TO THINE OWN SELF

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MARY TABOR

DANIEL

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by

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Some stories leave the reader not only with the sensation of time pleasantly passed, but with a more durable feeling of a fuller perception of life; their meaning flows over into workaday consciousness and, by altering the relations of things, transmutes the quality of existence. *To Thine Own Self* takes its place in this positive class of stories. The characters, each in their own way, follow or negate the rule, "follow your own desire"; and round this principle the tales turn and the book unfolds, with interplay of frustration and joy. That such a principle leads not to spiritual disruption, but to the fundamental law of life through which all that is positive comes into the world, is the theme illustrated by the thoughts and actions of some of the men and women who take their parts throughout these exceptional tales. This book is the outcome of the author having seen the personal example of Dr. Edward Bach, one time Harley Street Specialist, who carried the principle into living effect and discovered the healing herbs enumerated and explained in *The Twelve Healers and Other Remedies*.

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"This above all : to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Shakespeare.

DEDICATED TO

EDWARD BACH, PHYSICIAN,

IN DEEP GRATITUDE FOR

HIS LIVING EXAMPLE,

BY ONE OF HIS TEAM OF WORKERS.

PROLOGUE

ONCE upon a time there were some children and they lived in the King's Castle.

One day they said to one another :

"What shall we do today?" The King, they knew, was busy, and they had to amuse themselves.

"I know," said the Eldest Boy. "Let's play 'Pretending.' "

"Yes," they all shouted, jumping up and down with excitement. "Yes, let's."

"If we start now," said the Eldest Boy, "we can play all day, and that will be fun."

"I'll go first," said the Eldest Boy. "You all follow. It isn't far really," he said, pointing down from the Castle Gates, where they stood, to a planet turning slowly and rather laboriously upon its axis. "You all know the way; we've talked about it so often."

They all nodded.

The Eldest Boy continued : "They are all playing it down there, but they don't know they are; they've forgotten. We'll go show them how to play it properly."

"Now, don't forget," he said slowly and impressively; "we shan't win, our team won't win," and he looked proudly round on the little group collected beside him, "unless we REMEMBER. And it won't be finished—the game won't be finished and won till we are all back here safely, having done his or her bit."

"It's team-work—each one must win his own game so to speak. And you will, by showing them all," again he pointed downwards, "that it's all pretence."

"Now, when you arrive you must learn and get used to *their* rules, otherwise you can't do it all properly. Play their game: only in your own way—the REAL way—our way.

" 'Chaqu'un pour soi' is the thing to remember. Each

one to do his or her bit and don't bother about the others. And whatever happens, don't interfere with each other, if you do meet in your travels, even if you think the other fellow is apparently making a muck of things. He won't be really, and you're much more likely to muck things up if you interfere.

"Help, give a hand, by all means, if asked, but otherwise leave 'em be."

"The Password," he continued after a pause.

"Yes, the Password?" they all shouted again, jumping up and down with excitement. The Password was always so thrilling; and it was so terribly important you shouldn't forget it. Otherwise, if you met another you mightn't recognise him or her, specially if they were in disguise, unless you knew the Password.

"The Password," he continued, "is 'Follow your own desire; to the gallow's foot and after.' "

"If you meet some one you will know them by that. One of you says the first half, the other finishes it correctly. And it will also, of course, take you anywhere you want to go; it unlocks all gates, raises all drawbridges, carries you through all dark forests, opens all dungeon doors."

He turned away, then back again: "If any of you really wants help, I'll be there," he said; "but try and manage for yourselves. Remember that the more you each do individually, the more dragons will get killed. It's much best for each to fight and slay his own dragon," and here his eyes flashed, "than all be wrestling with one chap. Because then we'd have seven dragons to our credit, even if it takes a little longer, instead of just one. And *Remember,* 'FOLLOW YOUR OWN DESIRE.' No one else's; you can't get anywhere without that; if you try to you'll get side-tracked. And most of all beware of suggestions from outside prompted by so-called affection. If someone says you should do so and so or act in a certain way, beware at once. Don't

do it, unless your chargers at once respond to the order; they always know the Trumpet Call, and whether it originates with you or from outside. But almost invariably a suggestion or order from outside, prompted by one who professes affection—so-called—is an effort to give you orders, to dictate to you, and that is against our rules, for it smashes the Password.

"Now to your chargers, oh Knights! and Ladies to your palfreys, and off we go."

And he dived off right away into the abysmal space to the game of Pretence.

The others followed a few seconds behind each other.

They were each to bring back as many slain dragons as they could. That had been arranged in the many times that they'd discussed one day playing this game.

If by evening they each had brought back one, the team would have won the game and shewn the people down below that it was a Game of Pretending. But if anyone could possibly bring back seven dead dragons . . . oh! that would be too exciting for words.

. . . . .

It is now towards evening. The Eldest Boy is back again. He slew seventy times seven.

The others are on their way, but none has yet arrived. All have slain one, at least. Some more.

The Eldest Boy goes back and forth to hover round, in case anyone needs help. But he is very content with the way the Game is going.

The King sits and waits, smiling, for the return of the children.

CHAPTER I

"THE first time I discovered he had that peculiarity was some years ago when he was staying with my people.

"I'd got leave and come down and found him there. We went for a walk one day and it happened then. I am not sure he knew about it himself before that."

"He must be a queer chap."

"Yes, but I am not sure there isn't a lot in what he says," said another.

"Tell us about it, Jack. I've never heard the story properly, and I've never grasped what it is he is driving at."

"Yes, do," said several others.

"All right, I will," said Jack.

They were all seated round the dying embers of a wood fire one evening in September. A 'bachelor' party staying the week-end with Jack Burton.

"Before I start, does anyone want a drink; the tray's on the table over there; help yourselves. Might as well start at making yourselves at home right away. I think I'll have one too."

When they had settled down again, Jack continued :

"As I was saying, Davidsson and I went for a walk together."

. . . . .

"How long has that house been empty?" he asked.

I turned my head to look at a fairly modern house on our left standing back among some trees.

"A matter of some four months, I should say. They've overbuilt the place, unfortunately, and a house of that size doesn't go easily nowadays."

"Funny," he said. "It looks as though it had been untenanted for far longer than that. It's full of ghosts and looks miserably lonely."

"Why," I said, "it's not an old house, so it shouldn't be haunted like that."

He stopped suddenly in his tracks, and I looked up. To my surprise I found he was looking to our right at an old Elizabethan mansion standing in big grounds just ahead of us.

"Oh, that," I said. "That's old, if you like, but it's not untenanted."

At that moment a girl came down a path from the house and passed out of a little gate near us. She was our gardener's daughter, and she smiled at me as she passed—she had a merry smile.

"It is untenanted," he said sharply, "except for ghosts. And what that child is doing coming out of there I don't know. She's the only alive one there and had no business in such a place."

"She," I replied, "is the under-housemaid, and the house is tenanted; in fact it belongs to some rich people who bought it some eighteen months ago. There, there are some of them coming out of the house now. They've got guests; they often have."

"I tell you they're all ghosts," he replied stubbornly; "and the house is heart-sick for want of company."

I looked at him in astonishment. He seemed agitated and very upset at something. I think it was the first time he'd had such an experience.

"All dead," he said, as though speaking to himself. "And such a lovely place. Seems a tragedy. Fancy such a lovely place being untenanted."

"Come on," I said; "let's move on."

I didn't know what had come over him and wanted to change the subject. But he wouldn't be diverted.

Some of the people were closer to us now, walking among the flowered borders, chatting together. One of them laughed, and he broke out :

"I told you so. Look at their faces—all dead; and that laugh, good God ! how mirthless."

The girl who had laughed was walking with a man, and I felt a throb of distress go through me, for they were young and good looking and seemed well matched, and the thought of my own recently broken love affair made me feel heartsick.

They passed on as we watched and turned a corner round some trees.

"Tragic," he spoke again. "Why the devil doesn't some one come and live in the place; it's just aching for it."

He turned as he spoke and looked at me, but my thoughts were still with the memory of my tragedy.

"Good God alive !" I heard him ejaculate. "If you aren't dead too. What the hell's happened to you?" He stared round him with a horrified expression on his face. "Here are some more, all dead," he muttered, as some people appeared round the bend in our path.

Then he suddenly strode forward, and I had a job to keep pace with him.

After some time, passed in silence, he slowed down and looked at me again.

"What in heaven's name's happened to you," he said. "You can't really be dead, though you look it. Why don't you wake up—come to life. Pull yourself together, man, for God's sake."

I didn't in the least know what he was talking about, so I said nothing, hoping this extraordinary mood would pass. He was always pretty strong-minded in some ways. I mean, he had strong views on some subjects, but I'd never known him anything like this before.

He still stood looking at me for some moments and then moved on, uttering, "Good God" under his breath.

He was due to leave that evening after tea, and except for being rather quiet and preoccupied, it seemed my people didn't notice anything and I didn't say anything to them. But I noticed that when they weren't looking

at him he sat and gazed at their faces, one after the other, as though bewildered and horrified.

. . . . .

They all sat silent when Jack stopped speaking.

Then one of them said, "Well, what of it. What happened after that?"

"Oh, only just this," said Jack. "He says that almost everyone in the world is dead, isn't alive at all. All going about like ghosts. He's a vitally alive person himself, you know—always was. Intensely interested in everything of the moment. Full of life, that was the thing that struck one so about him. Then suddenly he realised or rather saw that other people aren't alive, they're all walking about like living ghosts. Dissatisfied, unfulfilled, bored, dragging along like unhappy ghosts. It upset him fearfully when he first saw it clearly, though he must have been aware of it for a long time, all his life, in fact."

"He's got over the shock of it now, but, my word, doesn't he rejoice when he does meet a really vitally alive person living fully in the moment."

"You sound as though you agree with him," said one of his listeners.

"I do. I know what he means now. Though it took me some time to understand. And at the time of which I've been telling you I was more or less dead. I thought my life was wrecked by a broken engagement, and there didn't seem anything worth living for. So I must have appeared particularly awful to him.

"But most people are like that, you know; they've either stayed dead after some such experience as I'd had, or they've never yet come to life at all. At least, not since they were children; they are alive most of them till they let it all get beaten out of them.

"If you'd seen him you'd know what I mean. Vitally

alive, that's him. Vibrant with interest in everything and vibrant with compassion, but he has no use for sentiment. He KNOWS what he KNOWS, and he says it is up to everyone to BE ALIVE here and now. And very few of us are, you know."

Jack looked round at his companions and knew his remark was true.

"It's all very well for him," one growled morosely, "but he's got something perhaps to be alive about; most of us haven't really."

"We have," rapped out Jack, "our Selves, that's what we've got to be alive about and it's a jolly big interest, too. Just BEING ourselves, and then everything else of the moment becomes of vital interest; but we're generally busy being what someone else wants us to be, and pushing our Selves into the background instead of expressing our real Selves. If we did that, my word, we'd have enough interest and be ALIVE all right.

"He was quite right when he said to me, 'Wake up, you're dead too.' "

"And what of those people in that house—were they real people?"

"Oh, yes, they were people in human bodies, if that's what you mean. But they weren't REAL, they weren't ALIVE. He was quite right, I know that now. They were dead people walking about, not Living Beings. I've learnt now to know the difference.

"None of you is really alive, you know," he continued, looking around at them with a smile. "But you will be; at least I hope you will. Anyway, you'll know what I mean when you see him."

"When is he coming?"

"Tomorrow morning," Jack replied.

A silence followed, and then one who up to now had not spoken, said;

"I suppose he is more like what Christ was than anything we know."

"Yes," said Jack. "Exactly, I've often thought that. He must be like what Christ really was. Full of vibrant life, joy, interest and compassion. The sum total of which constitutes LOVE, so far as we here are able to comprehend it."

CHAPTER II

"It was an amazing experience." Jack was speaking.

One moment I was in that room shaking with fear—you know I've always felt it was haunted, and I was terrified. The next moment I was standing on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, stretching forth my hand and speaking to the wind and the rain.

"Christ was standing by my side, and I turned and grinned at Him as the storm quieted.

" 'You see,' He said, 'how easy it is,' and I nodded. I'd realised it was simple, but till then I'd never been able to bring myself to try. Though I'd seen Him do it so often, and I knew He was just waiting for us to follow suit and do the same. I remember chuckling at the simplicity of it, and He laid His Hand on my shoulder and said, 'Rejoice that you KNOW.'

"It was like when you are learning to do anything you suddenly let yourself go and find how simple it is, once you've stopped feeling sure you can't do it properly; and you say to yourself after, 'Lor, how easy it is.'

"Then I came back to the room again and realised it was the same thing over again. One had only to speak to the heart of the thing, whatever it was that I and others had felt in that room, and it would be quieted.

"You know," he said, turning on his arm and looking at the faces of those sitting around, "it's very simple really. Anyone who's fond of animals—dogs, for instance—knows that if a dog gets into a panic and goes frantic with terror, snapping even, if he can only make that dog aware, reach its inner consciousness, make his voice penetrate through the animal's terror, it will be calmed at once; brought back to itself, as it were—back to its usual sense of security and well-being. Well, the chap does that by touching the animal or speaking to it. He reassures it.

"It was the same with the storm; one spoke to the heart of it, to its inner Self, and it was soothed; its panic and disorder gone.

"But no one can do it if they're panicked themselves. Any more than a chap could calm his dog if he were in a hell of a fright himself. He'd only make the dog worse. They're very sensitive to our moods, animals are, so is all Nature.

"After all, we were given dominion over Nature, to soothe and guide her, not to be frightened and upset by her panics. You see, it's we who originally started her disorders; they come from us, man, first. We should help and guide, not create dis-order.

"So, to come back to the room. I suddenly had the same feeling as I had by the Lake; it was for me to calm and soothe and reassure, not to create more distress by panicking." He stopped speaking.

No one spoke for a bit. Some moved a little uncomfortably in their chairs, others shuffled their feet or coughed. As men will in such circumstances.

Though no one spoke, scepticism was conveyed at this far-fetched story.

Then one spoke, the youngest member; 'The Lad' Jack called him, who seldom talked; the same one who had asked Jack on that previous evening when he was describing Davidsson to them, "Wasn't he like Christ?"

This time he said, "Could you do it again now?"

A movement went round the room. He had voiced their thoughts, but whereas they had been thinking, "He couldn't do it now," he himself felt assured that Jack could.

"Yes, if the need arose," said Jack, quietly, but with conviction. "Unless there is a need, one shouldn't and wouldn't of course; one doesn't speak to the heart unless the heart wishes for the word."

Silence again fell on the group.

Jack was a curious chap, they agreed among themselves. He had a disconcerting way of talking about things. So naturally, as if they were ordinary topics of conversation. They themselves were unused to such subjects, and yet Jack's very assurance could but carry to them a sense of his own conviction. It was curious how natural he was about it all, never in the least embarrassed and never self-conscious as to what they might be thinking.

A few minutes later the man-servant came in with a tray of drinks, and the conversation became general.

CHAPTER III

Two of them came in from an early walk and found some of the party at breakfast.

"Sorry we're late," said one.

"You're not, and you couldn't be, here," said Jack. "No set time for breakfast or any other meal for the matter of that."

"No," said another. "Jack's an amazing chap, he does not mind what you do or when you turn up or don't turn up. If you come down at ten-thirty, you find a wonderful breakfast appear from somewhere if you want it. And if you come down in the very early hours and go and forage, you'll find plenty to eat and coffee waiting to be heated, and no one says a word to you after. They behave as though it were quite the usual thing to do in another person's house. Same with all the other meals; no one's ever put out when you turn up, and there's always something to eat!"

"Have a nice walk?" asked someone.

"Yes, fine, thanks."

"By rights you shouldn't have answered that question," said another.

"Why?"

"Because a question is an imposition; it demands an answer. In this case Dan over there was being polite, which is just as bad, because it's being insincere. Sorry, Dan, but it is so.

"It's not my theory, but Jack's, but I heartily agree with him. All questions are imposing on the person to whom they are addressed. Getting their attention. You know you talk about 'paying attention' or 'giving your attention'; it's all giving out, and shouldn't be demanded; only given gratuitously."

Jack smiled. "I expect," he said, rising from the table, "the ideas we hold here are new to some of you fellows,

but all the same you'll find they're sound. Never to ask a question unless it be to help another, is one of them."

He wandered over to the mantelpiece and lit a cigarette.

"Well," said one of the two early walkers, "I'll volunteer some information gratuitously. We passed one of the loveliest gardens I have ever seen to-day. An ordinary looking house, nothing to write home about, but the garden, masses of blooms of every kind. And a girl among them, although it was so early. She was talking to the flowers as we came round the corner."

"Conversing with them, you mean," said Jack.

"If you like; it's the same thing."

"No, you can chat and do all the talking, but she talks to them and they talk back. Tell her what they want done, and how they're feeling and all that."

"We haven't told you what garden it was yet."

"No, but I know. 'The lady of the flowers' she's called here. Corner house, standing up above the road."

"That's it, and a jolly good name for her too. She looked like one of her own phloxes as she stood there in a sort of chintz frock, and she smiled when she saw us; knew, I think, that we'd heard her talking and thought we'd be amused, and her face went all round and beaming like a phlox when it's fresh with dew and lit by the sun."

"Yes," said Jack; "she's one of the alive. Her smile is like sunshine—from an inner sun, though."

"Refreshing to meet," said the second walker. "Someone who seemed to have all day to stand and stare, so to speak."

"I know," said Jack. "She never seems to hurry, much less hustle, but she gets through an amazing amount of work. Yet if you were to call, she'd give you the impression that she'd nothing in the world to do but to sit quiet and talk or listen to you or wander round the

garden with you; that is, of course, if she wishes to see you."

"I'd like to meet her," said one. "Sounds so restful.

"Is," said Jack; and then, "Go and call if you want to meet her."

"Oh, I say, I couldn't."

"Now you're being conventional instead of natural. If you want to go and call, go. Why consult Messrs. Convention? They're taboo here; visitors who bring members of that firm along with them are not welcome here. You'll find her mighty interesting to talk to. She'll tell you some wonderfully thrilling things. That is if she wants to," with a smile.

"Why? Is she standoffish? She didn't look it."

"No, just sincere and entirely natural; one of those people who has the courage to BE, and not pretend."

Having said this, Jack wandered off into the garden.

Later, when most of the members of the party had gone their respective ways—golfing, walking or whatever they pleased—Jack sat under the trees in the garden quietly smoking; two sat with him.

Presently a car drew up at the gate.

"Hello, that's Marian," said Jack.

She passed on into the house and presently reappeared and slipped into one of the vacant chairs so quietly that the two visitors were scarcely aware of her coming. Jack was talking, and they were, as usual, enthralled at what he was saying.

One of them was 'the Lad.'

"Meet the wife," Jack said to him.

She smiled at him and at the other man whom she had met before, Donald Hodgson.

"The wife of the man who wouldn't have married her if he had known," she said with a chuckle.

It was an old-standing joke, arising from a conversa-

tion they had had together in the very early days of their married life.

"If you ask her some time, Marian will tell you, Lad, to what she is referring," said Jack as he smiled and looked across the garden to the distant hills.

"Davidsson hasn't arrived yet," remarked Marian.

"No, but he's coming this morning," said Donald.

"That's clever of you to know that," said Jack quickly.

"You said so yourself last night," said Donald.

"Did I? Then he probably will come. As a matter of fact he never makes plans or appointments, so I couldn't know in the ordinary sense of the word. But if I said that, he probably will.

"Anyway, he'll turn up if and when he feels inclined."

"He said in that letter that he'd like to drop in on the party," said Marian, "so I expect he will unless another job of work calls him off."

" 'That letter.' " Jack laughed.

"Well, it was long for him," said Marian. "Quite six words, if not one or two more. Anything in the form of a letter is so unusual from Davidsson."

"No, he'll never write unless the spirit moves him," said Jack. "In other words, unless he feels the desire. That's his unvarying and unfailing guide always—his desire." The two visitors looked interested. "He'll probably tell you more about that when and if he comes," Jack continued.

"You could tell them quite a lot," said Marian. "Your whole life's based on it, dear."

"Yours too, Marian."

"Mostly," Marian agreed. "But I'm still sometimes a bloody fool, to use one of Davidsson's favourite expressions."

It was when the others had wandered back from their various ploys, and were sitting with them under the trees, sprawled on the grass or in deck chairs, that Donald

suggested that Marian should tell them why Jack wouldn't have married her if he had known.

Jack chuckled and lay back contentedly in his chair, pulling at his pipe, while Marian told them of the conversation they had had some four years ago. A monologue, Marian called it, following on a remark of Marian's regarding some neighbours of theirs, and Jack's reply, saying she could have done the same if she felt so inclined.

. . . . .

"My dear, it is no business of mine what you do."

"No business of yours?"

The woman looked at her husband in sheer amazement.

"None whatever! You are perfectly free to do what you like, so far as I am concerned."

"Then why ever did you marry me?"

The man paused.

"I don't know. Convention chiefly. But I wouldn't now." A smile radiated his whole face.

The woman looked mystified. She knew he loved her and she knew she loved him as few did in this world.

"No," the man continued, seeing the expression on her face. "No, I wouldn't now. I know so much more now. Our wedded life has taught me so much.

"Then, I thought of convention. And, too, the idea of vows and declarations seemed to make so sure. Also, I believed then that the Church's spoken authority that God had joined us together was inspired.

"Now I know that she says the same thing to any two people who come along and ask her to. She makes no enquiries as to their suitability, and she hasn't the inspired knowledge to discern. She 'joins' any two people together, and then piously says God has done it and it cannot be undone. Whereas with ourselves, I KNOW we are affinities joined together by God long before the

Church performed her ceremony and asked us to make vows. Now I do not need the assurance of vows given by you or my self to prove the permanence and reality of our love.

But as to my possessing you and you me. That of course is absurd, and you know it, though you do not realise you do. You would not wish to restrain me or hold me, should I have the desire to do certain things. No, your love is such that you desire for me full self-expression, as is mine for you. Full freedom.

"We both know that whatever happens we are 'in LOVE' with each other, both of us in LOVE. And for the rest, to us there are no bonds, no demands, no limiting each other, no asserting of rights, for there are no rights. We just ARE, in LOVE.

"With regard to the couple you were discussing, well, that is different in one way. They are married by the Church, but not WED, not affinities; so naturally, if the one tries to hold the other, there are sure to be disastrous results from that one's point of view.

"They think they are now entitled to control each other. Make certain demands of each other. And be 'punished' if either of them breaks the vows they made at the Church's request, either here by being divorced or hereafter by an indignant God. Whereas, if God is capable of indignation, which I doubt altogether, He is too full of compassion and understanding; His indignation would be far more concerning the presumption of one soul daring to control another and against an organisation which, in His Name, makes presumptuous statements.

"But, my dear, He has no indignation; of that I am convinced, for indignation is the outcome of the desire to control and dictate, and I don't believe even God wishes to do that. With Him, Who made us all in the beginning FREE SOULS, His is a compassion which

will guide and tend us if we wish it, but never drive, never force, never control.

"It is up to each of us to realise we are Individuals, and to refuse to be interfered with. If we refuse to be interfered with the interferer will in time learn better. But he is not to blame; it is the one who puts him or herself under that control, instead of realising and claiming their Birthright of Freedom.

"So now you see why I would not marry you now, knowing what I do. It would be to insult our Love and to insult each other, by demanding rights which are not asked of others—by the Free."

His wife looked up at him and smiled.

"Yes," she said, "I see now, and, of course, as you say, I *knew* it before; but my mind worked in the conventional line. Whereas now I realise the mind KNOWS nothing, it only works on other people's ideas, the heart only KNOWS."

"Yes," said her husband; "even when I say, 'my dear,' I do not mean you are mine possessively, but 'dear to me'—so dear. And we pass from one glorious KNOWING to another, hand in hand, but always Ourselves, always FREE."

. . . . .

Marian wandered off after she had finished her story, leaving the others sitting in thoughtful silence.

Presently they sauntered in, in twos and threes. In the dining-room the first comers found Marian already seated and well through her meal.

She smiled at them and said, "You know, of course, that everyone here feeds when they like."

"Yes, so we were informed at breakfast. What a wonderful easy and happy-go-lucky existence, but I don't know how you get the servants to do it."

"Happy and go-follow-your-desire life," said Marian.

"That's the only thing that brings happiness and usefulness—real usefulness. As for the servants, well, they do the same, follow their desires or inclinations; the result is that there is always a breakfast being cooked, or a lunch or supper just prepared when anyone wanders in for it at an odd moment."

"Wonderful," said the other. "Fancy having a manservant and a cook who felt the inclination to do that sort of thing at any old hour."

"Well, you see, they're here because their desire is to express themselves in that form, so they're altogether happy, in fact they revel in it."

CHAPTER IV

It was in the early afternoon that Davidsson arrived. No one heard him coming; he suddenly appeared from among the trees and slipped into an empty chair.

Jack was talking at the time and did not stop. Those who knew him, knew better than to make any movement to disturb the speaker, and the others were not aware who he was.

He sat quietly listening while Jack talked, pulling at his pipe.

When he had finished, Jack said :

"Good to see you," and, with a wave of the hand, "This is the present family, Davidsson."

"I came along this morning and stopped on my way to call on The lady of the flowers. I expect most of you have met her or heard of her from Jack and Marian.

"Such a peaceful soul, and, my word, what courage.

"If you haven't heard it, I'd like to tell you fellows how she first started to live—broke away, in other words, and took her freedom."

This was characteristic of Davidsson; he didn't preach, and he never tried to force people, he just somehow seemed aware of their need, and then would tell a story which put his point impersonally. Sometimes it was an imaginary story, often one of real life. But whatever it was it always appealed to one or often more of his listeners; just giving the advice or help needed.

"The little clock on the mantelpiece ticked primly; the little lady in the arm-chair sat primly, straight backed, playing patience; everything in the room was prim and perfect and well behaved. Terribly prim and always would be, so thought the girl sitting with her feet tucked up on the sofa, as she glanced around the room.

Then she dropped her head once more and became absorbed in her book.

