'Aye, that I am!' she said; 'but tha'rt so like thy mother tha' made my heart jump.'

'Do you think,' said Colin a little awkwardly, 'that will make my father like me?'

'Aye, for sure, dear lad,' she answered and she gave his shoulder a soft quick pat. 'He mun come home—he mun come home.'

'Susan Sowerby,' said Ben Weatherstaff, getting close to her. 'Look at th' lad's legs, wilt tha'? They was like drumsticks i' stockin' two month' ago—an' I heard folk tell as they was bandy an' knock-kneed both at th' same time. Look at 'em now!'

Susan Sowerby laughed a comfortable laugh.

'They're goin' to be fine strong lad's legs in a bit,' she said. 'Let him go on playin' an' workin' in th' garden an' eatin' hearty an' drinkin' plenty o' good sweet milk an' there'll not be a finer pair i' Yorkshire, thank God for it.'

She put both hands on Mistress Mary's shoulders and looked her little face over in a motherly fashion.

'An' thee, too!' she said. 'Tha'rt grown near as hearty as our 'Lizabeth Ellen. I'll warrant tha'rt like thy mother too. Our Martha told me as Mrs Medlock heard she was a pretty woman. Tha'lt be like a blush rose when tha' grows up, my little lass, bless thee.'

She did not mention that when Martha came home on her 'day out' and described the plain sallow child she had said that she had no confidence whatever in what Mrs Medlock had heard. 'It doesn't stand to reason that a pretty woman could be th' mother o' such a fou' little lass,' she had added obstinately.

Mary had not had time to pay much attention to her changing face. She had only known that she looked 'different' and seemed to have a great deal more hair and that it was growing very fast. But remembering her pleasure in looking at the Mem Sahib in the past she was glad to hear that she might some day look like her.

Susan Sowerby went round their garden with them and was told the whole story of it and shown every bush and tree which had come alive. Colin walked on one side of her and Mary on the other. Each of them kept looking up at her comfortable rosy face, secretly curious about the delightful feeling she gave them—a sort of warm, supported feeling. It seemed as if she understood them as Dickon understood his 'creatures.' She stooped over the flowers and

talked about them as if they were children. Soot followed her and once or twice cawed at her and flew upon her shoulder as if it were Dickon's. When they told her about the robin and the first flight of the young ones she laughed a motherly little mellow laugh in her throat.

'I suppose learnin' 'em to fly is like learnin' children to walk, but I'm feared I should be all in a worrit if mine had wings instead o' legs,' she said.

It was because she seemed such a wonderful woman in her nice moorland cottage way that at last she was told about the Magic.

'Do you believe in Magic?' asked Colin after he had explained about Indian fakirs. 'I do hope you do.'

'That I do, lad,' she answered. 'I never knowed it by that name but what does th' name matter? I warrant they call it a different name i' France an' a different one i' Germany. Th' same thing as set th' seeds swellin' an' th' sun shinin' made thee a well lad an' it's th' Good Thing. It isn't like us poor fools as think it matters if us is called out of our names. Th' Big Good Thing doesn't stop to worrit, bless thee. It goes on makin' worlds by th' million—worlds like us. Never thee stop believin' in th' Big Good Thing an' knowin' th' world's full of it—an' call it what tha' likes. Tha' wert singin' to it when I come into th' garden.'

'I felt so joyful,' said Colin, opening his beautiful strange eyes at her. 'Suddenly I felt how different I was—how strong my arms and legs were, you know—and how I could dig and stand—and I jumped up and wanted to shout out something to anything that would listen.'

'Th' Magic listened when tha' sung th' Doxology. It would ha' listened to anything tha'd sung. It was th' joy that mattered. Eh! lad, lad—what's names to th' Joy Maker,' and she gave his shoulders a quick soft pat again.

She had packed a basket which held a regular feast this morning, and when the hungry hour came and Dickon brought it out from its hiding place, she sat down with them under their tree and watched them devour their food, laughing and quite gloating over their appetites. She was full of fun and made them laugh at all sorts of odd things. She told them stories in broad Yorkshire and taught them new words. She laughed as if she could not help it when they told her of the increasing difficulty there was in pretending that Colin was still a fretful invalid.

'You see we can't help laughing nearly all the time when we are together,' explained Colin. 'And it doesn't sound ill at all. We try to choke it back but it will burst out and that sounds worse than ever.'

