



"That is kind of you. I am Isobel." We stood leaning against the rock in silence. Calm as she was, there seemed to be undercurrents of sadness which I could not at first define. I was about to search beneath the surface of her mind, but decided to draw back and wait. Different people demanded varied treatment and Isobel, I thought, would prefer to tell me her own story.

"Tell me about yourself," she said at last.

"Well, I have been here quite a while—or a very short time; I do not know which. Time has no measure here!"

"Is that an advantage?"

"Yes. I think it is. You see, there is no sense of hurry and strain, no tearing of oneself away from a joy because an hour strikes. Then, with friends, one can have endless time with them, if one will, going deeply into absorbing subjects that could only be touched upon on earth."

"Are you happy here?" She was leaning her cheek against the rock and did not look at me.

"So happy that I did not know such happiness existed!"

"You have all you desire?"

"All. And far more than I deserve."

"Ah," she murmured, "how much do any of us *deserve?*"

"Very little, but does not the beauty of this place speak to us of the generosity of the Father?"

"Does it?" she whispered.

"Isobel!" I chided. "You cannot doubt the Father's Love!"

"No, no," she agreed hurriedly, "only it is hard, at first. All your life to want a thing, and then at the end to have something else."

"When you have seen the Lord," I said in a hushed voice (for I felt that she was not far from Him), "you will meet the love-light in His eyes, and then you will understand that you have loved Him all the time."

"Oh, but I love Him *now*," she cried passionately, turning towards me so that I saw the tears on her cheeks. I put my arm around her.

"I am just being silly, I expect—wanting an impossibility."

"Well," I smiled, "are you sure it is an impossibility? A friend of mine told me once that if people form a picture first of what they think a place will be like, it is very hard to get at the truth. You see, they go on looking at their mental picture instead of observing what they see before them."

"Yes, I see what you mean, but in this case—"

"Suppose you let me see 'this case' too!"

"All right. When I was very small—I can only just remember—"

I used to live with my grandfather on his farm. Oh, it was glorious! I was allowed to run about among the animals just as I liked, so I practically grew up with horses, pigs, cats, chickens—you know what it is like on farms!"

"Yes."

"Then my grandfather died. Of course I did not know what had happened then, but my mother came for me—she was an actress—and took me on tour. After that, it was all travelling, stuffy lodging-house rooms and the noise of the stage. No more country life for me. My mother trained me as a dancer, so I lived like that." She stopped, and I murmured, "It must have been very hard, Isobel."

"It was. But something always kept me happy, always kept me looking forward, thinking it was worth while. It was the hope of living on a farm again! Sometimes I would sit dreaming of it between my turns, thinking that if I worked hard and saved, one day I could buy a holding, work it myself, and surround myself with animals. Oh, I used to pray so much about it!"

"Did you?"

"Yes. I used to tell the dear Lord that I did want to live a good life—a good, clean life that would please Him, and in return I asked if I could have *my* life, in the end. I did not mind waiting. I had just begun to save, and then—it all came so suddenly—and I was here. Yes, Bernard—," as I would have spoken—"I know He is Love. No doubt He has a wonderful Heaven here. It was just—the animals. I did love them so!"

"So you had your preconceived picture after all," I smiled.

"Yes, but you don't mean—," She broke off, hope lighting up her eyes.

"You are coming along with me," I said firmly, linking her arm in mine. "Oh, Isobel," as we started on our way, "how could you think that He would take our dearest dreams, if they were good ones, and give us only ashes in return!"

"It did seem hard," she confessed, "seeing all those rolling plains and valleys, and thinking there were no animals here. You mean that there *are* animals, I suppose?"

"You shall see," I chuckled.

"I do believe you are enjoying this!" And then I became serious again saying gravely, "It is a great joy, to unveil the Father's Love to men, even though one knows so little oneself."

"Do you know only a little?"

"Yes; but as we rise higher towards the Light, so veil after veil falls from the face of the Father's Love."

"It must be very wonderful. Shall I wear a robe the same colour as yours one day?"

"I do like people to explain things to me, and much prefer it to reaching out for information for myself. It is a legacy from earth, I expect."

"Well, theirs is a legacy from earth."