Time slipped by; the little lady shuffled her cards preparatory to starting another game.

Suddenly the girl on the sofa shut her book with a bang, and, throwing out her legs, landed them on the floor with a loud thud.

The little lady gave a horrified start and looked round over the top of her glasses.

"My dear, how you startled me! Did you fall asleep and drop your book, or what?"

"No, Auntie, I did nothing of the sort. I banged my book shut and I threw my legs out so, and thumped them on the floor so, on purpose," said the girl, repeating the process for her aunt's benefit.

The little lady gasped. Whatever was the matter. But before she could speak the girl went on:

"Yes, Auntie, that's me. I'm perfectly sane; you needn't look so concerned; only for the first time in my life I've 'come to myself,' like the prodigal son did, and I've decided to BE MYSELF and let everything else go hang."

By this time the little lady showed signs of immediate prostration from shock.

"My dear," she said, "whatever have you been reading now? These modern novels are some of them most undesirable, and they do seem to affect you sometimes, I've noticed."

"Yes, Auntie, I have been working up for this for some time; maybe you have seen symptoms. But it's not a 'modern novel' I've been reading, but a great and glorious book which tells you to be yourself and follow your Desire."

The little lady blinked and opened and closed her mouth several times, but words failed her. Had her niece got a touch of the sun when she was out this afternoon or what?

"Don't look as though you were approaching an apoplectic fit, dear Auntie," cried the girl. "This has

been coming on for some time, only you haven't noticed. And now I really am going to TAKE MY FREEDOM."

Again the little lady felt a sensation as of the world having suddenly turned upside down. Her little niece, barely nineteen years old, always so well behaved and lady-like, everything that she could wish, what had happened to her?

She said soothingly: "Run along to bed, my dear, and I'll bring you a nice warm drink and tuck you up. You'll feel better in the morning."

The girl chuckled, "Oh no, I won't, and oh no, you don't, Auntie dear.

"If anyone tucks me up it won't be you, it'll be somebody thrilling, though I don't suppose I'll find him tonight, nor for many nights for that matter. I'm not over easy to please.

"But, anyway, I'm off out now to see what I can find."

She flung her arms above her head with a gesture as though grasping the free air, and then skipped across the room to the door.

The little lady sat in speechless horror. Had she gone mad, had her niece gone mad, or what had happened?

Turning as she reached the door, the girl looked back, and, seeing her aunt's stunned expression, ran across the room and kissed her lightly on the forehead.

"Cheer up, Auntie," she said. "You'll get used to it in time. I'm not unique; hundreds of others are doing what I'm going to do, only I've been so long waking up and taking my courage in both hands."

As she said this she stooped over her aunt and extended her hands, then gently closing them, held them tight shut.

"See, Auntie, there I've got it tightly and safely in both hands," and with this she laughed and ran from the room, closing the door behind her.

In the little hall she only stopped to pick up her bag and a warm but smart coat and ran down the stairs.

Stopping at the flat on the next floor, she knocked gently on the door; then without waiting for a reply, turned the handle and walked in.

Crossing the passage she entered a room.

"Don't you ever lock your front door?" she asked, and, without waiting for a reply :

"I came straight in because I wanted to, and you must turn me out if you don't want me!"

The lady in the corner looked up in some surprise :

"You seem excited——"

"I am. I've just finished the book you lent me and I've made up my mind—definitely made it up—that I am going to follow my desire, as it says, from now onwards.

"I'm going out now because I want to, and I probably shall not come in till late, or the early hours of to-morrow, rather. Oh, isn't it fun, all by myself; no one to check me or to say, 'My dear, you mustn't——.' Oh, Moffles, you are a friend to lend me a book like that."

"But, my dear, I don't know that I expected you to take it as literally as all that; I mean, what will your aunt and everybody say?"

"Oh, you old fraud, you haven't got there yourself at all, although you've talked a lot about it to me and others. Oh, Moffles."

"My dear, what an extraordinary name to call me by."

" I know, I've never done it before, though I've always wanted to. Now I am doing it, because I want to now. It's a jumble of Muff and Woffles, whatever they are. They sound good, anyway. You see, dear, you always seem to me to be so near fulfilling yourself, your life, and then just drawing back and spoiling it all. 'Muffing it' as the boys used to call it, when someone dropped a catch.

"Moffles, dear, if you don't look out you will muff up

your life and just miss everything. You get so far and then someone or something pulls you back with a jerk, and you become conventional and pi-ish again. As though you suddenly remembered to consult some prim old body from your childhood's days, who brought you up very strictly and who's probably dead and buried long ago, but who still just keeps you on a string, so that you daren't fling all to the winds and dive as I am doing tonight.

"Do you know," she said suddenly, "I don't believe I've ever made such a long speech on my own before! Isn't it fun! That's because I wanted to say it, so I did. Oh, Moffles, I so want to shake you. Come and dive, dear; come out with me, and we'll get tight together and enjoy ourselves."

"My dear! what are you saying? What would your aunt say if she heard you?"

"Heard me! I said much worse things to her before I came down. Why, Moffles, I really do believe you're one of those people who talk and don't act. 'Deeds not words,' the writer of that books says."

"Yes, my dear, but one can't take all that literally. I mean, think what they'd say——"

"They? Who are they? Whoever do you mean?"

"Why, people, dear; one has to consider other people's feelings."

"Other people be blowed. Who cares what other people think? I've been spoon-fed with that ever since I arrived in the nursery. And here you've been, gloriously helping me and telling me all about being one's self and living one's own life and doing what one wants to do, and now that I determine to do so and ask you to do the same, you say, 'What will *they* say.' Be blowed to them, I say."

"My dear——" reprovingly.

"Oh yes, I know, but you'll hear much worse before I've done, so you might as well get used to it. Now

listen, Moffles dear, and I'll tell you the plan. I've been storing it up in my mind and hatching it out ever since I read the first chapter of that book you lent me. I'm going off on my own. Late tonight, when Auntie's asleep, I'm going to creep in, pack my case and go off into the unknown, and do what I've always wanted to do."

"And what is that, may one ask?"

"No! I'm telling no one, not even you. Then, when Auntie comes fussing down clucking like an old hen, you'll know nothing and so can't tell her anything."

"But, my dear, have you any money; how are you going to live?"

"As a matter of fact I have a little, an odd hundred pounds that Uncle left me and Auntie invested for me, and the other day I realised it; sold it out, you know. I did that when I got to the end of Chapter IV in the book, and it's all in the bank waiting to be used. And, anyway, Moffles dear, I've managed pretty well up to now. I mean, I didn't bring any money with me when I was born, did I, and yet God, or whoever it is, seems to have seen that I was provided for up to now, so I don't see why He shouldn't continue to do so."

Then, jumping up, she said: "And so that's that, and are you sure you won't come out and drink, drink to my FREEDOM. And, oh, I wish it were yours, too."

"Mine? My dear, I am perfectly free, thank you. An independent old spinster with an independent little income——"

"Yes, but all day long you miss the fun, and don't do all the things you'd love to do because you take orders from 'Them.'"

"Them?"

"Yes, 'Them'; you're always saying to me: 'You must or mustn't do it like that,' and when I say, 'Why?' you say, 'They say you must,' or 'They say you mustn't.' Oh! I wish you wouldn't turn back to consult them in

your mind all the time. I'd love to see you absolutely spontaneous for once. Do it, Moffiles dear, shock 'em all, whatever it may be. Anything, everything, so long as you smash this taking orders from other people.

"And now, I really have horrified you. Oh, don't go on muffing, Moffles dear, all your life. You're only just over forty, you know, and you could have such fun, and you're such a lovely woffly thing really. All beams and smiles and approval and longing to do things, when you're not thinking of what they'll say or they'll think.

"I'm off now, I've just made a second decision. I'm not even going back for my case or anything, for Auntie will probably be sitting up for me. I'll drop a note into the letter-box and tell her I'm off into the blue and that she's not to worry, for God can look after me almost as well as she or even a bit better, I fancy.

"Well, so long, Moffles dear; you are a dear, you know! With your lovely smile and your tied-by-the-leg-to-someone-who-ruled-me-in-my-nursery-days-and-does-so-still attitude of mind. Why, even your dear little flat is all like that. Must be so, must be cleaned and washed and dusted. 'It isn't done' not to do such things every day, and so thoroughly. Well, no more such orders and rules for me. I'm off, Moffles dear, goodbye."

. . . . .

It was some months after that the same familiar knock came at the flat door and a figure tiptoed in.

"All safe, Moffles dear, no one about?" said the girl as she dumped herself down on the poof at Moffles' feet.

The other stared at her.

"Well, Moffles, what do you see? Do I look starved or miserable or careworn or crushed with the rude awakening that life and experience have brought?"

"No, my dear, you look lovely, radiant, as you sit there hugging your knees. Life seems to have treated you kindly."

"I don't know about that, but my Desire has led me gloriously. Listen, Moffles, it's so lovely; you become more and more attuned to it. At first people butt in and try to frustrate one by suggestions. 'Only for one's good,' they say, or 'I thought you'd like it; it seems to me such a good idea.' But gradually you learn never to be dictated to by any living soul, and so you FIND your Self and then you fulfil your SELF. You can't go wrong then; as the writer of the book said: 'If you can't be true to your own self, whom you do know, how can you be true to others, whom you don't know?' For we know very little about others really, Moffles; we only *think* we do."

Presently, after a silence, during which the other sat very quiet:

"Moffles dear, have you got 'tight' yet? Do say you have! Or even tried to, for it's then that one rises free above the things that irk and press on one, and one sees things as they really are—one's Real Self gets released somehow.

"I seem to be in that lovely state all the time now without drinking. I seem to be above everything, and yet so much a part of everything. It's wonderful, but it's only so so long as I keep my Desire untampered with by outside influences. Oh, Moffles dear, don't look so concerned. Do something unconventional for once, Moffles dear; anything, so that you smash that domination of disapproval by 'them.' If you don't like the idea of having a drink, do something else; but that is a lovely way to start, because so many people disapprove of it; and people like yourself are so afraid of letting themselves go. Let go and BE, Moffles dear, do! do!"

They chatted on, and at last the girl rose.

"I'm off now" she said.

"Must you go?"

"No I never MUST do anything, but I want to go, and so I'm going. Auntie, did you say? No, I am not

visiting her tonight—not for many a long night. When she has ceased to think that I SHOULD go and see her then maybe one day I will."

Left alone in her flat, the other sat and thought and thought, then rising, did all the little things she did each night, one by one.

She shook her head ruefully as she remembered the girl's words:

"I never do anything the same way twice—it's so monotonous doing things by rule of thumb; one becomes the slave of habit. I just follow my desire each moment of the day, and oh, I am so happy, for I ONLY can fulfil my Self, you know. No one else can do it for me."

She paused, her hand on the bedroom door. She was getting old she felt; so much in life had passed her by. What a difference between herself and that child. She existed, the girl LIVED every moment of her life. How she envied her! But it was all right for her, she could do it. For herself—well, such things just weren't done, whatever would people think if——

Far away the girl was thinking to herself, "Now she'll have entered her little room, and slowly closing the door upon freedom, she'll have shut herself in with those OTHERS whose opinions rule and dominate her life."

"Relatives," Davidsson continued, "are a great stumbling block. So many trip up over them. They clutch and hold on. Claim rights of kinship, and hamper the freedom of individuals. Pity, is the note they play on most, trying to rouse the pity of the one seeking freedom. Either by pointing out their own need of them, their care or financial support, or by emphasising their own suffering from anxiety through not knowing what has happened to the wanderer and whether they are safe and well.

"The same answer applies to both problems.

" 'God can look after you as well as I can; and after me just as well as you can, and perhaps a little bit better!'

"This story I will tell you now shows you what I mean."

CHAPTER V

"Good lor', wherever am I?" The young man rubbed the back of his head with his hand, a trick dating from childhood's days, and looked dazedly around him.

"What's happened? Where's Dad? Where's everyone?"

Everything around him seemed unfamiliar. He closed his eyes, trying to remember.

Suddenly a mist seemed to clear from his brain and he saw; yes, he remembered now.

He saw the charabanc descending upon his little two-seater as he hurtled along the winding road near his home.

He'd been hurrying along to get back in time. Tomorrow was his elder brother's twenty-first birthday. His father had written him demanding his presence, insisting that he arrive the evening preceding it for the family banquet.

He hadn't wanted to go, had said all along he shouldn't. And now, it seemed at this late hour instead of leaving him be, the family, who heretofore had apparently thought he must be joking—that he would never do such an outrageous thing as defy his father's wishes and the family tradition by refusing to be present at the gathering of the clans, as it was called, on the eve of the eldest son's coming of age—had suddenly awakened to the fact that he meant what he said. The result had been an outraged letter from his father, at the very idea suggested by the family and demanding, commanding, his attendance.

The letter had been accompanied by another from his sister, pointing out his filial duties and begging him not to be selfish, but to consider the Family (with a capital F, as though there were but one family in the world). And finally, reminding him of his father's delicate state of health, and how the family doctor was

always saying that any strong emotion might cause his father to have an apoplectic fit, which would undoubtedly prove fatal.

Since he had so often given out his intention of not attending the family farce, as he called it, he was indignant at this turn of events; the more so since he had arranged an outing for that particular evening with his 'girl' to whom, but for his father's consent, he was already engaged. Therein lay another source of revolt against his family, for he knew that the woman of his choice would not be approved by them. He felt certain of his father's refusal of parental consent and of the family opposition.

"Not our class," he could hear them saying. "How dare he consider such a thing! What a come-down, what an insult to the Family!"

When he was twenty-one, in a little over a year's time, he intended to take the matter into his own hands. Till then—oh, damn the family.

However, his sister's letter had disturbed him. The force with which his father had written, now more and more indicated to him as he sat far into the night brooding over the matter, the shock which his reply, written in hot haste and despatched before thought could intervene, would cause the old man.

Gradually his revolt against the family bonds and demands was superseded by the thought of his father and the possible result on the eve of the celebrations. Any other time wouldn't have mattered so much, so his thoughts ran. And all the 'clan' collected there.

So his thoughts had run on, till, in a moment of vacillation, followed by remorse and self-condemnation at his own selfishness, he had decided to ring up his girl and explain his inability to be with her that evening, as he was called away by his family. Duty, you know, and all that.

Damn it all, duty! Indignation had once more got the

upper hand, and the eternal revolt within him for freedom to fulfil himself and break from the family restrictions. This, however, after much circling, he had allowed to be submerged, and after having rung up he would, he'd decided, motor down post haste in time for the family dinner. And if possible in time to intercept his own letter to his father, which would not arrive till second post.

He had been late starting out.

He had difficulty in getting through on the telephone and catching her, and then there had been a long discussion. She had seemed so anxious he should stand up to his family and smash this thing once and for all. He had been unable to talk her round, for she quoted all his own reasons so often used by himself to her, for the need of breaking with their restricting ties.

The end had been unsatisfactory. She had not been hurt, but regretful at his stepping back like that from his life's purpose.

However, since time had passed all too quickly, he had sped off, travelling at fifty most of the way.

Then nearing the town close to his home, he remembered, suddenly round a bend seeing a large charabanc coming head on. There was no room to swerve, and no time to brake.

He remembered that much, nothing more. His brain seemed suddenly to numb again. One thing only remained clear to him, he must find his father and explain before he read that letter, and, anyway, before any ill-effects followed it. He jumped up and started off blindly in search of him.

. . . . .

Having wandered for some time, he came to a populated part where crowds of people seemed gathered together.

He dashed in amongst them, looking first at one and then at another, and suddenly realising the hopelessness of his errand, stopped, not knowing what to do next.

These people, he supposed, must be sight-seers or locals, collected for his brother's coming of age celebrations.

Looking around, his eye fell on a man walking outside the crowd. His carriage and attitude conveyed the idea of one in authority. "A bobby, maybe," he said to himself.

Walking up to him, he said :

"Have you seen my father about; I'm looking for him."

The other looked at him and then smiled.

"Oh!" he said. "A new-comer. I don't know that I can help you much, but I'll take you to where the hometies are renewed."

Turning round, he led the way to a passage and up some steps on to a platform. Around, crowds of people were gathered. Thousands and thousands it seemed, as far as the eye could see.

At the far end of the platform someone had just descended by some steps, and was being, apparently, followed by people of all types and ages.

His guide suddenly stooped, and picking up a huge bell, rang it.

Silence immediately followed.

"This man," he shouted, "is seeking his father."

The silence was almost immediately broken by an onrush of people from all parts of the crowd.

He watched with interest, wondering what they were up to.

His guide turned to him.

"There are, as usual, lots of them," he said. "Come this way quietly and I'll get you away, where you can interview them undisturbed."

He followed, trying to get the man's attention.

"I say," he kept repeating, "I don't want anyone else but my father. You know, Lord——."

Here the other's voice broke in :

"I know, I know; they all say that, the new arrivals. You'll have to decide for yourself, though."

Coming to an open space at the back, they paused.

"There," said his guide. "You can stand on that seat and view the throng."

"But I don't want to; I just want my father, and," remembering the need for haste, "it's most terribly important for me to see him at once."

"Well, if he's here, you'll find him, since the call's gone forth."

From that moment the young man did not remember much, except being terribly jostled and grasping hands clutching at him. It was an amazing experience, like a bad dream; they seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere.

Some just looked on and smirked, some seemed to beckon in an authoritative way, expecting him to obey. Some tried to grasp him.

"But, my good man," he turned to his guide, "these aren't my father. I want my father."

"That," said the other, "is where you are mistaken. You called and they answered, naturally. There's no time here, you know."

"I don't know what you're talking about." During these moments he had ceased to regard the crowd whilst he concentrated on his guide, and they, in consequence it seemed, fell back.

He continued : "Tomorrow I was going to attend my brother's——"

"Oh, you were going to Morrow," said the other. "Then you've come to the wrong place; that's down below, if it is at all, though they say there they never come to it. Here you'll only find Today. As I told you, there's no time here, or, all time, whichever you like.

Hence, these," and he jerked his thumb over his shoulder at the crowd, continuing :

"You asked for your fathers. Well, there you are."

"I did nothing of the sort," said the young man indignantly. "I said I wanted to find my father, Lord——"

"One and the same thing," said the other quietly. "You only had one at a time, but there they all are, each your father once."

"My *WHAT*?" shouted the young man. "This rabble?" and then pausing; "Don't be a fool, man; I've heard of a man having several sons, but never a son having several fathers. Come, come——"

His eye ran over the crowd again. They were a mixed lot. Some well dressed and aristocratic looking; others shabby looking and unpleasant; others refined looking but poor; others intensely evil looking. In one and all as he looked he saw a responding glance of possessive recognition, and it filled him with an unknown fear.

"Who," he said, turning to the man at his side, "are these people?"

"As I told you, your fathers. You called them, and there's no time here, as I also told you. So they're each still your father until you disown them."

At this moment an elderly man pushed himself forward, and seizing the young man by the arm swung him round.

"Here you are, you young rascal," he shouted, then paused, unable to utter the words which seemed in danger of choking him.

"Hullo, Dad," said the young man. "At last, I've been hunting for you everywhere."

At his greeting of "Hullo, Dad" the crowd had started to rush forward again.

"I say, Dad, steady," he said hastily. "Calm yourself, Dad; you know what the doctor's always warning you, if you get excited. You'll have a—er and er."

"Have," snapped the other.

"You have! You have what, Dad?"

"What you hadn't the guts to say just now. 'You'll have a stroke and die.' Well, I have, thanks to you and your letter! Insubordination," and he spluttered again.

The young man looked at him, wondering if his brain had given. Taking him by the arm, he said gently, "Let's get somewhere alone, and talk quietly," but as he turned to go the crowd closed in.

"Oh, no, you don't," they shouted.

"He called us, and he's ours as much as yours."

One took hold of his arm and, leering into his face, said, "Come on, my lad."

At the same moment another, pushing him aside, looked down at the young man. He was well dressed, and, though he said nothing, a nod of his head indicated that he expected to be obeyed.

Both men, when he looked at them, conveyed the same feeling of inner terror, of something indefinable but binding, as though they had a hold over him, a rightful hold. He shuddered, and looking round his eye fell on still another close by. A small old man who looked at him pathetically and said, "My son, my son."

The young man had a sudden desire to comfort this old man. He felt pity surge through him.

But instantly the cry was resumed: "No, he's ours as much as yours."

The young man looked round desperately, and seeing the man who had acted as his guide standing near, said :

"What the dickens are they after? Are they all mad, or what?"

"No," replied the other. "More like it you are, to let them do it."

"Let them do it!" he said in amazement. "I wish they'd all go to hell."

"Well, tell them to. All of them."

"Would they go if I did?"

"Of course," said the other.

He turned. "I will, then. Here, Dad, come along, I'm going to buzz them off."

"One *and* all, I said," the guide spoke again. "You can't recognise one tie and not the others, you know. All these have been fathers to you in some life. Haven't you realised that yet? And if you recognise one tie you recognise the others. More coming," he said quietly as his eye wandered to the outside of the crowd.

The young man looked, too, and there he saw, now, crowds of others thronging. Women too.

"Brothers, mothers, sisters, wives," the guide's voice died away as he looked outwards again. Then he continued : "All these were such to you once."

"What!" cried the young man. But as he looked into each face he saw the same answering glance of possessive recognition.

"Well, break free once and for all," said the other. "You nearly did on earth, and just failed because you vacillated."

The crowd surged onwards again.

A feeling of unknown terror shook him again, a helpless, awful, feeling of being thwarted and suffocated.

Suddenly a sound rose from afar. It came carried on the wind. The crowd paused, looking frightened.

Some murmured, "Thunder"; others : "A voice spoke."

But the young man heard it distinctly. The words rolled to him, as from a great distance, in vibrant notes. No wonder the trees shook and the earth trembled.

Like cool breezes wafted at eventide they came.

"Except a man disown his father and mother and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, he cannot be my disciple."

The young man seemed to be standing on a hilltop, where the grass was short and the soil sandy.

A voice, the same voice as had just spoken was talking. "The closer the bond, whether of blood or affection,

which mean domination, the greater the need to break it. Disown it, and so go in freedom; no bonds, no ties, no servitude; to perfect Service Unafraid. Then begins Impersonal Universal Love."

For a few minutes he stood, then the scene vanished.

. . . . .

He turned and, raising his arms, said :

"Bless you all, I free you all. Go in peace and fulfil your Selves.

"All mankind are my brother and sister and mother and father; all who know their Father within."

A moment later he turned to find himself alone; but not before he had seen the faces of the freed, whose links he had broken. Alone? no not alone. Many were there waiting to minister to him.

Once more music came rolling towards them.

One by his side whispered reverently :

"The Joy Bells ringing for yet another SELF-FREED SOUL."

He listened spellbound as a mighty chorus rose and swelled in volume.

"Enter thou into the Joy of Thy Lord," it rang.

"The Joy of Perfect Service and Self-Fulfilment."

"Now go," said a voice, "and show them the way down there."

Was the voice from without or within himself? He could not tell.

"I go," he said and, turning, went.

CHAPTER VI

THOSE who so wished had had tea, and now they sat in the garden chatting.

"There are two men coming along later, Jack, and I'd like to tell you one or two things about each of them."

It was Davidsson speaking.

An expectant hush fell over the party; all felt another story was about to follow. The Lad leant forward eagerly.

A memory stirred within him of One Who once said: "I have somewhat to say unto thee," and beneath his breath he whispered the reply, "Teacher, say on."

"Davidsson's eyes wandered round and rested for a moment on the Lad. Then turning away, he continued:

"The old tavern was dark and ill-lit. The panelling round its walls was dirty and unkempt.

Situated in a squalid district, only the really poor and the down and outs frequented it.

In a corner a man sat. His hand shook as he poured a dash of water into the portion of whisky beside him. He only added the water to make the drink go further.

He felt in his pocket and brought out two coins, one shilling and a sixpence; that was all he had left for tonight—only one more double. Still, he was beginning to feel nicely fuddled, less tortured.

The door swung open suddenly and a figure stumbled in and sank down on a nearby bench, a huddled heap, his head bowed with exhaustion.

A barman came across; the boy, for he was little more, though poverty and want had already left their marks upon him, lifted his head.

"A half," he murmured. "All I can afford."

The barman waited, growing impatient while he fumbled in his pockets. He knew this kind : experience had

taught him to take the money before supplying their requests.

"Can't find it," said the boy weakly, seeking and turning out empty pockets. A mouth organ fell on the floor as he did so.

"Then off you go," said the barman. "You can't stop here."

The drink-sodden occupant of the corner suddenly roused himself, he had been watching the lad and a fellow-feeling stirred him. "Here, Tom," he cried, "give him a pint, he needs it."

The barman turned surprised; he'd never seen this man treat another before. For one thing, he rarely was sober enough to notice anyone else.

"Make it two and some Woods, if he'd like them," he said as the barman took the coin.

The whisky drinker relapsed into silence as the change was put on the table beside him.

No more whisky for him tonight.

Oh, it was awful, as the reaction swept across him: awful. What should he do? What a damn fool he'd been!

He shook from head to foot at the thought of what he'd do. He couldn't exist without it, and he'd no money left now till tomorrow night.

The boy had revived somewhat, and looking round at the barman said, "Whom have I to thank for this?"

The barman pointed with his thumb at the figure in the corner.

"Thank you, sir," cried the boy; "I can't repay you, but I'll play a tune; maybe you'll like that."

He picked up his mouth-organ and started to play very beautifully, lovely old-time melodies.

Some hummed the tunes with him as he played.

They asked for more. He gave them more.

The figure in the corner sat very still, hidden in the shadow from the lamplight. Tears rolled unnoticed down his face.

He lived once more in days long gone, when, full of burning urge, a great fire in his soul, he had set out, as he hoped, to help mankind.

To heal, to heal, that had been his great desire. He had felt it often in his hands as, in his student days at hospital, he tended the sick and suffering. But always, always, it eluded him. He could not do it, and medicine failed so utterly, so many died in agony. It was too much for him, and as the years passed he had sought refuge from that cry of suffering humanity in drink. He could not bear the torture of it alone.

