

Elbert Hubbard from Larkin to the Lusitania by Rick Ohler

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Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft Inn turns one hundred this year, and even at her age and with all she's been through, the old girl has never looked so good. When you consider that fewer than twenty years ago the building was padlocked and in such bad repair that it was in danger of either falling down or being demolished as a threat to public safety, its renaissance is all the more miraculous.

Today the restored Inn is flourishing, offering fine dining and lodging in an authentic setting with an ambiance that recalls the days when the world beat a path to an out of the way village called East Aurora to get a look at Elbert Hubbard and his Arts and Crafts community of Roycrofters. And soon, according to the newly formed Roycroft Campus Corporation, five original Roycroft buildings—the Copper Shop, the Print Shop, the Chapel, the Furniture Shop and the Power Plant--will be restored to their turn of the century glory. By all accounts the Wendt Foundation's 1995 renovation of the Roycroft Inn has been a success and a catalyst, and the Inn has regained its status as one of the centerpieces of local history.

With the renewal of a reverence for all things Roycroft comes, if not a reverence for, at least a renewed interest in Elbert Hubbard. He may no longer be a household name, but in his day Fra Elbertus captured the attention of not just his hometown, but the whole nation. From 1895-1915 he published *The Philistine: A Periodical of Protest*, the most successful "little magazine" of the time with a subscription of 200,000. He wrote the famous "A Message to Garcia," which began as a short, untitled essay in *The Philistine* and sold eventually millions of copies worldwide.

He was an orator, writer, epigramist, pamphleteer, publisher, printer of fine books and leader of the Roycrofters. As proof of his sphere of influence is the birthday girl herself, the Roycroft Inn, which Hubbard built to house the thousands who came to visit him, including luminaries such as Henry Ford, Stephen Crane, General Electric wizard Charles Steinmetz, Luther Burbank, Clarence Darrow, to name a few. Among his acquaintances were Thomas Edison, Frank Lloyd Wright and H. Spencer Lewis, great minds of the day. That is not to say that he didn't have his detractors. He was called immoral, an adulterer, a hypocrite, a shameless self-promoter, a skill for big business, an egomaniac, a charlatan, "an overpaid carnival barker" according to my boyhood neighbor.

The fact remains, however, that something extraordinary happened in East Aurora during Hubbard's Roycroft years 1895-1915. From the germ of an idea (that was not even Hubbard's alone) to publish a small magazine blossomed a cooperative, self-sustaining community called Roycroft. Its printing presses churned out the periodicals *Philistine*, *The Fra* and Hubbard's *Little Journeys to the Homes of Famous People* series. Its bookbinders and illuminators produced hundreds of de luxe, illustrated and illumined volumes of literature such as "Song of Songs" and "The Rubaiyat of Omar Kayyham." From the copper shop came ornate vases, lamps, stained glass items and from the leather shop came tooled work in an amazing variety. The furniture shop provided first the Inn and then the mail-order market with functional and artistic pieces in oak and other hardwoods. Great artists gathered at Roycroft as well—Alexis Fournier, whose murals grace the Inn's salon; W.W. Denslow, the illustrator of Wizard of Oz fame; the sculptor Jerome Conner; the multi-talented Dard Hunter, whose rose is the enduring symbol of the time. The Roycroft farms just outside the village furnished the milk, eggs and fresh produce for the Inn; there was a Roycroft Fire Company and a direct current Power Plant near the Furniture Shop.

Perhaps most extraordinary is that all of Hubbard's Roycrofters, from the groundskeeper to the lead craftsman thrived in a progressive, egalitarian, nurturing atmosphere along the lines of William Morris's Kelmscott Press in England and drawing from the social criticism of John Ruskin. At Roycroft the harshness and dehumanizing effects of the Industrial Revolution were left behind. Work was the common religion; the need for Head, Heart and Hand was inherent in all tasks, and the motto was John Ruskin's "Industry without art is brutality."

