

ALMOST GOOD

An Oration

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Chester S. Johns
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In the quiet of the evening
When the dusk was falling fast
I sat in my room and thought of the things
I had done in the years gone past.
But my thoughts were disturbed by the knowledge
That somewhere along the way
I had failed in my half-hearted efforts
To live virtuously every day.
So fretfully did my mind wander
For I knew I had misunderstood
The importance of that extra something
That separates evil from good.

Those words, written by a little-known poet, describe a feeling that most of us have encountered at one time or another. A feeling that we have not quite fulfilled our destiny. Not quite—but almost—been good. And that is a strange circumstance, because we are naturally drawn towards goodness. We are aware of it as a potent force in our daily lives. We feel it as a temptation—a temptation to leave the dreary paths of disappointment and frustration and live as we really want to live, but, foolishly, we resist. And so, God's World is weakened further still. Not through evil; not because you and I deliberately chose wrongdoing as a pattern to live by, but simply because most of us resist the temptation to be really good people.

Senator Homer Ferguson, tells the story of how near the Senate came, one day, to rejecting a bill that the majority of the members knew to be bad. In the end, however, it was not rejected; the Senate passed it. Senator Ferguson went from one of his colleagues to another, asking each in turn why he had voted as he did. And gentlemen, listen to this, not a single one of those men said they had voted from conviction. They had wanted to reject the bill; they almost did reject it; but in the situation which they saw existing, they became afraid. Afraid to voice the truth that was in their hearts. Afraid to lose the esteem of so-called important people. How often do you think this happens in the affairs of our nation? How often is a great decision almost good?

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