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## A Morning Walk

ARCHIBALD had been up many hours. He had breakfasted, and now he was taking a morning stroll along the village street, which was little other than a high ledge cut into the mountain-side.

He was forty or thereabout, but did not resent being thought older, and never corrected the miscalculations of acquaintances when they added a half-score years to his age. He was tall, with broad shoulders, a straight back, and legs that took long, energetic strides. His hair was light and rather thin; his face strong and rugged from exposure, and his eyes narrow and observant. He beat about with his stick as he walked, turning over pebbles and small stones, and sometimes uprooting a weed or flower that grew in his path.

The village sprawled along the gradual slope of a mountain side. The few streets rising one above the other were irregular in their tortuous effort to cuddle up to the houses that were built hap-hazard and wide apart. Flights of wooden steps, black and weather-stained, connected the streets with each other. Fruit trees were in bloom, making a pink and white blur against the blue sky and the gray, rocky slopes. Birds were piping in the hedges. It had rained, but the sun was shining now and riotous odors were abroad; they met him with every velvety gust that softly beat into his face. Now and again he straightened his shoulders and shook his head with an impatient movement, as might some proud animal which rebels against an unaccustomed burden.

The spring was nothing new to him, nor were its sounds, its perfumes, its colors; nor was its tender and caressing breath; but, for some unaccountable reason, these were reaching him to-day through unfamiliar channels.

Archibald had started out for a walk, not because the day was beautiful and alluring but for the healthful exercise, and for the purpose of gathering into his lungs the amount of pure oxygen needed to keep his body in good working condition. For he leaned decidedly toward practical science; of sentiment he knew little, except what he gathered from a class

of speculative philosophers. He liked to read musty books about musty peoples long since gathered to the earth and the elements. He liked to observe insect life at close range, and when he gathered flowers it was usually to dismember their delicate, sweet bodies for the purpose of practical and profitable investigation.

But, strangely enough, he saw only the color of the blossoms this morning, and noted their perfumes. The butterflies floated unmolested within his reach, and the jumping grasshoppers were not afraid. The spring day was saying "good morning" to him in a new, delicious way, while the blood in his veins beat a response.

A little ahead of him Archibald suddenly observed a huge bunch of white lilies ascending apparently from the sepulchral depths of the earth. In fact they were ascending one of the steep flights of wooden steps which led up from the street below. A young girl's face could be seen between the long stems and the blossoms. In another moment she stood on the edge of the road, panting a little. She was pretty, as healthful girls of twenty usually are. She was unusually pretty at that moment; her face, peeping over the lilies, was like another flower that had gathered its hues from the roseate dawn and the glimmer of the dew.

"Good morning, Mr. Archibald," she called in her sweet, high, village voice.

"Good morning, Jane; good morning," he responded with unusual cordiality.

"Oh! it isn't Jane," she laughed, "it's Lucy. L-U-C-Y Lucy. Last week you persistently thought I was my sister Amanda. This morning I am my cousin Jane. Tomorrow I suppose it will be 'good morning, Mrs. Brockett;' or 'Howdy, Granny Ball!'"

A more delicately attuned ear than Archibald's might have detected a lurking note of vexation in the girl's saucy speech. He flushed with annoyance at his own awkwardness. Yesterday he would have smiled with condescending inattention, and probably called her "Amelia" at their next meeting.

"Yes," she was thinking, as they walked together down the road, "if I were a stone or a weed or some nasty old beetle or other, he would know my name well enough." She was one

of a group of girls whom he had seen grow up in almost daily association with his own nieces and nephews at home. It was not to be expected that he could disassociate them. He regretted that there had been made no arbitrary classification of the family of "Girls," whereby a man of studious instincts and mental preoccupation might be able to identify the individual at sight, and even name it at a moment's notice. However, he felt quite sure that he would not soon forget that it was Lucy who carried the lilies and bade him good morning, like a second vision of spring.

"Let me carry your flowers," he offered; not through any tardy spirit of gallantry; solely because he knew better than she how to handle a bunch of blossoms, and it pained him to see the big wax-like petals bruised and jostled. The odor of the flowers was heavy and penetrating, like the fumes of a subtle intoxicant that reached Archibald's brain, and wrought and wove fantastic thoughts and visions there. He looked down into the girl's face, and her soft, curved lips made him think of peaches that he had bitten; of grapes that he had tasted; of a cup's rim from which he had sometimes sipped wine.

They walked down the grassy slope, the girl chatting the while, and Archibald saying little. Lucy was on her way to church. It was Easter morning, and the bells had been calling and clamoring to them as they went along. At the vestibule door she turned and delivered him of his burden of flowers. But Archibald did not leave there, as she expected he would. He followed her into the church; he did not know why, and for once he did not care to investigate his motives. When she had disposed of the lilies, turning them over to a sanctuary boy, she came and seated herself with the congregation, and Archibald, who had stood waiting, placed himself beside her. He assumed no reverential attitude, nor did he bow his head with any pretense of devotion. His presence caused much wonder, and glances and whispers of speculation were exchanged. Archibald did not notice, and would not have minded them if he had noticed.

The day was warm, and some of the stained glass windows were open. The sunlight came in, and the shadows of quivering

leaves played upon the casement through which he gazed. A bird was singing among the branches.

During the prayers he was inattentive, and to the singing he lent no ear. But when the minister turned to address the assembly, Archibald wondered what he was going to say. The man stayed a long moment with his slow, earnest glance sweeping the congregation, then he uttered solemnly and impressively: "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Another long moment of silence followed; and, lifting his head, he reiterated in louder, clearer tones than before, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

This was his text. It fell upon ears that had heard it before. It crept into the consciousness of Archibald, sitting there. As he gathered it into his soul a vision of life came with it; the poet's vision, of the life that is within and the life that is without, pulsing in unison, breathing the harmony of an undivided existence.

He listened to no further words of the minister. He entered into himself and he preached unto himself a sermon in his own heart, as he gazed from the window through which the song came and where the leafy shadows quivered.