

*"A TOAST to the ENLIGHTENED END
OF COMPREHENSIVE COMPASSION"*

by Morton J. Marcus

presented at the

**Indianapolis Literary Club
Annual & Inaugural Dinner Meeting
Woodstock Country Club
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Gentlemen of the Club:

Tonight we have heard a well-structured, yet highly emotional appeal to our better natures. Those of us who have been blessed with socially approved right-handedness have been reminded that many of our brothers and sisters, our neighbors and fellow occupants of this earth, are afflicted, burdened, yea verily I say unto you, tormented by left-handedness.

Yet, brothers, I call upon you to withhold, but for the moment, your natural tendencies toward kindness and sympathy, your ethical obligations to ease the suffering of the afflicted, your inclinations to inclusion.

Stay but this brief while with me as we explore the world to which we would condemn mankind for all eternity, if we were to express that kindness and sympathy, endorse that ethical obligation, yield to that inclination. For what we have heard this evening will surely end the sturdy social order which has blessed our civilization for eons.

Yes, gentle club-fellows, the siren song of fairness has been played upon our heart stings this night. But as certain is the setting of the moon, so too will the glory of great nations disappear below the horizon of history, if we endorse and yield to the evening's opening entreaty of our distinguished first speaker.

In the century just past, our century, gentlemen, much progress has been made without substantial gain to society. Has the vote for women emancipated them? I say, No! It took much more than suffrage to open opportunities for the occasionally fair sex.

Several steps forward have been made to establish and protect the civil rights of various minority groups within our society, but, as you gentlemen know too well, those rights are frequently under attack and those groups (African Americans, Hispanic Americans, disabled Americans, sexually ambiguous Americans) all can give testimony to obstacles remaining in their struggles for their rights in a civil society.

Today, America is much more tolerant ethnically and religiously than in the days of our youth. But tolerance does not imply nor guarantee acceptance. Jokes about the number of persons of Polish extraction it takes to perform mundane tasks have declined. The Irish policeman today is an icon of loyalty and honor on contemporary television as opposed to the bumbling, humorously corrupt caricature who patrolled the streets of radio. Some African Americans have achieved important societal standing as talented, effective role models today; yet millions still struggle for opportunity and respect. Asians no longer are limited to gardening, to washing our clothes, or to solving our mysteries. American Indians and Hispanics too have made strides. Jews and Catholics have, in some cases, become acceptable as neighbors, even friends.

But how far can all this goodness go? Will there be protests in the streets because President Obama has not nominated to the Supreme Court someone confined to a wheelchair? Are we to have campus riots when the next class of astronauts does not include a Purdue graduate?

If we harken to the pleading of my predecessor at this lectern, I ask you, what dangers lie ahead, what sacrifices must be made, what traditions obliterated, what heroes brought down in the name of his genetic proclivity?

Will the baseball diamond be reversed as runners are permitted to circle the bases clockwise? Will printed books be read "backwards" as in Hebrew? Will separate records in all sports be kept for right- vs left-handed persons? Will your TV remote be altered for some imagined slight of left-handed viewers? Will parity for left-handers be sought in the public and private sectors? Will these bedeviled creatures of a distracted God demand separate toilet facilities?

I know not. But, Gentlemen, as you do as you must, I know you will do what is right!