



# ON THE HILL-TOP

KATHERINE M. YATES















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## **ON THE HILL-TOP**

**In which Marjorie learns a great deal about  
one particular mole-hill.**





# ON THE HILL-TOP

BY  
KATHERINE M. YATES

Author of  
*On the Way There, At the Door, By the Wayside, Chet,  
Up the Sunbeams, etc.*



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## FOREWORD

The little books of the "Marjorie and the Dream" series are not written primarily for children in years; but are for the little girl or boy within, who never has grown up, and never will grow up. Those who would find the kernel of these bits of allegory, have but to know that *Marjorie* is this ever-young child within; and the *Dream* is the prosecuting attorney, self-analysis, who asks us questions — questions which we all must answer either now or sometime in the years to come.

K. M. Y.

*Honolulu*, 1919.



To  
ONE WHO DWELLS ON  
THE HILL-TOP



## ON THE HILL-TOP

*"The 'Dream' was little and thin and brown; and he wore a tight-fitting brown velvet suit, and very pointed little brown velvet slippers, and a little brown velvet cap perched jauntily on one side of his head; . . . and he had a rather uncomfortable way of giggling at things which Marjorie did not find at all funny."*

*From — "On the Way There" By KATHERINE M. YATES.*

"Oh, please," said Marjorie.  
"What's the matter?" asked the Dream, from his usual place on the footboard.

"I didn't want to come back just yet," said Marjorie. "I wanted to stay a while longer. I wasn't quite through understanding."

"Suppose that you just mention what you are talking about," said the Dream.

Marjorie rubbed a bit more of the sleep out of her eyes. "U-um —" she said, "It is such a sudden jolt to open your eyes on four walls and some windows when you have just been looking miles and miles away in every direction."

"Don't you ever notice that excepting when you just waken up?" asked the Dream.

"Yes," said Marjorie, soberly, "sometimes when I am *thinking* away up high, where everything is big and good and beautiful and I love everybody, and then suddenly come back to people and places and things and the little bothersome details of every-day life, that loom so tall, I get exactly the same kind of a jolt."

“And don't you know what the matter is? — what causes it?”

Marjorie looked doubtful. “Why yes, in a way I do; but it would take so many words to say it all.”

“Not necessarily,” said the Dream. “‘Keep your eye single,’ would pretty nearly cover it, wouldn't it? If you had a single focus that would cover the big and beautiful things at the same time as the near and definite ones, you wouldn't get any jolts, would you?”

“N-no,” said Marjorie, “but my eyes don't seem to be built that way.”

“Humph!” said the Dream. “We lay lots of things to our ‘build,’ when it is nothing but habit and laziness that is the trouble. But go on and tell me where you were and what you were trying to understand.”

“Well,” said Marjorie, “I was sitting on the top of a great high hill that sloped away steeply on every side, and there were some tall trees about, with long, swaying dark green needles in great locks that swung and swung in the wind; and away off, three or four miles beyond, was a wonderful blue sea, just like a strip of blue gauze, and some tall cocoa-nut trees bending and swaying along its edge. And in the opposite direction, just about as far off, were steep green mountains with big tumbles of clouds about their tops, and cloud shadows creeping across the deep gulches and the sharp shoulders, and down below were ponds divided off into squares like mirrors and reflecting the very bluest sky and the sunniest



clouds that you ever dreamed of. Oh, it was so beautiful!"

"And what were you trying to understand?"

"Well, there was a girl there talking to me, and she looked so kind and had such a sweet face and soft voice, and she was telling me an old, old story about the hill. She said that once upon a time, long, long years ago, a black and white dog owned the hill and lived there, and that a good many people were afraid of him and didn't dare to go near the hill. But sometimes, when some of those who lived near, were going home at night and had to pass that way, a little black and white dog would come running after them and wagging his tail and trying to make friends; and if they spoke pleasantly to him, he would run along beside them until they had reached their homes, and then go quietly away; but when he turned to go, if they happened to look after him, they would see that, as he went, he grew bigger and bigger and bigger, until, as he disappeared in the darkness, he would be tremendously big. And afterward they would find out that on the way home they had escaped some danger of which they knew nothing, but from which the dog had saved them by being there."

"But suppose that they weren't nice to him when he came?" said the Dream.

"She spoke about that," said Marjorie. "She said that if, when he came and tried to make friends with them, they scolded him and sent him away and accused him of following them to steal their meat, and threw stones at him, — then,

right while they were looking, he would begin to get bigger and bigger and they would have to drop everything and run for their lives, — and even then they didn't always escape him. And that was what I was trying to understand. I knew that it was only a story and wasn't true, but it sounded as if it meant something, and I was just going to ask the girl about it when I wakened up."