The tears were coursing down now, and great silent sobs shook him. That he had come to this, a drunkard, expelled by his profession, for long ago he'd retired into exile, excommunicated by the Medical Council.

His dreams, his great and glorious dreams, all gone, all trampled under foot.

Someone across the room spoke to the musician, for such he was; his soul was music-filled.

"Thank you, lad."

"Aye," said another, "it's been good to hear."

"Blessed be the feet of 'im that brings glad tidings," said another. "I feels I wants to start all over again. Life looks different some'ow."

"Rather, blessed are the hands that give," said the boy. "But for him I'd have been turned out at once."

"Blessed are the hands that give"; they didn't, they wouldn't, and he so wanted them to. The man in the corner glanced at his trembling hands, then dropped them between his knees.

A cold nose touched them, a soft head was pushed up. He looked down; the innkeeper's old bitch sat before him, looking up; she so often looked at him like that. So pitifully, as though asking for help. She had a great growth on her side which hung down. The innkeeper wouldn't have her put away. "No," he would say, "I always feels that while there's life there's hope."

Terrible it seemed to him, for he knew she suffered. Gently he stroked her, and his hands wandered over the swollen spot. His thoughts still on past dreams and hopes.

Presently he looked down, arrested by something. The dog was licking his hand gratefully and wagging her tail. He stooped, noticing her fully for the first time. She looked better; no longer tortured. . . . He glanced down and ran his hand along her side. The lump, where was it? That great ugly protruding growth?

He started forward, not trusting his eyes.

It wasn't there, it was gone. The bitch wagged her tail, beating it, as she sat, upon the floor. She panted slightly, her tongue hanging out as though in suppressed excitement.

He started up. Was it possible—could it be true? That at last, at last. . . .

He crossed the room, and from the passage turned into a smaller and often empty room to think.

A woman sat alone. "Good evening, sir," she said. Although so depraved, she still seemed to see something in him she respected. Perhaps it was the mutual recognition of another tortured soul.

He sank beside her on the bench. "Good evening, Mrs. Jones," he said. "How is it today?"

"Pretty middlin', sir," she said, "but might be worse, the 'ands be awful sore and itching, though, today."

Impulsively he laid his own upon them, as they rested in her lap.

"You poor, poor soul," he said, "and so brave; the rash is very bad today, I can see."

"Yes, sir, I've scratched 'em almost raw; couldn't help it."

"And you've suffered so long," he said.

They sat in silence. Then suddenly he rose and turned to go.

Voices from the other room had disturbed his silent thoughts. Exclamations came filtering through.

"She is, I tell you; she's 'ealed. 'Tis gone; it ain't there."

It was the landlord's voice. "And she so bad tonight. My God! how did it happen—does anybody know?"

More voices.

He turned to go, barely heeding them. Then stooped to lay his hand upon the woman's shoulder.

"Good night."

"Oh, look," she cried. "Look, sir, look! me 'ands—me 'ands be well." Holding them before her. "Ah! 'tis your touch wot did it. That I know. I felt it comin' from yer, sir."

The man turned and stumbled from the room; out into the night he went.

It was confirmed she, too, was healed.

He felt all dazed.

As from far away he heard the boy's voice again: "Rather, blessed are the hands that give. . . ."

. . . . . .

Back in the tap-room someone said: "Where's the bloke? He ain't come back."

"Left his whisky," said the barman. "He'll be back for it; trust him."

Then as the time slipped by and he did not return:

"That's queer," he said; "precious queer. I wonder wot's come over 'im?"

. . . . . .

In the little room the woman sat rocking herself gently to and fro as she stared at her hands, the skin of which was as that of a little child.

She could not take it in; the torture of years was gone. Silent she sat and gazed.

None spoke for a while, and then Davidsson said:

"Anyone who knew him then wouldn't recognise him now."

CHAPTER VII

"THE other who's coming along with him found his freedom in a different way," continued Davidsson.

It was a quiet little town: sleepy you might call it, in that nothing really vitally exciting ever seemed to happen in it, and yet it was not more sleepy than many other little towns.

It had one peculiarity: an old man much beloved by the town who had an eccentricity, so they called it; but then old people do have queer ideas sometimes.

As a matter of fact this peculiarity had been going on for many years. So that, when it first started, he was not then old; but his age did not stop him carrying out his purpose.

A stranger came to the town one day and put up at a small inn on the main street. After a long day's work he was tired and went to bed in good time.

He was awakened from a deep sleep by a curious noise. A bell ringing outside in the street below—a strong deep noted bell.

In his half-awakened state he said to himself: "The town crier. I wonder what he has to say—but surely it is early for——" He looked at the window; it was dark outside.

The bell persisted urgently, then a voice: "Wake up! Wake up!"

The stranger leapt out of bed. A fire it must be, a fire probably in this very building.

He threw on some clothes and dashed down the stairs.

At the foot of the stairs he met the landlord coming slowly up to bed. He did not seem in the least perturbed. He could not have heard the alarm, and yet who could miss it!

"What is it?" he asked urgently.

"What is what?" asked the landlord, gaping at his new guest.

"What's that alarm outside in the road. Surely you must have heard it?"

"That bell and the old fellow shouting? Oh, that's old Bill; no one takes any notice of him."

"But why's he making such a to do if nothing's the matter? How do you know there isn't a fire or anything?"

The landlord made to pass him on the stairs.

"Because old Bill's done it for years; we're all quite used to his noise. Poor old chap," he added with a sigh.

The stranger looked bewildered; his gaze wandered past the landlord to his wife standing behind.

"It's quite all right, sir," she said as she met his questioning look. "Old Bill *will* do it. He started years ago, and alarmed us all; woke us up suddenly in the middle of the night. We all rushed out, thinking something terrible had happened, and not wishing to miss anything there might be to be seen. But he just passed on down the street, saying the same thing and ringing his bell."

"Saying the same thing," said the landlord with a snort. "Shouting the same thing, you mean."

The landlady continued :

"He wouldn't be stopped; at first people reasoned with him, then the police threatened him for disturbing the peace of sleeping citizens. 'That's just what I want to do,' he replied. He's quite harmless really; they didn't want to prosecute him. They took away his bell. Heaven knows where he found it in the first place; but he soon found another, and when they took that away he got hold of an old can or gong or something and beat that. Awful row that was, so when he found another bell—the one he's got now—they let him keep that. The townsfolk preferred that to tin cans. And after all, he don't always do it; only sometimes quite sudden-like, and now they says they knows the sound o' his bell and don't

bother when it rings. So the police left that one with him. He does it in the daytime too sometimes, only it don't sound so loud then; people ain't so startled. But night's the time it comes over him mostly."

"Comes over him? What comes over him?"

"Oh, just these attacks; wantin' to make a noise and shout. But," as she turned to follow her husband up the stairs, "everyone's so fond of Bill they don't take no notice of that; they just leaves him be. He's quiet and companionable enough in between whiles."

"But what does he say when he has collected a crowd? He must have got something he wants to get off his chest."

"Oh, just that, 'Wake up!' that's all."

And she continued her way up the stairs, already sleepiness closing her senses in.

The stranger turned to remount the stairs, but changing his mind, descended quietly and, crossing the hall, unlocked the door and went out.

The street was more or less quiet now, except for the occasional bark of a dog as the town-waker, now several streets away, shouted his appeal.

"Wake up, wake up!"

He walked towards the direction of the sound, but, not knowing the town, evidently took the wrong road; and the voice grew more and more faint in the distance.

He returned to his hotel and bed.

. . . . .

Next morning the stranger made a few enquiries of the landlady. She was more communicative on the subject than her husband; he was frankly bored by it.

Having learned where old Bill lived, he sought out his old cottage on the slummy outskirts of the town.

Bill lived alone.

He was sitting outside his little house in the spring sunshine, mending a pair of children's boots.

"Hullo," he said to himself. "So the man's got a trade; a cobbler evidently."

Old Bill looked up as he approached.

"Morning, sir. Wot can I do for 'ee?"

"Nothing, thanks; at least, I just thought I'd like to call and see you."

The old man nodded.

"Pleased to see 'ee, sir."

The stranger continued :

"I heard your alarm; at least, your warning last night. It woke me up, and——"

"Me call? Did you indeed, I'm glad 'o that," said the old man. "Did it wake 'ee *right* up, sir?"

"It did indeed. I was very interested and thought I'd call and ask you about it."

He was humouring the old man, as he thought. It seemed the best way to draw him out, to get him to talk and explain the reason of his curious goings on.

But the old man replied :

"If it REALLY woke 'ee up sir, 'ee wouldn't need to come and ask me about it."

He felt non-plussed. But persevered;

"But, Bill, why do you do it? What's the idea?

"To wake 'ee up, o' course," said Bill, somewhat impatiently, as though he were talking to yet another half-wit.

" 'Wake up, wake up!' I says, and 'ee don't, none 'o ye. Ye pretend to, ye does yerself; but ye don't. Ye sleeps upon ye sel's. All o' ye."

"Bill," he said after a pause, "when did you first start doing this?"

"Doing wot?"

"This waking people up business."

"When I first realised that ye was all asleep, o' course," he said.

"You'm all asleep, every man jack o' ye, and wommin too. Childes too, though they be nearest to wakin'.

They 'ood if the older folks didn't put un to sleep like theirselves."

Another pause followed.

Then the stranger said :

"Bill, what do you want them all to do?"

"Wake up, o' course," said Bill. "Wot else is there for them to do but that? Nummat. Just wake up is all they've gotten to do. All anybody's gotten to do. So simpel it is," he said, "and they woarn't do it. No un'll do it. Not yersel' either."

"You woke me up last night all right," said the other with a laugh.

"Noa, I did na," said the old man indignantly. "If I 'ad you'd no be 'ere askin' questions. You'd be up and doin'."

"Up and doing what?" asked the other, in astonishment.

" Up and doin' summat; anythin', so long as it were summat," said the old man.

"Come, come, Bill," said the other, I'm doing something all day long. I lead a very busy life."

What a mixture of dialects the man spoke; must have lived in many places!

"You'm main busy sleeping; if you were nat, you'd no be busy," and after a pause: "Folk is allus busy in dreams, runnin' heere and there like a lot o' sheep. For what doan't 'ee wake oop, I'd like te know!"

The stranger smiled to himself; the old chap had indeed got a bee in his bonnet.

"Oh, noa, I aint," said the old man, replying as though he had spoken aloud.

"I ain't mad, I be awake oi be. Same as wot the birds and flowers be, an' animals—the free ones. 'Tis all o' ye wot bain't at 'ome. Sleepin'—not awaeke."

"And how does one wake up, Bill?"

"Be child-like; run where ye feet wants to taeke 'ee. Doan't keep stoppin te see if there be puddles or wot-

nots in the way; that's only grown ups wot have pointed they out to 'ee.

"You do other folk's bidding fra mornin' till noight. Ye 'ardly ever does wot ye woants to do. You'm so main careful over they puddles. So 'fraid lest ye get ye feet wetsed, and then ye mothers or ye mothers-in-law or sumbody'll be shocked. Git ye bloody feet wet and be blowed to it, says I, only do summat wot *you* want to do. Be blowed wot other folks think ye should."

Bill was waxing eloquent now.

The little boot had slipped from his lap to the ground; he was staring in front of him.

Then he stooped and picked up the little footwear and, shaking his head, said :

"But wot's the good of talkin'. All the toime ye be askin' t'other folk wot they think about it all. You caan't do nothin' without their permission."

"And when will you go out calling them again, Bill?"

"When me feetses wants to take me, o' course. When ye think?"

"I didn't know."

"Noa, ye would na. You goa and waeke oop, sir, an' live for a chaange. You'm only 'alf baeked at present."

"Really, Bill," said the stranger rising.

" 'Tis true, you wouldna be offended if 'tweren't.

"An oi've got lots of work te du. Lots of kiddies' shoes te mend. If I didna mend the kiddies' shoes, they'd kick me oot o' te town, but the simple folk be glad to have the childers' shoes an boots mended for nummat.

"But oi'd no do it if oi didna want to do et. 'Tis the childer wots got the most willin' feet."

He stooped to search in a pile of boots and shoes at his side.

"But, Bill, you've got some grown-ups' shoes there," said the stranger.

"Nay," said Bill; "they be still childer. There be one or tue wot be still child-loike in this town—though they

be old in years. Thank Gawd fer that. Thet's woi I do stay among 'em. Hopin' te remoind the others wot they really be, un dae."

"Well, I must be going," said the stranger."

"There's never no 'must' abart it : you either wornts to go or ye doan't. No 'must,' that's an excuse.

"Well, so long an' a good sleep to ye, and when 'ee waeks oop, 'member ol' Bill." He returned to his cobbling.

As the stranger walked away he pondered over old Bill's words.

"Must." He'd said, "There was never any must about things; one either wanted to or didn't want to." But, dash it all, one had to live, and one couldn't earn a living unless one worked for someone, and if one worked for someone, one had to do what was expected of one, otherwise, *how* was one to live?

"Yes, how?" he felt a voice inside him say. "It's all a matter of opinion that 'how' !" People rarely starved in this country, but the question of how one was to live was purely a matter of opinion. Better LIVE in a garret and be happy, be free, than live in a palace in servitude to the orders, opinions, demands of others. It all seemed to be a matter of exchange. One gave away one's freedom, one's inmost desire, in return for the money which would enable one to live as others considered a *nice* way to live, a conventional way, a respectable spick-and-span way.

Oh, damn it all. How he longed to be himself—to live; he didn't care where, if he could only do the one thing he wanted to do; had always wanted to do. But that would never bring in a fortune or even enough to live respectably—that meant in a fashion accepted by others as meet, desirable and proper. Oh, damn others, what did it matter what they thought. They didn't have to live one's life for one. One's family, their neighbours, one's family's friends, one's own so-called friends and

their neighbours, they all had an eye on each other and wanted one to conform to what *they* thought was done, or not done.

How horrified they would be if one got drunk; dear, dear, fie, fie, it just was not done; such an offence to others. But why? Where did the offence come in? Why so disapproving? He supposed the offence was against their personal opinions or those of their neighbours.

Dear, dear, what a circle they all pivoted round in; everyone with their eye on someone else's opinion. So busy watching that they'd no time to LIVE, to BE themselves. To be their OWN SELVES, spontaneous, abandoned; guided only by them Selves, not by other people's ideas and opinions.

He turned into a public-house and ordered a drink.

Good idea that, to get drunk just to smash other people's disapproval. Why be under the orders of others as to how much one should eat and drink.

The old man was right; people in their minds consulted other people's opinions as to whether they should or should not do a thing, rarely their own impulsive desire.

After all, drink only released one, gave one courage to think one's own opinions and stop running like sheep in other people's ruts. One forgot then what other people thought or did or hoped one would do, and one was just conscious of one's own Self. Free at last. The business of saving one's Soul mercifully forgotten in the business of KNOWING one's own Soul.

Back at his hotel, he sat down and wrote a letter to his firm, tendering his resignation. He could no longer travel for them. Circumstances had arisen which made it imperative to resign here and now. They could keep the month's wages due to him in lieu of notice.

Circumstances had indeed arisen.

He sat back and started making plans for the immediate future, in fact the now.

He looked up suddenly, thinking he heard someone moving in the quiet lounge of which he had believed himself the sole occupant.

Yes, he was right. There was the old man, old Bill, coming across the room.

"I just cum," he said, "to congratulate 'ee: I heard 'ee apulling of they bed-clothes off, so I noawed ye were wakin' oop. They swaddlin' clothes!"

CHAPTER VIII

DAVIDSSON was out that evening; his inclination having taken him to meet old friends at the village inn, where, Jack remarked, he was bound to find a job of work; he always did when his desire so moved him.

Marian, at Jack's suggestion, told the party of her meeting with the man who lived upon the mountain.

"This," said Marian, "was before I met Jack, when I was still hampered and bound by ties."

. . . . .

"He was the most amazing old chap I have ever seen. I don't know why I call him 'old,' except he looked as though he had the wisdom of the ages. He was quite young-looking really and held himself very upright."

They were sitting in the garden of the hotel, drinking coffee.

Suddenly one of them said, "Look at Marian's face."

They all looked.

"And what is wrong with my face, that you all suddenly decide to look at it?"

"Well," said the speaker, "you look as though—as though you'd lost sixpence and found half-a-crown."

"And," said Marian, "Tom looks as though he had lost a florin and found two shillings."

"How's that?" asked Tom.

"Well, you find a man who interests you very much, but, to your amazement, you find that he has two sides to him. He seems wise as the ages and yet human as—as Christ."

"As Christ?" said Tom in astonishment.

"Yes, as Christ. You are amazed that this man, with all his wisdom and understanding, should suddenly walk part of the way back with you because, he says, he needs a drink and so is going to the nearest pub."

"Well, I was surprised, but I don't see how that makes him human like Christ. Christ, they say, was a Divine, Perfect sort of Being, not human in the sense this chap seemed to be."

"I don't see any difference. This man, you say, was going to a public-house to meet his friends and have a drink."

"Exactly," broke in Tom. "Meet his friends in a public-house! Come, Marian, what are you thinking of—have you gone potty? And you compare him with Christ, as being human like Him."

"You say your friend of this morning surprised you after your talk, because he suddenly became so human and went off to a pub. I say not much difference there between him and Christ, since He was known as the Friend of wine-bibbers. That's all.

"You find one man who embodies, to your mind, two opposites—to your mind, mark you—and so you think he can't be what he first appears to be. Hence the florin and the two shillings. I say, look at Christ and you find the solution of your problem."

"Oh!" said Tom.

A pause followed; no one seemed to know what to say. In fact there seemed nothing that could be said.

The girl continued:

"As for looking as though I'd lost sixpence and found half-a-crown, I can assure you that I feel as though I'd found a fortune, without having lost anything at all."

Again another pause, and then:

"But you weren't there this morning. I don't see how that applies, or are you referring to something quite different?"

"No, I was not there this morning, but I shall be this afternoon. I am going off now to visit him."

"Good lor'," murmured someone.

The girl took no notice. She rose from her chair, and

as if oblivious of the whole party, passed up the terrace steps into the hotel, leaving her coffee half drunk.

The others sat on in silence, looking rather uncomfortable and embarrassed, and no one knowing quite what to say.

Then one said: "I have never known Marian to talk so much at a stretch before."

And another replied, "No, nor be so decided before. She wasn't long making up her mind as to what she wanted to do."

"Well," said another, "we'd better make our afternoon plans exclusive of her. That is obvious."

One of them jumped up and ran into the hotel, but returned shortly and shaking his head said:

"I hoped I might catch her and persuade her to stay and make a four at tennis instead; but the hall porter says she went out a few minutes ago and boarded a bus just across the road."

"Well, that settles that," said another, and they all agreed and talked plans, leaving, it seemed, the recent conversation strictly alone by mutual consent.

Marian climbed the steep pathway, heedless of the heat and the arduous ascent.

Tom in his account had described the way he had followed.

She had taken a bus to the village in the valley below, and then followed the path upwards.

It was some time before she espied the little cottage made of stone. She knew at once it was what she sought. No one was about, but as she drew near a figure came out of the door and approached her.

"So you have come," he said. "You have lost no time."

"It did not seem a bit unnatural that he should so address her. Formalities she did not expect.

Tom's account of his talk with him that morning had reminded her of One Who had said to Nathaniel:

"Before, when thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee." So now this man reminded her of another time when it was said of Him, "He told me all things whatsoever I did." And yet it did not seem strange to her.

They talked, and she spoke to him as she felt she would have talked to that One in Galilee those many years ago, had she met Him then.

After a while the man said: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and ALL these things shall be added unto you."

"Oh," said the girl very hurriedly; the words were a shock to her. "Oh, but really, surely you know I am not at all religious or anything like that. It just is that I want to do something worth while. There are so many things I'd like to do, but can't, somehow, and yet I want to so badly, that I feel I ought to be able to. And yet, I don't know which to do and am not sure if I could do any of them. Only, deep down inside me I feel there is something worth while I could do. But I am not 'good' at all!"

He watched her, smiling, while she said this and then:

"Seek ye first the Kingdom within you and ALL these things shall be added unto you. Dear Lady, it is so simple; but people won't see it, because it is so simple.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is within you; you, each one of us. We don't have to go seeking outside; it is the real Kingdom of your Self, within you.

"Just do, minute by minute, what you, your-Self, wants to do and ALL these things shall be added to your doings."

"Oh," breathed the girl. "But isn't that being very selfish and inconsiderate of other people?"

"No one but one's Self can know what we should do. No one else can, or has any right to control our Self in any way."

Again the girl hesitated, reluctant to argue, but unconvinced.

"But surely that is selfish?" she ventured.

"Self-ish, maybe. But, remember your Kingdom of Heaven is within your self—nowhere else. Christ told us that so clearly."

"Our Father which art in Heaven," murmured the girl to herself. "Then, then——"

"Your Father IS in Heaven, within you, and He is the ONLY Person to whom you should listen and Whom you should serve."

"But, in that case, He is in everybody——"

She paused to think. "Then oughtn't one to serve others?"

"Serve, yes, but not be a slave to. Serve Him Who is your Self, your Creator, your Father, and in so doing you will always serve others. But try and obey other people's demands, restrictions and laws and you will be unfaithful to the Father within you, your Self."

"Oh, dear," said the girl, feeling overwhelmed by this vast statement.

"It is very simple," said the man. "Just obey every impulse you have, at once, and you cannot go wrong and *THEN* all these things will be added unto you.

"You see, at present, you are a slave to other people's wishes, statements and opinions. You think if you don't slave for your parents, they and you will starve. How many people starve to death in a year in England? I've not heard of many, have you? And yet you frustrate your heart's desire to express yourself, because you are told you must work to earn money, and so on, and that it is your duty to be a servant to your parents. Yet Christ said, "Take no thought for tomorrow," and: "Except a person leave father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, they CANNOT be My disciple." You see, you don't take Christ literally. Hardly any do, and yet they profess and call themselves Christians—followers of Christ. And it is not only to parents and families that people are slaves, but to convention, to the opinions of

their 'set,' to the Church. They are slaves to these things which are outside them Selves. Whereas Christ told them to look within them for their purpose, their mission, their fulfilment.

"Do this, dear lady, and all these things shall be added to you. How else can the Father speak to you, but by the desire you and you alone are aware of, minute by minute? Do it instantaneously without pausing to reason, and you are home! To reason is to consider other people's opinions, and they are no business of yours!"

The girl sat silent.

The man continued :

"What, I wonder, is your spontaneous reaction to all that, without stopping to reason."

"Oh, a glorious creed for oneself, because there are so many things one would like to do, if one were free. But," she paused and gave an embarrassed laugh, "forgive me for being outspoken. But, very selfish and—and wicked."

"Who said so?"

"Well, everyone would say so."

"Exactly, you see, you are the slave of other people's opinions. You've even almost forgotten how to recognise your own. Be your Self, dear lady, and you will always Serve the world then. Every little desire followed, with, behind, the great Desire—which you have—to Serve, will lead you to Service. But obey others and you will be side-tracked and miss the opportunity to Serve, by following servitude."

"Oh," said the girl, "how lovely to be free; if only one had no obligations——"

"You are free, you have no obligations. They are simply self-imposed, because at the moment you prefer to be subject to outside opinion, rather than serve the God within you. You cannot serve God and mammon, you know. Follow your every little desire and you will find your Self serving everywhere, all the time. Listen to that 'still small voice' and you cannot go wrong.

"Leave God to look after His own; they are no concern of yours, you know. Follow thou Him, Who is within you—your Self. Your Real Self and your Father are one, as Christ said of Himself. So you need not mind being Self-ish, with a capital S and a hyphen; for then, you are being God-like."

He rose as he spoke, and turning, went into the cottage, leaving the girl alone with her thoughts.

Returning a few minutes later with a tray, he said :

"Don't reason, that is arguing with others. Listen to your desire, every moment; that is God speaking.

"I have only good beer and cider to offer you, if you would like either of these. And little loaves which I bake myself. They are new, fresh baked this morning."

"Oh, thank you," said the girl. "Cider, please, and a little loaf, and," with a laugh, "So I shall be following my desire; though it is a desire of the body—greed, in fact."

"The body is our guide. Since we are in the body, it is the means through which our desires lead us. If you follow those closely you will find it is the way the Father speaks to you."

She looked puzzled and he continued : "When I feel I need a drink I go to the inn. Down the mountain a little way, is a tiny village; and there always I find some one who is needing help. If I repressed that desire, I should miss an opportunity to Serve."

"Oh," gasped the girl, "how wonderful!"

"Yes, and how simple." he replied.

It was towards evening when she left.

"Go," said the man, "and Serve the whole, by being true to your Self, every moment of the day and night."

And she went.

"That experience," said Marian, "changed my whole life."

CHAPTER IX

"ONCE," said Jack with a chuckle, "Marian belonged to a Study Circle——"

"I never belonged to any Study Circle," said Marian indignantly, vivid memories arising in her mind of the type of pious people she once met at one.

"No. I beg your pardon. Marian was asked to address a Study Circle. She was never asked again. And she never got out what she went to talk about; she told them something else much more to the point. I'll tell you now; Marian won't mind."

"I don't mind," said Marian. "It is all perfectly true."

. . . . .

"Prostitutes, harlots, adulteresses! dear people, dear people, don't you realise that, knowing what we do, everyone of us is one of these!"

The speaker had risen to her feet and faced the amazed and horrified faces of the members of the Study Circle.

"We are! It is quite true.

"I've listened long enough to this discussion, this constant reference to the women of the streets. Ladies, I prefer to call them. Ladies of the street. 'Prostitutes' you call them; the more outspoken, 'harlots.' Others refer to adulteresses. But don't you see, knowing what we do, that we all have lived before on this earth and may do so several times more. And knowing that time is not. Then we are all adulteresses, harlots, ladies of the street."

The speaker paused, and the moment was filled with indignant exclamations and gestures of disgust.

"It is so," she continued. "If there is no time and everything is in the NOW. And if, as we know, we are

convinced, we all have lived before and known other conditions and other relationships: then we have all lived with several, no, lots of men! And we have all been promiscuous. So it is no use our looking down our noses at these people, who are only doing in one life what we have done in the course of centuries.