As the Inn gets ready for her birthday party, it is fitting that we take a look at Elbert Hubbard, the Oz of East Aurora, without whom the Inn would never have existed. Of course, a few magazine pages and a handful of photographs will not do justice to a man who was almost constantly in motion and who committed almost every thought he had to paper and from there onto a printed page. But even in a limited space there is a story worth telling about a life that begins like a Horatio Alger tale and ends like a Greek tragedy. Here is a very "Little Journey to the Life of Elbert Hubbard," meant not to be complete by any means, but meant to whet the reader's appetite for further investigation.

SOAP. If not for one Jet Weller, there might not have been a Roycroft at all. As Mary Hubbard Heath tells it in *The Elbert Hubbard I Knew*, Jet Weller surprised his cousin Elbert by arriving at the modest Hubbard home in rural

Bloomington, Illinois, unannounced one day in 1872. Jet owned J. Weller & Company Practical Soaps in Chicago and had married Mary Larkin, whose brother John was also in the soap business. Jet found Elbert, then 16, to be an honest, hard-working, self-motivated young man, so he offered him a job selling soap door-to-door in the Bloomington area. And the rest, of course, is history. Elbert sold out his first wagonload of soap in a week and was sent to the big city of Peoria where he promptly convinced those citizens of the value of Weller soap. From Peoria he spread out to Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota, soon running his own crews of “soap-slingers.” In 1875 John Larkin split with Jet Weller and opened the Larkin Soap Company in Buffalo with Elbert (by then his brother-in-law) as his junior executive. Elbert rose to the occasion by adding Philadelphia and Washington to his sales territory and showing a penchant for advertising. In the 1880s, sales of Larkin soaps expanded rapidly, thanks in part to Hubbard’s factory-to-family sales programs and his promotional gimmicks, in which he offered prizes such as silverware or perfume in each box of soap at no extra cost. By the time Hubbard and his wife Bertha moved to Grove Street in East Aurora in 1884, the dusty roads of Bloomington must have seemed worlds away. He wore expensive clothes, kept horses and dabbled in horse trading, led discussions at the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle of East Aurora and was every bit the dashing, successful man of commerce and pillar of the community. But that was about to change.

ALICE. Without Alice Moore (later to become Alice Hubbard) there never would have been Elbert Hubbard, the writer, or Elbert Hubbard, the feminist. And there certainly never would have been Elbert Hubbard the duplicitous two-timer who had two daughters barely a year apart, one with Bertha and one with Alice.

Elbert married Bertha Crawford, whom he had met while peddling soap in Normal, Illinois, in 1881. She was an attractive, sweet, intelligent woman who painted and gardened and oversaw a proper East Aurora home that soon included three sons, Elbert II, Sanford and Ralph. She was a perfect match for the up and coming soap executive. In 1889, the Hubbard household grew by one with the addition of Miss Alice Moore. It was the custom of times that single schoolteachers board with local reputable families, and as Miss Moore was already acquainted with the Hubbard’s next-door neighbor Dr. Mitchell, the situation seemed perfect. For Elbert and Alice, however, it was too perfect, as if fate had brought them together for, in Hubbard’s words, “a soul-embrace.” Even though Alice was rather plain looking compared to Bertha, she lighted a fire in Elbert’s heart almost from the beginning. Here was a strong woman who knew and loved books and who was a progressive thinker not bound by the

strictures of convention. Furthermore, she knew that for Elbert there was more to life than soap. It is no surprise that within a year Bertha Hubbard, sensing the attraction between her husband and her boarder, removed the teacher from her house, thinking that she had saved her marriage.

Charles Hamilton, in his excellent biography, *As Bees in Honey Drown*, chronicles the love affair of Elbert and Alice through the letters that they began sending each other soon after Alice's banishment from Grove Street. From that time period, 1890-1894, we learn that Alice encouraged Elbert to write, and in clandestine meetings in a woodland cabin, collaborated with him in his first novel, *The Man, A Story of To-Day*. Authorship was credited to Aspacia Hobbs, perhaps because the novel was so bad that no one would want to claim it, or because the plot was so close to the truth (an intellectual love affair between a spinster school teacher and a mysterious man runs afoul of low-thinking local citizens). Nevertheless, Hubbard loved being a published author, and Alice pushed him to do more. By 1892, Alice was living near Boston, and Elbert was growing more and more dissatisfied with his life of gentility and wealth. In a move that surprised Bertha, John Larkin, the good citizens of East Aurora—everyone but Alice—Elbert wrote to his parents that he had “sloughed his commercial skin,” and sold his interest in the Larkin Soap Company. His immediate plans were to attend college at Harvard to receive the education he needed for a career as a writer. The Harvard experiment lasted only long enough for Hubbard to solidify his relationship with Alice whom he saw often, and learn contempt for higher education.

