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The razor's edge, 1944.

641
THE RAZOR'S EDGE

Some reflections on W. Somerset Maugham's new novel —
the story of a man who found faith

WRHS
By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver



At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, May 7, 1944

In our age of turmoil, strife, burden and disillusion, men are again turning to the classic theme of religion, religious phenomena, religious personalities for guidance, for refuge, for peace. Writers, artists are responding to this mood of the people about them. They turn to religion for subject matter in their novels, plays, essays, poetry. And some of the works of these artists have proved very popular. Best sellers of our day have to do with religious subjects -- two great works of Sholem Asch -- the Nazarene and the Apostle; a similar book on the same theme -- The Robe by Lloyd Douglas; Franz Werfel's The Song of Bernadette; more recently the book built on the life of St. Francis -- Blessed Are the Meek by Zifia Kossak. Many other books of this type are remarkable popular with the reading public. Even Moving Picture producers, aware of the new interest of the people, have begun to produce pictures of an essentially religious character.

This was also true, you will recall, during the last war and after the last war. Religious books were in great demand. There was Wasserman's World Illusion -- the Great Hunger. The reason for all this is not far to seek, nor hard to find. Religion came into the world to free man from fear, to give him a sense of security in a frightening world, and to provide him with hope and courage when he felt oppressed and hopeless and defeated.

A war-torn world like ours, and a tortured generation like ours is beset with fear, has lost its sense of security. Our world feels itself hopeless and defeated so that it is natural that men should reach out for eternal consolation of religion, that hope and courage that he should try to recapture that freedom from fear/that religion has given to mankind in all the centuries.

The very gifted writer, W. Somerset Maugham, whose works are well-known, widely read -- Of Human Bondage, The Moon and Sixpence and many other works, short stories -- Mr. Somerset Maugham has recently written a book on a religious theme called "Razor's Edge" which has to do with one man's salvation, the story of a man who found a faith. The title, "The Razor's Edge", is taken from one of the sacred books of India.

"The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over. Thus, the wise say, the path to salvation is hard."

The hero of this book, the Razor's Edge, is a young man, an aviator in the last war who was twice wounded and who experienced in the war a few unnerving and shattering experiences. His closest friend, a promising young man, in an effort to save him, the hero of the book, was shot down and killed before his very eyes, and our hero is unable to get over that experience. It haunts him. It seems to have changed his personality. He cannot settle down after the war to the routine lives to which all soldiers settle down.

Upon his return from France, he is urged to complete his college education but can see no good in that. His mind has gotten away from formal studies and institutions of learning. He was offered many a job, and some very promising jobs, but he will not take one. He cannot settle down.

He is young, this hero of our book, Larry Darnell, attractive and in love with a very bright, attractive, vivacious and practical American girl who is very much in love with him. They are engaged.

But if Larry Darnell could only settle down, to go work, there was no reason why they should not marry and live happily ever afterwards.

But that is just it. He can't settle down. He was uprooted, his life was unsettled and he is groping for something which he had to find before his life could fall into a permanent, organized and satisfying pattern. Ordinary pursuits did not interest him. He had begun to read a great deal on his own — philosophy, psychology, with raptness and concentration, like a man upon a determined quest.

Isabel's family keeps urging her to persuade Larry to take a job. "If he loves you he ought to be prepared to work for you." They want her future to be sure, like the future of all people. Isabel tries and tries and fails.

"Let's be sensible", she says. A man must work, Larry. It's a matter of self-respect. This is a young country and it's a man's duty to take part in its

activities. Henry Maturin was saying only the other day that we were beginning an era that would make the achievements of the past look like two bits. He said he could see no limit to our progress and he's convinced that by 1930 we shall be the richest and greatest country in the world. Don't you think that's terrible exciting?"

"Terribly."

"There's never been such a chance for a young man. I should have thought you'd be proud to take part in the work that lies before us. It's such a wonderful adventure."

He ~~ing~~ laughed lightly.

"I daresay you're right. The Armours and the Swifts will pack more and better meat, the McCormicks will make more and better harvesters, and Henry Ford will turn out more and better cars. And everyone'll get richer and richer."

"And why not?"

"As you say, and why not? Money just doesn't happen to interest me."

