

*Elbert Hubbard, 1899*

*A*  
*MESSAGE*  
*To GARCIA*

*Adapted By*



ANDY ANDREWS

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An Introduction to  
*A Message to Garcia*  
ANDY ANDREWS

**I**t was about ten years ago, in Fairhope, Alabama, on an otherwise ordinary summer day. I was tagging along, with nothing on my mind other than enjoying my wife’s company as she shopped. We’d planned to take our time, perhaps breaking at some point for coffee and lemon bars at Page & Palette.

It would be relaxing, I thought, strolling the sidewalks of this quaint village on the shores of Mobile Bay. Instead, we were dashing from awning to awning, seeking cover from the pouring rain of an afternoon thunderstorm.

Thankfully, most of the shops in Fairhope have awnings. Why? Because most of the shops there are actually shops. While other places have stores or markets, Fairhope has shops. This, one senses quickly, is not a city or a town. It’s a village. Villages have shops, shops have awnings, and that is why, after navigating the entire length of Section Street, we were still relatively dry.

As Polly headed one way, in search of that elusive perfect outfit, I decided to explore an antique shop I’d seen in the other direction. A short walk later, bells on the door of the small brick building announced my entry, and an elderly woman looked up from behind a massive walnut desk and smiled. She was well appointed and her hair, I noticed, was beautifully styled and brilliantly white—a striking contrast to the royal blue skirt and blouse she wore.

“Good afternoon,” she welcomed me. “Is there anything specific I can help you find?”

Perhaps a dry location in which to linger as your pretty wife shops for a new dress?”

I laughed. “You saw us outside?”

“I did,” she answered, emerging from behind the desk. “I saw you dash by earlier, but I’m happy you came back. I’m glad you are here.”

Assuming that was the way she greeted everyone, I thanked her and turned to move down the nearest aisle. The woman spoke again. “I mean to say that I am glad that *you* are here. You, the author.”

“Oh?” I said. “Gosh, well thank you.” I’d stopped, and was not entirely certain how to respond.

“Yes,” she said, moving past me toward the back of the shop. Indicating that I should follow, she added, “I recognized you because of Karin. You know, that sweet young lady who owns Page & Palette? She gave me your book, *The Traveler’s Gift*. I just loved it, and ever since, I’ve always hoped you might come in.”

“Wow,” I said. “I’m glad I did.”

She turned, and with a definite twinkle in her eye, declared mysteriously, “Not as glad as you will be...”

I smiled, cocking my head to convey curiosity, but didn’t need to ask a question or urge her to continue. The cute little old lady was practically bubbling over with excitement.

“In the business of antiques and rarities,” she began, “there is a unique thrill in the acquisition of a perfect item. Perfect, that is, for a particular person, a special person. Now, as you know, everything in here is old, including me.

“You may not believe this,” she inserted, as if it had just occurred to her, “but I have owned this place for coming up on fifty years.” She paused to gauge my reaction.

“Really?” I said with great surprise in my voice. “That’s astonishing. I’ve never known a business of this type to be opened by a child, but I suppose you must have been one when you started it fifty years ago. You’re not old enough to have been more than what, seven, or eight years old?”

She cackled gleefully. “You are so full of it,” she said, “But I appreciate you making an old lady laugh.”

Changing the subject, she directed my attention to a specific shelf and said, “These books—there are fourteen—when they became available, I was determined to do whatever I had to do in order to secure them for you.”

“For me?” I asked.

“Yes, for you. You want them.” She was not asking a question, she was making a statement.

Leaning in for a closer look, I said, “I do?”

“Yes,” she replied firmly, “You do. I knew they were meant for you the moment I laid eyes on them. You definitely want these books.”

She was right, too, although until that moment, I must confess, I had not known the treasures she was offering even existed.

There were indeed fourteen volumes. Beautifully hardbound as a matching set, they were nearly a hundred years old. Every word inspired, every page inspiring, this was a complete collection of the writings of Elbert Hubbard.



