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AMONG THE TRAIL



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Along The Trail

**In which Marjorie finds that ~~EVERYONE~~ does
not hurry past the rough places on
the trail,—and why.**



Along The Trail

In which Marjorie finds that **EVERYONE** does
not hurry past the rough places on
the rail,—and why.

By

KATHERINE M. YATES

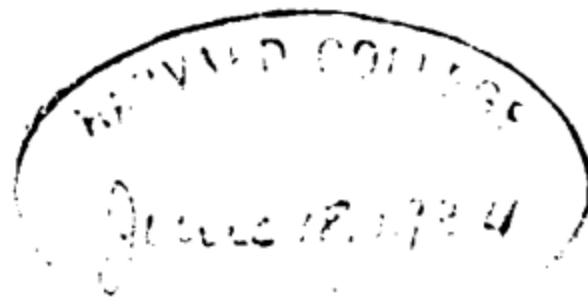
AUTHOR OF

**AT THE DOOR,
WHAT THE PINE TREE HEARD,
ON THE WAY THERE,
CHET, ETC.**



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ALONG THE TRAIL

“DON’T you think that you are making a great deal of fuss?” asked the little brown Dream.

Marjorie started and caught her breath sharply and then exclaimed,—“Oh *dear*, but I was frightened! I’m so glad you waked me up! Why, I’m all of a tremble yet and my heart is pounding like anything.”

“What was the matter?” asked the Dream, perching himself as usual, cross-legged on the foot-board and grinning broadly.

“Why, it was chasing me!” cried Marjorie, “and it almost caught me!—but there, you know all about it and you don’t care in the least,—you just keep on grinning!”

“Well, why don’t you grin too?” asked the Dream.

“Because there’s nothing to grin about,—and I’m still too frightened, anyway. I was perfectly sure that it would catch me, and I ran—and ran—”

“But what was it?” asked the Dream.

“Why, it was a—a—” Marjorie hesitated. “Well,” she said at last, “I suppose it was sort of funny, after all; but it didn’t seem so the least bit, before I waked up.”

“But what *was* it?” persisted the Dream.

“Well, it was a—a tea-cup.”

“A *tea-cup*?”

“Yes, you know it was;—but it seemed different then, and I was dreadfully frightened.”

“And it was chasing you? Was it a big tea-cup?”

“No, just the ordinary size.”

“What was in it?”

“Nothing. I could see the bottom of it.”

“But how was it chasing you? Did it have arms and legs and a face?”

“No-o,” said Marjorie, “I told you that was just an ordinary tea-cup, a white, thick one without any handle, like the ones they use in restaurants.”

“And what did you think that the tea-cup was going to do to you if it caught you?”

“I don’t know. I wasn’t thinking—I was just running.”

“There are lots of people in this world who are not thinking—just running.”

Marjorie nodded soberly.

“And lots of them are running from things no more dangerous than a ferocious tea-cup.”

“But I was asleep,” said Marjorie.

“And there are ever so many other people asleep,” said the Dream;—“and being chased by tea-cups—and feather-dusters—and baked apples and all sorts of things like that. I can tell you it keeps them running! Why, I’ve known a man to run a mile from a mustard

plaster—and then get down and cuddle close to it as soon as it caught him.”

“I don’t blame him for running from that,” said Marjorie;—“I’d run faster than from a tea-cup.”

“Neither do I,” said the Dream;—“but the funny thing was to see him cuddle right down beside it and sizzle, when it would have been so much easier to just wake up.”

“Waking up isn’t always so very easy,” said Marjorie decidedly.

“It is if people don’t go to sleep with cotton in their ears.”

“Do some people sleep with cotton in their ears?” Marjorie looked doubtful.

“Surely,—prejudice cotton. If they would make use of some real wide-awake moment in which to put it under a fair, clean mental microscope, they wouldn’t use it any more;—it’s all full of live, crawling mistakes,—ugh!”

“But don’t those harm their ears?”

“They certainly do. Sometimes they eat clear into their brains and make holes

and nests there, and then it's desperately hard to get them out,—it takes a vacuum cleaner to do it.”

“That makes me think!” exclaimed Marjorie: “I once knew a perfectly darling old lady who had a little wee pillow—only about six inches square—that she kept to put *over* her head because the robins wakened her too early in the morning.”

The Dream nodded. “Plenty of people shut out the bird songs with one or another sort of prejudice and — — Pretty view, isn't it?” he added, waving his hand carelessly.

Marjorie raised her head. “Oh!” she exclaimed, gasping, “I never, never saw anything so wonderful! Look at the purple sea—real pansy purple—and the long lines of white surf, and—oh, did you see that wave break, 'way down there on those rocks? Did you see how high it went? Let's watch them. I'm afraid the next one won't come so high, though.”

“*Afraid* it won't?” said the Dream.

“Yes,” said Marjorie, “There are not often two such big ones together. I’m afraid there won’t be any more like that.”

“And suppose there are not?”

“Oh, of course it doesn’t make any difference;—only I love to see the big ones. I’m afraid you’re not very fond of scenery.”

“Would it be a serious matter to you if I were not?”

“No-o, of course not; only I think that you would miss a great deal of pleasure. Oh, look at that dear little burro coming up the trail! Isn’t he funny! Oh, I do hope that he will come as far as this; but I’m afraid he won’t—I’m afraid he will turn off at the branch down there. No, he’s coming on, after all. I was dreadfully afraid that he wouldn’t.”