Isabel giggled.

"Darling, don't talk like a fool. One can't live without money."

"I have a little. That's what gives me the chance to do what I want."

"Loaf?"

"Yes," he answered, smiling.

"You're making it so difficult for me, Larry," she sighed.

"I'm sorry. I wouldn't if I could help it."

"You can help it."

He shook his head. He was silent for a while, lost in thought. When at last he spoke it was to say something that startled her.

"The dead look so terrible dead when they're dead."

"What do you mean exactly?" she asked troubled.

"Just that." He gave her a rueful smile. "You have a lot of time to

think when you're up in the air by yourself. You get odd ideas."

"What sort of ideas?"

"Vague," he said, smiling. "Incoherent. Confused."

Isabel thought this over for a while.

"Don't you think if you took a job they might sort themselves out and you'd know where you were?"

"I've thought of that. I had a notion that I might go to work with a carpenter or in a garage."

"Oh, Larry, people would think you were crazy."

"Would that matter?"

"To me, yes."

Once more silence fell upon them. It was she who broke it. She sighed.

"You're so different from what you were before you went out to France."

"That's not strange. A lot happened to me then, you know."

"Such as?"

"Oh, just the ordinary casual run of events. My greatest friend in the air corps was killed saving my life. I didn't find that easy to get over."

"Tell, me Larry."

He looked at her with deep distress in his eyes.

"I'd rather not talk about it. After all, it was only a trivial incident."

Emotional by nature, Isabel's eyes again filled with tears.

"Are you unhappy, darling?"

"No," he answered, smiling. "The only thing that makes me unhappy is that I'm making you unhappy." He took her hand and there was something so friendly in the feel of his strong firm hand against hers, something so intimately affectionate, that she had to bite her lips to prevent herself from crying. "I don't think I shall ever find peace till I make up my mind ~~to~~ about things," he said gravely. He hesitated.

"It's very difficult to put into words. The moment you try you feel embarrassed. You say to yourself: 'Who am I that I should bother my head about this, that and the other?"

Perhaps it is only because I'm a conceited prig. Wouldn't it be better to follow the beaten track and let what's coming to you come?' And then you think of a fellow who an hour before was full of life and fun, and he's lying dead; it's all so cruel and so meaningless. It's hard not to ask yourself what life is all about and whether there's any sense to it or whether it's all a tragic blunder of blind fate."

"It was impossible not to be moved when Larry, with that wonderfully melodious voice of his, spoke, haltingly as though he forced himself to say what he would sooner have left unsaid and yet with such an anguished sincerity; and for a while Isabel did not trust herself to speak."

"Would it help you if you went away for a bit?"

"She put the question with a sinking heart. He took a long time to answer."

"I think so. You try to be indifferent to public opinion, but it's not easy. When it's antagonistic it arouses antagonism in you and that disturbs you."

"Why don't you go then?"

"Well, on account of you."

"Let's be frank with one another darling. There's no place for me in your life just now."

"Does that mean you don't want to be engaged to me any more?"

"She forced a smile to her trembling lips."

"No, foolish, it means I'm prepared to wait."

"It may be a year. It may be two."

"That's all right. It may be less. Where d'you want to go?"

"He looked at her intently as though he were trying to see into her inmost heart. She smiled lightly to hide her deep distress."

"Well, I thought I'd start by going to Paris. I know no one there. There'd be no one to interfere with me. I went to Paris several times on leave. I don't know why, but I've got it into my head that there everything that's muddled in my mind would

grow clear. It's a funny place, it gives you the feeling that there you can think out your thoughts to the end. I think there I may be able to see my way before me."

"And what's to happen if you don't?"

"He chuckled.

"Then I shall fall back on my good American horse sense, give it up as a bad job and come back to Chicago and take any work I can get."

And so he leaves for France, and in Paris Larry lives in a little room, in a small dingy hotel, but he is happy. His place is not far from the Sorbonne/and the "Bibliothèque Nationale" to which institutions he can go to read and study. That is all he wants. He reads, studies eight ten twelve hours a day. Everything that seems important to him he studies, reads. He studies languages in order to get closer to the masters who wrote. He probed deeper and deeper into philosophy and the mystics. "He wants to make up his mind whether God is or God is not. He wants to find why evil exists and whether he has an immortal soul and whether when he dies — it is the end."