"You, most of you, are married people, but you don't pretend that you are married to the same man as when you were here a hundred, two hundred, a thousand years ago. We've all lived before—we agree about that—upon this earth. But because then we were married to another person, we don't call ourselves promiscuous or prostitutes. But, in a sense we are! Most surely and most wisely we are, and we have done the exact things through the ages that the Circle is condemning in the women of our day; who, speeding up, are doing it now in one life.

"Giving themselves, giving solace, giving service, but free, without bonds.

"And as for adulteresses, as they are called and as they have been referred to this afternoon——

"Adultery is nothing but adulteration. When love has ceased, when desire has ceased between two people, then adultery or adulteration has taken place, for love and desire are no longer pure, but adulterated.

"If a woman continues to live with one man when her desire is with another, the result is not pure union, but adulterated union. For she is not giving pure affection, and the result is, that one adulterates the union. The same if the man's desire is elsewhere. Hence Christ said, If you desire another in your heart and don't fulfil that desire you commit adultery.

"Like to like, dear people. Love to love, desire to desire, and if you withhold that, adultery is the result.

"The lovely ladies of the street give pure service, unadulterated. They give solace and comfort, pure and unadulterated. No impurity there, believe me; just

glorious free giving, no possessive holding asked in return. No 'my lover,' 'my husband,' just giving.

"So, you see, we needn't be ashamed of being harlots or prostitutes. And as for adulteresses! Why many have been and are that still, who continue to consent to a union which is adulterated by the lack of responsive desire *and* who hold those whose desire is elsewhere.

"But to come back to my first remark. We have all been promiscuous in time. And since we hold that life is continuous, and that we re-incarnate again and again, then we have many husbands living! or, if you like, we have lived with many men other than our present husbands."

A smile came over the speaker's face. "You asked me to come and address you today, and I have broken all your usual procedures by interrupting your discussion which precedes the address, and giving you my opinion on that discussion. But I could not contain myself!

"I am, and I know I am, what you please to term promiscuous. For I realise I have lived many earth lives before this one. And I have—I realise I have—had many who I loved and to whom I 'gave my body,' as it is sometimes called. I will not call it giving myself, for I belong to myself only; no one possesses me or has a right to possess me. That is a hark back to unenlightened slavery.

"But I am willing to grant that I am promiscuous. I am living with one man now, when many now living may have been my lovers and my husbands in other lives. But since life is continuous, what is Time? We're agreed on that point. So why all this quibbling about what someone does in one life, when we all have done it many times over in the course of many lives?

"No, dear people, don't let us be ridiculous, and don't let us quibble. Instead, let us realise that we are all gradually learning Universal love, Universal giving; Impersonal love, which gives and does not constantly

look for what it receives. Impersonal giving, which does not seek to hold or possess. That is what we are reaching after in our many lives. But do not let us draw our skirts away from these who, speeding up, are fulfilling themselves in their present earth-life; and who are courageous enough to ignore the world's opinion and condemnation, and to go for, headlong, heartwhole, the pure fulfilment of themselves. Not the adulterated conformity to convention, and so-called religious moral opinion."

The speaker sat down with an amused smile which also held a world of understanding. Her audience still seemed to be suffering from shock and maintained a stunned silence.

She rose once more.

"A parting remark," she said. "Our Great Elder Brother once said, "The harlots are nearer the Kingdom" than many so-called righteous people. That is a fact, and He meant us to know it as a fact."

This time the speaker bowed and turning, left them.

Silence followed for a few minutes, then everyone started collecting themselves to depart; none knowing quite what to say. Though some burbled to themselves indignantly as they buttoned their coats.

One little lady who had been sitting very still now rose. "Well," she said—and to some her smile seemed to resemble that of the afternoon's speaker—"Well, we call ourselves a Study Circle, and we meet to discuss. But this lady has gone straight to the central point. No circling for her!"

CHAPTER X

The long week-end had elongated itself. Several of the guests had stayed on. To their requests as to whether they might, Jack had replied, "Follow your desire; when we've had enough of you we'll tell you or walk out ourselves."

Davidsson came and went at will. He would turn up unexpectedly after being absent sometimes for hours, sometimes for longer intervals.

One evening Jack told the others of the time when Davidsson had addressed a public meeting. He disliked publicity so much that he had never before agreed to take the platform. Jack's account was of an interview given afterwards by a reporter to an indignant lady who called on him for first-hand information.

"And then he laughed," said the speaker, deeply engrossed in his story.

"He what?" interrupted an indignant voice.

The speaker looked up as though drawn back from watching an absorbing scene.

"He laughed, Madam; and the thing happened."

"The thing! What thing?"

"The miracle."

"You mean to tell me he laughed." The lady gasped. "The fraud, the impostor, the irreverent wretch!"

"Oh, not at all, believe me, Madam, there was no fraud there; it *happened.*"

"You mean to tell me," said the indignant lady again, "that he, a man who professed to come and speak on healing—laughed at—at the crucial moment? The sacrilegious wretch. Laughed indeed. How dare he, with all those people around. And all those who had come thirsting to hear what he had to say." She moved herself in her chair with an indignant shuffle.

"I heard, I heard it rumoured that such a thing had occurred, and I wouldn't believe it. Absolutely wouldn't believe it, er Mr. Whatsyername. So I came along to you, knowing I should get an accurate account; since you were there purposely to report the—the evening's proceedings."

"If you will allow me, Madam," said the speaker, "I will proceed with my account. For myself, I never expect to have the privilege of such an experience again. As I was telling you, the gentleman in question had held us spellbound by his simplicity, his obvious sincerity, and above all his understanding and—what shall I call it?—his compassion. Yes, his compassion toward all who were seeking, really seeking, for light——"

"And then he laughed! I never heard such a thing," said the lady, her outraged feelings getting the better of her again.

"Madam, believe me, it was a wonderful laugh; in fact it was almost a guffaw——"

"A—a guffaw!" Here words failed her.

"Yes, Madam," said the speaker earnestly, "and everybody at once started laughing too. It was glorious. One laughed from one's stomach."

"Mr. Whatsyer——" exclaimed the lady in horror.

"I beg your pardon, Madam, I s'pose I should have said 'one's upper abdomen.' It rushed, rolled out of one absolutely unrestrained—unrestrainable!"

The lady was making choking noises, gesticulating with her hands.

"I," she spluttered, "I, I never heard such a thing. Here a man comes and professes to speak on healing, and instead of praying and solemnly laying his hands on the sick, he—he——" Here her voice failed her again.

"Madam, Madam, please remember; he only came to speak of the healing properties of——"

Here the lady again interrupted.

"No, Madam," he continued, "He did not come professing to heal himself. That was an unexpected and most wonderful result."

"Result! Result, indeed, of what, pray? Of his laughter, I s'pose!"

"Well, yes maybe; I can't tell you. But everybody else laughed too, Madam, as though they'd suddenly forgotten their fear of disease, or rather—how shall I put it?—as though they suddenly realised how simple it all was, and how stupid to be afraid; because there was no disease really, just a temporary passing state so easily remedied; and therefore so unimportant and powerless."

"Unimportant," screeched the lady. "Do you mean to tell me my rheumatism is unimportant?"

The man continued as though she hadn't spoken.

"It was as though everyone had just emerged from a great cloud, and realised how frightened they'd been about a little thing which was just passing over, leaving the sunshine always there. And the relief and the absurdity of the things implanted on them by the 'wise,' who use long names with longer faces, suddenly burst upon their consciousness. And they all laughed—roared, Madam. I am told the noise could be heard streets away in spite of the traffic."

The lady had risen and was shaking out her gown.

"Really, Mr. Whatyoumaycall, I came here to hear sense from you, not drivelling nonsense."

The man ignoring her, continued:

"For myself, I can never forget it. I feel as though a great burden had rolled off me, even if the miracle hadn't happened. But there you are, it did. They were all healed. Then and there!"

The lady was standing gazing down on the man, who still retained his seat, unaware that she had risen.

"It was like, yes it was like that phrase—I don't know where it comes from, but it has always thrilled me—'And all the Sons of God laughed.'"

As she reached the door the lady turned and said: "I will leave you to your madness, Mr. Er—. Whatever else he did last night, that man seems to have robbed you of your senses."

"Yes," he replied thoughtfully. "Robbed me of all my senses of *fear* and left me gloriously, gloriously FREE.

"Most truly did all the Sons of God shout for joy."

"And what about"—said the lady, turning once more—"what about all those people, those earnest students, who came to sit at that man's feet and learn to heal. They didn't learn much!"

"Ah; they. They, the wise, the prudent, the would-be important people. No, they wouldn't have learnt much; except that the healing of disease is not a personal matter and can't be cornered——"

"They," she interrupted, "they were disgusted. I've talked with some of them before I came here. They say the man's a fraud and didn't teach them what they came to learn. Didn't show them where to find the power they sought."

"Oh, no, that is quite true. He smashed the power and released the sufferers. Yes, they must have been very disappointed when he removed the power of fear from the sufferers' hearts and shewed how simple it all was. Yes, a nasty shock for them.

"But some, Madam, came with ears open to hear, and they are for EVER convinced."

As the door shut with a bang, the retreating lady heard a great joyous laugh which came from the relaxed stomach of the man, as he once more remembered that mighty roar which went up—where? To Heaven most surely. The laughter of the Sons of God, the FREED."

CHAPTER XI

One morning Marian had a visitor. She hustled in looking flushed and harassed and bringing into the quiet room an atmosphere of worry and disturbance.

"My dear," she said, "I *had* to come and see you and ask you what you thought about—about this curious, no, incomprehensible letter I've had."

Hastily she opened her bag and, searching about, found and gave to the other a letter.

"I had to come round and see what you'd got to say about it. I've asked the Morrisons—I called there on my way— and also the Jones; now I want to know what you think about it."

The other took the letter and laid it down on the table beside her, whilst her caller loosened her coat and threw it open as though to cool her perturbed thoughts.

"And what do you yourself think? Have you decided that, before you seek the opinion of so many others," she asked with a smile in which an amused twinkle shone out.

"No, I don't know what to think, so I've come to ask you. I never read anything of the like before. I've known them both for years; it's most amazing. In fact, I've known them longer than anybody else here and—will you read and see what they say? They can't both be mad; one might be queer possibly, though not either of them, I shouldn't have thought, ever. But both! You see they both sign it. Oh, you haven't read it yet, of course."

"No, I will now, but you know it always seems to me much best to make one's own decisions and have one's own opinions, rather than just a conglomeration of other people's. Why not settle what *you* think for once, and act on that, since it's a letter to you, I presume? Instead

of being a sort of register of other people's ideas and opinions."

"But I don't know what to think, and I always do ask you. I have such confidence in your opinions, though you seldom will tell me or advise me really."

Marian picked up the letter and read it aloud.

"Dear Alice," it ran,

"We should be so rejoiced if YOU would come to tea tomorrow, Tuesday. We should like to meet YOU; we have been looking forward to this pleasure for such a long time, and have never yet made your acquaintance. If you feel like it, do come along : without the newspaper or the wireless broadcasting and receiving set or the outside world.

"We feel that we have not yet encountered the lovely world which is yours; nor, as we say, met YOU.

"So hoping YOU will give us this pleasure."

"And, you see," broke in the visitor, as the other paused, "you see, it is signed by each separately."

Marian folded the letter very thoughtfully. She seemed to be pondering it.

"The others all say it's either a joke in very bad form or else that they've gone queer, for some reason. It isn't a forgery. I know their writing too well.

"No," said Marian; "if you really want my opinion, I think it's one of the bravest and most beautiful appeals I have ever known made."

Her visitor looked at her open-mouthed.

"If you take my advice—though I'd much rather see you follow your own unthinking inclination, without resort to any outside influence, you will go home and find and remain in that beautiful world of yours and go *alone* to call this afternoon. And, by so doing, give those two the very real and wonderful experience which they hope for."

"You—you can't really help me at all then," said the

visitor. "I'd so much relied on your opinion to guide me."

The other smiled and, taking her by the shoulders, gently shook her.

"My dear," she said, "for once drop all that and just know your own opinion; just be yourself. Drop all that living other people's ideas and be your Self regardless of whether it's correct or not. Leave other people out and be yourself in your own world of beautiful creating. You've got a dear little cottage and a sweet garden. Why not just for one day or a few hours have it to yourself, without any mental visitors armed with opinions and arguments, and let your Self breathe and live unhampered. Just your Self in YOUR world. Both so beautiful, as those two realise—but as you do not, and have never yet permitted to be known, even to yourself. Unlock that lovely world and BE in it for a little while alone."

CHAPTER XII

WHEN her visitor had gone Marian wandered out into the garden. Soon after she had joined the others Davidsson started to tell a story.

The girl looked about her helplessly. What should she do? There was no doubt she was lost, and time was slipping by. What would her host and hostess say? They were always so terribly punctual for everything.

She was so hot and felt so flurried.

"Good day to you, Madam." She turned round hurriedly and found a man standing by her.

"Or isn't it?" he went on with a smile.

"Isn't it what?" she said, still too surprised at his sudden appearance to think of anything.

"A good day, Madam. I hope it is, because it always is, you know."

"I don't know at all; I don't know what you're talking about—what always is?"

"Today," he replied. "So I hope it is a good day."

"Good Heavens!" she said to herself. "The man is mad."

He proceeded to repeat himself, seeing she had not understood his remark,

"It always is Today," he said, "so I hope it is a good day for you."

"It's a very bad day," she replied impatiently, suddenly remembering how hot and tired she was and how late it was getting. "I am lost, and I don't know what to do." Then, more hopefully, "Perhaps you can direct me. I want to go to——" and she gave an address.

"You are living there," he remarked as they started to walk away together.

"No," she corrected him. "I am only staying there."

"Much the same thing; you are living there at the moment," he answered.

"Only for a few more days," she replied. "Then I return."

"Just as well," he said. "But why be there when you are here?"

Really, the man was mad, she decided. However, if he would put her on her way all would be well.

"Is it very far away," she asked anxiously. They were approaching a main road and more houses. "Isn't there a bus or train anywhere we could take?"

"There's a tram here, if you'd like to get in," he said as they approached a tram terminus. One of the trams was crossing preparatory to its return journey.

"Which one?" she asked. "Quick, do let's hurry."

"Which you like," he replied. "They all go."

She jumped into the waiting tram and sank on the seat with a sigh.

A few minutes later the conductor arrived and was proceeding to ring the bell, when her guide jumped up and tapping her on the knee said, "We're here. Quickly, we gèt off now."

"But," she replied, as he hustled her off, "we haven't gone anywhere; we hadn't started. What happened? Were we in the wrong tram."

"No, we're here," he repeated.

"Here?" she asked in amazement. "But we were here before."

"Yes, I know," he said. "Always here," and taking her arm, proceeded to guide her through the crowded street.

"Why ever did we get in," she asked, "if it wasn't going to take us anywhere?"

"Well, we're here," he replied. "That's all that matters, and you had a nice little rest for a few minutes. You know, you were tired."

By this time she was getting thoroughly vexed. Standing still on the pavement, she stamped her foot and said,

"What is the good of telling me we're here. I know

that well enough, but what I want is to get there—back to my friend's house."

"I know you do," he replied; "and did you but know it, you are there already, as I said before. I am trying to make you realise that you are here."

"Here! Here!" she raised her voice in indignation. "I want to get away from here. Don't you understand?"

"Perfectly," he said. "But when we do arrive at your friends' house you'll say, 'Here we are!' So, you see, here is really where you need to be, only you don't know it."

She turned to walk on again, not knowing what else to do.

"Dear, dear, I shall be so late for lunch," she sighed.

"It's much best," he said quietly, "to have meals when one's ready for them, instead of when they're ready for one."

"Can't do that," she snapped, "in other people's houses."

"Oh," he said, "won't you get any lunch when you get in? Perhaps you'd like to get some now."

"Of course I shall," she snapped again, "when I do get in."

"Then you will have it when you're ready, won't you?"

"Yes, but it's ready long since," she replied.

"Quite so," said he, and then to himself, "These servants of Time."

Presently, at his suggestion, they boarded a bus.

"Not if we're going to jump out again at once," she said.

But he reassured her.

As they went along she began to recognise some of the surrounding buildings, but realised they'd yet far to go.

"I must have gone a long distance," she remarked.

"Yes, it's a way you have—most people have, in fact—and then they're surprised when they find they have lost

the in-between. If you'd all only stay here it would be so much better."

"Perfectly mad," she remarked to herself again. "How could one always stay in one place?"

She heard him chuckle.

"That's not necessary, in fact it's what you generally do. Go *where* you like, only be here."

"By the way," she said, changing the subject, "I haven't asked your name, nor apologised for taking you out of your way like this; but in these foreign towns I am done, because I don't talk the language."

"Oh, that's all right," he said. "As a matter of fact, if you could speak the language I doubt if you'd get a lucid answer. You see, they're so few of them at home; always away."

"Oh, but there are a lot of people in the streets. I wouldn't need to go to a house."

"Just the same," he said. "They're not here if they are in the streets. The people you meet out are generally somewhere else, and the people at home are, more often than not, away somewhere." Then proceeding to make himself clear. "They sit like mummies or masks, with their minds somewhere else, or they rush about all over the house doing nothing in a terrible hurry, because they've already gone somewhere else."

Again she tried to turn the subject to stop his flow of nonsense.

"You haven't told me your name yet."

"Now," he said.

"Now—what?" she asked after a pause.

"Always only NOW," he replied with a smile.

"Oh, I see; you mean your name is NOW. I am so sorry I didn't understand." (Odd names some people have).

"Yes, Now of Here."

"You—you mean you live here, Mr. Now?"

"Yes, I am always here," he smiled again.

"But you weren't when I met you," she snapped, feeling exasperated.

"Oh, yes, I was," he said. "It was you who were not."

She stared at him.

"It's quite all right," he said. "I am NOT out of my mind. Most people are, or rather, I should say, out with their mind—wandering, you know. You've heard the expression, 'Mind's wandering.' Well, most people's are more or less. Either straying in the past or into the future; very rarely Here.

"You have a tendency that way, as I have tried to point out to you.

"Allow me, if I may." They had reached the gate of her friend's house; he was removing the button-hole which, for the first time, she noticed he was wearing.

Holding out the flowers to her, he said, "They will help you."

She took them, two little sprays, one of Clematis, the other of Honeysuckle.

"To be," he continued. "Now and Here."

She looked up; he had gone, vanished, nothing remained to prove he'd been there but the two little flowers in her hand.

. . . . .

That afternoon the girl had a curious dream. Being tired after her wanderings, she had gone to rest.

Her friends carried out their programme to scheduled time. Being Saturday, the husband was at home and they had arranged to drive out in their car and visit some friends.

People were due to come to tea, so they had to be back in good time.

As she had only got back shortly before the time they were due to start out, she had persuaded them to go without her and leave her to lunch alone and rest.

In her dream—at least she supposed it was a dream, due probably to her meeting with the strange man that morning—in her dream she had awakened in good time for tea, and having tidied herself, went down to the drawing-room, where she found her friends.

They had sat chatting for a while, and then a most peculiar thing had happened. She hoped it was a dream, otherwise she would have to visit an oculist about her eyes, or a doctor perhaps.

Anyway, this is what had happened. They were chatting, and suddenly she noticed that while her friend was talking about the people they'd met that afternoon and the curiousness of her husband meeting an old friend after so many years—the husband had suddenly got quietly out of his chair and gone out of the room. She was so surprised that she had turned to the empty chair and found he was still sitting there, only his face had a curious, rather absent-minded look.

She then turned to her friend, who had stopped talking. She did not seem to notice her husband's lack of attention, but she herself suddenly got up, too, and went out.

"How odd," thought the girl, and looked back to see her friend still sitting quietly, with a curious expression on her face, as though she werelooking at someone she was anxious to please, but a little in awe of.

The girl herself felt she must get out into the air, so she got up and went out into the hall and on into the drive. What should she see next? Neither had noticed her going, for as she got to the door she'd looked back to see, and she'd also noticed that her chair—the one she'd sat in—was vacant. She was very relieved at this, for she'd almost feared to see herself sitting there also, with a curious expression on her face!

Going down the drive, she was surprised at the sound of traffic and passers-by, which reached her ears.

On reaching the gateway she found that her surroundings had changed. From the quiet lane which she had walked down that morning the roadway had turned into a wide thoroughfare, and, more and more curious, all the traffic was keeping two clearly defined tracks. Everything on her side kept that side; nothing veered out beyond the middle of the road. The same with the other stream, it didn't poach at all on this half of the road.

Another very odd thing then happened. She saw that the road itself was slowly travelling along like a moving floor, the half near her going in one direction, the other moving in the opposite.

So that if anyone stepped out on to the road and stood still, they just drifted along in the direction in which the road was travelling.

"Interested?" said a voice behind her, and turning round she saw her friend of the morning.

"Oh, Mr. Now, how you startled me!" Then looking back at the road, she said, "It's all so queer; I can't understand it."

"It's quite simple really," said the man. "Those going in this direction," pointing to the side nearest them, "are making for the Future; those on the other side, for the Past. See the sign-post?" And she beheld for the first time a sign-post in the middle of the road with three arms to it. One had, "TO BE," on; the other, pointing the opposite direction, "BY-GONE." The third, which pointed at the front gate of the house, had, "HERE and NOW."

"What a lot of people!" she murmured.

"Yes," said the man, "and your two friends have just gone out. He went into the Past," he pointed in the direction indicated by the sign-post to By-gone, "to meet a lady he saw this afternoon for the first time for many years.

"His wife went the other way, to meet her mother, whom she has to visit every Wednesday afternoon. She's gone, mind in advance, so to speak. She dislikes it so

much that she goes much more often than she need. But Mother likes to advise her on every subject."

"Your neighbours are out, too," he said, pointing to the house next door.

"He has gone to replay the game of golf he played this morning. And she's gone trotting up the road all in black, but jubilant, to help make arrangements for her mother-in-law's funeral, which she longs for and which she goes to meet, in the hope of hurrying up the day."

All sorts of people went by. Some hurrying, some slowly, despiritedly, some just stood and allowed themselves to drift along on the road.

"That little lady," said the man, "arrived but a few moments ago to call on your neighbours in the other house next door, but already you see she is hurrying off in her mind. She is always so busy she never stays in the Present; she rushes off all the time somewhere else. So she really hears very little of what is said to her, and in consequence is often bored."

"And very boring, I should think," said the girl.

"It makes her very restless. She doesn't stay long anywhere. She hops off again back home to get busy over something, but with her thoughts still away somewhere else. She scuttles off in her mind at other people's bidding; she is not her own mistress, but very influenced by certain people. So she can't sit and be restful, you see, as she is always fussing round them and what they think she should do."

"That little lady there, with the basket on her arm, has gone into the future to do this evening's weekly shopping. She goes every day and often several times a day, but her body only goes once a week by bus.

"That man there, just gone by into the Past, is going to his old home; his mother has called him. He never does anything without her advice. A lot of them, as you have seen, are at the beck and call of other people.

"That boy is off into the future; you see the carpenter's tools on his back. His body is with his bicycle. He is an errand boy, but he lives in the future. His desire is to be a carpenter."

"That man there, with the gardening tools on his shoulder, is off to dig his allotment. His body is sitting on an office stool."

Presently the girl noticed her friend return; she looked weary and despirited. The husband, too, returned; he seemed to have enjoyed himself on the By-gone Road, and was rather reluctant to re-enter the gate to NOW.

After that the girl had found herself in her room, dressing for dinner, and she couldn't for the life of her decide whether it was a dream or no.

Anyway, the sound of continuous traffic and hurrying feet had stopped.

She daren't tell her friends and ask them what they thought. Well, how could she?

And she couldn't ask Mr. Now, because he lived in the Here, and all that was there in the past, since it happened in the afternoon. At least, she thought it was, though she wasn't very sure."

CHAPTER XIII

"THAT," said Jack, at the end of Davidsson's story, "reminds me of a fellow who lived in a village where I went with a party once for a holiday."

"I've just seen *the* cottage," said Jean, walking up to the tea-table and pouring herself out a cup of tea.

"I did giggle," she continued. "Has anybody else seen it yet?"

"I have," said one. "This morning."

None of the rest of the party had, as yet.

They were a group of friends who'd taken a house for a month in the little quiet village. Attracted there chiefly by the good golf within motoring distance and the fishing in the river nearby.

"He must be a rum old bird," spoke Jean again. "Can't be very keen on callers."

"What's it all about, anyway," asked a new arrival that day.

"Oh," said Jean, "an old crony who lives in the village here. A man who was playing golf with Jack yesterday, told us about it."

"What's 'it'? and what's 'the cottage'? You aren't very explicit."

"Well, this old crony, at least I expect he must be an old crony, has got the weirdest remark or statement hanging from his porch."

"As a matter of fact he's neither old nor a crony, whatever you mean by that word," said Jack.

"Oh, have you seen him? What's he like?"

"Yes, I saw him this morning."

"I'm still in the dark," said the new-comer. "I've heard about a remark and a porch and no more. Is it a church porch or cemetery, or a museum porch, or what?'

"No, stupid," said Jean. "The porch of his cottage,

and I called it *the* cottage because it's got this rum statement on the board hanging outside the porch. The statement is—let me see, I wrote it down; you can see it from the garden gate. I thought you'd all like to hear it. Here it is," said she, drawing a piece of paper out of her pocket. "I'll read it to you.

"It's headed :

" 'To callers,' and goes on : 'While your body's here, please stay here. When you want to go, please take your body with you.' "

A general laugh went round the room from the other members of the party who'd been sitting saying nothing.

"How interesting," said the latest arrival.

"Interesting?" said Jean.

"Yes, very. I'd like to meet the chap."

"Well, if you go, be sure and take your body with you," said one of the party who had not yet spoken.

"Facetious fool," said the new arrival. "Are you trying to be funny, or were you, as usual, not here when Jean read out the statement just now."

"It seems to me it's you who are being facetious, seeing that I am here, large as life, and have been since you arrived."