"Well, have you thought it out yet?" asked the Dream.

"Let me see," said Marjorie. "I think the little dog might be like a true little thought that comes to us sometimes and doesn't seem so very important just then; but we give it a pleasant look and make it welcome and keep it along with us; and then by and by, when we stop somewhere and look back over the way that we came, we suddenly see how big and helpful it really was, and how it had protected us from some evil thought or some danger that we hadn't noticed. Don't you think that perhaps that was what it meant?"

The Dream nodded his head. "Whether it is or not, it is a pretty good thought to whistle to."

Marjorie laughed. "But let me see how it works out when you are not nice to the thought. If you scold it and send it away or refuse to look at it because you are afraid that it will get some of your meat — keep you from having some of the good times that you want to have — then it gets big right away, if your conscience is in good working order, and you have to drop everything

and run and run, — and then after all, it will catch you and you will have to fight and fight and fight; but you know perfectly well that it will 'get you' in the end; for when a truth takes a notion to follow you, and you see it, you can't ever escape it, because some time you will have to adopt it whether you want to or not, or it will adopt you, and you might a good deal better be nice to it to begin with."

"And so the dog wasn't really a bad dog either way?"

"No, he was always good, he just looked bad to those who were afraid of losing something, and in reality he wouldn't have taken anything good away from them or hurt them, he just wanted to help. And he was never little, he was big all the time, but only looked little when folks didn't pay much attention. And anyway, isn't it funny how differently something big affects you, according to how you look at it? If you like it and trust it and it is helping you, the bigger it is, the gladder you are; but if you are afraid of it and hate it, the bigger it is, the more dreadful it is and the more you try to run away from it."

"Well, it looks to me as if you got your lesson, even if you didn't stay as long as you wanted to," said the Dream.

"Oh, but I want so much to go back," said Marjorie. "It was so beautiful there, and I could see so far in every direction, and besides, I would like to see if I couldn't find out what you meant by having a single eye. Mayn't we go back, please?"



"Is this the place?" asked the Dream.

Marjorie sat still on the top of the high hill and gazed around. "Oh," she said breathlessly, "isn't it wonderful!"

"There's one nice thing about you," said the Dream, "You don't admire things with a falling inflection."

Marjorie looked puzzled. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"Why," said the Dream, "haven't you known people who admire things with a falling inflection or a whine?"

"Oh yes," said Marjorie, "Now that I think of it. I used to know a woman who would say: — 'They have the most b-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l home!' in exactly the same tone that she would have said: — 'It was the s-a-d-d-e-s-t story!' And another who used to say: — 'I just adore flowers,' in a tone that made you see nothing but funeral wreaths and weeping willows. She said that flowers never 'kept' for her, but just wilted right down, and I always thought that it was because she hung about their necks with all her weight, instead of patting them on the cheek and calling them 'dearie.' And she was just the same with people. She used to put her hand on my shoulder and tell me how much she loved little girls; and her hand was warm and heavy, and so was her thought, and I used to feel as if I were being wrapped up and smothered in a warm, soft, under-done pancake. It wasn't nice of me, but why couldn't she be cheery about things, especially cheery things, and think *up* instead of down?"

"I suppose she'd say that she wasn't 'built' that way," said the Dream slyly.

Marjorie laughed. "And you gave that another name, 'habit' and 'laziness,' when you were talking about seeing with a single eye. Now let me see if I understand," and Marjorie leaned back against one of the tall trees and looked steadily before her. By and by she spoke. "I can look away off at the sea and the cocoa-nut trees on the edge of it, against the blue; or I can look close by, at the swaying branches with the long green locks, right before me," she said.

"Look again," said the Dream. "Suppose that you were going to paint a picture, what would you put into it?"

Marjorie looked. "Well," she said, "first I would have that long green branch at the left, and that bit of old mossy stone wall down in front, and that feathery green shrub just over there; — and then I'd have that slope of hill over there; and then, away off, the cocoa-nut trees and the blue gauze sea beyond; and then that wonderful sky and those fluffs of clouds. There, that makes it quite perfect."

"Look at it carefully as a whole and be very sure that it is just as you want it."

"It is perfect," said Marjorie again. "It is a wonderful picture."

The Dream grinned his funny little grin. "You got so interested in your picture that you forgot your habit, didn't you?" he said.

Marjorie still sat looking at the picture.