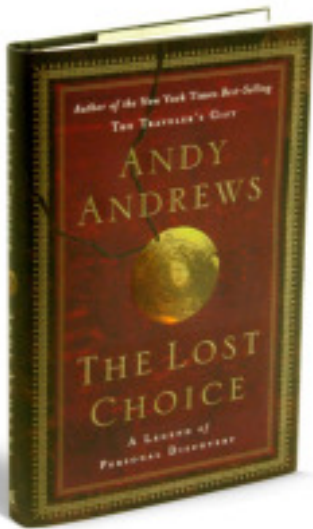
Carefully I reached toward the books. Barely brushing the old leather with the tip of my index finger, I read the gold-embossed labels, each describing what that volume contained. Hubbard's work, I quickly understood, had been categorized: *Good Men and Great*, *Famous Women*, *Imminent Orators*, *American Statesmen*, *Great Teachers*, *Great Reformers*, *English Authors*...

There were more, but suddenly my eyes filled with tears and I drew back sniffing loudly. Digging in my pocket for a handkerchief, as if I'd been overwhelmed by an allergic reaction, I looked at the woman and coughed, attempting to laugh, but only managed to produce a bizarre choking sound.

“Whew!” I said, and blew my nose, but she was not fooled. The old girl smiled sympathetically and waited for me to regain my composure.

It wasn't easy. There was an odd sense of déjà vu swirling through me. Hauntingly, I reached forward and again ran my palm along the spines of the books. The covers were dry and cracked. After all, they were nearly a hundred years old, but to me—for some reason—the leather seemed to pulse or breathe, as if awakening from a deep sleep to greet a long awaited friend.

It was my imagination, I knew. Still, even as I pulled away, the peculiar sensation lingered, and I understood why. Incredibly, I had already shed tears for Elbert Hubbard that very day.



I'd been working during the early morning hours, writing the book that became (and continues to be) my wife's favorite, *The Lost Choice*. It's historical fiction and filled with characters who really lived and events that actually occurred.

The plot involves a newspaper reporter, a police detective, and a museum curator. Together, they attempt to track the movements of an ancient artifact that has come into their possession, only to find proof that the object has been passed from one historically significant person to another for centuries.

Only hours before, I had completed a critical part of that novel, in which the mysterious relic had been taken aboard a cruise ship—the world famous Lusitania—that was about to depart New York Harbor.

It would turn out to be her last voyage.

The passenger manifest included Alfred Vanderbilt, one of the world's richest men, and the famous Broadway producer, Charles Frohman.

Also aboard with his wife was the author whose books had already sold tens of millions. His name was Elbert Hubbard.



Several days later, the Lusitania, flagship of Cunard Cruise Line, was eleven miles off the coast of Ireland, passing the town of Kinsdale, when suddenly, without the slightest warning, a German submarine, under orders from its government, torpedoed the vessel.

The date was May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1915. It was 2:10 in the afternoon.

Now, looking back to that day in the antique shop, I can understand that seeing Hubbard's life work produced an emotional response in me that was beyond my simple admiration for the man. You see, I had been writing *The Lost Choice* during the aftermath of our generation's most horrific event, the tragedy of 9/11.

As I did the research, it became increasingly apparent that there were eerie similarities between the attacks of 9/11 in 2001 and the sinking of the Lusitania. Both were deliberate acts of evil, perpetrated on an unsuspecting civilian

population. Both attacks ended in a massive loss of innocent lives.

Both were unexpected and unprovoked. And both events led directly to war, resulting in the deaths of many, many more. However, the most stunning connection obvious to me was the weird parallel between the final moments of the Twin Towers, and the death throes of the great ship, almost a hundred years before.



In an astonishingly short amount of time after the attack, the Lusitania shifted to a vertical position, thrusting her bow several hundred feet into the air. Only

then did she begin her final descent, slowly at first, then increasing in speed as if eager to end her suffering. The tip of her bow was the last part of the famous ship to slide beneath the waves before she disappeared forever.

The witnesses who survived each disaster's final moments, described what they saw in almost exactly the same way. Even the words they chose seemed interchangeable.

A quote by one of the Lusitania's survivors is particularly haunting. "We watched from the lifeboat," he said. "At the end, it was as if a great building were falling in on itself, crumbling straight into the ground."