The Dream sniffed. “I don’t wonder that you run away from tea-cups,” he said.

“Why?” exclaimed Marjorie in surprise. “What has that to do with the burro?”

“Nothing whatever. It has to do only with your being a coward.”

“Me? A coward?” gasped Marjorie. “Why, no one ever called me that before in all my life.”

“It must have been because they were too polite, then,” remarked the Dream.

“Well, you’re not, anyway,” snapped Marjorie. “But what made you say it?—what made you think it?”

“Out of your own mouth you are condemned,” said the Dream. “That is all I was judging by.”

“What do you mean?” asked Marjorie, forgetting all about the burro in her indignant surprise.

“Merely that within the last five minutes you have acknowledged yourself to be afraid of five absolutely harmless and insignificant things.”

Marjorie looked puzzled.

“You said that you were *afraid* that the next wave would not break so high, —*afraid* there would not be any more like the first,—*afraid* I was not fond of

scenery,—*afraid* the burro would not come so far as this,—*afraid* he would turn off at the branch trail,—that is five, isn't it?"

Marjorie hesitated. "Why," she began, "of course I didn't really mean that I was afraid;—for none of those things really mattered in the least. I just meant — —"

"I only know what you *said*," interrupted the Dream. "You *said* that you were afraid."

"But you don't understand!" exclaimed Marjorie. "I'm afraid—that is—I *suppose* that I use the word wrongly, but— —"

"I suppose you do," said the Dream. "It would be a mighty good word to cut out of your dictionary. It has no place anywhere that some other word would not fill a thousand times better. Don't you think so yourself?"

"Yes, I guess you are right," said Marjorie thoughtfully; "but I'm afraid

—that is—I don't believe,—well,—maybe I could if I tried.”

“Good!” said the Dream. “That is a very pretty example of substitution. In place of ‘I'm afraid I can't,’ you put ‘Maybe I could if I tried.’ Now suppose you leave off the ‘maybe,’—the ‘I could if I tried’ sounds fairly well, doesn't it? Then, as there is no excuse for not trying, the ‘if I tried’ can be cut out;—and that leaves just ‘I could,’ which is equal to ‘I can.’ What do you think of that for an example in the cancelling of ‘no account’ factors? Isn't that pretty good arithmetic?”

Marjorie nodded her head. “It's all right—fine. That word ‘afraid’ is just the label of a coward, isn't it;—and a label like that must make some sort of an impression on a person—even if it doesn't really ‘belong’ at first—if he keeps on branding everything he says, with it. It must get tattooed onto his character after a while.”

“It surely does. It is a bad combina-

tion of letters, and if I were you, I would go to work and scatter them so that they will never get together in the same shape again. Now just turn around and take a look at these mountains.”

Marjorie turned, and then started forward, her eyes shining. “Oh, aren’t they beautiful—beautiful!—and we are almost among them, even though the sea is so near. If we follow this trail along the spur, it will lead us right up into them;—and oh, did you ever see such ferns?—they are taller than I am;—and look at the vines dropping down from the trees and twisting all about;—and this wonderful, wonderful moss. I didn’t know the world *could* be so beautiful.”

“Yes, it is beautiful,” said the Dream; “and it is just as beautiful if you look back down the valley. The whole world is beautiful if you only get up high enough to look at it.”

Marjorie gazed back at the broad valley with its soft green slopes and glittering waterfalls and the long tree

shadows across the grass, and the curving grey roads, and the slender trail winding up the mountain, and then gave herself a little tight hug. "Oh, I'm so glad I'm here!" she said.

Presently along the trail came a group of children, talking quietly among themselves. Marjorie watched them as they approached; but they passed by without noticing her, and seated themselves upon a little knoll a few yards up the trail.

"They don't seem to be having much fun, do they?" said Marjorie, looking at them curiously.

"No," said the Dream, "They are slaves, and slaves can't expect to have much fun."

"Slaves!" exclaimed Marjorie. "Why, I didn't know that there were slaves here."

"There are no more here than elsewhere," said the Dream.

"But," said Marjorie, "I didn't know that there were slaves anywhere in these days. I never saw any before."

“You mean that you never *noticed* any;—but you have *seen* plenty of them.”

“But who is the master of these?—who are they slaves to?—and how did he get them?”

“Go and talk to them,” said the Dream.

Marjorie hesitated. “I’m afraid—that is—well, all right, I will,—I guess they won’t mind,” and she walked toward the children, who seemed to be rearranging some of their belongings, in a rather glum fashion. One little girl had a number of very much soiled horse-shoes which she was trying to tie up in her handkerchief, so that she could carry them more easily, and Marjorie stopped to help her. “Why are you taking these with you?” she asked, when they had finished. “They must be very heavy. What are you going to do with them?”

“Oh, I have to carry them,” said the little girl. “She says She will give me something if I do;—but they are awfully

heavy, and my arms are nearly pulled out of their sockets.”

“But who is She?—and what will She give you?”

“Why, you know who *She* is!” said the little girl; “But I am not sure what She will give me this time.”

“Do you take them to her?”

“Oh, no, I just carry them, and She says She will give me something.”

“Have you carried any before?”

“Oh, yes, lots of times.”

“And what did She give you then?”