"How do you mean?"

"People who have always thought of Heaven as a place where they can rest, would not be happy if they were taken at once to one of the other Halls. Of course, as soon as they shed their physical bodies they shed their weariness also, but nevertheless the memory of it remains. They feel it would be perfect bliss to sink down into a long sleep, so—as Heaven is fulfilment—this is given them first of all."

"I love that expression, 'Heaven is fulfilment'." We journeyed for a while in silence, and then I asked, "Is the sleep in the Hall similar to earth sleep?" Janet considered a moment.

"No, it is more than that. Here, there is nothing to distract, for here all of the person sleeps."

"Does not all the person sleep on earth?"

"Now Bernard, you must know the answer to that!"

"I suppose I do," I confessed after reflection. "You mean that on earth a man's body sleeps while his spirit goes out to the Plane Between, and is busy there."

"Yes. On earth, each time of sleep is like a miniature death. During his sleep-time a man learns his way about the Plane Between, learns to travel through the void. Sleep is a merciful plan of the Father's for it makes men familiar with death although they are not conscious of it. If it were not for sleep, the ordeal of death would be scarcely endurable."

"Now it is just like a familiar friend," I finished.

When we reached the Hall I was immediately struck by the subdued light. It was like a summer twilight, and into the air stole a profusion of flower-scents, now one, now another, coming to caress the nostrils and make glad the heart. Silently reaching out for the information (for here, as little talking is done as possible and that only in a low tone, that those who sleep may not be disturbed) I knew that the "twilight" was always here. How soothing to tired senses, I reflected, and how familiar to those who fall asleep in their beds on earth and awake—here.

As soon as I began to walk, the extraordinary nature of the ground drew my attention. It was soft and springy, yet amazingly light to walk upon. Indeed, although it was possible to press the hand down so that the wrist, too, was covered, every step was aided as though taken from a springboard. I saw at once the double advantage of this for not only could weary ones find walking easy, but they could lie down anywhere and discover a couch with a natural spring.

In the subdued light, we saw many sleeping forms. I was particularly struck with the relaxed position of their bodies—quite unlike the sometimes rigid attitudes of adults in sleep on earth. Here, they resembled young children or animals. They might have been dragonflies drifting on a leaf down a lazily-flowing stream. Some had a smile just curving the lips as though in enjoyment of a happy dream.

"These are the ones who will soon awake," Janet told my mind, "for here the sleep is dreamless."

"Yes. They do not have to both rest and learn in Heaven's sleep."

"So much more is taught in sleep on earth than people realise," Janet continued to think into my mind as we walked on. "When awake, men often reject wisdom. They like to have a reason for everything, to grasp things with the intellect on which they pride themselves. Some things can never be seen clearly on earth, but only with the extended Heaven-sight. There, they must accept things on trust at times. That is why, when man's intellect is sleeping, wisdom often comes."

"How does that text go?" I thought back. "*That should tell man why he is sometimes wiser for 'sleeping on' a problem! 'God speaketh once . . . by a dream, in a vision by night, when deep sleep falleth upon men and they are sleeping in their beds. Then He openeth the ears of men, and teaching, instructeth them . . .'*"

Close beside us, as we walked, there was a movement, and instantly Janet stopped to kneel down beside the awakening one. It was a man. He was stretching like a sleepy kitten.

"Stay with him," Janet instructed me, "until I bring some fruit. We never let them awake in loneliness—we must welcome our visitors."

She travelled with incredible swiftness, her step more like a flight than a walk, and with all her speed there was not a sound. I turned my attention to the sleeper. He had finished stretching and his glance was casting lazily about. At last it rested on me. We smiled.

"Not morning yet?"

"It is always like this here," I explained.

"What, always drawn curtains? How odd! Though I must say it is very restful." I saw that he did not realise where he was, so remained silent beside him. After a while he said musingly, "Strange I feel so well. When I went to bed last night I *was* ill. In fact, I was not sure I would wake again on earth. Thought I might just snuff out in my sleep, you know."

"You did," I said quietly.

"I did—what?" Then he began to stare at me, at first startled, then slowly returning my smile. We did not say a word for a time after that. I just sat smiling casually, as though it was the most