"Yes," she said. "When I put aside the habit and looked at it as a whole, I had it all at once, instead of in sections. I didn't have to come back from the distance and the great things at all, because I kept them in the picture while I looked at the near-by things; and that made it all into one beautiful whole."

"And you don't get any jolt when you do it that way?"

"No," said Marjorie, "I only see that it all fits in and belongs together. I wonder if I can get the habit of looking at all of the close-by things and people, as just a part of a wonderful picture that has big and splendid things in the background; and so keep everything at its real size, instead of letting the near-by things loom so high as to shut out the view of those that are really so much greater."

"Well," said the Dream, "you know what I mentioned as a companion to habit."

"Laziness," said Marjorie.

"Now," said the Dream, "if you were to go and lie down beside that stone wall and look toward it, how much of the sea and the sky and the tree branches would you see?"

"Not a glimpse," said Marjorie.

"Wouldn't have much picture, would you?"

"No."

"Well, then just remember to keep things in their real, actual, proper proportion to the whole picture. Everything has its place, but don't be lazy and go and lie down beside it and let it cut off all the rest of the view."



"I see," said Marjorie, thoughtfully, "A single eye gives you balance and the right idea of composition in your picture, and keeps the little things from shutting off the big ones. Oh, I see! Isn't that funny?"

"What?" asked the Dream.

"Why, that's what it means by 'making mountains out of mole-hills.' If you go and lie down with your face up close to a mole-hill, it can shut out all of the mountains on earth while you stay there, — and all of the other beautiful things in the world."

"That is certainly so," said the Dream, "and while you were lying there, you would probably be getting dust in your eyes and keeping busy hating the mole that built the hill for his own home, without even knowing that you were living."

"Probably I would," said Marjorie, "when all I really had to do would be to sit up and take notice of the things over the top of it."

"And forget it," added the Dream.

Just then the girl with a sweet face came around the brow of the hill, leading by the hand a very soiled, bedraggled little child who was eating hungrily, a bit of bread. Marjorie had sprung up at the first glimpse of the girl, but when she saw the bedraggled child, she hesitated, half drawing back. The girl glanced down at the muddy little one. "She is in a pretty bad way, isn't she?" she said, smiling; "— ragged and hungry, but the raggeder and hungrier she is, the more she needs my help, doesn't she?"

"But how did she get so — dreadful?" asked Marjorie suspiciously.

"What difference?" asked the girl, putting up her head and looking at Marjorie with very level eyes. "She is wet, ragged and hungry and she needs my help. Isn't that enough?"

Marjorie's eyes fell, then she came forward and took the child's other hand. "I think she needs mine too," she said, softly; and together they walked along, helping the little one over the rough places on the way, which hurt its bare feet, and guiding it better than it knew how to go alone; and Marjorie tied a soft kerchief over a long scratch upon its arm.

The Dream was walking along on Marjorie's other side; and presently, when she stopped to help the little one down over a steep place in the trail, the Dream sniffed. "Is it grateful for all your trouble?" he asked.

Marjorie looked at him as the girl had looked at her. "I don't know and I'm not asking," she said. "She needs me and I'm helping her, — that's *my* part, to do as wisely as I know how; the rest of it is *her* problem. We're both of us learning lessons, and the more that we learn by love and kindness, the less we'll have to learn by hard knocks; and she's got bruises enough now, so I'm not going to add to them by fussing at her for fear that I won't get enough flattery to pay me for my trouble."

"But wouldn't it do her good to be grateful?" asked the Dream.

"It probably would, and she probably is; and



it sounds very nice to make believe that if I tried to get her to acknowledge it, it would be because I wanted the acknowledgement to do her good; but if I looked clear down inside of me, I'm pretty sure I'd find that it was really because I wanted my own vanity flattered, and wasn't worried about her being made better by it, at all."

The Dream laughed. "You seem to be using a spot-light on the inner side of yourself now and then, don't you? That's a good sign. Most folks think that spot-lights are just to light up other people, or else their own show-windows, and never think about turning them on the little dark personal cellars, and attics, and cubby-holes that they keep all shut up tight. I wonder why."

"I think it's because we're afraid of our cellars and attics and the things that may be shut up there," said Marjorie. "I've found a lot of ugly little objects lurking around in those places, and plenty of them wearing masks that you don't notice until you turn on the light. A spot-light gives you lots of surprises when once you learn to use it on yourself."