“Why—why—” said the little girl, “— I don’t remember that She gave me anything;—but everyone said that She would, and maybe She will sometime.”

“And you don’t know what it will be?”

“No,—but it will be something,—everybody says so.”

“Did you ever see anything that She gave to anyone who carried them?”

“No-o,” said the little girl, “—not exactly;—but you see that ever so many

of us have them,—and we take all that we can find.”

Marjorie glanced around, and sure enough, quite a number of the children had bundles of the horse-shoes, or heavy strings of them around their necks;—and just then she noticed a little girl near her who was taking off her shoes and stockings. Marjorie thought that she was going to try the trail barefooted; but instead, as soon as she had gotten them off, she immediately put them back on again. Marjorie watched her in surprise. “Why did you do that?” she asked.

“Well,” said the little girl, “I’ll tell you;—I was in a great hurry this morning, and I forgot and put on my right shoe and stocking before the left, and this is the first time that I have had a chance to change them.”

“But what difference did it make?” asked Marjorie.

“Why,” exclaimed the little girl, “don’t you know? She doesn’t allow you to

put them on that way—She will punish you if you do. You must always be very careful about that.”

“But who is She?” asked Marjorie, “—and did She ever punish you?”

“Why, you know who *She* is,” said the little girl. “No, She never punished me;—but everyone says that She will.”

“Are you her slave—whoever She is?” asked Marjorie.

“Why, no!” exclaimed the little girl angrily, “Of course I’m not! I am no one’s slave.”

“Then what right has She to punish you?” asked Marjorie.

“You don’t seem to understand anything,” said the little girl, getting up and walking away.

Marjorie looked after her in surprise,—and just then she noticed another little girl who was trying to pin up a long rent in her frock. Marjorie reached into her pocket for her small house-wife. “Wait a minute,” she said, “I have a needle

and thread here, and I will sew that up for you quicker than you can pin it.”

“Oh, no, no!” cried the little girl, drawing away and crumpling the tear up in her hand.

“But why?” exclaimed Marjorie. “I’ll be so glad to, and the pins will drop out before you have gone ten steps.”

“I can’t help it if they do,” said the little girl. “I can’t have it sewed while I have it on,—She doesn’t allow it,—She would punish me.”

“But *why?*” exclaimed Marjorie.

“Well, just because She doesn’t allow it,—and oh, dear, I haven’t pins enough, either. Won’t you ask that girl over there for some of hers?”

Marjorie noticed then that the most of the children had rows of bent and crooked pins stuck across the front of their dresses or blouses, and she approached the one the other girl had mentioned. “Please will you give me a few pins for your friend over there?” she asked.

“Oh, no, no!” exclaimed the little

girl, clasping her hands over the scraggily row of pins. "I found all of these, and She doesn't allow us to give them away, —we have to pick them all up and keep them. She will give us something if we do, —and She will punish us like anything if we don't. That's what everybody says. That girl ought to know better than to ask for them."

Marjorie stood and looked at her wonderingly. "I wish you'd tell me who She is," she said.

"Why, you know,—everybody knows," and the girl walked away, up the trail, with her head in the air. As Marjorie turned to go, she noticed a handkerchief lying on the log where the girl had been sitting; but before she could pick it up to restore it, the girl came rushing back, sat down on the log, threw her head back and laughed an unnatural "ha-ha-ha," without a sign of a smile on her face, and then picked up the handkerchief and started away.

Marjorie's astonishment was too great

to be repressed. "Oh, please wait," she cried. "Won't you tell me why you did that?"

The girl stopped and looked her over as if her ignorance were appalling. "Why, where have you been all your life?" she exclaimed crossly. "You ought to know that whenever you have to go back after anything, you must sit down and laugh, or She will punish you."

"But is She your mistress?" asked Marjorie.

"My mistress? Most certainly not!" exclaimed the girl. "I am my own mistress. I don't understand what you mean by saying a thing like that," and she walked angrily away.

Just then the girl with a torn dress called to Marjorie to know if she had gotten the pins, and Marjorie approached some of the other children to ask for them; but they all drew away from her as the first one had done. "No, no," they said, "we can't,—She would punish us, —everybody says so."

“I can’t get them for you,” said Marjorie, returning to the little girl. “They are all afraid that their owner will punish them.”

“Their *owner!*” cried the little girl; “Why, the idea!” and she got up and flounced off, holding the torn skirt in her hand.

Marjorie walked on, deeply puzzled; and as she passed one of the boys, he rose up and joined her. “Such a time as I’m in for!” he said, gloomily. “My left ear has been burning all the morning, and She will punish me for that; and last night I dreamed that one of my teeth dropped out, and She will punish me for that; and now I’ve forgotten and cut my nails on Friday. I surely am in for it good and plenty this time!”

“Does She punish you for things like that?” asked Marjorie.

“Why, of course,” said the boy.

“Does She punish severely?”

“Well, I don’t exactly know,” said the boy.

“Didn’t you ever do any of those things before?”

“Oh, yes, lots of times.”

“And didn’t She punish you?”

“No.”

“Then what makes you think that She will now?”

“Why, everybody *says* She will,” exclaimed the boy, half impatiently; “and—oh, wait a minute—your dress is caught on that briar. There, it is going to tear—hold on until I get out my knife and cut the branch so that we can loosen it more easily.”