In 1894, as Hubbard wrestled with the impossible situation of having three young children and one legal wife in East Aurora, and one woman whom he called wife in Massachusetts, he hit upon the perfect solution. He would travel to Europe. So just when Alice was discovering that she was “in the family way,” her lover was boarding a steamer with his friend, Dr. Mitchell, to search the old pathways of England for grist for his writing mill.

WILLIAM MORRIS. In a trip that included visits to the homes of Dickens, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Eliot and more it was the unplanned excursion to Hammersmith, home of Morris's Kelmscott Press, that changed Elbert's life. Even though it is doubtful that Morris and Hubbard ever exchanged more than “How do you do?'s,” at Kelmscott he saw for the first time fine book printing, Arts & Crafts home furnishings, and the benevolent paternalism and respect for both product and producer that drove Morris's establishment.

Hubbard had lots of heroes—Emerson, Whitman, Lincoln, Aristotle, Leonardo da Vinci—but of William Morris he said in his *Little Journey to the Homes of English Authors*, “William Morris was the strongest all-around man the

century has produced. William Morris could do more things, and do them well than any other man of ancient or modern times. . . his heart throbbed for humanity, and believing that society could be reformed only from below, he cast his lot with the toilers, dressed as one of them, and in the companionship of workingmen found a response to his holy zeal which the society of an entailed aristocracy denied. [He] lived a clean, wholesome, manly life—beloved by those who knew him best—shall we not call him Master?” The Roycroft of the early 20th century would bear much similarity in appearance and philosophy to Kelmscott.

HARRY TABER and THE PHILISTINE. Back In East Aurora after his trip abroad, Hubbard found himself pulled in many directions. Putnam Company was publishing his *Little Journeys* and had accepted his novel, *No Enemy (But Himself)*. He tried to get away often to Boston, ostensibly on business, but really to see Alice and his new daughter, Miriam. His growing first family, which now included the newly-born Katherine, demanded his time. His buyout agreement with Larkin allowed him to live comfortably if not in luxury, but he still taught some business courses in Buffalo.

In the evenings Chautauqua groups once again became a fixture in his life. It was in these discussions with neighbor Harry Taber and others that the idea for *The Philistine* emerged. The first issue, with Taber as editor, typesetter and pressman and Hubbard as business manager, appeared in June of 1895 and was sent free to 2500 editors and other literary folk “on suspicion,” in hopes of reeling in subscribers. The little magazine or pamphlet as this popular type of publication was called, measured just 4 and 1/2 by 6 inches and had a butcher paper cover—Why? Because it has meat inside!—As the joke went. (Note: For a comprehensive look at the many little magazines of the day refer to *Sinners: This is East Aurora!* by Dirlam and Simmons, Vantage Press, 1964.) Hubbard’s only contribution to the first edition was an excerpt from his *Little Journey* about Shakespeare, but within a year *The Philistine* was edited and written by Hubbard alone and within little more than two years, it was printed by Hubbard himself on the Roycroft Campus.

The Philistine was the essential measure of Hubbard, the writer. His four novels had not sold well and were soon thankfully forgotten. His *Little Journeys* were informative history lessons, clearly written, but occasionally dry. *The Fra*, launched in 1908 was *The Philistine* made larger (14X8 inches), classier (coated paper and designs by Dard Hunter) and more serious to please an ever-growing list of would-be advertisers, whom he kept happy by writing and signing many of the advertisements. But *The Philistine* let Hubbard be himself. The name alone was self-deprecating and a slap in the face to all academics and intellectuals. The subtitle, “A Periodical of Protest,” gave notice that this would

not be another stodgy monthly like *Harper's*. Volume I, Number 1 takes a whack at John Calvin by quoting him on the cover, "*The Philistines* who engender animosity, stir up trouble and then smile," and lets readers know that they are in for an irreverent look at the world.