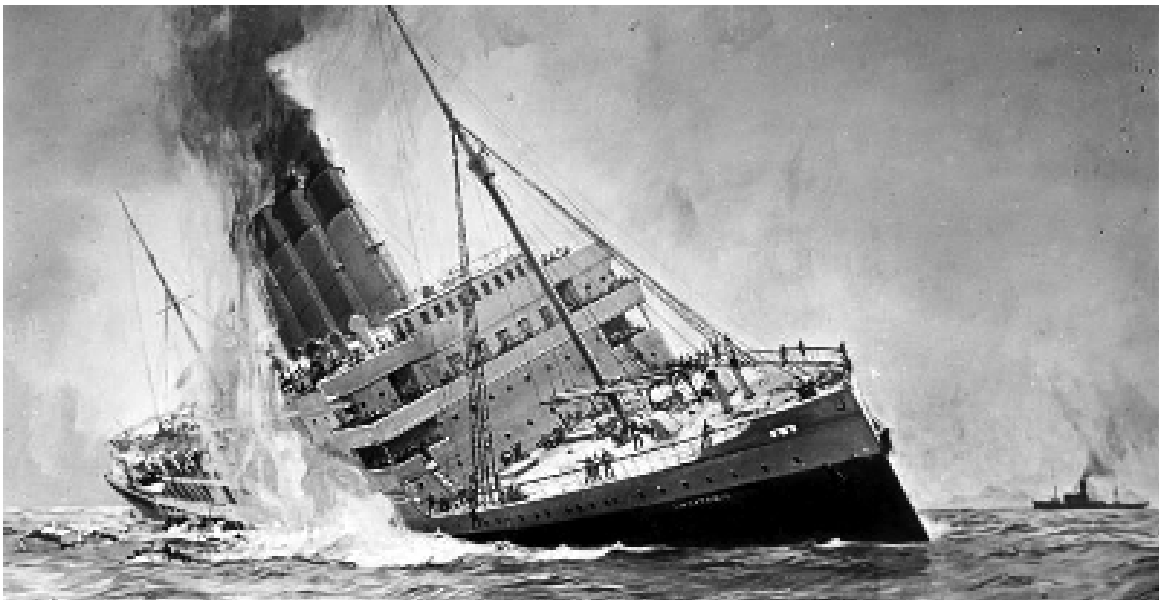


In fact, the Lusitania sunk in less than eighteen minutes, with only six of her forty-eight lifeboats successfully deployed. The unconscionable act killed one thousand, one hundred and ninety-eight passengers—men, women and children. Elbert Hubbard and his wife were among the dead.

While Vanderbilt and Frohman were lost as well, it was Hubbard's name that was most often featured prominently in newspapers around the world.

For the majority of Americans, the sinking of the Lusitania was horrific, but Elbert Hubbard's death made it personal.

The mourning at that time was also virtually identical to the national grief we experienced after 9/11, but if it is possible to imagine being *even more* devastated, the loss of Hubbard made it so. Consider the anguish we might've felt after 9/11 had we not only lost more than the three thousand that we did, but Harper Lee as well, or Max Lucado, or John Grisham. At the time, Elbert Hubbard was all three of them rolled into one. He was a national treasure.



In 1899, Elbert Hubbard had written what is now considered to be the first book ever produced in the modern genre of inspiration or self-improvement. And in a country where freedom, character, and hard work could make dreams come true, the public was hungry to be encouraged and inspired.

The book was called *A Message to Garcia*, and it sold more than forty million copies during Hubbard's lifetime.

Today, that number has exceeded one hundred million, not only making it by far the best-selling book of its kind, but one of the best-selling books in any category of all time.

With modern society's media machines, it is almost inconceivable that an author past the one hundred million mark on a single book might be a virtual unknown. Unfortunately, today's demands for novel-length books, with action or scandal on every page, are part of the publishing world that has unintentionally rendered Elbert Hubbard an anonymous part of the past.

Quietly, however, within the confines of some hugely successful families and the businesses they own, Hubbard's book continues to sell, and his impact is still being felt.

At some point in our lives, most of us have been influenced by inspirational heavyweights like Zig Ziglar or Og Mandino. Perhaps you've been emotionally moved by Charlie "Tremendous" Jones, or intellectually challenged by Earl

Nightingale. Well, Elbert Hubbard was the writer who inspired *those* men.

Elbert Hubbard was the giant our heroes revered.