Marjorie stood still while the boy cut through the wood, and then, together they loosened the thorns, one by one. “How kind you are!” she said, when it was finished,—“and oh, what a pretty knife!”

“Yes,” said the boy, looking down at the bright pearl handle;—“I’ve had that knife for two years and never lost it

once, and—” then suddenly he stopped and caught his breath and, running across the trail, he began pounding on the trunk of a tree beside the way.

Marjorie watched him in utter astonishment. “Now, why in the world did you do that?” she exclaimed, as he came back and started to take up the conversation where he had left off.

“Oh, one has to,” explained the boy. “She will punish you if you say a thing like that and don’t knock on wood immediately after. She would take my knife away from me.”

“But what difference does knocking on wood make?—and why does She have such perfectly ridiculous rules?”

The boy shook his head. “I don’t know,” he said;—“only everybody says that we have to do things her way or be punished.”

“But you never really are punished?”

“No,” said the boy.

“Nor rewarded?”

“No.”

“Then what’s the use?”

The boy said nothing.

“Who is She, anyway?”

The boy was silent.

“Is She your owner?”

“Certainly *not!*” said the boy.

“Do you work for her?”

“No.”

“Is She the queen?”

“No.”

“Then what right has She to make laws?”

The boy was silent.

“Did you ever see her?”

“No.”

“Or anyone who ever did see her?”

“No.”

“Then who in the name of common sense is She?”

The boy laughed rather foolishly. “Well,” he said, “if you ask who in the name of *common sense* She is, it sort of annihilates her;—because She doesn’t belong to that family.”

“Please tell me what her name is,” said Marjorie.

The boy stood still for a moment, biting his lips, and then he said slowly;—“Do you want her real name—or her pet name?”

“A pet name!” exclaimed Marjorie, “for a person who rules people like an idiotic tyrant! Tell me both names.”

“Well, her pet name is Luck;—but her real name is—”

“What?” asked Marjorie, eagerly.

“Superstition,” said the boy.

“O-o-oh!” said Marjorie. “Why, I know quite a lot about her. And you all let an idea like that rule you?”

The boy nodded. “Some of them say that they do it just for fun, that they are not really afraid;—but those are the very ones who carry a chunk of wood around in their pockets so as to have it handy, and who would suddenly remember an engagement if they started to sit down at a table where there were twelve already.”

“But,” cried Marjorie, “don’t you really, really in your own heart, know that there isn’t any such person?—that she’s nothing—*nothing*—NOTHING,—and that she *can’t* rule you—and she can’t punish you—and she can’t reward you,—that she can’t even exist, herself;—that she isn’t anything—not anything nor anywhere!”

The boy nodded slowly. “Yes,” he said, “down in my heart and up in my common sense I know all that,—and so do all of us;—but we’ve gotten into a habit of bowing down to the make-believe whims of a make-believe slave driver, and we kow-tow to her all the time, and whenever Common Sense tries to shame us out of it, we jump on him in a body and throttle him,—and then do some more kow-towing.”

“Why don’t you get to work and organize a strike, or a boycott or something?” said Marjorie.

“I really have a notion to,” said the boy. “I never thought much about it

before. How would I better start?—by advising them all to dare her to do her worst, and prove that no harm comes?”

“Oh, no, no!” exclaimed Marjorie. “That wouldn’t be the way at all;—that would make her seem real and big and something worth daring;—and what you want is to prove that she isn’t anything—and doesn’t live anywhere—and hasn’t any power to be dared—and that she is just nothing,—nothing but an emptiness without any outside.”

“Good!” said the boy. “I like that last;—but how shall I begin?”

Marjorie thought for a minute. “Well,” she said, after a while, “an emptiness never teaches anything, so we’ll have to put someone real into the place you’ve been giving to her;—someone real who makes real rules, and I think the best person would be Understanding—or else Common Sense,—or both of them would be better yet.

Don't you think they ought to make good rulers?"

"Fine," said the boy.

"Well then, suppose that you begin by trying to substitute their rules for the sham rules of Superstition."

"Good," said the boy again. "I'll just laugh at them all when they bow down to Superstition, and tell them—"

"Oh, no!" said Marjorie, "I wouldn't. I wouldn't laugh at them or criticise them; for that only makes people angry and stubborn. I would just begin by obeying the other rulers *my own self*;—and then, when other folks notice and begin to ask questions, I would tell them why and try to make them see that Understanding and Common Sense make pretty good chums, and are very good company to have about;—but I wouldn't round them up and try to teach them—I would just *live* it—and let them see."

"You are right," said the boy. "That is much the wisest way. I am going to begin at once. Thank you so very

much," and he started on, to join the others.

"Wait just a moment," said Marjorie. "There is one more thought that might help some. That emptiness called Superstition, is supposed to have a bigger emptiness ruling her, and that is Fear;—so just give Understanding and Common Sense a chance to fill *all* vacancies—and you will like yourself and the world a lot better."

The boy gripped her hand for an instant, and then ran along to catch up with the other children, his eyes bright and his face eager and purposeful.

When he was gone, Marjorie stood still for a few moments, looking about over the beautiful country, her hands clasped tightly and her eyes big with the joy of it. Presently the Dream hopped down from a boulder where he had been sitting cross-legged, braiding some strands of grass. "Where did you get all of that?" he asked, curiously.

"All of what?" asked Marjorie.