Just then the child, who had been walking with her head down and her lips very close together, looked up, first at the girl and then at Marjorie; and when she dropped her head again, her mouth was quivering. After a while she spoke. "Some times," she said, "a trail looks all right when you first start out on it and the folks around you say that it is a good trail; — and then by-and-by you begin to wonder, — and then it gets worse and

worse, and you don't know how to get out of it or go back, and you get all soiled, and you get muddled and you don't know whether it is your fault or what the trouble is, but you think that everybody hates you, — and it keeps getting worse, and — and — ,” the child stopped and bit her lip hard. Marjorie tightened her hold on the little one's hand, and presently she went on: — “And if you are soiled and everybody keeps away from you and — and sometimes they throw mud so that you look dirtier than ever — and then you — you just don't know what to do.” Again she stopped and held her lip between her teeth. After a while she spoke again. “I suppose,” she said, “that you think that I am too old to get so dirty; — but I wouldn't have, if I had understood in the first place that it was the wrong trail.”

The girl bent down toward her. “Listen,” she said, “you are only as old as you know and understand. No matter how big you are or how big you grow to be, on the *outside*, if you are not wise and kind *inside*, you will make mistakes, and you can't really correct them until you learn better ways, and you can learn those only by studying the best in you and by coming near to those who are wiser and kinder than you are; but you must always be sure never to draw away from those who need your help, or tell them that they must get clean before they can come near to you, or before they can begin to learn; for perhaps they don't know how to get clean without your help.”

The child touched her cheek softly against the hand that held hers, and then the girl turned to Marjorie. "Her mistakes show how young she is, don't they? Mistakes and wrongs are always because one doesn't know, or because one doesn't understand."

"But — but aren't some wrongs done on purpose?" asked Marjorie.

"Perhaps they may seem so when you just glance at them; but can't you see that if the people knew and understood great things, they *could* not do wrong on purpose? The more things that they understood, the more things they couldn't do wrong about. Can't you see that?"

"Yes," said Marjorie slowly. "Yes, if they really fully understood all that it meant, they wouldn't want to do wrong things; and even if they wanted to, they wouldn't dare. I see that. And then I suppose that it is for every one of us to try to help everybody else to know and to understand as much good as we know and understand ourselves. Is that what you mean? But how can we, without seeming to — to 'preach'?"

The girl looked at Marjorie again with very level eyes. "Just by *living* it," she said gravely, "and by having your hand always ready."

Marjorie looked down at the hand holding that of the little child. "I suppose," she said, "that if we keep our own clothes as clean as we can, and are as wise as we know how to be, then people who need our help will just naturally gravitate toward us and we will have a chance to do the



work that we are ready to do. But you know, sometimes we don't have time to do all that we would like to."

The girl smiled. "Is there anything more important in the world than just to be kind and wise and help where you can?" she asked.

Marjorie hesitated. "There is so much that I want to learn," she said, "and learning takes time."

"Why do you want to learn?" asked the girl. "Think carefully."

Marjorie walked on silently for a little way. At last she said earnestly; "I want to learn more so that I may help more."

"And," said the girl, "do we learn more by studying, or by practicing?"

"By practicing," said Marjorie quickly. "When you once know the principle, then the rest comes by practicing and by what you find within. I think I understand. If we always do the work that comes, and study *that* problem, so as to be able to help wisely, we will be learning all the time, and helping too."

"Yes," said the girl, "it is very important to know how to help *wisely*."

Marjorie heaved a sigh and glanced down at the dirty little child. "Sometimes it is so hard to be wise," she said, "I wonder why."

Here the Dream gave a funny little giggle and Marjorie looked at him. "What is the matter?" she asked.

"I was just thinking," said the Dream, "of what you said a while ago about mole-hills and

mountains; and when you spoke about how hard it is to be wise, I wondered if you ever thought about one reason, and about what a funny little mole-hill you are and what a great big mountain you look to be, from your own view-point."

Marjorie pursed up her lips and the Dream went on. "You see," he said, "you keep so tremendously close to that funny little mole-hill that you are, that there isn't room for much of anything else in the picture. You come and lie right down beside it with your face up close against it, just as we were talking about lying down beside that old stone wall; and then you can't see enough over the top of it, the most of the time, to have a chance to acquire such an *enormous* amount of wisdom. If you would get up and look over the top of it now and then, and notice how little and funny it really is, you would get a whole lot wiser right away."