But the new arrival ignoring him, continued; "It's one's body he does not want without one's self."

"You sound as mad as he," said another.

"He's not mad," said Jack. "He's got the point, which is more than any of you seem to have done. I was passing this morning and happened to see the notice over the porch. As I was moving on someone said, 'Interested?' and I looked back and saw a man gardening.

" 'Very,' " I said.

" 'Come in, if you like,' he said. 'Only don't stay when you want to be off, because I've not time for that sort of thing.'

"I said, 'I quite agree with you,' and he continued, 'I thought you understood, otherwise I wouldn't have invited you in.' By this time we were walking up the garden path.

" 'Curious thing,' he continued, 'the way people have of dumping their bodies down and running off and leaving them. Wouldn't matter so much if they left them at home while they wandered off. But to go and call on someone and then trot off and leave their body sitting in a chair inanely smiling or looking blank. Well, it beats me, and yet most of them think themselves the last thing in good manners and correct behaviour.

" 'Amazing the time people spend away from their bodies,' he continued, 'and mostly answering the beck and call of someone else.

" 'This morning my daily char stayed away altogether. She's always doing that now. Got a tiresome old man whom she lives with, who dominates her and orders her about, and she stays with him; or the twins, very often they keep her at home; most demanding infants. So, along comes her body and the rest of her stays at home. Result : I find the dust-pan resting on my pillow when I go up for my tobacco pouch—full of dust, mind you—and the hearth-brush sitting in my arm-chair together with a tin of floor-polish.

" 'No, she's not been here herself for some days now.

" 'But she's no exception, nearly everyone's alike. People who come and ask my advice about their sick animals. I'm only too glad to give it, but they prance off while I'm telling them and expect me to carry on.

" 'The same with the average caller. Come to have their bodies looked after, I s'pose, while they trip off and expect one to chatter to a mask. I've no use for it, hence the notice,' he said, pointing to the porch.

"I liked the fellow. Most interesting about plants and trees and their healing properties."

"I must go and see this man, if he won't object," said the newest comer.

"Yes," said Jack, "most interesting and wise."

"Can't say I see much wisdom in all that," said one of the party. "Just likes the sound of his own voice, I should say."

"You," said Jack quietly; "you wouldn't understand a word; you're so seldom HERE; mostly mouching off somewhere, and you don't even know where you've been.

"Now, Gladys there, is still at her office, but she'll own to it. She always stays behind for a few days, fussing and wondering how they're doing without her. She misses quite three days of her holiday that way, don't you, Gladys? More than three days really, because about three days before she's due back she goes off, 'luggage in advance,' settling in before she gets there."

Gladys laughed.

"I never thought of it like that, but it is perfectly true."

"Glad you're so honest. Most people wouldn't be.

"Jean here spends a lot of her time in her brother's office all the year round, but particularly now, when she should be enjoying her holiday and making the most of it. Instead, she's in the old office all the time or fussing round the dining-room table at home and in and out of the kitchen, wondering if Sally, the maid, or whatever her name is, is doing everything properly and carrying out all her orders."

Jean, looking very embarrassed, said, "You're very personal, Jack."

"But it's true," said Jack, "whether you own to it or not."

"Dennis there, isn't here at all," said he, nodding at a figure in an armchair holding a newspaper and deep in a brown study. "He's trying to decide which horse he'll back for Thursday's race.

"It's all very interesting. That fellow I saw this morning is quite right.

"Why you people come down here and spend money

on a holiday I don't know, when you're not here at all. Might just as well stay at home."

A pause followed, and then one said, "Here endeth the lesson, or at least we hope it doth."

Jack laughed and got up.

"I don't care," he said. "I admire the chap's honesty. He's an expert gardener and knows all about animals, and people come and seek his knowledge and then hop off and don't listen while he gives of it to them.

"None of you is listening to me now; you're all off somewhere, leaving your bodies behind you, except this chap," pointing to the latest arrival, who had also risen.

"I'll join you," he said, "if you are going out for a stroll."

CHAPTER XIV

"Donald," said Jack, "there's a fellow living in this village who is very stricken by the loss of a dear friend. If you felt like telling him of your experience, it might help him."

That afternoon the man called. As he approached across the lawn Donald said, "Jack would know he was coming, he always did know things."

"But," said Jack, "I didn't. I just suddenly thought of him and realised how you could help him and, by Jove, you will, too."

Donald told of his experience quite simply.

. . . . .

I first saw him walking up the path to the house. I had been sitting with my friend till a few minutes previous, when I had gone to my room preparatory to going out.

It was as I crossed the hall that I caught sight of him. He was a stranger to me; and yet there seemed something familiar about his face.

I stood and waited for him to knock or ring, but instead he stepped straight in and, turning left, opened the door of my friend's den and walked in.

I went out and, my eye caught by some spring flowers, fresh blossoms since yesterday, I stopped to look at them and drink in their beauty.

He came out again as I stood there.

As I looked round he paused beside me and shook his head.

"Not at home," he said.

I started.

"Not at home?" I asked. "Do you mean Jim? He's in there. I only left him a minute or two before you came in."

I don't know what made me speak of my friend by his Christian name to a complete stranger. I suppose it was the familiar way in which he approached the house and entered Jim's private den which made me conclude he was someone who knew him very well.

He shook his head again.

"Not at home; I'm sorry," and then started off down the path at a brisk walk, before I had time to enquire who he was or if I could give any message.

Puzzled, I wended my way along a path to a gate which led out onto the side lane.

The incident had slipped my memory; there was much on my mind at the time. But I remembered it when I met him again a few days later coming across the garden, again behaving as though he were accustomed to walk about the grounds at will.

He passed me at a little distance, and entering a side door, disappeared into the house.

Quite shortly after he reappeared, going down the path as before, shaking his head again as though disappointed.

"Came to leave a note, I expect," I said to myself, knowing that Jim was indoors writing letters. "I suppose he didn't ask to see him; but why shake his head like that?"

I met him again one evening, to my intense surprise. I was on my way up to change after a game of golf. It was near the end of my visit. I was late coming in and hadn't much time to spare before dinner was due to be ready.

He passed me at the foot of the stairs. Pausing, he said: "He's away, as usual. If only he'd stay Here," emphasising the last word.

I broke in, "If you want Jim, he's sure to be dressing for dinner. I'll tell him if you like."

He shook his head. "No good," he said; "I've been up, but he wasn't here."

I was so surprised that before I could answer he had passed on out.

At dinner I remarked:

"You must have changed early tonight, old chap; I suppose you went out after."

Jim looked up. "Went out? I didn't go out. I got down just before you, though I wondered if you were in or were going to be late."

"That's queer," I said. "For someone was looking for you as I came in, and he said you were out. I met him coming down the stairs as I started to go up. He said he'd been to your room and not found you."

"Whatever are you talking about," said my friend. And then with a grin, "I wonder what you had at the club before you came back. Even so that's not like you; it must have been something very strong and potent."

"Indeed I had nothing to drink, if that's what you're suggesting. There wasn't time; we got in too late. Another thing, I've met this chap two or three times now. The first time he seemed very disappointed to miss you. The second time, too, he came away so quickly I presumed he must just have come to leave a note."

"A note, when?"

"Oh, a day or two ago. Yes, the day before yesterday. He went in at the side door next your den; but came out again almost at once, through the front door. But as he went down the path he was shaking his head, as though disappointed about something."

"Well, I had no note, I am sure. Whatever are you talking about? And you say he came in at the side door and went out at the front? Sounds as though he knew the house.

"You say you've seen him before?"

"Yes, the first time he walked straight in as I was going out, the day I went to see the Pritchards. He turned in to your den, but came out again, saying you

weren't at home. It was curious because I'd left you only a minute or two before. Funny you should always miss him."

"Sounds like some chap prowling round who'd no business here. What the devil was he doing walking into the house like that. I wonder you didn't stop him and question him, Donald."

"It never struck me to; he seemed so at home and behaved as though he were so used to coming and going as he liked. It must be some fellow who knows you very well, Jim, and the house too."

Jim shook his head.

"No one round here like that," he said.

"Perhaps he's staying somewhere near, then, and came to look you up."

Jim had fallen into a reverie. He so often did that. He'd started soon after his great friend had died. He was inconsolable for a time, and then had taken to sitting and dreaming. Always thinking of him and the times they'd spent together. His friend had lived close by and was always in and out in those days.

As now, Jim would go off into a reverie and be lost to the world, and everything that was in it, or out of it for a matter of that.

Seeing that for some reason I'd started his mind wandering back, I dropped the subject, and when the butler brought the next course and he roused, I talked of something else.

The next time I saw this unknown visitor I hurried to the house, to make sure Jim knew he'd come. I had to pass in front of the den to go in, and as I did so I glanced in. The stranger was standing by Jim's chair. He'd entered, as before, unannounced evidently. Jim was sitting with his feet up on his desk and his eyes looked out at nothing, lost in a reverie; or rather they were looking backward or forward wherever he went at such times.

The stranger stepped back and stood with his back to the fire, watching Jim, but Jim didn't move.

Presently he moved forward, and it seemed as though he spoke. Jim, still lost in thought, didn't appear to see him.

The stranger stepped back again, shook his head and turned to the door.

I met him as he came out of the front door.

"Wait a minute," I said, "I'll rouse him; he didn't notice you."

But the stranger passed on down the path without answering.

It was late that night that I saw him next.

Jim had been depressed all day, and had not come up to bed when I did.

I wasn't happy about him when, after an hour had passed, I'd not heard him come upstairs.

I opened his den door quietly and looked in.

He was sitting at the table, his head between his hands; his shoulders were heaving, he was sobbing.

As I approached, to my surprise I saw the stranger standing by him. He had one hand on his shoulder and with the other he was stroking Jim's head.

I was too amazed to move. No sound was heard but Jim's sobs. It was most distressing to witness his grief. The stranger stayed for some time and eventually Jim quieted down.

I moved back towards the door, not wishing to intrude, as obviously the stranger was striving to comfort him; trying silently to convey some reassuring help.

As I got to the door the stranger stooped and, putting his arm round him, held him close.

By the time I was in the hall he had joined me.

"He won't stay *here*," he said. "He will go away. He's never here when I visit him."

Then a wonderful smile lit up his face.

"Tell him," he said, "I often come, but he's not here

to meet me. Tell him to be his Real Self as he used to be; so on the spot, always waiting to welcome one when one called," and he went out into the night.

I turned back into Jim's den. He was still sitting at the table. Between his hands he held something, and as he looked at it a sad smile rested on his face.

I came and stood near him. He was murmuring to himself. "Dear, dear old pal, those were the days; the only days to live in. Today's dead without you."

I was about to speak when I caught sight of the thing he held in his hand. It was a photograph. I started as I looked, and went forward to look closer.

Yes, yes, of course. Fool that I was; of course, the face was familiar. It was the photograph Jim always kept in his bedroom, beside his bed, of his great friend whom, as he termed it, he had lost. He who had passed on, leaving Jim, as he expressed it, "with life empty and void."

"My God," I said to myself, "what a confounded fool I was not to recognise him. Of course, I thought he seemed familiar, though I'd never met him before."

I had been but once since into Jim's bedroom. He seemed to keep it so entirely for his life in the past and his memories that I never obtruded there nowadays. "What a tragedy," I said to myself. "What a tragedy! Jim living in the past, seeking him, and he vitally alive in the present seeking Jim."

It was some weeks before I saw Jim again.

My visit was due to end on the day following the incident in his den at night. But before leaving I had had a chat with him, and he was so offended at what I had said that I had neither seen nor heard of him since.

Then came a letter brief, but to the point.

"Dear Don," it ran,

"First I must apologise, because I want to, for the way I took your advice that day.

"If you feel like it, it would be good if you would come down, I have somewhat to tell you.

"As always,

"Jim."

I wondered what he could have to tell me. I was very thankful he was no longer offended; he evidently was not or he would not have said that he wanted to apologise. After all, there was nothing for him to apologise about. Everyone has a right to his own opinion. I had expressed mine and suggested what I would do, if he were me. Not if I were he, for I knew very well what he'd do. But he had fought the suggestion, though it wasn't so much a suggestion as a statement.

I had told him that the visitor I'd seen on various occasions was the same as the photograph represented. But I had said that for myself I didn't agree with photographs at any time, and emphatically not of those passed on.

To start with, it was a way of holding them, getting their attention by concentrating on them.

Secondly, it made one dwell in the past, brought back memories, but never brought both oneself and the other in to the immediate present. Why? Because if a person is with you, you don't sit and look at their photograph. And for myself, I believe—I should say I KNOW—they are as vitally alive as oneself, more vitally alive. And just as, when still in the body, his friend had a way of walking in suddenly at will, so now the same.

Busy, vitally alive somewhere, gloriously happy, FREE—untied by bonds, they should be—and, at will, visiting those they love.

So to what purpose to live in memories, to such an extent that one missed them when they called on one. This I knew Jim was doing and I knew he had, in consequence, been unaware of his friend's visits.

But Jim did not like my remarks. The photograph, he said, was his dearest possession, and as to missing his

friend, why he was always thinking of him, of the glorious times they'd had together, of his companionship, of the talks they'd had, and many other things.

And he could not see that all that was dwelling in the past. Bringing the past into the present. He could not see that, were his friend still in the flesh, it was the last thing he'd be doing.

So we had parted in a strained manner.

I arrived, and Jim said nothing till late that night.

He had wrung my hand at meeting, that was all that was necessary between us to show we understood each other.

It was after the servants had gone to bed; the shutters closed, the oak-beamed den silent, shadows thrown by the log-fire, no other lights. Jim had been chatty and much more on the spot.

He said quietly after a silent pause, which is so perfect and so beautiful between friends :

"Tell me, Don, more about what you saw. I was so pig-headed, so selfish in my grief, so upset at your remarks, that I could scarcely take in what you tried to tell me."

So I told him of the visitor I had seen.

"But first," I said, "I should say that I do not think it is our privilege to see them with the physical eyes; I think that rarely happens. These occasions were allowed to me so that, in my opinion, I could help you to realise his nearness. It is most unlikely I'll see him again. It's a closer contact than that that one is aware of. A feeling, a knowing that they are there."

"Yes, yes," he'd broken in, "I know, I KNOW now."

And so I had continued my story.

Afterwards we sat again in silence. Then Jim said, "I've known him near several times since you left, Don. Your words made me think, and I realised I was living in the past.

"Then one day I felt him near, and felt he wanted me to burn that photograph, so I did. And, by Jove, didn't he seem pleased. Then I knew he knew that I realised he was alive and so close at times. Gone off on other work, like when he was here in the flesh, as you say. But back often to give his love and radiance."

"It's wonderful," he said after a pause. "I know now he's alive."

Not long after I went up to bed—leaving Jim downstairs.

I was lying half asleep when Jim, on his way up, knocked at my door gently, and without waiting for an answer came in and switched on the light.

His face was radiant, a quiet peace and joy hung round him.

"I wanted just to tell you," he said, "that he's just called in. And, by Jove, isn't he happy!"

After a pause he said, "Thank you, old chap; I cannot say more because words fail me; but you, I know, understand."

That night I had a dream. Jim's friend stood by me. His face now wore a look of joy, of serene happiness. He held up his hand and said, "Bless you. All is now well with him," and went.

The visitor sat very quiet when Donald had finished.

Before leaving he went up to him and said, "I am so grateful." More wasn't needed.

"My word, the difference in that fellow's face when he came to go," said one of the party.

"Yes," said Jack. "That's done it. If people only realised."

CHAPTER XV

"I've just been to call on The lady of the flowers," said one of the party, strolling up to the tea-table.

"What, a shy chap like you?" said another. "I thought you didn't know her."

"No more I do—did," he replied. "But Jack said the other morning at breakfast that if I wanted to I'd be a bloody fool if I didn't, or something to that effect. So I went.

"She didn't seem at all taken aback or anything; in fact, she seemed quite pleased to see me. I said when she answered the door, 'Er, I just felt I'd like to call, and so I am taking no notice of Messrs. Convention and all that, don't you know.' And she smiled and said, 'Come in.' "

They all laughed, remembering Jack's remarks at breakfast that morning.

"Dash you," said the man who'd been his companion on that early morning walk. "If I'd known I'd have come too."

"I know, that's why I didn't tell you. I'd no desire for your presence on this occasion. Two's company, and so on. I *had* a desire to go alone and so," turning to look at Jack, "I did."

Jack nodded. "Good to you," he said.

"She was awfully interesting and delightful. She told me of the talk she had with that uncle chap of hers. You know of it, of course?" he said, turning to Marian. "And Jack too. But I told her you other fellows would enjoy hearing about it. Oh, by the way, she may be calling in this afternoon some time, and she said she'd tell you about it if you liked."

"Here she comes now," said Marian, getting up from her chair and crossing the lawn to meet The lady of the flowers.

"That's top whole," said her recent caller as she sat down. "Now you'll be able to tell them the story you told me this afternoon."

"I will certainly," she said, "if they would like to hear it."

When tea had been cleared away she started.

"What is a medium, Uncle?" said the girl to her visitor who had called in for a cup of tea and a chat.

Actually he was not her uncle, but she had known him since she was tiny and always addressed him thus.

"A medium," said the old man—he was not really old, but seemed so to her, since she was only nineteen.

"A medium is something which stands midway between two things—forms a connecting link. An agent, in other words. A messenger."

"Oh," said the girl. She sat with her feet tucked up on the settee.

"The commercial traveller who brings you goods from his firm is a medium or agent between you and them; he forms a link between you if you let him."

"Yes," said the girl, "I see. But I was thinking of the people who spell it with a capital M and——"

"I know," said the man. "They profess to put you in contact with someone on the Other Side. The genuine ones do; but, my dear, everyone is a medium really, did they but know it."

"Really?" she said.

"Most certainly, but not necessarily a connecting link with the other side; but they have their messages."

"How do you mean, Uncle?"

"Well, dear, the lovely souls, some of whom you know, who smile and seem to carry the sunshine with them are the agents of the Great Sunshine. They know and love the sunshine in sunlit places, and they carry some of it with them. They are mediums.

"The flowers are mediums; they contact the Great Life Force and bring forth its beauty, its colour, its marvellous creation, its perfume.

"The birds know the Joy of the world; the care-freeness of the world, the spontaneousness of the Life within them, and so burst forth into song. They are agents or mediums.

"A person who has walked along a country lane and seen and recognised the beauty of the hedgerows, the wonder of the bursting buds, the glory of Nature, and who comes to call on you, carrying these in his or her soul, is a medium of these things.

"Another will bring you the peace of Nature, of her unworrying, unhurried progress, her repose.

"Another will love and rejoice in and bring you the Joy of the All. The gladness of the birds, of the prancing kitten, of the puppy chasing its tail, of the calf kicking its heels, of the beauty in their fellow-men, of the Joy of the Great Creator in His Work. Such a one is a Medium of Joy, of Gladness, of Rejoicing."

"Oh, how lovely," breathed the girl.

"Yes, but there are other kinds. Just as people should be very careful of the medium they might choose if they wish to contact one on the other side; for myself, I think this should *never* be done—never call them. If that one takes the initiative and clearly indicates that he or she wishes to speak to the one still in the earth body, well and good.

"Well, just as the medium's message would be gauged by the medium him or herself, and certain mediums would always be avoided; so in other walks of life people may be mediums of undesirable things.

"Some people make mental contact with others, talking in thought to them; consulting them, allowing themselves to be dominated by them, their lives ordered by them. Such come as agents of other personalities and are not themselves their Real Selves at all. Mainly agents or mediums.

"Some people bring a worried, brooding look with them, and you know that they have been contacting worrying, dark things, giving them harbourage in their minds. They are mediums.

"Others are the agents of the spirit of disapproval which runs about the world. They can only look at certain people from that point of view; they are controlled by, or the agents of, the spirit of disapproval.

"Others are all fuss and worry and restlessness. They are controlled by the ideas and opinions of others; they are so busy trying to do and be all these things that those others have told them they should, that they are never, or rarely, them Selves. They are rarely HERE in the moment; always a step on, fussing to be off doing something else which must be done. So the thing of the moment gets scamped, and not well done, and so much of the present is missed. They are the agents of the spirit of fussiness in the world. Being interfered with, and often interfering with the peace of other people. You'll find, if they visit you, they seldom sit quiet and gloriously still like the agents of the Great Peace, of the Great Out-of-Doors. They start going away as soon as they arrive, although they may end in staying quite a little while; but all the time they have created a feeling of unrest and disturbance by their agitation to start going as soon as they arrive.

If they would allow themselves to be them Selves, they would sit quietly and peacefully, blessing by their very presence all whom they visited or who visited them. Beaming forth the sunshine of the Soul's Smile.

They would come to give; not to take by a constant flow of questions, the answers to which they rarely listen to because they are off again in mind somewhere else.

"Such people are mediums or agents of restlessness, busy-ness; but in them Selves are so beautiful, would they but BE STILL and let them Selves BE."

"I know quite a few like that," murmured the girl.

"What a pity they don't know how lovely they really are; they would never be lonely then if they were their Real Selves. People would flock just to be with them for a few minutes."

"Yes, they'd be so full of giving they'd have no time to feel they were neglected.

"All are so beautiful really," continued the man. "If only they wouldn't engage themselves to other people and things so unlike them Selves. They need to break FREE. To contact the things they love, the music in Nature, the beauty in the world. There is so much. And thank God there are so many who are agents, mediums of these things.

"But, you know, the perfect thing is to be the direct agent of your own Soul, your OWN Spirit, your own Self. Once we are that," the man said, "all the other beautiful things fall into line, they rush in upon us as it were, and we should all then be such lovely Messengers."

CHAPTER XVI

THE next afternoon visitors came to call. Marian was quite prepared for them. They came occasionally, she said, and all together; usually chose the same afternoon—so convenient of them.

Cook, she said, had had the desire to make cakes; when that happened she always knew what to expect.

Miss Smith was speaking as some of the house party strolled in to tea.

"Isn't it a shame?" she turned to her host. "Don't you think so, Mr. Burton. She's such a charming little woman, and everybody likes her so much. And he—that wretched man, won't let her come. Jealousy, I s'pose."

Her host looked at her and was about to speak, but she continued :

"They're newly married, so she told me; at least about a year ago; and there are so many things she'd like to do and can't because her husband's such a tyrant."

"She told you that?" her host got a word in at last.

"Yes, no, well, I mean, she told me she couldn't come; at least, she'd consult her husband and she hasn't come, so obviously he's stopped her !"

"Did she tell you her husband was a tyrant and stopped her doing things she wanted to do, that's what I meant to ask."

"Oh no, but I could see that was the case."

"Well, if it is the case, all I can say is the woman's a bloody fool to be stopped."

"Oh, Mr. Burton," said the lady, "what—what language !" Here she gave a giggle.

"You've heard it before from me and are likely to hear it again, so it's no good pretending it's a shock. If you don't like my manner of speaking, well, don't

meet me, Miss Smith. Which means, don't come to the house."

The speaker's eyes twinkled. He knew Miss Smith wouldn't stop coming. He knew she loved to hear his language, as she described it. He knew she enjoyed repeating what he said to others, and he knew that nothing would stop Miss Smith going anywhere or entering any house when there was a chance of hearing something about which she could gossip. Her joy in life was embroidery. Not needlework, oh dear me, no. Embroidering other people's conversation as she repeated it and incidents as she recounted them.

"As I was saying," continued Jack, "if the woman lets herself get side-tracked from following her own inclination, she's a bloody fool, Miss Smith, a very bloody fool. For myself," he continued after a slight pause, during which Miss Smith made a mental note of his exact words to tell her next-door neighbour when she called in that evening. "For myself, I don't believe a word of it. I think she's a little coward and a—a knave or whatever the feminine of that word may be. Er—I beg your pardon, Miss Smith?"

Miss Smith was giggling, "Nothing, nothing, Mr. Burton. I didn't speak. I, I just exclaimed, 'Oh,' you know, that was all."

Jack continued: "In my opinion the lady in question knows very well what she wants to do and not to do. But she hasn't the courage to say so. So she takes refuge behind her husband's so-called decision. I don't believe she even asks him about it or mentions it. She just leaves it to people to imagine that's what's happened. Yes, I know the lady, Miss Smith; I've met her. She didn't want to come and, failing the courage to say so, she hides behind her husband's figurative figure and pretends he's stopped her.

"She's a knave because she pretends it is all through him that she doesn't fulfil the demands of pestering

people like yourself, who want her to go on outings and things. After all, why should she? Why should anyone? Half the party don't want to, but they haven't the courage to say no, so they've agreed to go.

"The only redeeming point about the lady is that she knows her own mind."

After this long and somewhat forceful speech, Jack proceeded to light his pipe as though nothing had happened at all.

Meanwhile Miss Smith giggled and said, "Oh, Mr. Burton, you *do* call a spade a spade."

"That is better than calling a spade a fork, Miss Smith, which is what you are doing."

"I?"

"Yes, you. You are calling the lady's poor husband all sorts of things when really and truly you *know* nothing about the man. I doubt if you've ever even met him."

"No, I haven't, not yet."

"I thought not," grunted Jack.

"And, dash it all, Miss Smith. This bloody outing to Folkestone. Who wants to go to Folkestone?"

"I do for one," broke in Miss Smith.

"Oh, I know that! That's why you've arranged the trip. But who wants to who's got any sense? In a great motor char-a-banc in this heat.

"Why not be honest yourself, instead of going round from house to house pestering people to come and trying to persuade them they want to when they don't. Why not be honest; take an old hat round and ask for contributions for your trip, as you don't want to afford it yourself and you would rather travel by road than by rail. That *would* be honest, Miss Smith. As it is you want everybody to undergo a day of discomfort and boredom, to enable you to get there cheap for half-a-crown or something and take one or two of your pet friends with you. Ask them all for half-a-crown, by all means, to enable you to go

and your pets; but don't pretend you want them or that you think they'll enjoy it, because you know they won't."

By this time Miss Smith had gone slightly purple in the face.