“All of that wisdom,” answered the Dream.

Marjorie puckered her brows. “I don’t exactly know,” she said. “It was just there when I wanted it, that was all. I suppose that when we really try to chum with Understanding and Common Sense, they give us what we need when the time comes to use it or pass it on;—but sometimes it is awfully hard to live up to their standards so that they will stay with us.”

The two walked along the trail for some time in silence, Marjorie thinking very deeply;—at last she said:—“I’d hate to be a slave.”

“Yes,” said the Dream, “it would be uncomfortable.”

“I can’t see how anyone—” but just at that moment her foot slipped on a mossy rock and down she went, hitting her knee on the rock and sinking her elbow deep into the mud. “There!” she exclaimed, “I might have known what would happen if I wore these

shoes—I slipped once before when I had them on!” and she got up and began trying to wipe off the mud.

“Is there anything the matter with the shoes?” asked the Dream.

“No,” said Marjorie, “only I slipped when I had them on before, and when you do a thing once, you are so likely to do it again under the same circumstances,—you always have to keep it in mind.”

“But you weren’t stepping naturally,” said the Dream,—“You were going as if you were walking on eggs.”

“Yes,” said Marjorie, “that is because I turned my ankle once when I was crossing a mossy rock, and I don’t dare to use it quite freely at such times, for fear that it will happen again,” and she began to feel carefully of her knee to find if it hurt much.

“Why don’t you wait until your knee mentions it, before you go to feeling for trouble?” asked the Dream.

“Because I hurt it one time, by falling in almost the same way, and I want to

see if it feels as it did that time. It was sore for ever so long after that.”

The Dream said nothing for a moment, and then,—“I don’t see why you fell, anyway—you could have caught that branch when you slipped.”

“Yes,” said Marjorie; “but one time when I tried to save myself that way, I strained my arm,—and I don’t want to do it again.”

“You have to be pretty careful, don’t you?” said the Dream.

“Yes,” said Marjorie, rather proudly. “My mother had a wen on the side of her head, that she got from a bump, so I have to be very careful not to hit my head;—and my grandmother had something inside of her twisted by going down hill sidewise, or uphill,—I don’t remember which it was, so I have to be careful about that; and a girl I knew had to carry her arm in a sling for a long time just from—” Marjorie stopped.

“What is the matter?” asked the Dream.

Marjorie was standing still and looking rather frightened. "What is the matter?" asked the Dream again.

"Why," said Marjorie, "when I started to walk along, I—why—it feels as if I had ropes or something binding me."

"I don't see any," said the Dream.

"I don't see any, either," said Marjorie; "but I feel them. There is one on my right ankle, and one on my left knee, and one on each arm, and one around my waist, and something that doesn't feel right on my head. What can it mean?"

"Can't you walk at all?" asked the Dream.

"Yes, a little," and Marjorie took several rather clumsy steps; "but I have not a bit of freedom,—it scarcely lets my muscles work at all. I don't understand it."

"I thought that you had Understanding and Common Sense for chums," said the Dream.

"Why, of course I have," said Mar-

jorie; "so I surely ought to be able to find out what this is;—oh, I don't have to ask them, I see now, it is Sequence that has tied me up this way! That is rather interesting, isn't it? Because I turned my ankle once, I am afraid of turning it again, and that binds it;—and because Grandmother got twisted, I expect to do it myself if I set my foot sidewise in going up or down a steep hill;—oh, yes, I understand," and Marjorie started to move slowly along.

The Dream walked beside her for some distance. "Well, what are you going to do about it?" he said at last; "You don't seem to be getting on very rapidly."

Marjorie looked surprised. "Why, I don't know what I *can* do," she said. "These bands won't let me move any better than this."

"That is too bad," said the Dream;—but his voice sounded dry and unsympathetic.

A moment later a boy caught up with them and nodded pleasantly to Mar-

jorie. "The trail is beautiful just here, isn't it?" he said.

"It is the most beautiful place that I ever saw," said Marjorie.

The boy slowed his pace and walked beside her, and Marjorie saw that his face was strong and kind, and his eyes full of laughter; but his lips were very firm;—and for a little way she forgot the bonds, and they walked on, talking of the beautiful country;—but presently, when they came to a steep place in the trail, Marjorie hesitated. The boy held out his hand;—"See," he said, "You can step there—and there—"

"But I can't," said Marjorie.

The boy looked surprised. "Why that isn't hard," he said.

"But," said Marjorie, "I am wearing a lot of bonds—I have no freedom of movement—I couldn't do that way at all,—and I couldn't reach my arm the way you said."

"That is too bad," said the boy; but he said it more kindly than the Dream;

—and then he found her an easier way up, and they walked on again, and Marjorie told him all about her bonds, and how she came by them; and later, about the children that she had seen and the way that the other boy was to help them.

The boy listened interestedly, but with a puzzled look in his eyes. Presently he said:—“I’d like to ask you a question, if you are willing. Is this Sequence, which you speak of as having bound you this way—is it actually any more real than Superstition?—and doesn’t it seem to be governed by Fear, in just the same way?”

Marjorie hesitated. “You don’t understand,” she said. “You see, my Grandmother was walking down hill;—it was ever and ever so long ago, when she was quite a young girl—she told Mother about it, and Mother told me;—well, she was walking down hill—or else it was up hill, I don’t remember which—and it was very steep and—”

“But,” said the boy, “you told me all that before, and what I want to know is whether Sequence is not just as much of an emptiness as Superstition is.”

