

The Great Nostalgia

(excerpted from Chap. 31 of Mikhail Naimy's *The Book of Mirdad*, w/edits by Lyn)

A sleepwalker is the man with the *Great Nostalgia* amid a world apparently so wide awake. He is drawn by a dream which those about him neither see nor feel; therefore they shrug their shoulders and titter in their sleeves...

Barren, and bleak, and forlorn is the land over which the dreamer flies. But the wings of intention are strong; and the man flies on.

Somber, and blood-curdling the mountain at whose root he descends. But his heart is indomitable; and the man's heart boldly beats on.

Rocky, and slippery, and barely discernible his trail up the mountain. But silken is the hand, and steady is the foot, and keen is the eye, and the man climbs on.

He meets on the way with men and women labouring up the mountain along a broad and a smooth roadbed. They are the men and women of the *Small Nostalgia* who crave to reach the summit, but with a lame and a sightless guide. For their guide is their belief in what the eye can see, and what the ear can hear, Some of them rise no higher than the mountain's ankles; some reach its knees; and some the hips; and very few the girdle. But all slip back with their guide and go tumbling down the mountain without so much as glimpsing the fair summit.

Can the eye see all to be seen, and the ear hear all to be heard? ... Only when divine sight, comes to their aid will the senses truly sense and thus become ladders to the summit.

Common sense is the most undependable guide. Though the road it shows appears to be smooth and broad, yet is it full of hidden traps and pitfalls; and those who take it to the summit of Freedom either perish on the way, or slip and tumble back to the base from which they made their start; and there they nurse many a broken bone; and there they stitch many a gaping wound.

The men with the Small Nostalgia are they who, having built a world with their senses, soon find it small and stuffy; and so they long for a larger and airier home. But instead of seeking new materials and a new master builder, they rummage up the old materials and call upon the same architect - the senses - to design and build for them the larger home. No sooner is the new one built than they find it so small and so stuffy as the old. And so they go on demolishing and building and never can they build the home that gives them the comfort and the freedom they crave. For they rely upon their deceivers to save them

from deceit. And like the fish that jumps from the frying pan into the fire, they run away from a small mirage only to be lured by a bigger one.

Between the men of the Great and the men of the Small Nostalgia are the vast herds of **rabbit-men** who feel no nostalgia at all. They are content to dig their holes and live and breed and die therein; and they find their holes quite elegant, and roomy, and warm, and would not exchange them for the splendours of a kingly palace. And they snicker at all dreamers, especially the ones who walk a solitary trail where footprints are few and very hard to trace.

Much like an eagle hatched by a backyard hen and cooped up with the brood of that hen is the man with the Great Nostalgia among his fellow-men. His brother-chicks and mother-hen would have the young eagle as one of them, possessed of their nature and habits, and living as they live; and he would have them like himself - dreamers of the freer air and skies illimitable. But soon he finds himself a stranger and a pariah among them; and he is pecked by all - even his mother. But the call of the summits is loud in his blood, and the stench of the coop exasperating to his nose. Yet does he suffer it all in silence till he is fully fledged. And then he mounts the air, and casts a loving farewell look upon his former brothers and their mother who merrily cackle on as they dig in the earth for more seed and worms.

Rejoice, ... Yours is a prophet's dream. The Great Nostalgia has made your world too small, and made you a stranger in that world. It has unloosed your imagination from the grip of the despotic senses; and imagination has brought you forth.

And your longing and intention shall lift you high above the stagnant, stifling world and carry you across the dreary emptiness and up the Rugged Mountain where every intention must be tried and purified of the last dregs of Doubt.

And your intention so purified and triumphant shall lead you to the boundaries of the eternally green Summit and there deliver you into the hands of Clarity. Having discharged its task, intention shall retire, and Clarity shall guide your steps to the unutterable Freedom of the Summit which is the true, the boundless, the all-including home of God and the Transcendent Man.

Stand well to the test, Stand well, you all. To stand but for a moment on that summit is worth enduring every kind of pain. But to abide forever on that Summit is worth Eternity.