At the end of two years Isabel and her mother came to Paris. Isabel is still very deeply in love with Larry. She finds him even more changed than when she knew him back home. She discovers in him a very calm spirit. He seems to be so much more at ease with himself. She asks him whether he is now prepared to return home. No, he is afraid he can't. He is now on the threshold. "He sees vast lands of the spirit stretching out before him, beckoning, and he is eager to travel them."

And again Isabel, just as two years before, begins to argue, reason with him to come back home, to take his place with other young Americans in the normal pursuits of life.

"But doesn't money mean anything to you?"

"Not a thing," he grinned.

"How long d'you think all this is going to take you?"

"I wouldn't know. Five years. Ten years."

"And after that? What are you going to do with all this wisdom?"

"If I ever acquire wisdom I suppose I shall be wise enough to know what to do with it."

Isabel clasped her hands passionately and ~~I~~ leant forwards in her chair.

"You're so wrong, Larry. You're an American. Your place isn't here. Your place is in America."

"I shall come back when I'm ready."

"But you're missing so much. How can you bear to sit here in a backwater just when we're living through the most wonderful adventure the world has ever known? Europe's finished. We're the greatest, the most powerful people in the world. We're the greatest, the most powerful people in the world. We're going forwards by leaps and bounds. We've got everything. It's your duty to take part in the development of your country. You've forgotten, you don't know how thrilling life is in America today. Are you sure you're not doing this because you haven't the courage to stand up to the work that's before every American now? Oh, I know you're working in a way, but ~~it~~ isn't it just an escape from your responsibilities? Is it more than just a sort of laborious idleness? What would happen to America if everyone shirked as you're shirking?"

"You're very severe, honey," he smiled. "The Answer to that is that everyone doesn't feel like me. Fortunately for themselves, perhaps most people are prepared to follow the normal course; what you forget is that I want to learn as passionately as -- Gray, for instance, wants to make pots of money. Am I really a traitor to my country because I want to spend a few years educating myself? It may be that when I'm through I shall have something to give that people will be glad to take. It's only a chance, of course, but if I fail I shall be no worse off than a man who's gone into business and hasn't made a go of it."

"And what about me? Am I of no importance to you at all?"

"You're of very great importance. I want you to marry me."

"When? In ten years,"

"No. Now, As soon as possible."

"On what? Mamma can't afford to give me anything. Besides, she wouldn't if she could. She'd think it wrong to help you to live without doing anything."

"I wouldn't want to take anything from your mother," said Larry. "I've got three thousand a year. That's plenty in Paris. We could have a little apartment and a bonne a tout faire. We'd have such a lark, da ling."

"But, Larry, one can't live on three thousand a year."

"Of course one can. Lots of people live on much less."

"But I don't want to live on three thousand a year. There's no reason why I should."

"I've been living on half that."

"But how!"

She looked at the dingy little room with a shudder of distaste.

"It means I've got a bit saved up. We could go down to Capri for our honeymoon and then in the fall we'd go to Greece. I'm cracy to go there. Don't you remember how we used to talk about travelling all over the world together?"

"Of course I want to tavel. But not ~~z~~ like that. I don't want to travel second class on steamships and put up at third rate hotels, without a bathroom and eat at cheap restaurants."

"I went all through Italy last October like that. I had a wonderful time. We could travel all over the world on three thousand a year."

"But I want to have babies, Larry."

"That's all right. We'll take them along with us."

"You're so silly," she laughed. "D'you know what it costs to have a baby?"

Violet Tomlinson had one last year and she did it as cheaply as she could and it cost

her twelve hundred and fifty. And what d'you think a nurse costs?" She grew more vehement as one idea after another occurred to her. "You're so impractical. You don't know what you're asking me to do. I'm young, I want to have fun. I want to do all the things that people do. I want to go to parties, I want to go to dances, I want to play golf and ride horseback. I want to wear nice clothes. Can't you imagine what it means to a girl not to be as well ~~am~~ dressed as the rest of her crowd? D'you know what it means, Larry, to buy your friends' old dresses when they're sick of them and being thankful when someone out of pity makes you a present of a new one? I couldn't even afford to go to a decent hairdresser to have my hair properly done. I don't want to go about in street-cars and omnibuses; I want to have my own car. And what d'you suppose I'd find to do with myself all day long while you were reading at the Library? Walk about the streets window-shopping or sit in the Luxembourg Garden seeing that my children didn't get into mischief? We wouldn't have any friends."