In *The Philistine* Hubbard was free to make his preachments about every aspect of life. Here, for example are some words of wisdom from the January 1903 edition: "The Learned Professions, so-called are three in number, namely: Law, Theology and Medicine. As for myself I have no use for any of them. . . The Learned Profession of Law thrives on strife and discord. . . Theology, or organized religion, is only possible when it can feed on fear. And Medicine jumps in and waxes powerful, rich and impudent on the results of Law and Theology." "No matter what your complaint, just stop eating entirely for two days, three, four, a week, two weeks, and your system will burn for fuel all the poison in your physical cosmos. . . Fresh air and water Nature supplies gratis, and in inexhaustible quantities—use them freely, but eat moderately. By so doing you will exorcise the megrims and make your spirit free," "A school should not be a preparation for life—A SCHOOL SHOULD BE LIFE." "A duty is a pleasure we try to make ourselves believe is a hardship." And so on.

Since it was his magazine, he could be self-serving, especially regarding his situation regarding Alice. "Indeed it is not seldom that love children [such as his Miriam] possess a very superior mental and moral stamina. And were it necessary I might name a dozen and more of the strongest among all the sons of the earth—men who have shaped the world's destiny—who were born outside the pale of the marriage contract." (*The Philistine*, April 1897). Or "Legal Marriage: A scheme for holding together the incompatible." (*The Philistine*, February 1906.) "Divorce laws are obsolete in their character, and should die the death. A marriage that can not be dissolved tends to tyranny. . . To enslave another is to enslave yourself. Constancy, unswerving and eternal is only possible where men and women are free." (*The Philistine*, September 1910). He could also fill each edition with plenty of ads for the Roycroft and Roycroft products.

The most amazing thing about *The Philistine* is that, unlike almost all the little magazines of the day, it succeeded. Even more impressive is that it succeeded without raising its original price of ten cents a copy and one dollar for a year. By 1911 the subscription was 200,000, including many who had accepted Hubbard's offer to pay ten dollars for a "Life Membership in the Academy of Immortals" and a subscription to *The Philistine* for "ninety-nine years, but no longer." We correctly give Harry Taber the credit for the original *Philistine* idea, even though it was Hubbard who took the ball and ran with it. As well, Taber must be recognized as the originator of the Roycroft Printing Shop.

He was the driving force behind the first Roycroft Book, *The Song of Songs*, Hubbard's only contribution was an introduction. So while it is fair to say that without Harry Taber's ideas and talent neither the Philistine nor the printing business would have gotten off the ground, it is also fair to say that without Elbert Hubbard's flair for promotion, neither would have stayed aloft.

A MESSAGE TO GARCIA. Elbert Hubbard was off to a good start by March of 1899, but who knows how far he would have gotten without the unbelievable popularity of "A Message to Garcia," the untitled essay in that month's *Philistine*? It is not Hubbard's best writing by any means. Contemporary readers will find it repetitive, pedantic and, frankly, boring, a 1500-word piece that only needed a third of that to get its message across. (Note: to read "A Message to Garcia" in its entirety visit www.birdsnest.com/garcia.htm). It is another preachment, which simply praises Lt. Rowan for following orders and completing a task without hesitation and without complaint. For some reason, however, the essay took off. That edition of *The Philistine* sold out and subsequent printings of the "Message" number in the many millions. Corporations, military organizations, schools and universities made it mandatory reading. And East Aurora was on the map.

