THEE. ALL ARE FRUITS FOR ME THAT THY SEASONS BRING, O NATURE! SINCE FROM THEE, IN THEE, AND UNTO THEE ARE ALL THINGS" MARCUS AURELIUS

"I TRUST IN THE UNBORN, NOT IN THE DEAD

"THE MASTER-BUILDER"

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT
ROXBURGHE HOUSE
PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1916

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MY DEVON YEAR

THE SECRET OF THE DAY

AMONG the pomps and pageants of the seasons, revealed by nearly every sun that rises, painted upon the clouds, mirrored in the waters, and wrought into the fabric of the earth, shall be found a reflection or image of human emotions : the Secret of the Day, to be won from harmonies or discords of natural things. And a pilgrimage to seek this affinity is among the deepest joys your country dweller knows. On such high days a man may wander forth into the aisles of the eternal temple and strive to win that message proper to the time. From glare of unshadowed noons it can take shape, or from the twilight hour ; from dayspring on the heather and granite, or from still moments ruled by the moon ; from busy hamlets and orchard lands, or the murmuring of bees in remote moors ; from the whisper of rains and rivers ; from the songs of birds, or the silences of ancient forests and unfretted wastes.

Many a morning brings with it some echo of human emotion so obvious that the analogy strikes instant, almost unconscious, acknowledgment from all, and mankind sighs before a leaden dawn, or lifts his heart with gladness to a sunrise of promise ; but more often the diurnal progress is intermixed with subtler manifestations, and the brooding guardian-spirit of each day must be sought for with a measure of reverence and care. Then if your mind is open to such forces, if the key of your heart is surrendered to natural influences, like a dream the secret of the day shall grow upon you, and there shall develop a sort of inner certainty spun of the sky and the things under the sky. Be the day all blue ; be the day all gold ; be the day sad and sobbing—a theatre of mad winds, that shake the roof-tree and smite things animate and inanimate to destruction—yet secrets it surely holds ; and the brain of man shall win them, shall weave a definite subjective inspiration from the objective revelation of the hour. Thus Nature crowns suit and service at her courts, sometimes with a sort of lyric joy that lifts the heart upon its ebb and flow before her glories, sometimes with full measure of grief at her failure, and not seldom with gravity when we behold the eternal destruction of her unfit.

I doubt if there exists a passion or shade of passion, a prompting, a repulsion, or a great desire common to man, that some day shall not seem to mirror, though the closeness or subtlety of the likeness must depend upon the mind that seeks and finds it. Such light

flashes like a diamond—to one all purple, to another red as dawn, to a third the nameless colour of the deep sea, to a rare spirit, here and there, the composite ray of truth itself.

And thus you shall find, set largely forth through the annual circle of the sun's work upon this planet, a gamut of human moods—from Love, the Mother's primal bribe to win us like children, with a toy—along endless avenues of light and shade, by ways and through hours of mingled cloud and sunshine. All passive states of anticipation, expectancy, and awful dread are imaged here in their range of suffering, endurance, suspense, rest, sleep, or death; and activity also, in its countless manifestations, is most closely indicated. Here a day tells the tale of hope rekindled, of achievement crowned; here the unnumbered states of the mind—toil, tribulation, or opposition—are likewise painted upon the earth by the seasons, by the havoc wrought of lightnings, the magic of winter rains and summer suns, the teeth of the frost, and the eternal attrition of the tides. To-day a dozen facts, huddled together under the howling of the West wind, shall simultaneously cry and shout their message like the trumpets of an army; to-morrow only the burden of a robin's song sets free the secret; or a moonrise; or the sudden, far-flung, fast-fading flame of the afterglow. Content, the master-jewel of human glory, I have found blazoned upon no opulent triumph of Nature, but rather within some still, grey, twilight hour, between the passing of the harvest season and

the oncoming of Winter. On such a day content comes whispered by a falling leaf, or is written upon the fringes of sequestered woods, where the birch, before bud-break, dwells in an amethystine mist about her silver stem.

The winds, indeed, often and at all times in the yearly pilgrimage utter aloud the secret of the day, and so reveal the tale they have gleaned from earth and sky and the cloudland of eternal change between them. Naked, winter boughs cry it painfully; and sometimes, in the upper chambers of the air, serene and calm above mundane storm, the high clouds wheel and turn their chariots of light into the word one went to seek. The sea holds the secret, and its messages ride upon stinging spindrifts, torn from off the waves; roll in organ songs along lonely beaches; lull their burden to mere moaning upon the blind cliff-faces. With many a kiss the sea will whisper it, will write it hugely above her glimmering ocean-facing ridges of rock, will thunder it in her caverns, will spout it from the nostrils of her leviathans, will sing it in sunshine on a million simultaneous dimples, will cry it where the sea-bird presses his breast against the wind, and slants upwards or downwards upon that invisible inclined plane.

Nor does the obvious often intrude upon these wanderings after buried treasure. The wind may howl along its winter ways in the tree-tops, yet wake no sense of sinister power, of storms or sorrows; it may utter music proper to the season of opening