And so, on and on this loveable and practical American girl argues in a very practical way with the man she loves but whose standards and objectives are so utterly different not alone from her standard, but from that of her set, who by all the standards of her set will never make good, will never amount to anything. Isabel can find no excitement in the life of the spirit. She can find no excitement in that world in which Larry finds marvelous excitement and satisfaction.

So they reach the crossroads and Isabel must decide, must choose. She breaks her engagement with Larry. She has her misgivings, welling up, perhaps from the deeper recesses of her being. After breaking her engagement she confides in a friend: "And yet at the bottom of my heart, I've got an uneasy feeling that if I were better, if I were more disinterested, more unselfish, nobler, I'd marry Larry and lead his life. If I only loved him enough I'd think the world well lost." But she was afraid to risk it! "She gave him for a square-cut diamond and a sable coat!" she is retold by a friend of hers.

Ten years go by. Isabel returns to America, marries a fine young man who worships her, the son of a rich broker, who gives her all she wants -- position, comfort, love, a family -- everything that she thought she wanted. Then came 1929, the financial crash, and in this financial crash her husband loses his fortune. It is wiped out. He is beaten and crushed. He is bankrupt. He suffers a nervous break-down. They are destitute and and if it were not for the financial assistance given to them by a devoted uncle, they would be in desperate straits indeed. So now, ten years later, Isabel, her husband and family are pensioners of a rich uncle. They live in Paris. Isabel is a devoted wife. She is very fond of her husband, but deep down in her heart she knows that she will always love Larry Darnell. She could never get him quite out of her system.

What about Larry Darnell, this man who was in quest of spiritual salvation. And for ten years now he has been following his road, seeking the Holy Grail as it were. He has wandered far over the world -- Spain, Italy, China, Burma. He has spent five years in India where he sat at the feet of holy men. He had learned how to meditate. He had come to understand what saintliness is and how peace of soul can be had when one had very little else. He had learned what power resides in the spirit and what healing can come to one by permitting the mind to master the body. He learned how fear can be conquered through the years. Larry learned sweetness of character and serenity during his ten years. He had visited many religious communities. He had sampled numerous faiths. He was attracted to the Catholic discipline while visiting a monastery. He was impressed by their ~~learning~~ learning, piety and unworldliness. But their theology could not satisfy him. He could not react spiritually to their preoccupation with sin, their purpose of their prayers, their conceptions of why there was Evil in the world.

It was in India where he found much that he was looking for. The Hindu philosophy of Transmigration of Souls and Reincarnation captivated him and answered the doubts of his mind. Transmigration of the soul -- the soul passes from the body in an

endless course of experience occasioned by the merit or demerit of previous works. That to Larry was some satisfying explanation, a justification of the evil of the world. "The evils we suffer are the result of sins committed in our past lives. If we strive toward virtues in this life, our future lives will be less affected." In other words, the soul is passing through a discipline, through a discipline of progression, of self-perfection. The more virtue, the more happy will be the condition of the soul in the next phase of existence. And he remarks too that the ultimate goal, the philosophy of Hinduism and Buddhism, the ultimate goal is to become completely liberated from this bondage of rebirth and to lose oneself ultimately in the absolute. Among the Hindus and among the seekers he finds his supreme goal, the desirable aim, the all satisfying objective of human life -- to engage in a passionate craving to know reality." to seek the ultimate in the quest of nobility of spirit, illumination.