Jack chuckled. "Come, come, Miss Smith. You know it's all perfectly true. It only so happens that I'm the one honest person who's got the courage to say what he thinks. The wife over there is nearly throwing a fit; she thinks I've excelled myself and never been so rude before, which is saying a lot. But it's all true. Everybody else is thinking what I am saying, and some are saying so amongst themselves behind your back.

"Everybody lacks the courage to be truthful. Your Mrs. Newly-Wed—I forget her name, too. She hides behind her husband's disapproval, which I am sure doesn't exist. He's a man who only asks to be left alone himself; he'd never interfere with another. I've met him. I know the type—rare but refreshing to meet. His quiet manner and lack of criticism amongst all this gossip, in this hot-bed of scandal-mongering, is used by others as an opportunity to misrepresent him as a strong silent man, which he may be, who in private dominates his wife. Bunkum; that chap wouldn't interfere with anyone.

"You see, he won't stick it long. They'll move on to healthier surroundings where people aren't so interfering and inquisitive. Difficult to find, but there are such places. Know one myself, but I'm not telling you where it is.

"His wife dislikes it, too, but to the end she'll hide behind her husband, you'll see. She's all things to all people to their faces."

Jack was chortling as Marian returned from showing Miss Smith round the garden and seeing her off.

She smiled in return.

"If she had any self respect she'd never come here again," she said.

"Her love of gossip is such that she'll even stomach any truth about herself if she can carry away something 'that dreadful Mr. Burton has been saying now' to others."

The following morning Jack, stepping out of the post office, met Miss Smith.

"Oh, Mr. Burton, have you heard, they're leaving."

"Who? The Newly-Weds? I never can remember their name."

"Now, how did you know who I meant?"

"Following on our last conversation, of course. And does Mrs. Newly-Wed say she is sorry to be going, but that her husband insists?"

"Yes, that's exactly it, poor thing."

Jack laughed.

"I think it's a great pity to dig her up like that, just when she's getting to know people and likes it so much. He might consider her."

Jack laughed again.

"What did I tell you yesterday, Miss Smith? He wants to go and so does she, but she hasn't the guts to say so. You needn't blush, you're used to my language. I was talking to him only last evening. He told me she's even more anxious than he to be quit. So what do you think of that!"

He passed on down the street.

CHAPTER XVII

"PEOPLE are so afraid to be them Selves," said Davidsson one day.

"Most people hearing the story I am now going to tell would think of it as applying to anyone but themselves. And yet how few people live their lives irrespective of what anyone else may think.

"Get up when they like, eat when and what they like. Drink when and what they like. Speak to whom they wish to speak and not to those they don't. Form their own opinions about people instead of basing them on what others say. Do as they like instead of continuing to do as they were brought up to do. It is only by being free from outside opinions that we can fully follow our own desires minute by minute."

The little lady walked a little further up the winding path and sat herself down on a wooden bench under the shade of the vines. The vineyards spread up the mountain-side behind her.

She was very hot and rather tired. The party of sight-seers, with whom she had been viewing the lovely old city, had dispersed for a while to seek refreshment.

She gazed about her; the view was beautiful. Below the lake lay deep blue and still under the hot sun.

"Excuse me, Madam."

She turned round to see a stranger had seated himself upon the bench beside her. She smiled. She had a very beautiful smile, which lit up her face like someone on whom the sunrise was reflected. Then suddenly she looked down and, seeking hastily in her bag, withdrew a pair of spectacles and put them on. The effect was very marked, the smile disappeared, supplanted by a frowning

scowl, the effort to see properly, one felt. It seemed the glasses did not really suit her sight.

"Oh, Madam," said the stranger, "why did you do that? You looked so lovely till then."

"Do what?" she rapped out quickly. "What do you mean?" and suddenly recollecting she was speaking to a complete stranger—an unheard of thing, since no one had introduced them to each other. "Anyway, I don't know what you mean or why you're presum—er, why you're speaking to me."

The stranger smiled. "I'm afraid it does seem presumptuous to you. But come now, why, if we wish to speak to each other, should we wait for someone else's approval?"

"Approval! I don't know what you mean," she said abruptly.

"Well, if you wait to speak to someone for the first time until you have been introduced by a third person, isn't that waiting for their approval and consent before you start off?"

She paused and replaced her spectacles, which she had removed unthinking in the astonished surprise conveyed by his remark.

"Oh, come! there you go again; now that lovely smile's gone again. Why do you put them on? You can't see nearly so well with them, you know, as you can without."

Again his audacity in speaking to her without an introduction was forgotten in the heat of the moment.

"Put them on," she said. "Of course I *must* put them on, I couldn't see all I should otherwise."

It was very important that this stranger should not know how right his remark had been, when he said she could not see nearly so well with them as without.

But that was only a matter of practise; soon she would quite forget how to see without them, and then all would be well.

"Madam," said the stranger again, "where did you get them?"

"Get what?" she said quickly. "Oh, the glasses? From the Tourists' Assistance Office, of course. You should have some, too, you know; for, now I come to think of it, I've seen you in our party when we were sight-seeing yesterday."

"You may have seen me in the same building as yourselves, Madam; sight-seeing, too, maybe, but not of your touring party."

"Oh, that's a pity," she said. "They are so excellent, the company who brought us out and guide us round, and it is they who provide the spectacles, so that one may miss nothing. It's so terribly important to miss nothing. And another thing, there are pitfalls and things to be avoided that one would never see without these glasses."

The stranger leaned across and picked up the case from which the spectacles came. A name was stamped outside, "Messrs. Public, Opinion and Grundy," he murmured. "Quite so, I thought as much."

"Yes, they are an excellent firm. You know them, doubtless? But the lenses are cut by a very special company, by name Messrs. Convention. You've probably heard of them, too? You see, the first provide the frames for the lenses, and see that you have the correct lenses for your needs, you know, and the second cut the lenses themselves. So that you are absolutely all right. I mean, you're so safe then. Of course, it takes a little time to adjust one's focus to them, because one's sight is such an obstinate thing, isn't it? It has such a trying way of ranging free."

"And why shouldn't it?" asked the stranger. "It seems to me a very much better idea."

"Oh, dear me, *no!* You ask Messrs. Public, Opinion and Grundy and see what they say. They'll tell you. They're so clever; they know. I can't tell you properly why myself; that's why I always have to consult them.

But there always is a reason, you know, and they are so convincing."

"I don't care about reasons and whys myself," said the stranger. "I like results."

"Results?" said the little lady, raising her eyebrows in disapproval.

"Yes, results; I like your smile! That's a result of a beautiful impulsive uncritical outlook. Put on your glasses and consult Messrs. Something, Something and So-forth, and you are so busy thinking of what they are saying that you lose your lovely smile. And believe me, dear lady, the world is so much the poorer."

"I don't understand all that," said the little lady huffily. "It's too unintellectual for me. You should be more tabulated and scientific in your statements."

"Too simple for you, you mean. Come," said he, smiling, "take off those spectacles of your—er—rather, of Messrs. Something and Something, and you'll see how simple it all is."

"Oh, I couldn't possibly. Whatever would happen to me? I might not see all sorts of things I should avoid, and I might talk to all sorts of people whom I shouldn't allow to speak to me, if I hadn't my glasses on. You see, I don't see those ugly things unless the glasses point them out, so to speak. Ordinarily I should just see something very beautiful and be so terribly deceived. It's most important not to be oblivious of these things. One might come to a dreadful end and one might not be able to point out such dangers to others, if one hadn't one's glasses."

"They're *not* your glasses," growled the stranger. "I'd like to stamp on them; or, better still, I wish you would, and smash 'em to bits."

"Really!" said the little lady, indignantly. "Why, I'd be quite lost without them now."

"Oh no, you wouldn't," said the stranger. "You'd be found!"

"Again you're talking nonsense," she said. "I'll tell you this much, once I did consult another firm. When someone suggested my sight was wrong, I first consulted another firm. They were very, very kind, in a way, but, well, their advice was all right, until I went and consulted Messrs. Public, Opinion and Grundy. It was they who really made me see the terrible danger I was in!"

"Danger? Danger from what?"

"In taking the—the other firm's advice."

"And what was that?"

"That I should use my own eyes and not let myself be hoodwinked and side-tracked by wearing other people's eye-pieces! Most vulgar it was of them, I thought. At least, I realised it was after Messrs Public, Opinion and Grundy had pointed it out to me. Most dangerous, too; I might have wandered off all on my own one day and got cut adrift from all my old acquaintances and have had no one else's opinion to go by, and that would have been awful."

"Glorious, you mean," said the stranger, gently. "And what, may I ask, was the name of this firm who were so—so undesirable, shall I say?"

"Oh! Oh! I couldn't tell you, because it—well, it's such a funny name. I mean it's rather an unconventional name and you might think I had associated myself with them, and, and——"

"Oh, come, come, dear lady, you are far too safely in the keeping of Messrs. Public, Murderers and so on."

"Public, Opinion and Grundy is the name," she said reprovingly, and then indignantly: "Murderers did you say? My dear Mr. ——, I don't know your name, they are Public Saviours, they save you from yourself, you see. Without their helpful guidance——"

Then suddenly:

"How dare you; you are making fun of their names.

How dare you! They are three most respectable directors of a great trust, and their name, as I told you, is Public, Opinion and Grundy—oh, my gracious, how funny! I—I never looked on it in that light before. I wonder if anyone else ever did? Of course, you could read it as 'public opinion,' how queer—oh dear, I've dropped my glasses, how tiresome, whatever shall I do?"

"Step on them," said the stranger. "But first do tell me the name of the other firm—the ones you first consulted."

"Oh dear, how irritating you are! Do help me find my glasses, and don't keep pestering so."

"Tell me their name, and then I'll see what I can do."

"Oh dear, oh dear! Well, if you will know, they're called Messrs. Damn, All and Plunge," she said, stamping her foot and jumping up. "Oh dear, there now, I really have gone and done it. I've smashed those glasses."

She stooped to pick up the bits, in the hope that the frames, anyway, might be repaired and the lenses replaced, when from far away up the mountain the strains of a voice singing reached her ears. She paused, listening. It sounded familiar, yes:

"How Beautiful they are, they are—the Lordly Ones ——"

Oh! her heart gave a pound, the Lordly Ones. How she wished she might see one.

"How Beautiful."

She straightened herself up. "Beautiful," yes indeed. But she'd never see one if she met him, with those glasses on, for they made so much of discrepancies that one missed the beauty, especially in people.

No! She would not have the glasses repaired; she'd do without them. Then one day, maybe, she'd meet and see a Lordly One. Deep down in her she'd always felt

sure that such existed. The Lordly Ones, how Beautiful they must be. Oh, she couldn't miss seeing one of those.

"Such are all," came the quiet voice beside her. "Only it needs someone to see and remind them.

"A love smile such as yours can wake the chord of memory because *you* can SEE."

CHAPTER XVIII

IT was getting dusk, but the evening was warm and they still sat out.

A discussion was in progress. Some of them could not see how the theory, which Jack and Marian held, of following one's desire could work, much less be right.

Davidsson came up while they were talking and sat down quietly.

"I'll tell you a story," he said presently, "which may put it more plainly to you. It is called 'The Story of the Children who played Special Messengers.' "

"Today," shouted the children as they jumped up and down in their excitement. "Today, it's today."

The King smiled as he approached across the velvety grassy sward.

"Today," they shouted again.

"You said that yesterday," said the King still smiling.

"Yes, that was today, too, and it was *FUN*. But today's today now, and more fun. It's always today. Please what's today's game. Please, please."

"Today's game," said the King gently, "is 'Special Messengers.' "

"Oh!" A hushed sigh went through the little crowd.

"O—oh! how lovely!"

"Now," said the King, "listen carefully. Today you go to earth to be my Special Messengers; and Special Messengers always work quietly and unobstrusively.

"The best work done is what appears to be the most ordinary.

"First, I want to know how you propose I shall get my orders to you? For there will be orders all the time. Well?"

"It's like this," he continued as they listened in

expectant silence, "how am I going to get my orders to you, each one separately. How are you going to know it is an order from ME, and how am I going to be sure you get it? There must be no bogus messages and orders, no mistaking. Each one must definitely KNOW it is his or her order, and not a side-track. How can I communicate to each one, I, myself, to each one, him or herself."

"I know," said one. "By our desire!"

"Exactly," said the King. "By your desire. The desire you have moment by moment. That is a thing no one but yourselves can know, each one of you. Follow it unfailingly, and then I shall know where I am and what you are up to. The one who follows it the most carefully is the one who will do the best work. I should have said, the one who follows it the most care-freely. But the point is to follow it, and don't get caught out!

"The standards of the earth are misleading. They will try and persuade you that you should not follow your desire in certain ways, even if you wish to. Don't be caught out by that. Whatever it seems like outside doesn't matter. What you do doesn't matter. All that matters is that you *follow* your desire, and by so doing you will be following my orders. Don't think of, or listen to, anyone else's wishes or desires. Your own is your only responsibility. If you fail to do that you fail as a Messenger. If you do it, you *can't* fail. It's quite impossible.

"Very simple, isn't it?

"The job of work will always be where your desire is.

"If you have a great desire which seems to possess you, I can, if you follow it, put the work I want done there, so that your desire leads you straight into it. In other words, where your desire is there is your work. If you get a desire from me you will know it is taking you, that sudden impulse, to a job. Then down tools, whatever you are doing, and at it!

"Nothing else, nothing else at all.

"You all already have the desire to Serve. Well, follow your desires minute by minute, and you'll find work all the way. No reasoning, no interfering with another, no being interfered with. All always working alone, and yet, you see, together. But each one's got his or her job, and no one else can do that job but he or she. No one else can possibly know what that job is but that one person, for no one else can have that desire. It is his or her own.

"You each will have, when you get there, a very important and individual instrument which will register absolutely accurately your desires. It will tell you better than anything else; it will register most delicately your desires. Don't, whatever happens, frustrate it, restrain it, or check it in any way. Respond to it at once. You know to what I refer?"

"Yes!" broke out in eager whispers from the children.

"Well?"

"Our earthly bodies."

"Quite right. Listen to that attentively. Listen to desire; never use reason. Never listen outside to what the world says. Be in the world, but not of it. Never do anything but what you enjoy doing, because you will then be following your desire. No bonds, no ties, no appointments. How can you down tools and off to the job of the moment if you have appointments and ties?

"Be free of everyone. No obligations. Just the fun of doing what you enjoy because it is the call of your desire.

"Now, off you go. You'll be back by eventide."

And so they went, those Special Messengers.

"We are," said Davidsson, "all of us, one of those children, Special Messengers, but some of us have forgotten, that's all. It's when we follow someone else's desire that we get hurt or go wrong."

CHAPTER XIX

"Now," continued Davidsson, "I will tell you of something which once happened to me.

"It was all intensely interesting; the most interesting experience I have ever had.

"I had been doing the thing I loved most in all the world: wandering along the country lanes, drinking in their beauty.

"How I came upon this place I cannot tell you. I just happened there.

"And I had found a flower whose name I did not know, but whose grace, beauty and colour were such as I have never seen. I did not pick it, for I felt it might wither. So wonderful was it, I felt fully content to leave it in its own surroundings. Curiously enough, once I had found it blooming so radiantly and had in my first moment of unspeakable joy made this decision—not to interfere with its freedom by picking a blossom—I found that the glorious blooms were everywhere about. No matter where I looked, or where I went on my way, I found it. It grew with other radiant things, never interfering with their growth nor its colour clashing with theirs. In fact, its beauty seemed to enhance the beauty of everything which grew near it.

"What a find! What a day for me! All my life my love of Nature, and particularly of flowers, had led me to seek ever further and further into Nature's store. And always as I found things more rare in the unpopulated parts of the country I had a feeling there was still something yet more lovely to be found.

"My holidays I spent on rambles such as this. But always when I felt near to finding this glorious thing which I sought the stern call of work, the demand of the hated office, took me back away from all I loved. Why,

I had so often wondered, when all Nature's offspring neither toil nor spin the web of anxious labour, should man have to deny himself the following of that which he really wanted to do and be for toil and labour in the sweat of his brow?

"But for me today was a day of freedom. I had given myself a holiday, holy-day it felt to me. It was so precious. Most particularly because I had taken it without leave! I had suddenly decided that I could *not* resist the call of the open sky and lanes and fields, woods and moors. So I had just shirked the office and come away. 'Broken bounds,' I said to myself with a thrilling feeling of joy inside me, the feeling one had had at school when one had gone, against rules, outside the school premises without permission. The fun had been the knowledge of the horrified disapproval of the authorities, should one be found out.

"My act would probably be followed by dismissal from the office. I knew that, but had not allowed it to weigh with me, although it meant losing my present source of livelihood. Anyway, I was having a lively-day, a life-giving day. Never had I experienced such joy, such a sense of satisfaction, of fulfilment, as when I found that little flower. Its blossoms waving in the wind seemed to fill the air with the song of—of what? Of souls set free! Yes, the chorus one would expect to hear when the one self-freed soul leaving the ninety and nine, entered Heaven's gate. The Rejoicing Song!

"And now to continue the story of that day.

"As I wandered on following the trail of this wonderful flower—or did it follow me?—it seemed to, I cannot say. But everywhere that my joy-filled steps took me it crowded round my feet.

"Presently I came upon an old-fashioned building resting, it seemed, by the side of the road, as all lovely old-fashioned buildings seem to be doing. They look as

though they had sat down, peacefully, satisfied, after seeking, in the place where they most wish to be.

"I hurried forward. Could it be? Yes, an inn, another perfect thing in this day of perfect happenings. Just what I most wanted at that moment was a drink.

"Outside the door I noticed the lovely new-found flower was blooming. As I approached the latch lifted quickly and out stepped a man. I had never quite seen his like before. I do not know what it was that struck me so about him; he seemed so purposeful, and yet unhurried. There was a great peace about him, and yet his countenance shone with a radiant joy. And yet, I say, but why should not peace and joy go together? In truth they cannot be separated, but one's worldly idea does not connect the two together. Somehow peace conveys, to the worldly mind, inactivity; and joy, somehow, the opposite. And yet, as I saw in this man's face, the two in perfection and united are in fact the complement of each other.

"He stopped as he saw me, and I noticed, then I thought I must be mistaken. Yet—yes it seemed so—for he was bareheaded—on his brow there rested among the wayward curly hair a blossom of the new-found flower.

"He greeted me, lifting as he did so his right hand, in which he carried a staff. 'God's morning to you, Brother,' he said.

"I replied, 'It is indeed God's morning.'

"His eyes travelled to my head—I never wear a hat. He looked a moment, and said:

" 'You have found IT!'

"Puzzled at his remark, I remained silent, then following the direction of his eyes, I found he was now looking at the new-found flower blooming either side of the door.

" 'Yes,' I cried in my enthusiasm. 'My heart's desire! I've always sought such a flower, not quite knowing what I was seeking.'

" 'Ah,' he said, 'you know its name!'

"I started quickly to explain that I did not know its name and to ask him what it was. But already he had turned on his heel and was walking off with that purposeful step of his, his head high. As he went I heard him say, 'They're coming.'

"Seeing nothing approaching along the winding lane, I turned into the inn and ordered my drink."

"It was while I was sitting in the cool parlour that he came back; already I seemed to know that purposeful step and the quick click of the latch being lifted.

" 'No pause with you,' I found myself thinking, 'between your purpose and your action.'

" 'Landlord,' he called loudly, 'drinks for all who so desire—on me.' And then I heard the front door shut again.

"At the same moment the approaching sound of horses' hooves broke on my ear, and in a few moments I saw a stage-coach draw up at the door.

"The driver, an old man with a long white beard, leant back in his seat, quietly surveying the passengers as they alighted.

" 'Yes,' I heard him say, 'that's right; you'll find it here,' in answer to an enquiry from one of the travellers.

"I rose from my seat and walked out.

"Some of the passengers had already wandered off, others stood about looking a little lost. Some were entering the inn. One, a lady, seemed to be very perturbed as she stood on tip-toe trying to explain her difficulty to the old driver.

" 'No, Madam,' I heard him say very firmly, 'I have not brought you past the place. No, Madam, that is impossible. I never go back. Another thing, if I were to turn round and take you to the place which you say you know we passed it would not be there *now*; it would be over. You'll find it here, I can assure you, it only grows HERE.'

" 'But,' expostulated the little lady, 'but, Mr. Time, I found it there once. I want to go back there and find it again. Please, please, Father Time.'

" 'Madam, that is impossible. As I said before, I never go back. You will find it today if you look NOW.'

"The little lady was trying to keep back her tears.

"But the driver cracked his whip and guided his horses on into the coaching yard beyond the inn.

"I looked towards the inn door, wondering who all these people were, and what they had come for. As I did so I noticed the man who had spoken to me on my arrival standing, staff in hand, also looking at them all, with an expression of the greatest compassion on his face; as though he longed to gather all these people together and show them that which they sought.

"That was the impression I got, but none spoke to him or sought his advice, so he remained motionless.

"The little lady who had been in such distress hastened past me at this minute. She had evidently unsuccessfully followed the driver into the coaching yard, still in the hopes of persuading him to take her back. Now she was walking rapidly back in the direction from which the coach had come. I heard her saying, 'Not here; it was back there I found it, in the lanes passed by.'

"I wandered off on to the open land beyond the lane. All the passengers were scattered; they seemed to be seeking something. I wondered suddenly if it were the new-found flower which I had discovered that morning that they all were after. But that seemed ridiculous, because it grew in abundance all round one's feet. There was no need for them to go hurrying off up the lane, as some of them were doing, if they were after that. It was here, now, all around them.

"The lane must have wound a lot, for in a little while I came upon it again, and jumping a gate, I paused by it, listening to the sound of hurried footsteps approaching.

Everywhere flowers grew in abundance, and the lovely new-found flower in profusion among them.

"The walker, though obviously tired, was hurrying along, muttering to himself: 'It's sure to be round the next turning that I'll be able to find it.' I watched him go, looking neither to the right nor the left, missing all the beauty around him.

"Two more came along a little later, as I still stood watching the man go pacing on. I could see his head above the hedge where the lane turned. Evidently he had not found what he sought, for he still walked on.

"The two newcomers were walking more slowly. One had her back turned as she approached; she stumbled every few minutes into a rut or the ditch.

" 'You'd much best look where you are going,' said the other, 'instead of walking backwards all the time.'

" 'Well,' said the first, 'I feel sure it's behind. If I could retrace my steps I know I'd find it, only you won't come too.'

" 'No,' said the other. 'I've promised to come with you today, but I saw nothing back there in the past anything like it. Tomorrow, when I am on my own, I am going to see what I can find. I most surely shall succeed then.'

" 'Tomorrow,' snapped the first, 'never comes.'

" 'Oh, but it will,' said the other; 'that's what I always keep saying to myself "Tomorrow I'll do what I like, not what other people want me to do" ' and then to herself, ' "If only I can get time to myself." '

"Many others straggled by: they all looked weary or disappointed or hopeless as they plodded along.

" 'None of them joyous in all this beauty,' I said to myself. 'So amazing, none of them seem to see that lovely flower.'

"I noticed some seemed to catch sight of it as they gathered other wayside flowers. But none actually realised it, for just as they caught sight of it another would call

to them and they would leave what they were intent on —called away."

"It was towards evening when I once more reached the inn.

"I knew that by now it was far too late for me to get back to town in time for work the next morning. Anyway, the knowledge did not affect me in the least.

"I had determined that I would keep hold of my Freedom. The next day when it came would be another holy-day, wholly-free-day, when, like today, I would follow my desire.

"To my joy I found my acquaintance of earlier in the day, sitting on the ground at the roadside; flowers were all around him, and the new-found flower of the morning bloomed close by his side. The little bloom still lay among the curls on his forehead.

" 'You still have it, I see,' he said. 'You'll never let go of it now.'

"I seated myself and waited, wondering to what he was referring. Then, since he remained silent, I said, pointing to the new-found flower which bloomed around us both:

" 'I have never seen anything quite so exquisite as this. I wonder what its name might be? It seems to be where-ever one goes or, rather, wherever one goes it seems to be.'

" 'One and the same thing,' my companion replied. 'Wherever you go now you will find it, and wherever it is you will go.'

" 'Its name,' he continued, 'you yourself told me this morning. You said, when you pointed it out to me—you remember?—"I have found 'My Heart's Desire.' " It is the Flower of the Heart's Desire.'

" 'Oh,' I said suddenly, 'that is why it rests there on your head——' I paused.

" 'Yes,' he continued. 'Above thinking, above reasoning, just The Heart's Desire.'

"We sat in silence; words were not necessary between us.

"Most people, I suddenly realised, think their heart's desire should not be followed, they used thought. He said, 'Above thinking, above reasoning.'

"Others, poor souls—I'd seen some that day—thought that they had known it once and must seek it in the past.

"Others got side-tracked just when they were going to follow their spontaneous desire by the calls or opinions of others.

" 'Shall we go and have one?' my companion said as he got to his feet.

" 'The Inn,' he continued as we walked towards it, 'Is rightly named. It has no sign,' as I looked to find one. 'The landlord says it is not necessary. Those who need the inn will see the bloom outside and find The Heart's Desire.'

"As we entered he said, 'We shall find work here; someone in need of help or comfort. It is always so if one follows one's Heart's Desire, wishing always to Serve. The Master found so many such in inns.'

"I started. His words brought a thrill—of course! How often one had read the words or heard them, 'The friend of wine-bibbers,' and not realised all they meant. So He, too, as we were doing, had wandered into inns and helped and healed the needy and comforted the weary.

"Then another thought struck me. I sank upon a bench. Now I knew of whom my companion reminded me. The Master, Christ! Yes, the same compassionate look, so full of understanding. The same healing presence.

"He looked up.

" 'You, too,' he said. 'All who so love Him grow like Him.'

"I bowed my head upon my hands, too overcome to speak. Could it be? How did he know that I loved Him so much. Could it really be that one could grow like Him as he had done? The wish, the Desire of one's Heart—the Desire—as I buried my face in my arms something

touched my wrist. I put my hand up to my brow; I raised my head, and as I did so caught sight of myself in a mirror on the opposite wall. Yes! There it was, The Flower of one's Heart's Desire. One's Heart's Desire!