While Hubbard was a prolific writer, his true legacy has been preserved by the message he delivered in his most famous work. The timeless wisdom contained in his little book, *A Message to Garcia*, continues to resonate today. Written in the aftermath of the Spanish American War, this short, ten-minute read tells the true story of a President of the United States and his desperate attempt to communicate with the leader of the Cuban Revolution during the Spanish American War.

General Calixto Garcia was a critical American ally, and all that was known of his whereabouts was that he was somewhere in the mountains of Cuba, leading a charge against the Spanish forces. What President McKinley needed was a man who could deliver that message to the General with no time wasted, and no questions asked.

McKinley found that man in Lieutenant Andrew Summers Rowan, and with the delivery of the President's information, the outcome of the fight was secured.

As one might expect, when the war was won, there were more than a few people willing to seize credit for America's victory. Then, of course, the media and the politicians weighed in, bickering publicly about who really deserved credit, and why, and what percentage of the success they might claim.

It was Hubbard, however, with his book, who managed to state the truth in a way that stopped every other argument in its tracks...

*“It was Rowan!” he declared. “Every president and general or king the world has ever known, banded together, could accomplish nothing without a man like Rowan!”*

*Rowan, a simple lieutenant, but a man who did what needed to be done, who did what he said he would do. Amid all the hand wringing, temper tantrums, posturing, prayers, and tears, never forget that it was Rowan who got the message to Garcia.”*

Hubbard’s little book has stood the test of time for a number of reasons.

Chief among them, however, is the fact that we all recognize the incredible value of a person who will get a job done, a person who will act quickly and courageously when his or her name is called.

Do you wonder what became of the fourteen Hubbard volumes I was shown that day in the antique shop? They’re in my office, of course, along with other memorabilia I have managed to collect through the years—some from the *Lusitania*, and other pieces more specific to Elbert Hubbard’s life and career.

My fascination with the man and his work has led me to an astonishing discovery, though the word *discovery* might not be appropriate in this case. After all, it is tough to discover a thing that barely exists...

Obviously, when *A Message to Garcia* was first written, the concept of audio books lay well into the future. Why then, has the option been mostly ignored during the years since? Was the book deemed too short, thus not worth the effort? Was it simply an oversight? I have no idea.

The fact remains, however, that there is not another case in publishing history where a single book has been printed more than one hundred million times, with as little notice of the achievement as this one.

Elbert Hubbard's classic, *A Message to Garcia*, has obviously been recorded on audio, but the recordings can be expensive and hard to find. Because I believe so strongly in the book and its timeless message, I have [recorded an audio version](#) of *A Message to Garcia*. This is an effort I have undertaken in honor of Hubbard and as a free gift to you.

The content in this book must not be allowed to fade away, forgotten by a generation that so urgently needs its message. Hubbard's words are more important today than ever before and I want to be certain his point is made and well understood by those young and old, who want to accomplish more with their lives.

Our world is in desperate need of people like Rowan. Read the book—it follows in its entirety—or [listen to the audio version](#) I've recorded, and you'll understand exactly what I mean.

Of course, the idea expressed so well in this book will not spread on its own. This idea can bring change to a family, a corporation, a small business, even an entire society, but it will require hundreds, perhaps thousands of people who are willing to deliver this message to their families and friends.

*Will you be one of them?*

# *A* *MESSAGE TO* *GARCIA*

*by Elbert Hubbard, 1899*

*Adapted by* ANDY ANDREWS



In all this Cuban business, there is one man who stands out on the horizon of my memory. When Cuba declared her independence from Spain, and war broke out a mere ninety miles from American shores, it was critical that the United States communicate quickly with the Cuban leader. His name was Calixto Iñiguez Garcia.

Garcia was somewhere in the mountain jungles of Cuba, and no one knew where. No mail or telegraph could reach him. At that moment in time, it was imperative for President William McKinley to secure his cooperation, and quickly. Unfortunately, no one knew how to make that happen.

Finally, someone said to the president, “There’s a fellow by the name of Rowan who will find Garcia for you, if anybody can.” So Rowan was sent for, and given President McKinley’s letter to be delivered to Garcia.

Now, much of what Rowan did next is a matter of record; however, I have no special desire to rehash what you already know.