'There's one thing that comes into my mind so often,' said Mary, 'and I can scarcely ever hold in when I think of it suddenly. I keep thinking suppose Colin's face should get to look like a full moon. It isn't like one yet but he gets a tiny bit fatter every day—and suppose some morning it should look like one—what should we do!'

'Bless us all, I can see tha' has a good bit o' play actin' to do,' said Susan Sowerby. 'But tha' won't have to keep it up much longer. Mester Craven'll come home.'

'Do you think he will?' asked Colin. 'Why?'

Susan Sowerby chuckled softly.

'I suppose it 'ud nigh break thy heart if he found out before tha' told him in tha' own way,' she said. 'Tha's laid awake nights plannin' it.'

'I couldn't bear any one else to tell him,' said Colin. 'I think about different ways every day. I think now I just want to run into his room.'

'That'd be a fine start for him,' said Susan Sowerby. 'I'd like to see his face, lad. I would that! He mun come back—that he mun.'

One of the things they talked of was the visit they were to make to her cottage. They planned it all. They were to drive over the moor and lunch out of doors among the heather. They would see all the twelve children and Dickon's garden and would not come back until they were tired.

Susan Sowerby got up at last to return to the house and Mrs Medlock. It was time for Colin to be wheeled back also. But before he got into his chair he stood quite close to Susan and fixed his eyes on her with a kind of bewildered adoration and he suddenly caught hold of the fold of her blue cloak and held it fast.

'You are just what I—what I wanted,' he said. 'I wish you were my mother—as well as Dickon's!'

All at once Susan Sowerby bent down and drew him with her warm arms close against the bosom under the blue cloak—as if he had been Dickon's brother. The quick mist swept over her eyes.

'I never seed no sense in th' Doxology afore,' he said hoarsely, 'but I may change my mind i' time. I should say tha'd gone up five pound this week, Mester Colin—five on 'em!'

Colin was looking across the garden at something attracting his attention and his expression had become a startled one.

'Who is coming in here?' he said quickly. 'Who is it?'

The door in the ivied wall had been pushed gently open and a woman had entered. She had come in with the last line of their song and she had stood still listening and looking at them. With the ivy behind her, the sunlight drifting through the trees and dappling her long blue cloak, and her nice fresh face smiling across the greenery she was rather like a softly coloured illustration in one of Colin's books. She had wonderful affectionate eyes which seemed to take everything in—all of them, even Ben Weatherstaff and the 'creatures' and every flower that was in bloom. Unexpectedly as she had appeared, not one of them felt that she was an intruder at all. Dickon's eyes lighted like lamps.

'It's Mother—that's who it is!' he cried and he went across the grass at a run.

Colin began to move toward her, too, and Mary went with him. They both felt their pulses beat faster.

'It's Mother!' Dickon said again when they met half-way. 'I knowed tha' wanted to see her an' I told her where th' door was hid.'

Colin held out his hand with a sort of flushed royal shyness but his eyes quite devoured her face.

'Even when I was ill I wanted to see you,' he said, 'you and Dickon and the secret garden. I'd never wanted to see any one or anything before.'

The sight of his uplifted face brought about a sudden change in her own. She flushed and the corners of her mouth shook and a mist seemed to sweep over her eyes.

'Eh! dear lad!' she broke out tremulously. 'Eh! dear lad!' as if she had not known she were going to say it. She did not say, 'Mester Colin,' but just 'dear lad' quite suddenly. She might have said it to Dickon in the same way if she had seen something in his face which touched her. Colin liked it.

'Are you surprised because I am so well?' he asked.

She put her hand on his shoulder and smiled the mist out of her eyes.

so natural that he did not know it was understanding. He pulled off his cap and looked round still smiling.

'Tha' must take off tha' cap,' he said to Colin, 'an' so mun tha', Ben—an' tha' mun stand up, tha' knows.'

Colin took off his cap and the sun shone on and warmed his thick hair as he watched Dickon intently. Ben Weatherstaff scrambled up from his knees and bared his head too with a sort of puzzled half-resentful look on his old face as if he didn't know exactly why he was doing this remarkable thing.

Dickon stood out among the trees and rose-bushes and began to sing in quite a simple matter-of-fact way and in a nice strong boy voice:

> 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
> Praise Him all creatures here below,
> Praise Him above ye Heavenly Host,
> Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
> Amen.'

When he had finished, Ben Weatherstaff was standing quite still with his jaws set obstinately but with a disturbed look in his eyes fixed on Colin. Colin's face was thoughtful and appreciative.