Subscriptions grew and orders for books increased until the East Aurora Post Office was granted First Class status, rare for a village of still only two thousand souls. Demand for "A Message to Garcia" overtaxed the original tiny print shop, so in 1901 Hubbard constructed the huge two-story Roycroft Print Shop, a stone and timber structure reminiscent of the buildings he had seen in Europe. Visitors found East Aurora, too, and began arriving in trains and horse-drawn carriages by the hundreds and thousands. Hubbard at first put up guests in his house, but that quickly became impractical. Not wanting to turn away customers and admirers, Hubbard began construction of the Phalanstery or "community home," which became over time the Inn building that stands today. To serve as a meeting place Hubbard built the Chapel at the corner of Main and South Grove from stones he bought at one dollar a load from local farmers. Legend has it that wagons lined up around the block as incredulous locals were paid to rid their pastures of nuisance boulders. Rather than buy furniture and copperware for the Inn Elbert decided that he could find craftsmen to make it there, and soon the Roycroft Furniture Shop and the Blacksmith & Copper Shop appeared, again in the style that recalled the Medieval Guilds of Europe where art and craft trumped sales and profit. By the time the Roycroft Inn opened in 1905 several hundred Roycrofters worked for Hubbard, adhering for the most part to his motto, "Art is not a thing, it is a way."

As for the Fra himself, when he wasn't on the Roycroft Campus, he took to the lecture circuit, playing to packed houses all across the nation. Mark Roelofs, Elbert and Alice's grandson, remembers his mother Miriam taking him to the very top of Carnegie Hall and pointing to the stage. "I heard your grandfather speak here when I was a girl. The place was full and he had the audience in the palm of his hand for two hours." The lectures were full of jokes, homespun wisdom, preachments and, of course, plenty of ads for Roycroft books, magazine and handcrafted items. It seemed there was nowhere to go but up for the Roycroft.

SCANDAL. Elbert had managed to leave Alice and little Miriam behind during this period of his ascendancy to America's center stage. He paid child support, and generally kept his secret from the public. There came a time, however, when Hubbard, probably through carelessness of record keeping rather than malicious intent, fell behind in his payments. Wayland Woodworth, brother-in-law of Alice, finally sued Hubbard for the money in 1902 and the whole matter became public knowledge. Poor Bertha had no choice but to file for divorce and leave the Roycroft and her beloved Elbert to Alice.

When the scandal broke, Hubbard's many critics, who already disliked him for his egotism and superficial preachments, lost no time in saying, "We told you he was no good." From newspapers across the country came ridicule and disgust. In typical Hubbard fashion he hit his detractors head on, publishing in *The Philistine* two pages of the remarks along with a W. W. Denslow cartoon bearing the caption, "Every knock is a boost." In Los Angeles where he was scheduled to speak, prominent clergymen united in a successful campaign to have the hall rental denied and his talk cancelled. Hubbard rented a different venue himself and spoke to a packed house.

The divorce certainly cost him—Mark Roelofs tells of prejudice against him for being the son of an illegitimate mother well into the 1930s. And Buffalo churches and polite society shunned him. But he made the most of it and turned his divorce into a crusade for personal freedom and women's rights. An epigram of the day from Hubbard's collection entitled *1001 Epigrams*—"When a minister takes a vacation, the congregation usually enjoys the vacation more than the minister"—is especially poignant. To his mother he wrote, "I want no apology made for me—I need no vindication—it is the whole that counts. My heart is right and I am in the hands of God. The foolish little fearing folk may desert me and this is well. There is no lie on my lips and I am not a hypocrite. If I go down, it will be because I deserve it, but look you, *I am not going down.*" And he was right . . . for a while.

Elbert and Alice married in 1904, and to the shock of many of the good folks of East Aurora, she came with little Miriam, then almost ten years old to

live in East Aurora. Alice involved herself with the business, campaigned for women's suffrage, horrified her neighbors by riding her horse astride like a man and wrote occasionally for Roycroft publications while Miriam went to the public school where Alice had taught.