Marjorie turned toward him with a flash of anger in her eyes; then suddenly she laughed. "You're right," she said. "I got down close to it for a moment just then, and it loomed so big and important and injured, that I almost lost sight of the wisdom that you were pointing out over the top of it. I am afraid that I do a whole lot of my kindnesses from so close up to the 'Me' mole-hill, that I don't lose sight of it at all, but keep it right in the picture, to see how the kindnesses look with it in the foreground, or the background, or somewhere."

"There is nothing so very original about doing that," said the Dream.

"But that doesn't help *me* any," said Marjorie. "It hasn't any business to be always getting around in the way."

"It does mess up the landscape considerably," said the Dream.

Marjorie sighed. "I suppose," she said, "that I've got to learn to just simply walk all over that mole-hill in order to get it into its proper proportion. There isn't any other way, is there?" she asked, rather anxiously.

"Only one," said the Dream.

"And what is that?"

"To try to see everything else as so big and wonderful and full of opportunities, that you forget all about the 'Me' mole-hill; and then it will shrink away until you will never notice it in the picture at all."

"I wonder if I could," said Marjorie thoughtfully.

Just then they reached a crossing of ways, and the girl and the little child turned to follow a new trail, after bidding Marjorie good-bye, lovingly; and Marjorie felt the lingering touch of the small fingers about her own for a long way down the path, as she walked slowly on beside the Dream.

A little way farther on they came to a turn in the trail, and there, just beyond, in the shade of a big clump of mango trees, Marjorie saw a number of groups of girls of her own age, talking and laughing and seeming to be having a very good time. As Marjorie approached, several of them saw her and some of them beckoned to her to join them.



"I think I'll go over there with them, for a while," said Marjorie.

"All right," said the Dream, "I'll wait for you here."

"But — but won't you get tired of waiting?" asked Marjorie.

"I don't think so," said the Dream, and Marjorie walked toward the nearest group and left the Dream sitting and swinging on a low branch and watching her.

As Marjorie approached, several of the children got up to welcome her and she sat down among them. In a few moments she glanced over at the Dream rather anxiously. Presently she began to fidget, and in a few minutes more she rose up and bade them good-bye and, after another glance at the Dream, she walked toward the next group. The children there greeted her as had the others, and again she sat down. This time she sat a little longer, though even more uncomfortably, and presently she arose again and said good-bye and turned toward a group farther on, while those whom she had left looked after her, and one of them said something at which the others laughed. The group which she approached this time, only looked at her, looked her over very carefully from the top of her head to the tips of her toes, but none of them made any motion of greeting; and Marjorie walked on, her head rather high in the air. The next set greeted her with enthusiasm and she was soon the center of a laughing, chattering troop of young folks. But she did not stay long, and

- when she emerged, it was even with considerable difficulty that she managed to draw herself away from their detaining hands.

After this, Marjorie stood still for a few moments, looking about her rather doubtfully, and then at last, with some hesitation, she approached another party, though with less confidence and not much more success, and then another; and then others in rather rapid succession; but with none of them did she remain for more than a very few minutes, and in each case she turned away looking more and more puzzled and uncomfortable. By-and-by she stood still again, seeming uncertain as to what to do, and just then she caught a glimpse of a small cluster sitting quietly under a tree, gathered around one who was reading aloud. Marjorie glanced at the Dream, and then turned and walked determinedly toward the little group. When she reached them, they quietly made room for her and she sat down and took her chin on her hand and prepared to listen. However, in a very few moments she began to be restless again and to look about for a way of escape; and presently, when the children had become particularly absorbed in the book, she slipped softly away and back to the trail and came slowly on to where the Dream was still sitting swinging on the low branch. "Let us go on," she said.

The Dream jumped down and they walked on silently until they came to a little stream that was tumbling about big boulders and down over splashing little waterfalls. One great boulder



stood squarely in the middle of the stream and seemed to be fairly hanging over a wild little torrent only four or five feet high, beneath which was a beautiful black pool overhung with ferns and with tangles of vines which swung down from the trees. Marjorie stood for a moment looking at the boulder, then she went to the edge of the stream above the fall, and began searching about for a rocky foot-hold or two that would let her pass over. At last she found a way which seemed possible, and with considerable difficulty and a good deal of slipping and two very wet feet, she managed to reach the boulder and then to climb up its mossy side until she sat fairly upon the top, looking down into the black pool which reflected bright blue patches where the trees parted overhead.

The Dream sat beside her, wiggling one little pointed toe in the swift current and snapping bright drops of water far out into the pool.

For a long time they sat in silence. Then Marjorie spoke. "I'm a misfit," she said.

"Yes?" said the Dream.

"I am. I don't belong anywhere."

The Dream grinned. "Not *anywhere*?" he asked.