Yes, it is true that Rowan took possession of the letter, immediately sealed it up in an oilskin pouch, and strapped it over his heart.

Yes, within four days he left an open boat off the coast of Cuba, in the dark of night, and swam to shore, disappearing into the jungle.

Yes, in less than three weeks, Rowan came out on the other side of Cuba, having traversed a hostile country on foot, and having actually delivered the letter to Garcia.

Again, at present these are all things I have no special desire to tell in detail. The point I wish to make is this: McKinley gave Rowan a letter to be delivered to Garcia. Rowan took the letter, and set to his task. He did not ask, "Where is Garcia?"

Great God! My friends, Rowan is a man whose heroic form should be cast in bronze or carved in marble. At the very least, a statue of the man should be placed on the campus of every college in the land. For if young people desire even the barest chance at greatness, it is not necessarily book learning they need most, nor instruction about this, or that.

No, what they really need is a general stiffening of the spine. For it is backbone that will enable them to be loyal to a trust, to act promptly, to concentrate their energies, and complete a task, no matter the obstacle, to do the thing that needs doing.

In other words, when the chips are down, only a person with backbone will succeed, if ever asked to carry a message to Garcia.

General Garcia is dead now, but there are other Garcias endeavoring to lead others. Still, today, there exists not a single person, no man or woman, leading others in an enterprise of any sort, who has not been appalled at times by the imbecility of the average person and his inability or unwillingness to simply concentrate on a thing and do it.

No leader, great or otherwise, ever succeeds to a level approaching his potential, without others to assist him. Today's leader, however (unless he manages to gain that assistance by threat, force, or bribe), struggles along with uncaring assistants, foolish in lack of attention and miserable indifference—for it is half-hearted work that seems to be the rule. It seems to be the rule unless God, in his goodness, performs a miracle and sends an angel of light as an assistant, like Rowan.

And so, reader, I issue a challenge, put this matter to a test. You are sitting now in your office, there are clerks and assistants at your call. Summon any one of them and make this request: "Please look in the encyclopedia and make a brief memorandum for me concerning the life of a Renaissance artist named Correggio."

Will the assistant quietly nod, understanding, and simply go and do the task? No, on your life, he will not.

Instead, he will likely look at you with a sidelong glance and ask one of the following questions:

"Who was he?

Which encyclopedia?

Where is the encyclopedia?

Was I hired to do research?

Will any other Renaissance artist do?

Why can't Charlie do it?

This painter, Correggio, is he dead?



Is there any hurry?

Can I just bring you the encyclopedia and let you look it up yourself?

Why do you want to know this, anyway?"

At that point, I'll lay you ten to one that after you have answered the questions, explained how to find the information, and why you want it, the assistant will still go and get one of the other assistants to help find Correggio, or Garcia, or whomever. And after that, then the assistant will return to inform you that there is no such man.

Of course, I may lose my bet, but according to the law of averages, I will not. So, if you value your time and want the job done right, you won't even bother to explain to your assistant that Correggio will be found in the C's, not in the K's. No, if you're wise, you'll smile sweetly, saying, "Never mind."

Then you'll look it up yourself.

This incapacity for independent action, this moral stupidity, this weakness of will, this grudging resistance to cheerfully perform a task, these are the characteristics of a society threatening to embrace socialism in its future. If people will not act for themselves, what will they do when the benefit of their effort is for everyone, and they are rewarded whether they perform the task or not?

At least the dread of getting fired seems to hold many a worker in place. Advertise for a stenographer, a typist, and nine times out of ten those who apply can neither spell nor punctuate. People do not think it's necessary to know how. Can such a person even write a letter to Garcia?

"You see that bookkeeper?" said the foreman to me in a large factory. "Well, he's a

fine accountant, but if I send him to town with a specific task to complete, he might accomplish the work he was sent to do. On the other hand, he might not. I know that he might stop at a bar or restaurant on the way, and when he got to town, might forget what he had been sent for.”

Can such a man be entrusted to carry a message to Garcia?

We’ve recently been hearing much maudlin sympathy expressed for the downtrodden common laborer and the homeless wanderer searching for employment. Of course, all too often with that sympathy go many hard words against the men who create any jobs that might be had. Rarely are kind words spoken about the employer, the person who creates opportunities to be employed.