"Dazed, I looked round, trying to realise it.

"My wandering glance fell on his face.

"He was smiling. One could never describe that smile.

"He nodded his head.

" 'It's true,' he said."

"Christ told us," continued Davidsson, after a pause, " 'Where your treasure is there shall your heart be also.' Men will go miles to find a hidden treasure, whereas our heart will always lead straight to the most wonderful treasure in the world for us if we will only let it."

CHAPTER XX

FOSTER had called in to see them. He was on his way to Gloucestershire for his holidays. He was telling Jack where he was going, and Jack remarked, "A man I know had an interesting experience near there," and turning to the others, "This will interest you fellows.

"I went with him part of the way, and then left him to spend a quiet week by himself. He was a great walker, and my desire took me to a job elsewhere.

"You probably know the road we took," he said to Foster. "We left our pub and walked through the town and on past the old clothes yard, then we turned left——"

"The old clothes yard? Wherever is that? I never heard of it."

"By the church," said another quickly. Intent on hearing Jack's story, he threw this information to the interrupter.

"Then we went on up the hill, turned right by the golf club and further up past the new old clothes yard. By the way, what a huge place it is——"

"I say, what the hell are you talking about? I know the place pretty well, but I'm lost from your description. Old clothes yard! What the dickens is that?"

"Place where they put old clothes, stupid," impatiently answered the same man as before. Still intent on hearing the story, he sat watching the first speaker and brushed aside the interruption impatiently.

"But, oh hell! I can't follow you. I never heard of any old clothes yard in that place, or any other, for a matter of that, much less two—an old and a new."

Jack removed his pipe from his mouth and spoke tolerantly. "Place where the old clothes go; you know, discarded things—bodies. Perhaps you think of them under that heading."

"Good God!" said Foster. "Do you mean the churchyard and the cemetery?"

"Of course he does, you mug; go on, Jack; finish your story."

"But, good lord, what a name for them."

Jack gave his attention to the interrupter.

"That's all they are, you know, Foster," he said quietly. "So why call them anything else?

"You talk about a yard for scrap iron. Why not a yard for old clothes?"

"But——, it sounds dashed irreverent."

"Irreverent? Who to? My dear chap, when you chuck away your old coat-tails or dinner jacket you don't talk of reverence or irreverence. You shove them in the dustbin or give them to the rag and bone man or something."

It was the third speaker rushing in again.

"I know, but that's different altogether. When you chuck away a chap's old clothes for him you don't chuck him away too."

"Well, you bloody fool, what are you getting at? That's just the point."

"No, but dash it, when you bury a person, why, it's a sacred spot——"

"Then a dustbin's a sacred spot, and, by the way, you don't bury a person; it would be a criminal offence."

"You do when they die——"

"You fool, they don't die any more than you do when you chuck off your old pyjamas; and why should the dustbin be a sacred spot when you shove them into it, if you ever do. You don't go and sit in the dustbin with them. You're surely not quite such an ass as that. Or perhaps you do, since you've got such queer ideas."

"Shut up, you idiot, of course I don't—but that's nothing to do with burying a person——"

"You *don't* bury a person," the third speaker's voice rose in indignation. "I tell you, if you did you'd be had up. You are a bloody fool, Foster."

"Steady, old chap." It was Jack again. "Let him get it right; he's a bit muddled."

"As you like," grumbled the other. "*I* think he's a bloody fool. Unless he's doing it on purpose, which I'm not sure he isn't. I mean, who in their right senses could be so senile as to talk as he's doing?"

"Lots of people, old man." Then, turning to the other again, he said, "Have you got it clear now?"

"No!"

"Well, you've had quantities of new suits in your life since you were a brat in arms, haven't you? And they've all gone somewhere; into the dustbin or rag bag or something. You don't know and you don't care where. Well, it's just the same with our bodies. We've had any number since the first time we visited mother earth, and we've deposited them somewhere and gone off leaving them like old clothes. That's all it is. They mean no more to us than do our old clothes, so why should they to others? We don't accompany them into the grave, any more than we go and sit in the rag-bag or the dustbin. That's all it is, changing a suit of clothes, or a cloak, or a dress. That's why we here give the place its proper name.

"Now have you got it, Foster?"

"Yes, I'm beginning to see now, but—but what about all this talk of our bodies being raised up again at the last day?"

"Well, as to that, which body are you going to dig out and put on of the many? And which of all your old clothes are you going to unearth for the occasion?"

"Old clothes! Oh, I hadn't thought of that. One would have to find something new, I s'pose, for the occasion. The old ones would all have gone west long ago."

"Well, why want to go and dig up an old covering in the form of a body, when it, too, long since, will have gone west, as you express it. Though, as a matter of fact, you're wrong there in your mode of expression. The

phrase 'Gone west' is descriptive of the individual and not of his or her clothing, body or clothes."

"Yes," said the interrupter thoughtfully, "of course, you are quite right."

"A fat lot of a companion you'd be to a chap who'd passed on," said the third speaker. "Hovering round a dustbin when your pal is dancing about in a new suit, longing for you to come and have a rag—even if you can't admire his new clothes."

"I must say I still think it rather muddling."

"It isn't. Go and sit in a dustbin for a day, and see if you enjoy it. Nobody but you would be such an ass. And after you've got sick of it ask yourself whether chaps who've passed on are going to be as big fools as you and sit in graves.

"Oh, don't be such a silly mutt, Foster. If, when you step out of your present body, you want to go and sit with it in the old clothes bag, well, jolly well do. But don't expect other blighters to come and sit and hold your hand, so to speak."

"What he means, Foster," said Jack quietly, "is this. When you step out of your present body, which is only clothing, you'll be no more interested in it than you are in your discarded clothing, and you won't expect other people to be either—any more than you would expect them now to prefer to stop by your old clothes instead of going for a hell of a good time somewhere with you."

"But one likes to feel graves are nicely kept," said Foster obstinately.

"Oh, quite. Just as you keep a house nice someone once lived in whom you were fond of. But you don't expect them still to be in it now, when you know they're having a glorious time elsewhere."

"And now for your story," said the third speaker with a sigh of relief. "Let's get back into the jolly old NOW. And leave Foster to sit on the dustbin, if he still wants to."

CHAPTER XXI

"As I was saying," resumed Jack, "I went part of the walk with him, and then left him to find his own way to the village where he intended to stay. And now for what happened."

. . . . .

"Where the dickens am I?" said the traveller, stopping suddenly. "I haven't the foggiest idea. Lost, I believe."

He looked around him. The sun was getting low; it must be towards evening. Seven, eight, he didn't know. His watch had stopped. When did the sun set just now? About nine o'clock. Yes, that would be it; the time must be between seven-thirty and eight o'clock, and he was lost. Not the remotest idea where he was.

A stranger to these parts, he'd started off from his diggings about midday and had been walking quickly ever since, taking no notice where he went. Thinking, thinking all the time, round and round, and no further on than when he started out. But all unaware he'd walked, must have travelled miles and climbed too, for the hill-side sloped steeply away and from where he stood the land below was a far-away scene.

"Now what to do?" he said to himself. "Don't know, as usual. Don't know what to do next."

He wandered on a bit, and then chose an opening in the gorse.

Ah! what was that? Smoke up here! What could it mean, a woodman's hut? If so he'd enquire his way and get some food if he could. He was hungry and thirsty, jolly thirsty (something inside him said, 'Why not bloody thirsty, and done with it?'). He smiled. He wished he could let himself go spontaneously like that!

He followed the direction of the smoke and came to a clearing in the gorse, at the far end of which a few pine trees stood clustered together. There was the smoke coming from a small fire near the pine trees. Someone camping up here? Rather unlikely. Still, he'd go and see.

As he approached the far end of the clearing a figure emerged from among the pines, carrying some sticks and, stooping, laid them on the fire, which blazed up, crackling joyously.

As he drew near the stranger raised himself and turned towards him, as though expecting him, though he was not aware that he had been seen.

"Supper is almost ready," said the stranger. "You can wash the dust off in the pool behind that rock."

The traveller stopped, amazed. Not only did this stranger seem to expect him, but there was something curiously familiar about him which he himself could not place.

He seemed tall, but, come to look at him, he wasn't so very tall. Big in build, but again, come to look at him, he wasn't so big really. It was the impression he gave one of expansiveness, and of a great calm, as if he joined with the peace and assurance of everything around him.

"Thank you," said the traveller, turning to find the pool, as though to him also, it was all perfectly natural.

Returning he found the stranger had placed food ready for him and had himself started to eat. Too, a tankard of beer stood near his portion. Good and cool it was. As he drank it down he realised how thirsty he was and tired, too. Heavens knew how he'd ever have the energy to get back.

His companion continued to eat in silence, gazing about him as though intensely interested in everything around. A small bird fluttered down and picked up a crumb near his feet.

"Her nest's just over there" he said, moving his head sideways over his shoulder. "They've just finished building."

So he was a Nature lover, this stranger.

He said nothing, and they continued to eat in silence. The stranger refilled his mug for him. Presently, as he finished lighting his after-supper pipe, the stranger remarked:

"You're near the solution of your problem now, my friend."

The traveller started. How did he know he'd got a problem to solve?

He stared in silence at the other, still puzzled by the strangeness and yet familiarity of it all. Where had he seen this man before? Nowhere; he felt certain of that. Then what was it? A likeness? Might be. Something familiar—curiously so.

Again they sat in silence, smoking contentedly. Presently the stranger began to talk. The traveller sat spellbound, then found himself talking too.

Only one other had ever talked like this, or known, as this one did.

He didn't beat about the bush; he made statements, said things that he knew, and the traveller knew that he knew. He wished he'd the same assurance, the same positive knowing.

The stranger got up at last. It was now dusk, but the firelight lit up his features. Looking down at his companion, he smiled. The traveller felt he'd never forget that smile. The quiet joyous poise of his whole bearing thrilled him.

The traveller suddenly ached all over with a great envy. How he wished he'd this man's certainty, his assurance, his poise, his quiet joy. There was something so vital about it all, somehow, so safe-feeling.

The stranger smiled again; he'd only seen one other smile like that. "You have it all," he said, "but you

don't realise it yet. Break free; release your desire and you'll be there.

"You see," he said, sitting down again, "as so many others have done, you, like Esau, have sold your birth-right; since it is your Birth-Right you could not really sell it, but it's up to you to break the contract.

"Once, you handed over your Desire to others to control. Consequently, now you don't know it when you see it, or very rarely. Mostly you are not aware of it at all, or if it does put in an appearance you think you should disown it.

"Claim it! My friend, take it, unite yourself and be one with it.

"The only obligation in Life," he continued, "is to One's Self; no other."

"Good heavens!" cried the traveller. "But what about others? Surely one should consider them. I mean, that's pure selfishness. One can't help being concerned about others sometimes. I mean, one wants to help, and all that."

"Other people are not your concern; just your Self. 'To thine own Self be true.' "

"Yes, I know; I've heard that quoted, but then—I mean—Well, take yourself, for instance; at the moment you're trying to help me."

"Exactly."

"Then you are concerning yourself with someone else, aren't you?"

"Am I?" the other smiled again; and again the baffled feeling came across the traveller. Where had he seen this man before, or, rather, whom was he like?

Presently, "I will show you the way," said the other. "It isn't far, if you know the direct route."

They both rose and, passing through the pine trees, followed a descending track.

Deep in thought, the traveller followed the other. So absorbed was he that he was startled when the other

said: "There is your road. When you get round the next turning you'll be home."

It was now nearly dark.

The traveller glanced down the road, then turned to thank his companion, but he was nowhere to be seen.

He looked into the deeper shadows in case he'd slipped aside. Staring about him, he remained puzzled; no sound of footfalls—nothing.

Damn it all! he hadn't even thanked him or anything.

He turned his steps towards the village.

Sitting in his room late one evening a few days after, he again reviewed the meeting with his unknown friend, for such he had come to regard him.

It was all very wonderful, meeting him up there like that, and his knowing so much about him. Yes, funny too, since he did seem to know so much about him, that he should have thought that he lived in this little place, when really he was only staying a few days. He'd called it his 'home.' Funny that. He'd been so carefully accurate in all his talk but that.

"When you get round the next turning, you'll be home," he'd said.

Lovely it had been up there on the mountain. No wonder Christ had gone up a mountain whenever He wished to be alone.

Yes, what was it someone had said once? "One's Higher Self is always on the Mountain Top, so vast, stretching from earth to Heaven; Serene; ALL-WISE."

He smoked on in silence. Then getting up, started to prepare for bed.

A drink first. His friend had told him to keep close to his desire, follow it closely. Well, he meant to, and curiously enough, the more he looked out for it the more he found it. It became sort of spontaneous. It was bloody good, but he still felt, surely, a bit selfish? No;

he'd get to drop that idea. His friend had said if he were true to himself everything else would fall into line.

He turned and lit a candle; the flickering light rose up and down.

He crossed the room, and as he did so caught sight of himself in the long mirror; the dancing candle-light distorted things. He paused, then looked again. What was that he saw? His own face, of course. He paused. How tall the candle-light made him appear! He stood puzzled, then gazed and gazed. A dawning light broke over his consciousness, a smile was reflected in his mirror. The likeness! He stood transfixed, unable to move. A great joy, a great peace, a great understanding seemed to break over him. As he looked in the mirror his whole being seemed to expand and expand and expand. From somewhere cool air swept round him, the same refreshing breeze he had felt on the mountain top. The Mountain Top! Someone had once said, "One's Higher Self is always on the Mountain Top——"

CHAPTER XXII

It was later, when they were talking of love, that Davidsson said: "I, myself, think that very few living at the time being know what real love is. I will show you what I mean. Most people's ideas of loving a person is to possess them, which, of course, is the exact opposite of love. Here is an instance."

. . . . .

"Oh, I do want him so desperately. Can't you help me?" Her voice broke.

Her whole bearing was one of gripping tightly; her hands clutched the arms of the chair; she rocked herself to and fro every now and then.

"Want him?" said her companion, who had been listening in silence to her story. "What exactly, I wonder, do you mean by that."

"I want him. I want him to marry me."

"Why?" he asked.

"Why? Because then he will be mine. But he won't. He says he will not bind me or be bound. Oh, it is terrible to suffer so."

"I see," said her companion, after a pause. "By wanting you mean you wish to possess him. And he being, obviously, a free soul, will not be bound; neither will he bind you."

"But we love each other. And if we were married I'd be so sure of him, so sure he was mine."

"You say you love each other. He may love you, very probably does, but, my dear, do you love him? Do you know what love is? I doubt it. Your idea of love is possession."

The girl gazed at him in amazement. "But surely that is the perfect state?"

"To be in Love is, maybe, the perfect state. But to be in bondage most certainly is not.

"Your idea of love is evidently to possess and control another. Look around you and see how few, once they have entered that state of servitude, remain in Love long.

"Real love gives freedom. Its joy is in the other's joy. It never seeks to control, give orders, possess or direct. It leaves the other free."

"But the Church says that the people she marries are joined to each other by God."

"My dear, the Church cheerfully joins two people together for the remainder of their earth life, so she declares, without so much as making a single enquiry as to whether they are suitably matched or not. In most cases the clergyman who does it has never met one of the two before, and possibly neither. So, on what authority it is done, I do not know. Mind you, I do not consider she has the least right to interfere with two lives, if they wish to marry. But she cannot in the circumstances possibly declare that she has God's authority that they two are chosen by Him to be in bondage to each other for the remainder of their earth lives.

"No; all she does—and would acknowledge that she did, if she were honest—is to witness the vows of the two people that they wish to enter such a bondage. Oh yes, I know she blesses their decision. But what right has she to bless such a contract off hand, and make a condition that it be binding for the remainder of their earth lives?

"Dear lady, if two souls are wed, there is no need for any earthly or religious ceremony to unite them. And if they are not so wed no earthly or religious form or rite can permanently unite them. Conversely, if they are wed, no earthly rite or form can sever them. Where

Real Love is, such is not possible. Though few on earth know real Love."

"But," said the girl after a pause, "marriage makes one safe. At present so many girls are running after him; if we were married all that would stop. As it is, we are not even engaged."

"Do you really think all that would stop. My dear, it might not be done in your presence if you were married, but I doubt if it would stop. And as to not being engaged. You are very much engaged at the moment by the adhering to general opinion that you should possess your lover, and seal the fact by a public declaration. He, I should say, is free and occupied only with the desire to make you as free as he himself is.

"When you really love you will only have one wish regarding him: that he fulfil his every desire, every moment of the day. And when you do that there will be no fear of losing. For you will not be thinking of what you get, but of what way you can help him to fulfil his every wish unhindered by interference and crowned by a mutual glorious understanding and joy."

The girl rose. "I don't seem to be much further," she said. "I had hoped you could help by using your influence with him, if you would have come and met him. But as it is I don't know what to do," and she wrung her hands.

"My dear, that is a thing I would never do, use my influence to persuade another. No; each must have perfect freedom to act as he or she desires. It is only so that any can learn."

The girl departed and the man, after standing silent for a little, passed out into the park lying beyond the garden, followed by his dog, a beautiful creature who knew and understood the meaning of the word Love, in that he both received and gave it. Free he was from morning till night. No orders, no commands, no tricks demanded to be learnt in return for tit-bits. But just

gloriously free. He, too, understood freedom, and that was why the man was able to grant him so much of it. Never having had any restrictions put upon him or "No's" constantly repeated, he had learnt himself what was done and not done in regard to interfering with the man's freedom. He never worried for a walk, because he had free range to go where he liked and when he liked; but should the man take him out then he was delirious with joy. Too, he never interfered with the man's food. He knew that that which was put on the table was not for him, and his own was placed on the floor. So by not interfering he had given freedom and gained his own freedom. And by not dominating or controlling, the man had earned from the animal complete understanding, born of that unperverted glorious intuition which is in all animals when not interfered with. So great is their capacity to love and so earnest their desire just to give.

It was some time later that the man had a caller who reminded him of the talk he had had with the girl. He had not seen her to speak to since. In fact, if they had met she had avoided any opportunity for talk. He was sorry if what rumour said about her was true; but he never attached any reliance on rumour.

His visitor, a man to whom he took an instant liking, introduced himself as being the fellow the girl had wished to marry.

"I know you know all about it," he had said, "because she's told me, and I've come to thank you."

"Thank me?" the man said, surprise showing in his face. "Whatever for, I wonder? By the way, I've never spoken to her since, so I don't know any more. I understood she'd been out of town a lot, so we've met but rarely. And when we did at certain houses I realised she was avoiding speaking to me."

"Yes," said the visitor; "she's been through hell, but, by Jove, she's come out glorious."

"She could," said the man. "She had it in her."

"We got no further; couldn't under the conditions. And then, I s'pose partly because she couldn't stick things as they were and partly because she thought it might bring me to my senses, she went off one day." His face showed signs of great suffering as he spoke of the happening.

"And you, you just carried on, knowing that only she could teach herself and free herself and learn to give freedom. You were content to let her be, rather than coerce her. By Jove, what a bloody time for you; but you would suffer in a different way from most. The suffering of witnessing the missing of a venture because the current was not taken when it served. But you, with your knowledge and impersonal Love, so regardless of self, would realise that at some time she would achieve and attain."

The visitor looked at him. "Damn it," he said; "what a lot you know—how you understand. God, if I'd only known you then it might have helped the hell——"

"No," said the man; "you are the stronger for going through it alone. Such impersonal love is very rare though. Very difficult—impossible, in fact, for those who have not got there, to understand." Then he looked up; a smile lit his face. "But it is good to meet you and—a privilege." He held out his hand and the other grasped it.

"But," continued the other, "I have not told you all. She did not miss the current." He paused.

"Though precious near it," said the man.

"Not really, no. More my impatience, I think, made me feel she had. No, she learnt so much. Your talk must have helped her no end; she hasn't told me much of what you actually said. But she watched and saw and, once you'd opened her eyes and she'd owned up to

the truth of your remarks, so she tells me, she saw how possessive love is everywhere. How some live in married bliss in ignorance of the bonds they've forged and of the surreptitious doings of the other, hidden from them because of the disapproval, from the desire to dominate, which would result. And how many hadn't the courage to break free, so lived a terrible life of frustration."

The man nodded his head.

"She noted, too, the general attitude of domination and possessiveness and demanding which went with every engaged couple, and saw how different it was from what our state was, or rather might have been."

"What you tried to make it, you mean," said the man.

"So you see, since deep down in her was the great capacity to really give Love, she——she" here he paused.

"Came to her Self," put in the man.

"Yes, exactly," said the other, his whole face lighting up. "And, by Jove, isn't she glorious now! She wouldn't put one bond or constraint on now for anything."

The man watched his face.

"Friend," he said, "I congratulate you. It is a freedom she has learnt, which perhaps only love could have brought about. I can see from your face what it means."

"Yes," said the other. "And I want to thank you."

"Nothing to thank me for," he said. "I am only so rejoiced that she didn't miss the current when it served. You were more lucky in that than I; no, I should say more deserving."

"Oh," said the visitor quickly. "It has been so with you too?"

"Yes, and that is why I am so damned glad for you. My—my love wasn't strong enough to free her," he said slowly.

"No, not that," said the other. "Yours was, but maybe hers wasn't. And you would never try to hold, knowing, as you do, that all must go their own path until they are ready to be strong and stand alone and come alone."

"One day," said the man, "in other climes, in other times, we shall meet and she will be most wondrous fair. I've seen it there, in her face, only she did not know her own greatness, her own power to achieve, her own sufficiency to stand alone, her own great Self. But she will know one day. And," he said gently, as though to himself, "her hands will be open; she will not wish to hold anything, and so they will be full of giving."

The visitor bowed his head, as though in reverence before this great impersonal love which considered nothing from its personal point of gain, and then passed silently from the room.

And the man walked once more in the park with his friend and companion, that free soul in dog form, and thanked the Great Architect of the Universe that yet another had come to the Knowledge of Freedom. For there is more joy in Heaven over one Free Soul than over ninety-nine souls which know not FREEDOM.

CHAPTER XXIII

DAVIDSSON made his way across the garden to the back door of The lady of the flowers' house. Pausing for a moment, he watched the girl within, then stepped into the kitchen.

"I could help you, if you would let me," he said.

The girl looked up with a start and coloured violently.

"Oh! I am so sorry," she said; "I never heard or saw you."

"Much better decide and abide by your decision," said Davidsson with a smile.

"I—I am afraid I was miles away, thinking of something else, so I didn't notice you," said the girl, still confused at his sudden appearance. "Did you want Miss——"

"I know you were," continued Davidsson. "I assure you it is much best to decide at once and done with it. Never think things over; it's a great mistake. Make your decision and the rest will fall into perfect order."

"But I can't; that's just the trouble," said the girl earnestly. "It's all so difficult. I've been turning it over in my mind ever since the letter came. Good gracious!" she said, colouring again in dismay. "Whatever am I talking about? And you—why, it was you who started the conversation, and—and I've never seen you before and I don't know who you are. Whatever must you think of me!"

"That is of no consequence whatever, what I think of you or what anyone else does either," said Davidsson. "What matters is that you make up your mind and have done with it. Then you'll be able to be here."

"Be here?"

"Yes; you said yourself just now that you were miles away."

"Yes, I did—in my thoughts. I meant I was away in my mind, thinking of something else."

"I know all that," said Davidsson. "I knew it the moment I saw you. That is why I said I could help you, if you would let me. My advice is, decide and have done with it. You knew in the first place—at once—what you yourself desired."

"But—but how did you know I had anything to decide? I don't understand," she said, brushing her hand across her forehead. "I, you—I've never seen you before; you came to see——"

"No, I didn't," said Davidsson, smiling again. "I came to help you. You're still only half back, you know; you're still most of you away with your problem."

The girl sank into a chair, a cloth with which she had been drying the cups and saucers still clasped in her hand.

"You came to see me? But I've never heard of you ——"

"Nor I of you till now. But if you will be advised it will help you very much. Settle the problem once and for all, and leave the rest be."

"But you don't know what the problem is, so how can you advise me?"

"No; and I don't want to know your problem. But I do know that there is only one way to tackle it, and that is to decide what you yourself want to do and to do it. Never mind anything else."

"But other people do matter very much, unfortunately. And how could you have come here to help me if you've never heard of me till you met me a few moments back? I don't understand."

"It's all very simple," said Davidsson, seating himself on the edge of the table. "I followed my desire to come and call and I found you in here. I knew at once you were in difficulties. The solution of your problem is as simple as that was. Follow YOUR desire in making

your decision—not someone else's, your OWN desire, and the whole matter is settled."

"It's not as easy as that, not nearly. There are other people to be considered, as I said before. If it were only oneself to be considered it would be quite different."

"There never is anyone else but one's Self to be considered. Never anyone else."

The girl looked at Davidsson in amazement. "Never anyone but oneself?" she breathed, as if struck almost speechless.

"Why—why."

"It's perfectly true. Never anyone else but one's Self. Other people are not our concern. If you would look after your Self, here and now, there'd be no need for anyone to try and look after you. And the same with other people. Their sole job is them Selves, and when you realise that you won't go making them your concern.

"Look after your Self or look towards your Self, which ever way you like to put it, and then other people will cease to interfere with you and to make demands of you. They'll know it is useless.

"And as for your wasting time considering other people; why, you know, it is an impertinence." He smiled down at her and then suddenly became very grave. "It is a great impertinence. You are trying to usurp the business of their Higher Self, their Soul. Our only job here in this earth life is to look after or towards our own Soul or Higher Self and follow its dictates, made known to us in the form of desire or inclination. So only can we Serve God and our fellow men.

"You, at the moment, at this point of this earth life of yours—and for some time past, I should say—are wallowing in a phase of servitude. When you get tired of it you will free yourself and Serve instead."

The girl looked bewildered.

"It's perfectly simple and obvious," he continued. "You are subjecting yourself to the desires and demands of

others. You are indulging in servitude, wallowing in it, as I said. When you have had enough of it you will break free and start to LIVE and BE your Self.