Marjorie shook her head.

"You mean that you don't belong in any of those groups," said the Dream.

Marjorie was silent.

"Suppose you tell me about it," said the Dream.

Then Marjorie burst out. "I like you and the

kind girl and the ragged child a million times better than I do them," she said.

"Then at least you belong with us," said the Dream gently.

Marjorie sat still, her hands and her lips squeezed tightly together.

"Tell me about it," said the Dream again.

"Oh, I can't understand!" cried Marjorie. "I can't. It's almost always that way and I don't know what is the matter with me. I don't know — —." Then she stopped, holding her lips hard again and staring down into the black pool, her eyes dim with the hurt of the memory.

The Dream sat quietly waiting for a long time. "It is very beautiful here," he said at last.

Marjorie raised her head and looked about her, and then, with a long sigh her tight hands and lips relaxed and a soft little smile came about her mouth. "Yes," she said, "I do belong *here*. Oh, I love it all and it loves me, and it's sweet and kind and beautiful and tender and pitiful and — and — and everything I need," and then she put her head down upon her arms and cried and cried.

The Dream sat still, waiting quietly. After a while Marjorie sat up again and leaned over to touch softly a long half-curved fern frond that had bent down until it just skimmed the water and was making a tiny ruffle every time that the breeze stirred it; and then she dabbled her fingers in the ripples, and then sent a long brown boat-shaped leaf down the splashing fall, to be tossed off into the smooth pool and then sail

away down the stream. And then a great black velvet butterfly with a yellow flame in each wing, came and settled on the bending fern frond, and she held her breath while he fanned the great wings softly and drank the bright splashes which had caught in the silver hairs of the stem, and then sailed away up toward the blue patches above.

Presently she shook her head, though still she smiled; — “And even yet I don’t understand,” she said.

“Tell me what happened,” said the Dream. “What was the first group talking about?”

“Nothing,” said Marjorie.

“Nothing?”

“Just that. They were just talking. Nobody said anything that mattered and nobody paid much attention to anybody else, and everybody interrupted everybody else if she happened to want to, and it didn’t matter much, because there wasn’t much of anything to interrupt.”

The Dream laughed. “I can tell exactly what it was like, from the way you say it.”

“Yes, I know,” said Marjorie, “It makes me feel commonplace and inconsequent just to remember it. It was gabble, gabble, gabble.”

“Did you try to say anything to help?” asked the Dream.

“I couldn’t get a chance to unless I interrupted about three at the same time, and I couldn’t even find a place to begin to interrupt,” and Marjorie shook her head at the remembrance.



"And what about the next group?" asked the Dream.

"Oh, that was worse, a great deal worse. They were all talking about the people in the other groups, saying all sorts of dreadful things about them, or ridiculing them; and some were whispering together about each other, and two of them started to tell me things about all of the rest;—and then when one would go, they would all begin to talk about that one. By and by I got away, but I hated to go because I knew that they would begin talking about me the minute that my back was turned."

"They did," said the Dream, "and then they all laughed."

Marjorie's face flushed. "I ought not to care," she said, "but I do. One hates to be talked about or laughed at even if one does know that it doesn't really matter as long as one is doing the best that she knows how."

"It isn't pleasant," said the Dream, "but you are right, it really doesn't matter. If you start to worrying about what people say, then your troubles really will begin."

"And the next group," said Marjorie, "just looked me over as if I were a dummy in a new style of frock or a polar bear or something; and so I didn't stop."

"Well, the next group didn't treat you that way," said the Dream.

"No," said Marjorie, "they came out to meet me, and petted me and flattered me, and were loud and noisy and telling silly stories and eating

and drinking more than they wanted, and telling jokes about each other that weren't really funny, and some weren't even nice."

"You didn't appear to be having as good a time as they were," said the Dream.

"No," said Marjorie, "I didn't seem to know how to, and felt sort of like a wet blanket to them, and so I got away as soon as I could."

"And then?" said the Dream.

"The next group," said Marjorie, "was very different. They were all quite serious and as soon as I came they began to tell me what I ought to do;— that I ought to have a different colored dress, and that I ought to wear my hair differently, and ought to wear a different kind of shoes, and that my nose was the wrong shape, and that I ought to be somewhere else instead of there, and doing something else;— and the funny part was that no two of them advised me the same way about the same matter; and sometimes the same one told me so many ways not to do things, that there wasn't anything left."

"For instance?" asked the Dream.