'It is a very nice song,' he said. 'I like it. Perhaps it means just what I mean when I want to shout out that I am thankful to the Magic.' He stopped and thought in a puzzled way. 'Perhaps they are both the same thing. How can we know the exact names of everything? Sing it again, Dickon. Let us try, Mary. I want to sing it, too. It's my song. How does it begin? 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow'?'

And they sang it again, and Mary and Colin lifted their voices as musically as they could and Dickon's swelled quite loud and beautiful—and at the second line Ben Weatherstaff raspingly cleared his throat and at the third he joined in with such vigour that it seemed almost savage and when the 'Amen' came to an end Mary observed that the very same thing had happened to him which had happened when he found out that Colin was not a cripple—his chin was twitching and he was staring and winking and his leathery old cheeks were wet.

'Eh! dear lad!' she said. 'Thy own mother's in this 'ere very garden, I do believe. She couldna' keep out of it. Thy father mun come back to thee—he mun!'

Dickon was looking at him very hard. Being an animal charmer he could see more things than most people could and many of them were things he never talked about. He saw some of them now in this boy.

'Aye, that we do,' he answered.

Mary looked hard too, but she said nothing.

'Just this minute,' said Colin, 'all at once I remembered it myself—when I looked at my hand digging with the trowel—and I had to stand up on my feet to see if it was real. And it is real! I'm well—I'm well!'

'Aye, that tha' art!' said Dickon.

'I'm well! I'm well!' said Colin again, and his face went quite red all over.

He had known it before in a way, he had hoped it and felt it and thought about it, but just at that minute something had rushed all through him—a sort of rapturous belief and realization and it had been so strong that he could not help calling out.

'I shall live forever and ever and ever!' he cried grandly. 'I shall find out thousands and thousands of things. I shall find out about people and creatures and everything that grows—like Dickon—and I shall never stop making Magic. I'm well! I'm well! I feel—I feel as if I want to shout out something—something thankful, joyful!'

Ben Weatherstaff, who had been working near a rose-bush, glanced round at him.

'Tha' might sing th' Doxology,' he suggested in his dryest grunt. He had no opinion of the Doxology and he did not make the suggestion with any particular reverence.

But Colin was of an exploring mind and he knew nothing about the Doxology.

'What is that?' he inquired.

'Dickon can sing it for thee, I'll warrant,' replied Ben Weatherstaff.

Dickon answered with his all-perceiving animal charmer's smile.

'They sing it i' church,' he said. 'Mother says she believes th' skylarks sings it when they gets up i' th' mornin'.'

'If she says that, it must be a nice song,' Colin answered. ' I've never been in a church myself. I was always too ill. Sing it, Dickon. I want to hear it.'

Dickon was quite simple and unaffected about it. He understood what Colin felt better than Colin did himself. He understood by a sort of instinct

which had begun to hold the light he remembered in another pair. Sometimes when Colin felt Ben's earnest gaze meant that he was much impressed he wondered what he was reflecting on and once when he had seemed quite entranced he questioned him.

'What are you thinking about, Ben Weatherstaff?' he asked.

'I was thinkin',' answered Ben, 'as I'd warrant tha's gone up three or four pound this week. I was lookin' at tha' calves an' tha' shoulders. I'd like to get thee on a pair o' scales.'

'It's the Magic and—and Mrs Sowerby's buns and milk and things,' said Colin. 'You see the scientific experiment has succeeded.'

That morning Dickon was too late to hear the lecture. When he came he was ruddy with running and his funny face looked more twinkling than usual. As they had a good deal of weeding to do after the rains they fell to work. They always had plenty to do after a warm deep sinking rain. The moisture which was good for the flowers was also good for the weeds which thrust up tiny blades of grass and points of leaves which must be pulled up before their roots took too firm hold. Colin was as good at weeding as any one in these days and he could lecture while he was doing it.

'The Magic works best when you work yourself,' he said this morning. 'You can feel it in your bones and muscles. I am going to read books about bones and muscles, but I am going to write a book about Magic. I am making it up now. I keep finding out things.'

It was not very long after he had said this that he laid down his trowel and stood up on his feet. He had been silent for several minutes and they had seen that he was thinking out lectures, as he often did. When he dropped his trowel and stood upright it seemed to Mary and Dickon as if a sudden strong thought had made him do it. He stretched himself out to his tallest height and he threw out his arms exultantly. colour glowed in his face and his strange eyes widened with joyfulness. All at once he had realized something to the full.

