

**A MESSAGE FROM 1933**  
**FROM**  
**HENDRIK WILLEM VAN LOON**

**As given in:**

**The Home of Mankind**

**by**

**Hendrik Willem Van Loon**

**1933**

CMG Archives

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(2013)

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**A Message from 1933**

***The Home of Mankind***

**Hendrik Willem Van Loon**

*[It is now 21 March 2013]*

In short, during only a couple of thousand centuries (a mere second from the point of view of Eternity) the human race has made itself the undisputed ruler of every bit of land, and at this present day it bids fair to add both air and sea to its domains. And all that, if you please, has been accomplished by a few hundred million creatures who enjoyed not one single advantage over their enemies except the divine gift of Reason.

Even there I am exaggerating. The gift of Reason in its more sublime form and the ability to think for oneself are restricted to a mere handful of men and women. They therefore become the masters who lead. The others, no matter how much they may resent the fact, can only follow. The result is a strange and halting procession, for, no matter how hard people may try, there are ten thousand stragglers for every true pioneer.

Whither the route of march will eventually lead us we do not know. But in the light of what has been achieved during the last four thousand years there is no limit to the sum total of our potential achievements--unless we are tempted away from the path of normal development by our strange inherent cruelty, which makes us treat other members of our own species as we would never have treated a cow or a dog or even a tree.

The earth and the fullness thereof have been placed at the disposal of Man. Where they have not been placed at his disposal he has taken possession by right of his superior brain and by the strength of his foresight and his shot-guns.

This home of ours is a good home. It grows food enough for all of us. It has abundant quarries and clay beds and forests from which all of us can be provided with more than ample shelter. The patient sheep of our pastures and the waving flax fields with their myriad of blue flowers, not to forget the

industrious little silk-worm of China's mulberry-trees, all contribute to shelter our bodies against the cold of winter and protect them against the scorching heat of summer. This home of ours is a good home, it produces all these benefits in so abundant measure that every man, woman, and child could have his or her share with a little extra supply thrown in for the inevitable days' of rest!

But Nature has her own code of laws. They are just, these laws, but they are inexorable and there is no court of appeal.

Nature will give unto us and she will give without stint, but in return she demands that we study her precepts and abide by her dictates.

A hundred cows in a meadow meant for only fifty spell disaster --a bit of wisdom with which every farmer is thoroughly familiar. A million people gathered in one spot where there should be only a hundred thousand cause congestion, poverty, and unnecessary suffering, a fact which apparently has been overlooked by those who are supposed to guide our destinies.

That, however, is not the most serious of our manifold errors. There is another way in which we offend our generous foster-mother. (Man is the only living creature capable of mass movements of hostility against its kind. Dog does not eat dog--tiger does not eat tiger--yea, even the loathsome hyena lives at peace with the members of his own species. But Man hates Man, Man kills Man, and in the world of to-day the prime concern of every nation is to prepare itself for the coming slaughter of some more of its neighbours.

This open violation of Article I of the Great Code of Creation, which insists upon peace and goodwill among the members of the same species, has carried us to a point where soon the human race may be faced with the possibility of complete annihilation. For our enemies are ever on the alert. If *Homo sapiens* (the all-too-flattering name given to our race by a cynical scientist to denote our intellectual superiority over the rest of the animal world)--if *Homo sapiens* is unable or unwilling to assert himself as the master of all he surveys, there are thousands of other candidates for the job, and it oftentimes seems as if a world dominated by cats or dogs or elephants or some of the more highly organized insects (and how they watch their opportunity!) might offer very decided advantages over a planet top-heavy with battleships and siege-guns.

Will Mankind find and grasp a clue which will lead them safely through this hideous and shameful labyrinth?

In a humble way the author of this little book hopes to point to the one and only path out of that lugubrious and disastrous blind alley into which we have strayed through the clumsy ignorance of our ancestors.

It will take time, it will take hundreds of years of slow and painful education to enable us to find the true road of salvation. But that road leads towards the consciousness that we are all of us fellow-passengers on one and the same planet. Once we have got hold of this absolute verity--once we have realized and grasped the fact that for better or for worse this is our common home--that we have never known another place of abode--that we shall never be able to move from the spot in space upon which we happened to be born--that it therefore behoves us to behave as we would if we found ourselves on board a train or a steamer bound for an unknown destination--we shall have taken the first but most important step towards the solution of that terrible problem which is at the root of all our difficulties.

We are all of us fellow-passengers on the same planet, and the weal and woe of everybody else means the weal and woe of ourselves!

Call me a dreamer and call me a fool--call me a visionary or call for the police or the ambulance to remove me to a spot where I can no longer proclaim such unwelcome heresies. But mark my words, and remember them on that fatal day when the human race shall be requested to pack up its little toys and surrender the keys of happiness to a more worthy successor.

The only hope for survival lies in that one sentence:

WE ARE ALL FELLOW-PASSENGERS ON THE SAME PLANET, AND WE ARE ALL EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING OF THE WORLD IN WHICH WE HAPPEN TO LIVE.

*The Home of Mankind*  
Hendrik Willem Van Loon  
1933

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