"Well, one of them said that I must never put my left foot forward first, and told me who said so, and a whole lot of reasons why. And then after she had talked a while about something else, she told me that I must never put my right foot forward first, and told me who said so, and gave me a lot of reasons for that. 'Well,' I said, 'what must I do? Jump?' 'Oh, no!' she said, 'You must *never* jump!' 'But,' said I, 'If I never put my left foot forward first, and never

put my right foot forward first, and don't jump; how am I ever to get anywhere?' And she looked at me in a very superior and indulgent sort of a way and said sweetly, 'Oh, you will be taken care of.'"

The Dream laughed. "And so you couldn't follow all of their advices?"

"Follow them!" said Marjorie, "Why if I had followed them all I'd have been snuffed out like a candle; — and then I suppose that they would have gone on talking to the atmosphere and telling it what it ought to do about it, and what a mistake it was making in being built the way it was and in not wearing a hat."

"Good thing you escaped," said the Dream. "And what about the next group?"

Marjorie heaved a sigh. "They looked nice," she said, "but they were all talking about sicknesses and diseases and operations and things like that; and each was so eager to tell her own experience, with all the details, that she just fidgeted and fussed and could hardly sit still until she could get a word in edgewise to interrupt and begin her story, while the others fidgeted until they could get their turn. I stood it as long as I could, and then managed to slip away, and just as I was going, I noticed that another girl had slipped away too, and she came up to me. 'Isn't it dreadful?' she said, 'to talk about those things and go into all of those details, when there are so many beautiful things in the world to talk about?'

"'Yes,' I said, 'I got away just as soon as I



could. I don't see why they want to talk that way. Why, I've had some things just as bad as those and I don't talk about them.'

"'Nor I. Why, one time I had — —' and then she went to work and told me in careful detail a great long story about what she had been through with and how it felt, and all the rest of it; — and when she got through, she said: — 'But I never talk about those things;' and I honestly believe that she thought that she didn't; but if she had turned the spot-light back into the cubby-holes of her thought for a minute, she would have found — —."

"You remember," said the Dream, "what we decided that spot-lights are for."

"Yes," said Marjorie, "They are to use upon ourselves; — but it is such a lot easier to turn them in other directions. So of course I don't have to bother about what she would have found with her spot-light; but just the same, I got a lesson."

"That's all right," said the Dream, "Get as many as you please. I suppose you know how you happen to recognize a lesson that comes through some other person's mistake?"

Marjorie thought for a minute, then she laughed. "Because I notice that if I turn the spot-light my way, I find that I have some of the very same sort of ornaments that caused the lesson, sitting around on the mantle-piece or in the coal-hole or up in the attic or somewhere like that. I always know that it is a lesson and that part of it is coming to me, when I find that I



have something that it fits, among my own belongings."

"And then?"

"Oh, dear!" said Marjorie, "You ask so many questions that you spoil all of my egotism."

The Dream laughed. "That's fine," he said. "Anything that can be spoiled by questions, is pretty good stuff to get rid of. If we have anything that shies at questions, then questions are the things to make it walk right up to, without blinders; — and if it bolts, — good riddance! Now what about the rest of the groups?"

"Well, I somehow didn't fit anywhere for more than a minute or two. In one place it seemed rather better at first, for one of the girls was telling wonderfully interesting things about birds and flowers; and then another interrupted to tell about the kind of a bird that she had on her hat and what pretty feathers it had. And then the first one got started again, and another girl interrupted to tell about her dog, and then she told how much it cost and how it acted when it was sick; and then all the others began telling about how much their dogs cost and how many prizes they had won and the best time to cut their ears; until by and by the interesting girl got up and walked off, and so did I.

"And in another place, one started to tell about a great discovery that was very important, and the others listened for a few minutes and then began talking low among themselves about whether they liked long sleeves or short sleeves and how full their skirts ought to be and how

many beads it took to make a bag; and then that girl went away. And then something reminded me of a curious new machine that I had heard of, and I started to tell about it, and nobody listened, and everybody talked louder than I did; and so I stopped and went away too."

"Still misfitting!"

"Yes."

"And what about that last little group, the one you visited just before you came back to me?"

Marjorie sighed again. "That one looked just about the most interesting of any, because they were all so quiet and were gathered about one who was reading aloud, and I thought that I surely had found the right place at last, and I sat down so cozily to listen."

"But you didn't stay long."