'Mary! Dickon!' he cried. 'Just look at me!'

They stopped their weeding and looked at him.

'Do you remember that first morning you brought me in here?' he demanded.

Chapter 27

In the Garden

In each century since the beginning of the world wonderful things have been discovered. In the last century more amazing things were found out than in any century before. In this new century hundreds of things still more astounding will be brought to light. At first people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done, then they begin to hope it can be done, then they see it can be done—then it is done and all the world wonders why it was not done centuries ago. One of the new things people began to find out in the last century was that thoughts—just mere thoughts—are as powerful as electric batteries—as good for one as sunlight is, or as bad for one as poison. To let a sad thought or a bad one get into your mind is as dangerous as letting a scarlet fever germ get into your body. If you let it stay there after it has got in you may never get over it as long as you live.

So long as Mistress Mary's mind was full of disagreeable thoughts about her dislikes and sour opinions of people and her determination not to be pleased

by or interested in anything, she was a yellow-faced, sickly, bored and wretched child. Circumstances, however, were very kind to her, though she was not at all aware of it. They began to push her about for her own good. When her mind gradually filled itself with robins, and moorland cottages crowded with children, with queer crabbed old gardeners and common little Yorkshire housemaids, with springtime and with secret gardens coming alive day by day, and also with a moor boy and his 'creatures,' there was no room left for the disagreeable thoughts which affected her liver and her digestion and made her yellow and tired.

So long as Colin shut himself up in his room and thought only of his fears and weakness and his detestation of people who looked at him and reflected hourly on humps and early death, he was a hysterical half-crazy little hypochondriac who knew nothing of the sunshine and the spring and also did not know that he could get well and could stand upon his feet if he tried to do it. When new beautiful thoughts began to push out the old hideous ones, life began to come back to him, his blood ran healthily through his veins and strength poured into him like a flood. His scientific experiment was quite practical and simple and there was nothing weird about it at all. Much more surprising things can happen to any one who, when a disagreeable or discouraged thought comes into his mind, just has the sense to remember in time and push it out by putting in an agreeable determinedly courageous one. Two things cannot be in one place.

> 'Where you tend a rose, my lad,
> A thistle cannot grow.'

While the secret garden was coming alive and two children were coming alive with it, there was a man wandering about certain far-away beautiful places in the Norwegian fiords and the valleys and mountains of Switzerland and he was a man who for ten years had kept his mind filled with dark and heart-broken thinking. He had not been courageous; he had never tried to put any other thoughts in the place of the dark ones. He had wandered by blue lakes and thought them; he had lain on mountain-sides with sheets of deep blue gentians blooming all about him and flower breaths filling all the air and he had thought them. A terrible sorrow had fallen upon him when he had

Chapter 26

'It's Mother!'

THEIR belief in the Magic was an abiding thing. After the morning's incantations Colin sometimes gave them Magic lectures.

'I like to do it,' he explained, 'because when I grow up and make great scientific discoveries I shall be obliged to lecture about them and so this is practise. I can only give short lectures now because I am very young, and besides Ben Weatherstaff would feel as if he was in church and he would go to sleep.'

'Th' best thing about lecturin',' said Ben, 'is that a chap can get up an' say aught he pleases an' no other chap can answer him back. I wouldn't be agen' lecturin' a bit mysel' sometimes.'

But when Colin held forth under his tree old Ben fixed devouring eyes on him and kept them there. He looked him over with critical affection. It was not so much the lecture which interested him as the legs which looked straighter and stronger each day, the boyish head which held itself up so well, the once sharp chin and hollow cheeks which had filled and rounded out and the eyes

When the nurse carried the tray down-stairs she slapped it down on the kitchen dresser so that Mrs Loomis, the cook, could see the highly polished dishes and plates.

'Look at that!' she said. 'This is a house of mystery, and those two children are the greatest mysteries in it.'

'If they keep that up every day,' said the strong young footman John, 'there'd be small wonder that he weighs twice as much to-day as he did a month ago. I should have to give up my place in time, for fear of doing my muscles an injury.'

That afternoon Mary noticed that something new had happened in Colin's room. She had noticed it the day before but had said nothing because she thought the change might have been made by chance. She said nothing to-day but she sat and looked fixedly at the picture over the mantel. She could look at it because the curtain had been drawn aside. That was the change she noticed.