He meets up with many teachers in India. One especially influences him. This is what he taught:

"He sought to wean them from the slavery of self-hood, passion and sense and told them that they could acquire liberation by tranquillity, restraint, renunciation, resignation, by steadfastness of mind and by an ardent desire for freedom. People used come from the near-by town three or four miles away, where there was a famous temple to which great crowds flocked once a year for a festival; they came from Trivandrum and from far-off places to tell him their troubles, to ask his advice, to listen to his teaching; and all went away strengthened in soul and at peace with themselves. What he taught was very simple. He taught that we are all greater than we know and that wisdom is the means to freedom. He taught that it is not essential to salvation to retire from the world, but only to renounce the self. He taught that work done with no selfish interest purifies the mind and that duties are opportunities afforded to man to sink his separate self and become one with the universal self. But it wasn't his teaching that was so remarkable; it was the man himself, his benignity, his greatness of soul, his saintliness. His presence

was a benediction. I was very happy with him. I felt that at last I had found what I wanted."

What he found gave him a sense of peace, joy and an assurance which abided with him thereafter: "When I'd been at the Ashrama just two years I went up to my forest retreat for a reason that'll make you smile. I wanted to spend my birthday there. I got there the day before. Next morning I awoke before dawn and I thought I'd go and see the sunrise from the place I've just told you about. I knew the way blindfold. I sat down under a tree and waited. It was night still, but the stars were pale in the sky, and day was at hand. I had a strange feeling of suspense. So gradually that I was hardly aware of it light began to filter through the darkness, slowly, like a mysterious figure slinking between the trees. I felt my heart beating as though at the approach of danger. The sun rose."

"Larry paused and a rueful smile played on his lips.

"I have no descriptive talent, I don't know the words to paint a picture, I can't tell you, so as to make you see it, how grand the sight was that was displayed before me as the day broke in its splendour. Those mountains with their deep jungle the mist still entangled in the treetops, and the bottomless lake far below me. The sun caught the lake through a cleft in the heights and it shone like burnished steel. I was ravished with the beauty of the world. I'd ever know such exaltation and such a transcendent joy. I had a strange sensation, a tingling that arose in my feet and travelled up to my head, and I felt as though I were suddenly released from my body and as pure spirit partook of a loveliness I had never conceived. I had a sense that a knowledge more than human possessed me, so that everything that had been confused was clear and everything that had perplexed me was explained. I was so happy that it was pain and I struggled to release myself from it, for I felt that if it lasted a moment longer I should die; and yet it was such rapture that I was ready to die rather than forego it. How can I tell you what I felt? No words can tell the ecstasy of my bliss. When I came to myself I was exhausted and trembling. I fell asleep."

What he found gave him a sense of peace, joy and an assurance which abided with him thereafter. And Larry also came to feel that he now also had a mission in life. He wanted to return to America, to preach -- not Hinduism. He could not accept annihilation, nor that this world, because it is not as real or absolute, is altogether an illusion and therefore cannot be welcome as gracious and beautiful, and is therefore to not/be enjoyed at all. Larry, being of the Western World, had a great hunger for it. It was this emphasis which he found in the Orient upon self-perfection that only as men strive to perfect themselves spiritually do they achieve spiritual peace that he accepted. He wanted to bring back this message to his fellow Americans because he felt that they needed it, that in spite of the fact that they were tremendously idealistic, they were often wrongly directed.

And when his friend asked him how he was going to live when got to America he ~~xxx~~ answered "with calmness, forbearance, compassion, selflessness and continence."

He decides to give up his little income of \$3000 a year because he feels that while it helped him in his apprenticeship, after he goes back to America he will take a job in garage, or as a truck driver he will no longer need it. By leading his life with selflessness and renunciation and following the path of self-perfection he will serve his fellowmen."

There is much else in the story but time will not permit me to dwell upon it. Now after ten years Isabel meets Larry again in Paris. Her old passions are reawakened only to be frustrated. Now Larry meets poor Sophie MacDonald a childhood friend once a fine, spirited sensitive girl, happily married but now a drunk and dope fiend in a low dive in Paris because of the sudden death of her husband and child in an automobile accident. Now she sinks from one hell to another. Now now Larry Darnell decides to marry her having sensed the loveliness of her self soul, and how she struggles to reform her/ to meet the challenge of Larry's love, and how Isabel, consumed with jealousy, tries to defeat her desperate efforts to avert

destruction and sends her back to drunkenness. How tenderness can save, how selfishness nad heartlessness can destroy - - that is another phase of the story.