“Why, yes, I suppose it is,” said Marjorie, hurriedly and almost impatiently;—“but please wait a moment while I explain more fully how I got that band on my waist, for you don’t seem to understand. As I said, my grandmother was going down hill—”

“But see here,” said the boy, “What in the world is the use of spending time explaining all that, when you admit that it was put there by nothing and is nothing? Why don’t you just take it off—or rather, *know* it off?”

Marjorie stamped her foot with irritation. “You don’t understand!” she cried,—“and you won’t let me tell you!”

“Well, why *should* I understand?” asked the boy; “if it isn’t real—nor good—nor worth while—nor even existing?”

Marjorie was almost crying. “Oh,

dear," she moaned, "You haven't a bit of feeling. You never had anything of the kind yourself, and so you have no sympathy at all."

"Yes, I have," said the boy, touching her hand softly;—"I have been through it all—and suffered through it all, just as you are doing;—but I found out just what you, yourself, know; that it isn't anything;—and I want you to prove it by knowing that you are free and that there are no bonds;—that is all there is to do."

But Marjorie only shook her head;—"You don't understand," she said, "and you won't let me explain."

Again they came to a steep place, and again the boy stopped and helped her, showing her the easiest foot-holds and being careful to give his help so that the cords would not cut her flesh; but he said no more about her trouble, only accommodated his step to hers and talked to her cheerily of the things they passed;—and when the bonds bruised her in

spite of all that he could do, he comforted her and patted her shoulder gently and said:—"Never mind, it will be all right in a little while,—don't worry," and Marjorie almost forgot her fetters and the roughness of the way, and the choke in her throat,—and became quite happy again.

By and by the trail led out upon the very top ridge of the spur, and they looked down into a deep gorge on the other side, the banks upgrown with trees and tall ferns and a wild, dense undergrowth, and far below they could hear a stream rushing and roaring.

"Now," said the boy, "we have to go to the bottom of this gorge and out of the mouth of it, to get back to the level country again. I came here to see about a bit of land just below where we are now; so we will find the trail and go down, and then work our way out along the stream."

Marjorie looked down the steep, tan-

gled mountain-side. "Where is the trail?" she asked.

"I am not quite sure," said the boy; "but I can easily locate it,—I know that it is very near here."

Marjorie hesitated for a moment. "Isn't there any other way?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," said the boy, "there is a way along the top of the ridge, and then down the long slope over there. It is easier than this—though it is pretty hard even then;—but if you go this way, I can help you, and it will be rather hard for you to go that way alone;—and besides, I like your company."

Marjorie still hesitated. "Well, I guess I'll come," she said, finally. "It looks pretty steep; but I'm sure that you won't let anything happen;—and oh, see! How I wish that I could gather some of that beautiful fruit for the people in the valley," and she pointed to a tree laden with bright crimson mountain-apples.

"Why don't you?" said the boy.

Marjorie shook her head sadly. "My bonds!" she said. "I couldn't carry them. I can't do anything. I can't work—I can't help anyone—I am utterly useless."

"Nonsense!" said the boy. "Come, I'll help you gather some."

But Marjorie shook her head. "No, it's no use," she said. "I can't—I feel all limp and lax because my muscles aren't getting any exercise. I'll have to wait until I get rid of these bonds."

"Then why—" the boy stopped and compressed his lips. "Let us look for the trail," he said, holding out his hand to her;—and slowly they started down from the ridge.

"It is dreadfully, dreadfully steep," said Marjorie, presently.

"It will be all right as soon as we find the trail," said the boy; "—and it must be around here somewhere."

"But the trail must be very steep, to get way down there," said Marjorie,

holding onto a branch and peering forward.

“No,” said the boy, “not so very. Trails always tack when there are steep places. It is just that way with troubles—they don’t drop off like a precipice—they tack down safely, if you only find the trail.”

For a few minutes longer they struggled through the tangled vines and ferns on the steep mountain-side, over decayed and moss-covered logs and sharp, slippery rocks, and heard the nearer and nearer rushing of the water almost straight below them in the gorge. “I’ll tell you what we’ll do,” said the boy, finally; “You stay here for a little while, and I’ll scout around and find the trail, and then I’ll come back and get you.”

“All right,” said Marjorie, in a rather quavery voice, “only do hurry”; and she caught hold of a swinging vine, and stood waiting, anxiously, while she heard him crashing his way downward through the dense undergrowth. Several times he

called back to her cheerily;—but at last his voice came only faintly;—and then she heard nothing but the rushing of the water far below, and the creaking of the trees as they swayed in the mountain wind, and the lonely crying of a bird, 'way up in the heights.

Presently she called, but there was no answer. Then she called again, more loudly, conscious that the sound of the water below would shut out her voice from his ears, and yet calling more and more frantically. Then, hearing no answer, she started to follow him, a wild, unreasoning fear tugging at her, and her feet slipping and sliding, and the vines tripping her, hampered as she was with her bonds, until at last her foot caught and she stumbled and fell, the force of her fall flinging her almost over the brow of a vine-covered ledge, the bottom of which she could not see.

