



THE WISDOM OF LIFE

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Global Grey ebooks

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1890

The Wisdom of Life by Arthur Schopenhauer.

This edition was created and published by Global Grey

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their eyes, and reach those secluded spots which are accessible to learned toil.

For this is a sphere where there are infinitely fewer rivals, and a man of only moderate capacity may soon find an opportunity of proclaiming a theory which shall be both new and true; nay, the merit of his discovery will partly rest upon the difficulty of coming at the facts. But applause from one's fellow-students, who are the only persons with a knowledge of the subject, sounds very faint to the far-off multitude. And if we follow up this sort of fame far enough, we shall at last come to a point where facts very difficult to get at are in themselves sufficient to lay a foundation of fame, without any necessity for forming a theory; — travels, for instance, in remote and little-known countries, which make a man famous by what he has seen, not by what he has thought. The great advantage of this kind of fame is that to relate what one has seen, is much easier than to impart one's thoughts, and people are apt to understand descriptions better than ideas, reading the one more readily than the other: for, as Asmus says,

*When one goes forth a-voyaging
He has a tale to tell.*

And yet for all that, a personal acquaintance with celebrated travelers often remind us of a line from Horace — new scenes do not always mean new ideas —

*Caelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.*⁶¹

But if a man finds himself in possession of great mental faculties, such as alone should venture on the solution of the hardest of all problems — those which concern nature as a whole and humanity in its widest range, he will do well to extend his view equally in all directions, without ever straying too far amid the intricacies of various by-paths, or invading regions little known; in other words, without occupying himself with special branches of knowledge, to say nothing of their petty details. There is no necessity for him to seek out subjects difficult of access, in order to escape a crowd of rivals; the common objects of life will give him material for new theories at

⁶¹ Epist. I. II.