It is the employer who scrimps and saves for years in order to risk his own money to build a business. Where are the kind words for the employer?

It is he or she who grows old before their time, in a vain attempt to get ungrateful people to do intelligent work.

Rarely mentioned is the business owner’s long-suffering patience with some employees who habitually loaf when his back is turned.

In every business, there is a constant weeding out process going on. The employer is constantly sending away help that has shown their unwillingness or incapacity to further the interest of the business, and others are being taken on in their stead.

No matter how good the economic climate is, this sorting, this weeding out process, continues. Now, if times are hard and work is scarce, this sorting is done more carefully, but business success, or success of any kind, is based upon truth. Truth is

reality, and reality always demands that the incompetent and unworthy will be the first to go.

A successful business not only provides a return for the person who risked everything to create it, a successful business produces jobs. Jobs mean food on the table for those who support families. Every business succeeds or fails according to the quality of the goods produced, combined with the quality of the service rendered. Therefore, business success is simply a matter of survival of the fittest. So call it what you will—common sense, or good old-fashioned self-interest, ensures that every employer continues to employ the very best people.

And the very best people are those who can and will carry a message to Garcia.

I know a man of great potential. He has not the desire to create a business of his own, yet he is absolutely worthless to anyone else, because he constantly carries with him the insane suspicion that his employer is oppressing, or intending to oppress, him.

What value, one might ask, is this man to society? What contribution does he make? He cannot give orders, and he will not receive them. Should a message be given him to take to Garcia, his answer would probably be, "Take it yourself."

Tonight, this man walks the streets, the wind whistling through his threadbare coat. He says he is looking for work, but those who know him dare not employ him, for he is a lighted fuse of explosive discontent. He is impervious to reason, and the only thing that seems to impress him is the toe of a thick-soled size nine boot.

Of course, I know that one so morally deformed is no less to be pitied than a physical cripple. But in your pitying, do not forget to drop a tear as well for those who are striving to carry on a great enterprise—the business owner whose working hours

are not limited by the time clock and whose hair is fast turning white through the struggle to remain profitable, despite lazy indifference, and the heartless ingratitude of those whom, but for their employer, would be both hungry and homeless.

Have I put the matter too strongly? Possibly, but when it seems all the world has become indifferent to the producers, I wish to speak a word of sympathy for the person who succeeds. The person who, against great odds, directs the efforts of others, and by succeeding, manages to enrich the lives of many.

Personally, I have carried a dinner pail and worked for a day's wages. I have also been an employer of labor and I know there is something to be said on both sides. There is no excellence, *per se*, in poverty.

Rags are no recommendation, and not all employers are arrogant and high-handed, any more than every poor person is virtuous.

My heart goes out to the person who does his work when the boss is away as well as he does when the boss is watching over his shoulder. My heart soars for the person who, when given a letter for Garcia, quietly takes the missive without asking any idiotic questions, and with no lurking intention of chucking it into the nearest sewer, or of doing anything else but delivering it. That person does not get laid off. Neither does he have to go on strike for higher wages.

Civilization is in one long anxious search for just such individuals. Anything such a person asks will be granted. His kind is so rare that no employer can afford to let him go. He is wanted in every city, town, and village, in every office, every shop, store, and factory.



The world cries out for just such  
a person, for he is needed, and  
needed badly...that person who  
can carry a message  
to Garcia.





**H**ailed by a *New York Times* reporter as “someone who has quietly become one of the most influential people in America,” Andy Andrews is a bestselling novelist, speaker, and consultant for the world’s most successful teams, largest corporations, and fastest growing organizations. He also personally coaches individuals and small business owners to become Unshakeable Entrepreneurs at [AndyAndrews.com](http://AndyAndrews.com). He has spoken at the request of four different United States presidents and recently addressed members of congress and their spouses. Zig Ziglar said, “Andy Andrews is the best speaker I have ever seen.” Andy is the author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *The Noticer*, *How Do You Kill 11 Million People?* and the modern classic, *The Traveler’s Gift*—which has sold over 2 million copies worldwide. He lives in Orange Beach, Alabama, with his wife, Polly, and their two sons.

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