And then a panic took her. Scrambling madly to her feet, she fled up the mountain-side, breaking her way through

tangles of undergrowth and ferns,—up and up—out from among the trees, onto the open top of the spur and then along this, careless of path or trail, through waist-high rank, dry grasses, crashing through masses of wild lantana that tore and scratched her arms and dazzled her eyes with its gorgeous red and yellow blossoms flaring in the sunlight and caught and dragged her hair into long loose locks as she fled, the choke in her throat making her breath come in great sobs;—on and on, along the top of the spur, until at last she fell exhausted, and lay there in the long grass, quivering and sobbing, her face buried in her arms.

After a long time she sat up and put the hair back out of her eyes, her breath still coming hard, and her face crimson and swollen.

The Dream sat on a boulder beside her. “There is the boy, ’way back there,” he said.

Marjorie got slowly to her feet. The boy was standing at the top of the spur,

looking about, anxiously, and now and then putting his hand to his mouth and giving a long call.

Marjorie answered in a very weak and quavery voice; but he heard her and looked that way. "Come," he called; "I've found the trail," and he pointed down the gorge.

Marjorie shook her head. "No," she called, "I can't."

"But I have to go this way," called the boy.

Marjorie still shook her head, her breath coming in great sobs. "I can't," she called; "Oh, I can't!"

The boy stood still for a moment, then he called again. "You go that way, then," pointing toward the long slope near her. "It isn't so steep;—and I'll meet you at the mouth of the gorge," and waving his hand to her, he turned once more in among the trees of the mountain-side.

Marjorie stood looking after him, her hands tightly clasped and her lips quiver-

ing, then she turned away and started down the slope, along a trail through the tall slippery grass and scratchy, shoulder-high lantana with its flaunting orange, pink and vermilion blossoms. The Dream walked beside her. After a while he spoke. "Would you mind telling me why you did that?" he asked.

Marjorie choked back the sobs. "I—I don't exactly know," she said; "—only—only an awful panic got hold of me, and I just fled—I didn't know nor care where—so long as I got out of that dreadful, dreadful gorge with the black, creaking trees, and the snaky vines, and the dreadful rush of the water 'way down below,—oh, I was so frightened!"

"And what made you keep on running after you got out of the gorge, instead of waiting for the boy?"

"Oh, I don't know!" cried Marjorie. "I don't know a thing excepting that I was so terribly afraid—"

"Afraid that the gorge and the water and the vines would chase you the whole

length of the spur, out here in the sunshine?"

Marjorie did not speak.

"And you sort of forgot about your bonds when you were running, didn't you? You got over the ground pretty rapidly."

Still Marjorie said nothing.

"You have such a lot of tea-cups chasing you, haven't you?"

But Marjorie only kept her head bowed and walked slowly down the trail, feeling the bonds back on her body and limbs, and the dreadful choke in her throat growing worse and worse.

After a while the trail left the steep, grassy slope and entered the woods again, where the trees were very close together, with long, interwoven straggling limbs, and enwrapped with vines clear to their tops, and the ground was wet, and the mud black and sticky;—and then heavy clouds gathered and the way became more and more dismal, and the clumps of moss and ferns up in the

branches, looked like animals crouching for a spring, and Marjorie stumbled along, weary, frightened and miserable.

“It is very dark along this bit of trail,” she said presently, a sob in her voice, “and there are so many things that trip me up,—and I am so very, very lonely.”

The Dream was silent.

“But I know that I am going in the right direction,” she said, her eyes straight ahead, “even if I am so tired and bound, and feel as if there were no starch in me—or in anything else,—and the choke in my throat hurts so.”

The Dream plodded along without speaking.

“But I’m holding out both my hands all the time, as well as I can.”

“What for?” asked the Dream.

“So that if someone comes by who is getting along better than I am just now; whose muscles are in better trim, from being free and constantly working; perhaps that one will give me a hand for

a little way. You see, I do so much need a hand-clasp."

"And is that the only reason?"

"No," said Marjorie, "It might happen that the next to come, will be weaker than I am, instead of stronger, and the way seem darker and harder even than to me,—or he might even be uncertain that this is the right way, and then my hand might be of use, you know. I am trying to be ready either way;—and either way will make me stronger, and give me courage, and heart and energy."

Just then the clouds seemed to break away a little, so that it was not quite so dark; and Marjorie saw, seated upon a boulder at the side of the trail, a little girl, who was smiling and her eyes shining. As Marjorie drew near, the little girl held out both hands to her. "I am so glad you came," she said.

Marjorie took the hands, but she did not speak;—the lump in her throat was so very big, and the bonds she was wearing were cutting so!—and she could only

clutch tensely the hands and bite her lips to keep it all back. For one moment she stood so,—then she threw herself upon the ground beside the boulder, holding tightly to the warm hands and breaking into a wild passion of weeping.

The little girl slid down beside her and put her arms closely and strongly around her. "I love you, dear," she said, softly. "Don't fret,—everything will be all right."

Marjorie kept on sobbing and the little girl sat beside her and held her close and smoothed her hair and said loving things until the sobs had stopped and Marjorie sat up, holding fast to the warm hand. "You'll think I am weak—so very weak," she said, at last; "but I've had such a dreadful time. Please may I tell you?"

"I want you to," said the little girl.

And so Marjorie told it all, between choking sobs and little gasps as the bonds cut and galled her;—and when she had finished, the little girl still held her hand

closely. "Never mind," she said, "we will soon get rid of all this. You know better than it all, so it won't be hard."

