

## THE GREAT WHITE ROAD

Now, as I have hinted, under the teaching of Jorsen, who saved me from degradation and self-murder, yes, and helped me with money until once again I could earn a livelihood, I have acquired certain knowledge and wisdom of a sort that are not common. That is, Jorsen taught me the elements of these things; he set my feet upon the path which thenceforward, having the sight, I have been able to follow for myself. How I followed it does not matter, nor could I teach others if I would.

I am no member of any mystic brotherhood, and, as I have explained, no Mahatma, although I have called myself thus for present purposes because the name is a convenient cloak. I repeat that I am ignorant if there are such people as Mahatmas, though if so I think Jorsen must be one of them. Still he never told me this. What he has told is that every individual spirit must work out its own destiny quite independently of others. Indeed, being rather fond of fine phrases, he has sometimes spoken to me of, or rather, insisted upon what he called "the lonesome splendour of the human soul," which it is our business to perfect through various lives till I can scarcely appreciate and am certainly unable to describe.

To tell the truth, the thought of this "lonesome splendour" to which it seems some of us may attain, alarms me. I have had enough of being lonesome, and I do not ask for any particular splendour. My only ambitions are to find those whom I have lost, and in whatever life

I live to be of use to others. However, as I gather that the exalted condition to which Jorsen alludes is thousands of ages off for any of us, and may after all mean something quite different to what it seems to mean, the thought of it does not trouble me over much. Meanwhile what I seek is the vision of those I love.

Now I have this power. Occasionally when I am in deep sleep some part of me seems to leave my body and to be transported quite outside the world. It travels, as though I were already dead, to the Gates that all who live must pass, and there takes its stand, on the Great White Road, watching those who have been called speed by continually. Those upon the earth know nothing of that Road. Blinded by their pomps and vanities, they cannot see, they will not see it always growing towards the feet of every one of them. But I see and know. Of course you who read will say that this is but a dream of mine, and it may be. Still, if so, it is a very wonderful dream, and except for the change of the passing people, or rather of those who have been people, always very much the same.

There, straight as the way of the Spirit and broad as the breast of Death, is the Great White Road running I know not whence, up to those Gates that gleam like moonlight and are higher than the Alps. There beyond the Gates the radiant Presences move mysteriously. Thence at the appointed time the Voice cries and they are opened with a sound like to that of deepest thunder, or sometimes are burned away, while from the Glory that lies beyond flow the sweet-faced welcomers to greet those for whom they wait, bearing the cups from which they give to drink. I do

not know what is in the cups, whether it be a draught of Lethe or some baptismal water of new birth, or both; but always the thirsting, world-worn soul appears to change, and then as it were to be lost in the Presence that gave the cup. At least they are lost to my sight. I see them no more.

Why do I watch those Gates, in truth or in dream, before my time? Oh! You can guess. That perchance I may behold those for whom my heart burns with a quenchless, eating fire. And once I beheld--not the mother but the child, my child, changed indeed, mysterious, wonderful, gleaming like a star, with eyes so deep that in their depths my humanity seemed to swoon.

She came forward; she knew me; she smiled and laid her finger on her lips. She shook her hair about her and in it vanished as in a cloud. Yet as she vanished a voice spoke in my heart, her voice, and the words it said were--

"Wait, our Beloved! Wait!"

Mark well. "Our Beloved," not "My Beloved." So there are others by whom I am beloved, or at least one other, and I know well who that one must be.

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After this dream, perhaps I had better call it a dream, I was ill for a long while, for the joy and the glory of it overpowered me and brought me near to the death I had always sought. But I recovered, for my hour is not yet. Moreover, for a long while as we reckon time, some years indeed, I obeyed the injunction and sought the Great White Road no more. At length the longing grew too strong for me and I returned thither, but never again did the vision come. Its word was spoken, its mission was fulfilled. Yet from time to time I, a mortal, seem to stand upon the borders of that immortal Road and watch the newly dead who travel it towards the glorious Gates.

Once or twice there have been among them people whom I have known. As these pass me I appear to have the power of looking into their hearts, and there I read strange things. Sometimes they are beautiful things and sometimes ugly things. Thus I have learned that those I thought bad were really good in the main, for who can claim to be quite good? And on the other hand that those I believed to be as honest as the day--well, had their faults.

To take an example which I quote because it is so absurd. The rooms I live in were owned by a prim old woman who for more than twenty years was my landlady. She and I were great friends, indeed she tended me like a mother, and when I was so ill nursed me as perhaps few mothers would have done. Yet while I was watching on the Road suddenly she came by, and with horror I saw that during all those years she had been robbing me, taking, I am sorry to say, many things, in money, trinkets, and

food. Often I had discussed with her where these articles could possibly have gone, till finally suspicion settled upon the man who cleaned the windows. Yes, and worst of all, he was prosecuted, and I gave evidence against him, or rather strengthened her evidence, on faith of which the magistrate sent him to prison for a month.

"Oh! Mrs Smithers," I said to her, "how \_could\_ you do it, Mrs. Smithers?"

She stopped and looked about her terrified, so that my heart smote me and I added in haste, "Don't be frightened, Mrs. Smithers; I forgive you."

"I can't see you, sir," she exclaimed, or so I dreamed, "but there! I always knew you would."

"Yes, Mrs. Smithers," I replied; "but how about the window-cleaner who went to jail and lost his situation?"

Then she passed on or was drawn away without making any answer.

Now comes the odd part of the story. When I woke up on the following morning in my rooms, it was to be informed by the frightened maid-of-all-work that Mrs. Smithers had been found dead in her bed. Moreover, a few days later I learned from a lawyer that she had made a will leaving me everything she possessed, including the lease of her

house and nearly £1000, for she had been a saving old person during all her long life.

Well, I sought out that window-cleaner and compensated him handsomely, saying that I had found I was mistaken in the evidence I gave against him. The rest of the property I kept, and I hope that it was not wrong of me to do so. It will be remembered that some of it was already my own, temporarily diverted into another channel, and for the rest I have so many to help. To be frank I do not spend much upon myself.