"At the time being you are in bondage or in servitude to someone, trying all the time to please them and everyone else."

The girl gave a little gasp.

Davidsson continued: "Everyone, in fact, except the one whom you should please, namely, your Self. No," he went on firmly, "it is silly, and a waste of time. Your one job is to fulfil your Self, so is mine to fulfil my Self, by obeying or following every desire, no matter how small.

"You know what your desire is in this matter you were pondering so deeply when I came in. Act on it, follow it. Never think. If you stop to think you miss the correct decision and wander off after other people's opinions and obey them. If there were no one but yourself to be considered, you know, without hesitation, what you would decide. Well, there never is anyone else to be considered but your Self, do that and your Self will lead you to Real Service to all people."

He paused and looked around at the pile of recently washed things on the table.

"This," he said, "proves what I have been saying. You don't enjoy washing up——"

"Oh," broke in the girl, "but I am so used to it. I always do the washing up at home."

"Exactly, but you don't really delight in doing it. So why do it? And why bring 'home' away with you when you come on a visit?

"I know The lady of the flowers too well not to know that she would never expect such a thing of anyone. Granted she would never interfere with another, if they desired to do a thing. But then it wasn't the great desire of your heart. And, you know, you aren't 'saving' her, because she won't do it till she feels inclined to, and then it will be her desire, and so being, she will enjoy it. If

she didn't enjoy it she would make other arrangements."

"Well, she's out at the moment, and I did think it would save her and—and please her."

"It will do neither," said Davidsson with a smile. "But she'll never interfere with you, as you are probably aware, if you know her at all well. And it's far better to follow one's desire than to think."

He turned as he spoke and stepped out into the garden. At the same moment The lady of the flowers came along the little garden path.

"Oh," she said, "how lovely. So you two have discovered each other."

She passed on into the house, and Davidsson, crossing the lawn, disappeared down the garden steps.

The girl followed her hostess into the little dining-room.

"He seems to have gone," she said. "How funny of him; he never even spoke to you."

"Why should he," said The lady of the flowers; "he came to see you, not me. If he'd come to see me, he'd have come when I was at home and, too, my desire wouldn't have taken me out."

The girl stood silent. Then she said: "We had quite a long talk, and I don't even know his name. Nor he mine; he said so."

"Neither of which things are of the least importance. But what he said to you will have been."

The girl said nothing for a few minutes, and then turned and went out of doors.

"Now," said The lady of the flowers to herself, "if she will only ponder in her heart, instead of thinking with her mind—or, rather, with other people's minds—she'll reap such benefit from his visit."

CHAPTER XXIV

"I AM in two minds," said the girl that afternoon as they sat in the garden.

"That is a pity," said The lady of the flowers.

"Why? I mean I can't make up my mind."

"Why? Because if you are in two minds, it means you are listening to the dictates of another's mind which is already made up. You can never be your real self if you are listening to, or in, someone else's mind.

"Also, you do not need to be, nor should you be, in your own mind. The mind is the place where people collect other people's thoughts, opinions and ideas. You can never KNOW anything with your mind, because the mind only thinks.

"One should work from the heart always; the heart always knows. *Then* one gets what is called by some intuition, the tuition or teaching of the heart. When you work from the heart, the result is ACTION, not indecision. When people talk of a person as being out of his mind they mean out *with* his mind, following the dictates of another, instead of being him Self. If you are in conscious union with your Higher Self and act from your heart, you can never be out with your mind.

"For the last twenty-four hours you have been out with your mind, conversing with someone else's mind. The result is you have been what is called absent-minded."

"You've noticed that?"

"It has been evident. If you decide what your heart desires and act on it, you will be your Self once more and happy again."

"Now you're talking like that man who came this morning, Mr.—I don't know his name."

"Davidsson. Yes he KNOWS so much. You see, he

just followed the desire of his heart at the moment, and that led him to you."

"But one *must* think."

"Thinking, reasoning, is always considering other people's ideas. Most people are all mind and unaware of their real Self, their heart's desire.

"You get the whole story in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. He listened to what others said, and so went off on hearsay. When he came to him Self he realised his Father, or God-Self. Then he turned back to his Father or God-Self and from then onwards the way was clear. For, though he was yet a great way off that state of perfection when he would listen always and only to his Higher Self—the Father—yet he had decided to do it, so his Father was with him and guided him home to the perfect state. The mind only feeds us with husks, the heart is God-taught and KNOWS.

"When you are free of the dictates of others you will give the world such glorious Service from the Heart.

"It's no good trying to make up your mind, for the mind is composed of other people's ideas. Act from your Heart, and then you KNOW instantly and cease to think other people's thoughts.

"It is glorious, because you are then so SURE, so CERTAIN.

"But till then you must go on till you are satiated, and sick of it, and break free yourself; for no one but your Self can free you."

"It will be a great relief when I can come to a decision, for at present I am terribly restless and tormented."

"Yes," said The lady of the flowers, "when you invited yourself to stay you didn't say you would be bringing a lot of people along with you, but you have."

The girl looked startled.

"You have, and you have been conversing with them all the time for the last twenty-four hours.

"You might just as well be back where you came from."

"Why," said the girl in a surprised voice, "you are quite right. I am really far more conscious of them all, since that letter came, than of—of—" she laughed in an embarrassed way—"than of you and—and all this," and she looked out across the garden as though seeing it for the first time.

"Now," said The lady of the flowers with a smile, as she rose from her chair, "you are coming back into the Here."

CHAPTER XXV

LATER that evening The lady of the flowers and her visitor sat restfully after their evening meal and talked.

"Yes, I know how you feel," said The lady of the flowers. "I did once myself. If I tell you of a talk I once had with Jack Burton on the same subject it will, I feel sure, help you."

"I cannot see how following one's desire can be right. If everyone followed their own desire, think what chaos there'd be in the world! What murders, thefts, assaults, cruelties committed! What terrible domination of the strong over the weak.

"It puzzles me so much. I realise you and Marian have got hold of something that WORKS; that is obvious by the results in your lives. Your individual happiness, the effortless way you help people without ever interfering with them. You say it is Following your Desire; yes, that may be all right for you. But for others—for everyone else—I can't see that it can work. You see, your desire is founded on the desire to Serve. Service, not servitude, you say. But for others who haven't the desire to Serve. What of them? It seems to me that they, if allowed to follow their desires, if encouraged to do so, would cause so much evil in the world."

"There are two or three points you need to get clear," answered Jack. "First, follow your own desire; never anyone else's. You speak of the weak being dominated by the strong. If the weak, as you call them, would follow their own desire, they couldn't be interfered with. It is the fault of the weak that they are dominated. If they refused to be, the dominators would tire of their efforts.

"Interference is always the result of allowing another's desire to over-rule our own.

"With regard to murders, thefts, assaults, cruelties, I doubt if any of these would take place if people would

only follow their own desire. You are thinking only of the would-be murderer, thief, assaulter, when you say following one's desire is wrong. But if the victim of murder, assault or theft always followed his or her OWN desire, he or she would always be in the right place at the right moment, and so out of danger. Thus, the person likely to be robbed would, if he really listened to his own desire and followed his inclination, be at home and ready for the thief. Not necessarily sitting waiting for him consciously, but he would have the impulse at the given moment to be on the spot and would forestall the thief. For instance, in the night he'd feel the desire for a drink or to fetch something from downstairs; and if he followed it, he'd disturb or frighten away the burglar. Or, maybe, sitting at dinner, he might have the desire to fetch something from upstairs, if he didn't frustrate that desire by stopping to think instead of acting spontaneously, or by letting another's desire or opinion stop him, he would arrive on the spot at the correct moment to intercept the burglar.

"Again, in the case of murder or assault. The victim could circumvent these things if he or she were not under the dominion of another's will or desire, and therefore allowing him or herself to get sidetracked from following his own desire. Anyone who does anything that is against his or her own spontaneous desire may be laying himself open to such disaster as murder or assault.

"Such little things can save or side-track us. The young man who takes a letter to the post for another 'to oblige' against his real inclination—possibly out of politeness or to save another trouble or from a sense of duty because his mother or someone else asks him to, and in so doing gets knocked down by a car or has some other disaster happen to him, has only himself to blame, no matter how careless the motor-driver. Because, owing to being side-tracked from his own desire and following that of another, he was not in his own place at that

moment. The same with people who are murdered. I am certain that if we knew all, such cases could have been prevented. That all the victims, if they had been awake to their own desire, would have followed some impulse which would have saved them. How often you hear or read of a person who says, 'I don't know why, but I had a sudden impulse to look round, or to look up, or to go into the next room; if I hadn't, I should have been a dead man,' or 'very badly hurt.'

"We aren't awake to these facts. We aren't on the spot as we say. If we were always awake to our own desire, we would always be on the spot and on the right spot—in the right place.

"The same with the girl who gets unwillingly seduced. She goes out with a man, not because she wants to, but because she doesn't like to say 'no.' She is afraid of opposing his will or desire, so against her own instinctive distrust she goes with him. Or she may go for another reason. But always if disaster overtakes her it is, you would find if you really knew, because she followed the desire, suggestion or order of another, against her own inclination.

"We know, we always know. But we won't listen to our Selves.

"In the same way, anyone who disregards his own desire misses an opportunity to Serve.

"The man who followed his own desire could be led to arrive at the very moment when assistance to another is needed, and so prevent murder, theft, or anything else.

"But with the people who, as you say, would, if allowed, do evil, as you call it, if they followed their desire, they couldn't do evil to others if those others refused to be interfered with, as I've already explained. And as to the rest; why, they must go on till they are sick of hurting others or trying to. Satiated, in fact. If

you eat sweets till you make yourself sick, you don't want any more; not for a very long while, anyway.

"So with the desire, if it is followed, our OWN desire, and it is not for Service, we soon get sick of it. But the person who listens to the appeal of his desire is far nearer his own salvation than the person who is all self-restraint and self-denial. The latter are trying to repress the life-response within them; they are unnatural and unchild-like. For no one by nature restrains or represses; that is the direct result of another's suggestion, will or desire. And it is certainly unchild-like. Hence Christ said, 'The sinners are nearer the Kingdom of Heaven' because they are aware of and respond to their own desire, the voice of their Inner Self speaking and guiding them. Christ said, 'Be ye as little children,' and little children are by nature spontaneous.

"At the moment the law punishes the lawbreaker, or the one who interferes with, or hurts, another by action. It does nothing to punish the one who interferes mentally with another. It is not recognised that that is a far worse thing to do.

"But the person to blame really is the one who has allowed him or herself to be interfered with. He gets hurt maybe but he doesn't realise he himself is to blame; so next time it happens again, and will go on happening, so long as people aren't AWAKE to them Selves, to the guidance of their *own* desires.

"If you go for a walk with another against your own inclination, when, maybe, you'd sooner sit by the fire and read, you are being unfaithful to your Soul, your own desire, and thereby putting yourself in the wrong place, and missing your own opportunity to do your own job.

"To interfere with is to offend another, as Christ told us, and woe to the one who interferes, until such time as he learns not to. But, as Christ said, too, such offences must come to teach us to stand alone, and to refuse to be interfered with."

CHAPTER XXVI

"It is an absolute impossibility; I am convinced of it. For myself, I KNOW and what applies to me applies to all."

It was the Lad speaking.

A discussion was in progress. The party sat out in the dusk. The warm weather still held and the cool of the evening air was refreshing.

The Lad continued:

"No man can lose his Soul. By man, I mean no human Being, man or woman.

"He can loose it, yes. He can disregard his unity, his oneness with It, for a time. But always, always in the end he will come back to him Self. The parable of the Prodigal Son tells us that.

"Man could no more lose his Soul than he could lose God, for it's one and the same thing. His Soul is a part of God, is God. Made in His Image. You can't imagine God being lost, no more can you imagine one's Soul being lost. It is in direct contact with God, a part of Him.

"And as to being damned, whatever that may mean, of course it is ridiculous.

"My idea of damnation would be to be parted from God, and that is impossible. God is everywhere, so one could not go or be where God is not.

"If there is a hell in the hereafter, then God is there too, that is all I can say about it.

"As a matter of fact, we make our own hells here and now.

"The moment we realise our own Divinity, our own Greatness, our own akin-ness to God, hell ceases."

As the speaker paused, Jack leaned forward and looked at him.

This, the Lad, the silent boy who listened and seldom spoke, this!

It was obvious that while others had talked the Lad silently communed with his own Soul, and in consequence, he KNEW.

Now they were for once hearing some of those things which he knew.

Jack's heart glowed; the Lad was one of those who were ready, who KNEW here and now.

Meanwhile the Lad, as though suddenly aware of the sound of his own voice, fell silent again.

"The Lad is right." It was Davidsson speaking.

They all started, for he had not been there when the discussion commenced, and no one had noticed his approach.

He sat near their chairs, on the grass.

"No one can lose his Soul, but he can put himself for a time into the bondage of another.

"Then, he ceases to listen to his Self, his Soul, his Spirit, whatever you like to call it. He lets himself be dominated by another and ceases to listen to his own Desire, the voice of his Spirit speaking to him. Then he looses his conscious contact with his God-Self, but he cannot be lost, his God-Self or Soul sees to that.

"In time, too, he realises what he is doing, and then he comes to him Self and frees himself.

"There are many dominators in this world, but it is up to us to keep free of them.

"Parents are some of the worst offenders in that line. They try, most of them, to dominate the child from the cradle onwards. "Bring it up in the way it should go," they say. Their way—not the child's way. Later they hold on and demand attention and care, and if the child is not wise and strong it panders to its parents' demand, and so gets side-tracked from its life's Purpose. The choice of its life's expression, too, it often leaves to them, by following the trade or career *they* decide upon for it. Instead of following the purpose for which it came to earth and fulfilling its Self. In the choice of its mate,

too, very often, and later, in the running of its own home it allows them to interfere.

"In doing all this, the child, and later the man or woman, is unfaithful, for the time being, to his or her God-Self or Soul."

"The same with husbands and wives. Almost invariably marriage to them means bondage the one to the other and frustration, instead of Glorious Freedom, which enables each of them to fulfil them Selves more and more.

"The same with friends, how often when you hear of a great friendship you find, instead, a great bondage.

"Or, again, through fear you find one dominated by another.

"But it is always for the slave to free him or herself, and to enter into Glorious Service instead of servitude."

"We all come to earth with a purpose. But often, so often, the life's work is not fulfilled because the individual looses his conscious contact with his Soul and sells himself into bondage to another. Like Esau, he barters his Birth Right. The Right to fulfil his life's mission by expressing himself. It is for each to wake to his Life's Purpose. The Burden of Christ's message was 'Awake! Awake!' "

Later Jack lay in bed, thinking of the Lad and all he had learnt.

He remembered once more the night, soon after Davidsson's coming, when he had heard footsteps in the garden below and, looking out, had seen the Lad walking alone in the moonlight long after the household had retired to bed. He remembered, too, seeing the figure of Davidsson presently detach itself from the shadow of the trees and walk across and join the Lad.

He had wondered then, for they must have stayed long talking, the click of the Lad's door in the early dawn had awakened him. He had wondered then of the Lad.

It was not for nothing, he knew, that the desire of each to walk in the garden that night had led them to each other.

And another occasion. The Lad's remark, when they had been discussing Davidsson during one of his absences. He had said, "His name surely speaks for itself; like Christ he is David's son—own Brother to Him."

He, that usually silent lad, knew much; no wonder Jack's heart had gone out to him when first they had met.

Conscious of a great content, Jack fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXVII

"WHAT wonderful Beings we are," said Marian, as, from the driving seat of the car, she gazed thoughtfully across the heather-covered slopes in front of them to the village below and the distant hills.

They had come out for a run before supper.

Jack, Donald and another had gone off to see the view from the top of the hill.

The Lad stood by Marian, waiting for her to alight. But she sat on, so he seated himself on the running-board at her feet.

"Such capacity," she went on, "and such vast, vast possibilities! Each and everyone, the child running grimy-faced in the slums and the richest man in the land. All with such vast possibilities, did we but realise it.

"Two thousand years! and we haven't awakened to Christ's Message yet: "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from your deadness and your Christ Self shall give you the Light." And yet we don't.

"You know," she said, smiling down at the Lad, "we are all 'Priests for ever after the Order of Melchisidek,' as was Christ—our Elder Brother, but we don't realise it; we don't remember.

"Each a Priest in our own Sanctuary; with our own Sanctuary Lamp, our Desire, lighted by our Soul. Each with our Mission, our Life's Work—to fulfil our Selves. And the world isn't awake to the fact.

"I think the first time I fully awakened to it was some years ago, when I was staying by the sea. A tiny place, no more than a few fishermen's cottages, one or two scattered farms, an occasional labourer's cottage and a tiny Church near the cliff-top surrounded by cornfields.

"The place to which Jack was referring in his talk to Miss Smith that day. You will remember how amused you were at the time at them both."

The Lad nodded.

"Well, Davidsson knew this place; he often goes there when he needs absolute peace and quiet. One year I went down for a rest, and there I met Davidsson quite unexpectedly. We had many talks together on that lovely lonely shore, and one day this happened. Afterwards I took Jack there; he dearly loves the place.

. . . . .

"Come," he said, "and I will show you."

He led her up the steep winding-path of the cliffs; helping her over the crumbling places when loose stones slipped under the foot's pressure.

At the top he turned and, taking her hand, led her onwards.

It was sunset time, long shadows lay on the ground, pointing ahead of them as they walked onwards.

The tones of the church bell reached them as they walked.

Breasting the cliff-top, they walked on, across the close cropped grass where sheep nibbling, stopped to look at them as they passed.

They came to the door of the little porch; weather-beaten it stood, with mossy patches; the roof covered with golden lichen.

The bell had just stopped its call to Evensong.

They passed in.

A few sat sprinkled about the little nave, for the village was small and scattered.

The padre entered and, walking to the steps of the chancel, turned and faced his congregation.

No choir filled the stalls; they remained empty and silent.

Light through the stained glass of the western window fell across the tiny church and rested on the eastern stone wall.

The padre spoke.

The girl stood in the pew they had entered, surprised at the procedure.

The padre was addressing his flock.

They sat.

He spoke on.

He told them of them Selves, of the God Who dwelt in them, Who was they Themselves.

"Here," he continued, "we KNOW.

"We offer no supplications, we give no directions to a God aloof, who may chance to hear *if approached* often enough and with sufficient intensity.

"We give no orders to the God we KNOW and recognise as LOVE.

"We deem it not necessary to prompt His uncertain memory.

"We tell our Selves what He already knows the desire of our Hearts. By so doing we recognise our Desire, which is the Voice of our Soul instructing us, and follow that guiding.

"We deem it unnecessary to tell our God—our Father—what we need to fulfil those desires; we are aware that He not only KNOWS of them, but put them into our Hearts.

"We know that all we have to do in life is to follow the prompting of those desires, and all these things shall be added to us.

"We do not intrude upon His—our Father's—business by telling Him what we consider to be the needs and troubles and perils of others. Those, we know, are His business, not ours. We would not so presume as to dictate thus.

"INSTEAD, we thank Him for His constant care of them and us.

"For the Blessings daily poured upon us since, through His volition, we first came into Being.

"Let us now rest awhile and realise our Glory, our

own wonderful place in the Scheme of things, our own possibilities.

"Our own GREATNESS as His children, made in His I—AM—age. Let us lean on no one, but from our Self draw all the supply we need. Let us be busy with no one's busy-ness but our own."

He paused, and seemed about to turn.

A great peace filled the old building, as though the calm of a great Sanctuary brooded there.

"Remember, dear people," he said, "I represent each one of you. Each one of you is a Priest in a wondrous Sanctuary. He enshrines a God Who is perfect in Love, in Service, in Tenderness, in Compassion, in Wisdom.

"In each is the perfect KNOWING, the perfect calm, the perfect assurance, the perfect understanding. Let us not concern ourselves with any other but our Self, our God, our Father with us, our Heaven God-filled."

He bowed his head as though in reverence towards his congregation and, turning, stood facing the little chancel.

Then, after a few minutes, walked onwards to the altar. Turning again, he stretched his arms wide and said:

"Your God is with you."

And the congregation answered:

"He is I."

And all stood with faces uplifted, a great joy enveloping them.

The girl never properly remembered going out of the little church, nor how she knew the answer to the padre's exhortation, but she did, and she, too, had spoken the reply.

She found herself without.

The afterglow of the sun's setting filled the heavens.

She turned to her companion and smiled.

"You know now," he said.

"Yes," she replied; "now I KNOW."

"Surely the Lord is in me and I knew it not till now."

"And in me," the man replied in a soft whisper.

She looked at him.

"No prayers, no supplications, just KNOWING."

"Yes, that is the True Church, the only one of its kind that I know of. There may be others—please God there are."

"And other true Shepherds such as he, please God."

The man nodded assent.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"I HAVE a feeling." said Jack the next morning, "that Davidsson has moved on again."

Donald looked up, and Jack, seeing the expression on his face, said :

"You never know, with him, when he may come again. When his desire prompts him, always then."

"Meanwhile," said Marian quietly, "he has work to do elsewhere."

"But it's only two evenings ago that he was here," said Donald. "He's been away for longer than that and returned."

"Jack usually knows," said Marian.

"The Lad, too, has gone," said Jack. "He hit the road this morning after an early breakfast. Helped himself and walked out."

"Oh, glorious!" It was Marian speaking. "Out into the great Unknown."

"Yes," said Jack, "in company with his Desire."

"Do you mean," said one of the party, "that he footed it, like a tramp?"

"Like a roadster; yes."

When the others had gone about their various ploys Jack turned to Marian and said: "The Lad is one of the Special Messengers who has remembered not to forget."

Marian nodded her head.

"The Game is going well," she said.

CHAPTER XXIX

MARIAN was alone in the garden. An old moss-covered tree trunk was her seat. Around her Nature, dew-covered and rejoicing in the morning sunshine, lay in quiet repose.

She fingered the tree-trunk lovingly. A wasp settled on her hand. She spoke to it of all the loveliness and sweetness around it, awaiting only its coming and enjoyment. The wasp remembered and flew away to fulfil itself.

Donald came along the winding path, and finding her there, seated himself on the ground nearby.

"This wild part of the garden is very beautiful," he said.

"Yes, and I love the wild things that dwell here," she replied. "Besides the birds; the insects, those busy creeping things, the flies, the bees, the wasps. There is a wasps' nest not very far off, but they won't bother us if we don't interfere with them; there are such much more interesting things than people to interest them."

"Don't like them," said Donald with a laugh, as one flew around his head.

"If you ask them not to interfere with you they won't," said Marian. "Everything responds, if you speak to it from the heart. It's the universal language—from the heart to the heart—all understand that.

"The universal abhorrence of being interfered with is in Nature as well as in man. An animal will attack first, because it senses and fears interference, in self-protection. It will sense fear, and knowing that that same fear of interference may cause the other to attack it, it strikes first.

"But the heart language it recognises and understands.

"Domination by fear will never have any lasting

power. For in the end all are bound to rise above fear and break free from it.

"You see, everything has its own realm of sufficiency. Nature is more aware of that than man at present. You don't find Nature trying to possess as mankind does. She only fights interference. Where she has forgotten her own sufficiency, however, she does in some cases attack others. But on the whole, if you observe, you will find that most of Nature's creatures go happily on fulfilling themselves without interfering.

"Bees don't interfere with each other, though several visit the same plant.

"I know there are some cases of preying on others, but that is because, like mankind, they have forgotten their self sufficiency. I am convinced that there is a sufficiency in all the world for everything without interfering with another.

"The person who can never be alone, who must be with and talk to someone all the time, has forgotten his or her own sufficiency, their great purpose, their possibilities. When they remember what lovely people they are, then others seek them out for their very peace and calm's sake, their joyous contentment, their consciousness of Self Full-fill-ment. If we speak to the heart of those creatures which have forgotten, not giving them orders; that is, interfering, but reminding them that they can find their sufficiency without interfering with us, they remember and go on their way rejoicing."

"Is that what Jack meant last night when the moth was fluttering round the lamp? He said: 'Remind it that there are lovely things out of doors awaiting it, and it will leave the lamp and go.' "

"Yes, that's right. But the moth was not interfering then with anyone; only it had forgotten its life's purpose for the moment; when it was reminded of all the flowers awaiting its ministration, it remembered and went to

Serve, by following its desire to drink the flowers' nectar."

She rose as she spoke and turned down the path to the house.

Donald following her, said: "You and Jack are extraordinary people. You never seem to be in a hurry; you seem to sit so reposefully as though there were never anything to do, and yet you get through the most amazing amount of work. I suppose, if the truth were known, you've already, at this early hour, made that jam of which you spoke last night?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I have—early this morning."

"There you are," said Donald. "And yet when a fellow comes along he finds you sitting quietly among the dew-wet things, as though there were no work in the world to be done. Jack's the same, and, of course, Davidsson——"

"Yes. But work, as you know the word, means to you effort, strain—something that must be done. Duty, in fact! Whereas, if you just followed your inclination, you'd get through all sorts of 'work,' as you call it, with no effort at all; and do it far better, because it would be done at the right time. Then, too, you wouldn't ever miss opportunities, you'd always be in the right place at the right moment."

"It's always the same," she continued, turning to him with a smile. "Desire—follow your desire all the way. Always your own, never anyone else's, otherwise you get side-tracked. And, you know, duty is only another name for what someone else thinks you should do. If you want to do it, it becomes desire—not duty—at once. If it isn't your desire it's wrong to do it. Wrong to one's Soul, for one is missing another job of work."

They walked on in silence till they reached the house. Sun filled the rooms as they stepped in.

"What is so beautiful about this old house," said Donald, "is the way that, if you stand in one doorway,

you can always see the light from out of doors streaming in through another doorway."

"Yes," said Marian: "it has many exits to God's Great Out of Doors. We, too, love that."

And, Donald thought to himself, how like the old house was to Marian and Jack themselves.

They opened doors and showed you the sunshine flooding in, and then they themselves walked through them and left you to please yourself. Having shown you the doorway to the Light in your Soul, they passed on on their way, to other work—to the fulfilling of their further desires.

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