"But listen," said Marjorie, "I want to ask you a question. Why is it that when I do know that Sequence is nothing—is an emptiness with nothing around it, just like Superstition;—and that Fear, which seems to govern it, is the same;—why is it that I still feel these bonds? You know I explained to you—"

"Try to think it out for yourself," said the little girl.

Marjorie hesitated. "The boy thought," she said at last, "that the whole trouble lay in the explaining. That going back over the reasons and causes made them seem real;—and— and—it made me angry."

"Why?" asked the little girl. "Why did you wish to explain?"

"Well, because—" said Marjorie,— "because I did not want either of you to think that I had no excuse for feeling the bonds;—I did not want you to think

that it would be perfectly easy to drop them, since I kept on feeling them. I didn't want you to condemn me."

The little girl patted her hand softly.

"But I see now," went on Marjorie, "that I really didn't have any excuse at all; and that the reason why it was so hard to get rid of the bonds, was because I *made* it hard by trying to analyze them, and trace out and explain what they had to do with Sequence,—when there really *were* no bonds—and no Sequence,"—and then, pressing her cheek close to that of the little girl, "Oh, you have helped me so much!"

"How?" asked the little girl, smiling. "You seem to have reasoned all this out by yourself."

"You've helped me by love, and by knowing the truth all the time that I have been talking, and by letting me feel that you care,"—and then, stretching her arms wide;—"Oh, the bonds are all gone—all, all gone!—Oh, I am so glad!"

"What are you going to do now?"

asked the little girl, rising up. "There is work, you know."

"And I am going to do it," said Marjorie. "I am going to gather my arms full of this beautiful fruit and take it down into the valley for everyone who wants it."

"Good!" said the little girl. "When?"

"Now," said Marjorie, and she began eagerly gathering the crimson mountain-apples until she had as many as she could carry.

As she came back with her arms full, the little girl drew her close for a moment, and then stepped back. "Aren't you going along the trail with me now?" asked Marjorie, her eyes anxious.

"Not just now," said the little girl. "I am going to wait here for a while."

"But why don't you wait on a nicer part of the trail?" asked Marjorie. "It isn't at all pretty here, and so many who come along are muddy and tired and worried."

“That is why I wait here,” said the little girl.

“Oh-h-h! *That* is why you are waiting?—so as to help them?”

“Yes.”

“Then you are working—not waiting, aren’t you? But it must be so dreadfully sad to see, all the time, so many who are unhappy.”

“Does it make you sad or glad when you can help someone? Will it make you sad or glad to give your fruit to people who are hungry?”

“Oh, glad, of course!”

“Then why should *I* be sad? I know that the mud, and the weariness, and the worry aren’t even skin-deep.”

“But there must be a good many coming along the trail,—can’t they help each other, instead of your waiting on purpose?”

“They *can*,” said the little girl.

“And don’t they?”

“Many of them are very much inter-

ested in something else," said the little girl.

"In what?" asked Marjorie.

"In themselves. They don't always see the others. They have not always enough time left in which to love their neighbors."

"Yes, I know," said Marjorie.

"But there are a good many who do;—and a good many who are waiting— or working, as you called it—along the trail."

"But don't you feel that you are being delayed—waiting this way to help others?"

"Someone once said:—

'Help thy brother's boat to cross,
'And lo, thine own has reached the shore.'
No, we are not being delayed."

"I understand," said Marjorie softly; "but it seems very wonderful to me that you should *choose* to sit by these rough places along the trail, with helping hands and helping heart; but I see now that none of the mud sticks to your hands,

nor the worry nor weariness to your heart; for you keep them clean and strong with much work and the love that is in you;—but oh, it is *good* of you!”

The little girl touched her cheek softly. “I will see you again by and by,” she said. “I am so glad for the work you are doing.”

“It is all through you,” cried Marjorie.

“No,” said the little girl, “it is your work, done in your way,—I only helped you to set your hand to it.”

Marjorie looked down at her hands. “They don’t seem limp and lax and bound down now, do they?” she said. “I wonder—”

“Be careful,” said the little girl, gaily. “When you wonder and speculate, wonder and speculate about *real* things,—not about nothings. Don’t make them real enough even to wonder about.”

Marjorie pursed her lips ruefully. “That’s just what the boy said,” and then, “Oh, there he is now, ’way down the trail, waiting for me. Won’t he be

glad when he sees that I am really working? He has done the work he came for, and gotten there first, and over a harder trail;—but I know that he hasn't done half so much talking as I have. I guess perhaps it is better to walk over a trail than to talk over it, and one certainly does get on faster;”—and then, with a last straight, loving look into her friend's eyes, and a dozen “thank you-s,” she started down the trail again.

As they drew near to the boy, the Dream spoke. “Well?” he said.

Marjorie looked at him, a warm glow in her face. “Yes,” she said, “I have learned a lot,—and I've made a lot of fuss about it, just as I did about the tea-cup;—and I lost track of my Understanding and Common-sense chums a long way back; but they have come again, and are sitting here on this load of apples of mine right now; and if ever I see them sliding off to make room for the emptiness of Superstition and Sequence, and Fear, I'll—I'll—”

“What will you do?” asked the Dream.

“I’ll ABSORB them!”

“That might not be a bad thing to do now,” said the Dream.