One may question whether the religion which Larry discovers is very carefully thought out. After all Somerset Maughm is not a theologian. But Larry has found deep insight, what man lives for, what gives meaning to life, and what helps man surmount the trials and inevitable evils which befall all human beings. I don't think that Larry had to travel to so many countries. People can discover the same thing where they are if they seek it. They can find the same mission here at home. Unfortunately we take our religion rather mechanically, only when men are shaken out of the routine of their lives as Larry was, do they seek the answer of questions and do they begin to probe into their meaning and have no rest. When men seek, they find....



1) In our age of turmoil, strife, burden and disillusion - turning 64
classic themes - rel. phenomena - personalities for guidance
Writers and artists are responding - mood - take subject matter
Proved very popular - (Ash) - (Robt) (Sony) (Bernadette) (Robt) ^{Boyd C}
"Blessed are the Merciful" Zofia Kossak - (Holly wood) ^{Douglas}

2) Time after last war - (Woods' Blunder) (Great Hunger)

Reason - Rel. came to save man - besetting Fear - Sense of
Security in a frightening world - Provide him with hope & courage
when he felt hopeless and defeated.

(a) A war-torn world like ours - a tortured generation is
beset with Fear - has lost its sense, Security - feels ~~lost~~ hopeless
and defeated.

(b) Nothing is more natural > should reach out for the eternal
consolations, Rel. Try to recapture - Freedom - Security -
Hope & Courage - which Rel. maintained - all the dark storming -

3) The very gifted. whose. has recently written "The Razor's Edge"
It has to do with one man's quest for Salvation - ^{found a faith}
Title - Upanishads: "The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to
pass over. Thus, the wise say, the path to salvation is hard"
~~It is a War Book. Last war - aftermath, intrusion~~

4) The hero - a young American, an aviator ^{last war} - twice wounded -
unnerving and shattering experience...
Could not get over it. It haunted him. Shook the sp. foundations
Seemed to have changed his personality.
Could not settle down to routine life of
Upon his return from France - College - Job.

He was young ^{pleasant-looking} ~~and attractive~~ and in love with a bright, ~~good-looking~~ attractive, vivacious & very practical Am. girl - Isabel - who was very much in love with him. They were engaged! If he, Larry Darnell, could ^{only} settle down, so to speak, then was no reason why they should not marry & live happily ever after wards.

But - that's just it! He could not settle down! He was unsatisfied, unsettled. He was yearning for something which he had to find before his life ~~or~~ could fill with a permanent, organized & satisfying pattern. Ordinary pursuits did not interest him.

He was reading a great deal - in philosophy - in psychology - with reflection & concentration - like a man upon a determined quest.

Isabel's family kept urging her to persuade Larry to take a job - and a good job in an important brokerage had been offered him. "If he loves you, he ought to be prepared to work for you". ^{They want her father to be assured} She tries but fails. ~~Isabel is urged to express her~~ that his going away for two years. What for? To Paris. What for? To loaf! That's what he told her.

(p. 49-52)

4) In Paris - Larry lives in a scrubby little room in a small & dingy hotel - but it is near to the "Bibliothèque nationale" & the "Sorbonne". And it's all he wants! He reads & studies voraciously - 8-10 hrs a day - Even though that room is painful to him - there's no other his soul.

19
He studies languages to get close to the heart & mind of the
for master who works in those languages - to get deeper
into the writings of the philosophers & the mystics.

"He wants to work up his mind" Whether God is or God
is not. He wants to find why evil exists & whether he
has an immortal soul and whether when he dies - it is
the end."

5) At the end of 2 yrs. Isabel (the mother) came to Paul.
Isabel is still deeply in love with Larry. He finds in him a
calmness which he did not possess before - He is now at
last. He asks him whether he was now prepared to return
home - to Chicago. (He couldn't) He was on the threshold.

"He sees vast lands, the spirit stretching out before him -
beckoning, and he is eager to leave them."

Isabel again argues with him as she did 2 yrs. before.
(p. 74 - 76) And so on & on. The sensible, practical girl
from the Middle West - arguing with the man whom she
loves - but whose standards & objectives are so different - who,
by all the standards, he set - will never make good -
will never amount to anything - ^{Isabel} who can find no
excitement in the life of the spirit - & who with reason &
rationality.