A LENGTHENED SHADOW. Ralph Waldo Emerson's quote, "A great institution is the lengthened shadow of one man," was a favorite of Hubbard's. And so it was with the Roycroft as the first decade of the new century wore on. In order to reflect the simplicity of no-frills lifestyle Hubbard kept his hair long against the fashion of the day and took to wearing common, utilitarian clothing so that he was barely distinguishable from one of his employees except for his trademark loose collar and floppy tie. (Note: Ever the businessman he sold those simple floppy ties—called Tie Elbertus—for \$2.00 postpaid, perhaps the precursor to rock stars selling t-shirts at concerts.) His philosophy of business seemed to match his appearance. "With the Roycrofters there are no servants—all work and work with a will," he wrote. "The workers get a living and also get all the education they can absorb and digest. The place is one of physical, mental and moral health." Later in *The Philistine* he added, "All I make by my pen, all I get for lectures, all I make from my books goes into the common fund of the Roycrofters . . . the benefit is for all. *I want no better clothing, no better food, no more comforts & conveniences than my helpers & fellow workers.* Each worker, even the most humble, calls it 'Our Shop' . . . we have boys who have been expelled from school, blind people, deaf people, old people, jail birds and mental defectives, and have managed to set them all to useful work." The New York Department of Labor in 1904 wrote, "Probably in no other industrial undertaking in the State is so much to be found that is beyond the requirements of law with respect to the health and safety of employees, as in the Roycroft printing establishment at East Aurora." They noted four areas of particular accomplishment: profit sharing, attractive surroundings, physical comfort of employees, and intellectual, aesthetic and social opportunities.

Accounts by some of his Roycrofters in the priceless volume of transcribed tape recordings of Aurora's elders, *Talk Less, Listen More*, by Rachel Moyer Francis's Young Yorkers, corroborate the Labor Department's findings. Ed Godfrey, for example, talks about Hubbard inviting all Roycrofters out to the Chapel to hear Fritz Chrysler play violin or Carrie Jacobs Bond sing. In the afternoon he might invite workers to come out for a game of catch with the medicine ball. Juvenelia Ragan talks about Hubbard's progressive attitude toward women. "There was no need for women's lib in his organization; he gave them credit," she says. Cy Rosen, a master printer, recalls Hubbard taking care of the family medical bills without asking for repayment. And on Sunday nights

Hubbard would invite everyone to the Chapel for a little chat to round out the week. Life at Roycroft was indeed the Elbert Hubbard Show.

THE END? I grew up in East Aurora in the 1950s with the Elbert Hubbard story as a part of my childhood education. After all, the Hubbard statue stood guard (and still does) on the front lawn of my elementary school. We were taught all about the lives of Elbert and Alice, and we learned that their ending on the *Lusitania* was sudden, unexpected and tragic. Now, years later. I wonder.

Hubbard's last years were a study in contradictions. The Roycroft Shops were doing very well. *The Fra*, launched in 1908, was a beautiful magazine, well-received and full of ads written at first by Fra Elbertus himself. *The Philistine* continued to be a best seller, providing Hubbard a monthly pulpit for his preachments. Annual Roycroft conventions attracted Hubbard enthusiasts and celebrities from far and wide for serious conversation, music and frivolity, Hubbard style.

But there was trouble in paradise. With a family of 500 Roycrofters to support, Hubbard was lecturing more than he wanted, since his speaking fees generated the cash to meet payroll. The American Federation of Labor put the Roycroft Shops on the Unfair List to which Hubbard replied, “. . . we will not be dictated to by men with less intelligence, energy, initiative & ambition than we ourselves possess.” We can only speculate how well Hubbard's paternal and benevolent dictatorship would have fared under the pressures from a growing labor movement.

The most dramatic development in Hubbard in his last few years was his attitude toward Big Business. He had always been a proud businessman and never a socialist as some have suggested. Witness the first lines of his Business Credo: “I believe in myself. I believe in the goods I sell. I believe in American business methods.” When people thought of the *Fra*'s business, however, they thought of smaller, art-driven enterprises run by the country philosopher, the iconoclast. But here was Hubbard in 1909 writing a flattering *Little Journey to the Home of Philip Armour*, the meat magnate who had incurred the wrath of muckrakers. He followed that up with a whole series of *Little Journeys* to the homes of businessmen until they became little more than ads. *The Fra* carried a favorable profile of Standard Oil Company. The December 1911 *Philistine* carried this message: “I believe in Big Business and more of it.” Hubbard mourned the death of the business elite in his rhapsodic eulogy for Titanic victims. “I did not guess your greatness.”

What got Hubbard into the most trouble was his involvement in the 1914 Colorado coal mine strike, pitting the Rockefellers against the unions, the miners and the Marxists over working conditions. Hubbard defended the Rockefellers in

print, prompting Harper's magazine to respond with a piece entitled, "Elbert Hubbard's Price." Was Hubbard, people wondered, a paid shill for Big Business?