"No, they were reading a very dreadful book about very dreadful things that were all past and over and gone, but which brought up hatred and anger and bitterness over matters that were settled and done with and a new chapter begun. I looked at the faces while she was reading and saw in them the very feelings that make dreadful things keep on happening all over the world; and oh, I did so wish that she would stop; but she kept on and on, and I saw by their eyes that I couldn't say anything then, and so I slipped away and came back to you, — and — and — and here I am."

"An all around misfit."

Marjorie nodded her head. "Everywhere but here," she said.

"That is a very broad statement," said the Dream. "Did you try all of the groups?"

"No, I got discouraged. It didn't seem worth while to try any more."

"Really? Do you really believe that they were all like those?"

"No," said Marjorie, thoughtfully. "No, I am sure that there must have been some who were thinking and talking worth-while things; but I got so tired from so many disappointments, that I didn't want to bother any more. And besides, when I had gone that far, I didn't feel nice myself and probably wouldn't have known a nice group if I had found one."

"But why did you want to join any of them?"

"Because — because I was lonely," said Marjorie, a little choke in her voice.

"And when you came back, you said that you liked me and the kind girl and the ragged little child better than any of them."

"Yes, I do."

"Why?"

"Because the kind girl told me things that had a meaning, and I could help the little child."

"And me?"

"You? Why, let me see. I think it must be because you make me ask myself questions."

"And you always get an answer?"

"Yes, the answer is always there when I go after it, though sometimes I have to ask over and over again before it comes quite clearly."

"But it is sure to come eventually?"

"Yes."



“And still you are lonely. What was it that you really wanted besides, when you went to join the groups?”

Marjorie sat still and thought.

Again the Dream asked. “What were you really seeking in those groups? What more did you want?”

“Oh,” cried Marjorie, “I suppose that I wanted sympathy and flattery and carelessness and amusement — and —”

“And you found *just what you went after*,” said the Dream.

“Yes, and when I got them I abominated them. Oh, yes, I know; I ought to have gone looking for something better; but I didn’t think of that, and the others seemed to be having such a good time, and I was so lonely and — —”

“Let us go up on the hill-top again,” said the Dream.

Marjorie looked lovingly about at the ferns and the vines and the splashing stream and up at the glimpses of blue, high overhead, and down at the reflections in the pool below. Then she touched softly the long green frond that bent over the water, and then she stood up on the boulder. “I am ready,” she said, and together they climbed down to the rocky footholds in the stream, and across among the tall green growths and back to the trail again. Along this they walked silently until they came out into the sunshine once more, and then around the long curve that led to the hill-top. When they had reached there, Marjorie sat down on the grass under the tree where they

had been at first, and looked off across the wonderful stretch of color to the palm trees and the blue gauze sea.

"The picture is still here, you see," said the Dream.

"Yes," said Marjorie, "and oh, it is so much bigger and brighter and more beautiful than those that I have been looking at down below."

"And are you a misfit here?"

"No."

"Why?"

Marjorie gazed long and silently, then she said softly; "I think that it is because it is so very big that there is room for everybody, and so there can't be any misfits."

"And why is it so big?"

"Because I am so high up and can see so far, and nothing seems to crowd anything else because there is so much room everywhere that I look; and nothing seems to bruise me and hurt me here, as things did down below."

"And why did they seem to bruise you and hurt you?"

Marjorie sat and thought for quite a while. "It was because of what I *really* wanted," she said. "Not what I *thought* that I wanted, but what I really truly wanted; — and they gave me nothing but stones; — and it was because of what I wanted to give, and they wanted to receive nothing but — pebbles."

"You wanted bread?"

"I wanted to learn. That is what I said before. More than anything else in the whole world, I

wanted to learn. I want to learn more, so that I can give more."

"And didn't you learn anything?"

Again Marjorie sat and thought. "Yes," she said at last, "I did; but the learning hurt. It cost so much."

"And you want 'something for nothing'?"

"No." Then she laughed. "But you see, I seem always to want to pay some other way than the way that I have to."

"But you are willing to pay — what is necessary?"

Marjorie put up her head. "Yes," she said, "whatever the price is."

"Good!" said the Dream. "Just remember that. If you want to give, then you must be willing to pay the price for the thing that you want to give. If you don't pay in love, then you must pay in pain. It is the only way."

Marjorie leaned back against the tree, looking long and deep into the great picture spread before her; — long and long she looked, until her eyes grew great and her breath came strong and full. "No price looks too large to pay for anything worth while, when I am here on the hill-top," she said. "I am going to try to stay here all the time, and to bring up here to me, all of the lessons that I must learn, and to give from here all of the things that I have to give; for when I am here I can see where everything belongs, and I don't even know *how* to be a misfit."

