~~On the~~ The cross-roads have been reached. The worst
choice. He breaks the engagement with Larry -

6) He has her misgivings - walking up, perhaps from the deeper

reverse, her being. She confides in a friend: And yet at the
bottom of my heart I've got an uneasy feeling that if I were better,
if I were more disinterested, more unselfish, nobler, I'd marry
Harry and lead his life. If I only loved him enough I'd think
the world well lost! But she was afraid to risk it!
"She gave him up for a silver-out chambered and a rabbit coat"

4. Ten years roll by. Isabel returns to Am. Marries
a fine young man who worships her - the son of a very rich
brother. He gives her all she wants of life - position - security -
comforts - ~~but~~ a loving family.

But in '29 - the financial crash ruins him - sweeps
out his fortune and ruins his health. They are disabled.
The world they live in and can't. Suffer a poor, long-drawn.
The world they live in is crumbling about them. Then the
kindness of Isabel's uncle when fortune was not swept away
by the '29 panic - they are given an allowance - and are enabled
to carry on a tolerable existence. ~~But~~ They became the pensioners
of a relative's generosity. They live in Paris where Isabel's uncle
had wintered them. She is a devoted wife but she has always
loved Harry & she never got him out of her system.

7. And Harry Darnell during these 10 years. He had
been following the ghazis in quest of the Holy Land -
then Peru - Spain - Italy and on to China, Burma
^{5 years in} India - he had wandered in his spiritual quest.
He had sat at the feet of the Holy men in India. He had
learned how to meditate. He had ~~learned~~ ^{come to understand} what Saint Thomas
meant, and how pure & soul can be had. He had
learned what power resides in spirit, and what

healing can come to one by permitting the mind to master ^{the body} ^{and how can be conveyed} ^{the} ^{body} ⁱⁿ ^{depth} - in swatches - in serenity

In his 10 yrs. spent he had visited many physical centers and sampled numerous faiths. For a time he was captivated by the attraction to the Catholic doctrine in ~~the~~ while visiting a monastery, a religious fellowship. He was impressed by their harmony, purity & unworldliness. But their theology could not satisfy him - their preoccupation with sin - the purpose, their prayers - their conception why there was evil in the world -

It was in India where he found ^{much of} what he was looking for. The Hindu philosophy of transmigration of souls & Reincarnation captivated him and answered ^{many} ^{of} the doubts of his mind.

Transmigration - "soul passes from body to body in an endless series of experiences occasioned by the merit or demerit of previous works" - explanation & justification, the evil of the world.

"The evils we suffer are the result of sin committed in our past lives. If we strive toward virtue in this life, our future lives will be less affected." -

The Goal - is finally to be liberated from the bondage of rebirth - ^{- the cycle of existence} - to rise on up to the absolute - You are One!

~~(A Religion without a personal God)~~ ^{Religion can be attained} ^{What then is the goal?}

"A passionate craving to know Reality - ~~but is that~~ ^{illumination} ~~knowledge that enlightenment - power comes~~ = illumination"

He met a Guru - He taught him - (p. 298)
He receives the illumination (302) There came to him "an intense
sense of peace, joy and assurance and it abided with him there-
after."

8. Sense of Mission - Return to America - ~~found a modified~~ ^{the influence}
~~the world~~ - Could not accept ambivalence. No that this
world, because it is not an ideal or absolute, is altogether an
otherness - & it cannot be welcome as parents & hand-picked.
All life is not evil. - That return to Christianity, live
in world - love objects, the world - not for themselves but for
help with that is in them. Great Hunger for life!
Has any faith or faith. But Development, said - then
No. Knowledge - Self-perfection

9. Will go back to America to live - "with calmness, forbearance,
compassion, selflessness and endurance".
Feels he could back in America - greatest idealism in world
Set an ideal as working object - "ultimate satisfaction can only
be found in the life, the spirit"
Doubt as to whether an man can have any effect on such a big
restless people a American? (~~p. 305~~)
Decides to give up his little means - a morning, funeral
undoubtedly - ^{work which will mean bondage} will work in a garage - drive a truck - steam country
- first mechanic - "by himself following with selflessness and unswerving
the path of perfection he will serve his fellowmen"