Perhaps to deflect attention from his vocal support of the Trusts, and probably because he thought it just, Hubbard made his next cause the impending war in Europe. His article "Who Lifted the Lid Off Hell?" put the blame for the conflict squarely at the feet of Kaiser Wilhelm, or Bill Kaiser, as he called him. In the spring of 1915 he made plans to travel to Europe on the Lusitania, disregarding published German warnings that they would sink ships entering the war zone. The Fra thought he could talk some sense into the Germans, or maybe die trying.

On April 25, 1915, Elbert addressed three hundred friends, family members and employees in the Salon of the Inn. "Ideas are born," he began. "They have their infancy, their youth—their time of stress and struggle—they succeed, they grow senile, they nod, they sleep, they die, they are buried and remain in their grave for ages. And then come again in the garb of youth, to slaughter and to slay—and inspire and liberate. And this death and resurrection goes on forever. In time, there is nothing either new or old; there is only the rising and the falling of the Infinite Tide." He went on to say that he and Alice would be away a few months, maybe longer and then he made a gesture of a torpedo. "If such a thing does happen as that Bill Kaiser does get us, then Alice and I will go down hand in hand." And he passed the reins to his son, Bert, of whom he said, "his hands are clean, his head is clear, and his heart is in the right place."

There are differing accounts of Alice and Elbert's last moments; one has them in a lifeboat that subsequently capsized. Another, a letter from fellow passenger Charles Lauriat, Jr. sent to the Roycroft said, "Mr. Hubbard stood by the rail with a half-smile on his face and with one arm affectionately around his wife. . . I never saw two people face death more calmly."

Why did Hubbard board the Lusitania? Three possibilities come to mind. First, he might have been sincere in his hopes of stopping the war. There is evidence that Hubbard was planning to hire "aeroplanes" to drop copies of his article "Who Lifted the Lid Off Hell?" over the German countryside. Second, the cynics and skeptics who had considered Elbert a charlatan all along might suggest that the Lusitania was the ultimate publicity stunt for a man at the end of his creative energy. Sink or float he would get the headlines. And if death took him, his legacy would be secure.

Kitty Turgeon, former owner of the Roycroft Inn and Roycroft Shops and one of the nation's most knowledgeable students of Hubbard and Roycroft, has a third idea. She believes, with many others, that Hubbard was a member of the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, the Rosicrucians. Indeed, the Rosicrucians

themselves include Hubbard in their promotional literature as an example of famous members along with Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, Issac Newton, Descartes. And Rosicrucian symbolism such as the Hubbard favorite, Head, Heart and Hand, abounds in his writing. The Rosicrucians, a fairly clandestine operation in the United States, were about to announce the opening of their American Chapter on May 13, 1915, in Paris. Ms. Turgeon is on the trail of proof for her theory that one of Hubbard's reasons for traveling to Europe was to be present at that ceremony and be at the forefront of Rosicrucianism in America.

Whether that is the case or not, when Hubbard was asked about the possibility of his own death, he answered in a most Rosicrucian way: "That would be the greatest adventure of all."

There is much, much more to the life and death of Elbert Hubbard than what I have included here. Perhaps as we toast the Roycroft Inn's centennial this year, we will ponder the man who built it.

Recommended Reading

David Arnold Balch, *Elbert Hubbard: Genius of Roycroft* (Frederick A. Stokes, 1940).

Freeman Champney, *Art and Glory* (Kent State University Press, 1968).

Kenneth Dirlam and Ernest Simmons, *Sinners: This is East Aurora!* (Vantage Press, 1964).

Charles Hamilton, *As Bees in Honey Drown* (SPS Publications, 1973).

Mary Hubbard Heath, *The Elbert Hubbard I Knew* (The Roycroft Press, 1929).

Marjorie Searl and Marie Via, editors, *Head, Heart and Hand: Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters* (University of Rochester Press, 1994).

Felix Shay, *Elbert Hubbard of East Aurora* (Wm. H. Wise Co., 1926).

The Young Yorkers Club of Eggert Elementary, Rachel Moyer Francis, Advisor, *Talk Less, Listen More* (2003).