'I know what you want me to tell you,' said Colin, after she had stared a few minutes. 'I always know when you want me to tell you something. You are wondering why the curtain is drawn back. I am going to keep it like that.'

'Why?' asked Mary.

'Because it doesn't make me angry any more to see her laughing. I wakened when it was bright moonlight two nights ago and felt as if the Magic was filling the room and making everything so splendid that I couldn't lie still. I got up and looked out of the window. The room was quite light and there was a patch of moonlight on the curtain and somehow that made me go and pull the cord. She looked right down at me as if she were laughing because she was glad I was standing there. It made me like to look at her. I want to see her laughing like that all the time. I think she must have been a sort of Magic person perhaps.'

'You are so like her now,' said Mary, 'that sometimes I think perhaps you are her ghost made into a boy.'

That idea seemed to impress Colin. He thought it over and then answered her slowly.

'If I were her ghost—my father would be fond of me,' he said.

'Do you want him to be fond of you?' inquired Mary.

'I used to hate it because he was not fond of me. If he grew fond of me I think I should tell him about the Magic. It might make him more cheerful.'

been happy and he had let his soul fill itself with blackness and had refused obstinately to allow any rift of light to pierce through. He had forgotten and deserted his home and his duties. When he traveled about, darkness so brooded over him that the sight of him was a wrong done to other people because it was as if he poisoned the air about him with gloom. Most strangers thought he must be either half mad or a man with some hidden crime on his soul. He was a tall man with a drawn face and crooked shoulders and the name he always entered on hotel registers was, 'Archibald Craven, Misselthwaite Manor, Yorkshire, England.'

He had traveled far and wide since the day he saw Mistress Mary in his study and told her she might have her 'bit of earth.' He had been in the most beautiful places in Europe, though he had remained nowhere more than a few days. He had chosen the quietest and remotest spots. He had been on the tops of mountains whose heads were in the clouds and had looked down on other mountains when the sun rose and touched them with such light as made it seem as if the world were just being born.

But the light had never seemed to touch himself until one day when he realized that for the first time in ten years a strange thing had happened. He was in a wonderful valley in the Austrian Tyrol and he had been walking alone through such beauty as might have lifted any man's soul out of shadow. He had walked a long way and it had not lifted his. But at last he had felt tired and had thrown himself down to rest on a carpet of moss by a stream. It was a clear little stream which ran quite merrily along on its narrow way through the luscious damp greenness. Sometimes it made a sound rather like very low laughter as it bubbled over and round stones. He saw birds come and dip their heads to drink in it and then flick their wings and fly away. It seemed like a thing alive and yet its tiny voice made the stillness seem deeper. The valley was very, very still.

As he sat gazing into the clear running of the water, Archibald Craven gradually felt his mind and body both grow quiet, as quiet as the valley itself. He wondered if he were going to sleep, but he was not. He sat and gazed at the sunlit water and his eyes began to see things growing at its edge. There was one lovely mass of blue forget-me-nots growing so close to the stream that its leaves were wet and at these he found himself looking as he remembered he had looked at such things years ago. He was actually thinking tenderly how

lovely it was and what wonders of blue its hundreds of little blossoms were. He did not know that just that simple thought was slowly filling his mind—filling and filling it until other things were softly pushed aside. It was as if a sweet clear spring had begun to rise in a stagnant pool and had risen and risen until at last it swept the dark water away. But of course he did not think of this himself. He only knew that the valley seemed to grow quieter and quieter as he sat and stared at the bright delicate blueness. He did not know how long he sat there or what was happening to him, but at last he moved as if he were awakening and he got up slowly and stood on the moss carpet, drawing a long, deep, soft breath and wondering at himself. Something seemed to have been unbound and released in him, very quietly.

'What is it?' he said, almost in a whisper, and he passed his hand over his forehead. 'I almost feel as if—I were alive!'

I do not know enough about the wonderfulness of undiscovered things to be able to explain how this had happened to him. Neither does any one else yet. He did not understand at all himself—but he remembered this strange hour months afterward when he was at Misselthwaite again and he found out quite by accident that on this very day Colin had cried out as he went into the secret garden:

'I am going to live forever and ever and ever!'

The singular calmness remained with him the rest of the evening and he slept a new reposeful sleep; but it was not with him very long. He did not know that it could be kept. By the next night he had opened the doors wide to his dark thoughts and they had come trooping and rushing back. He left the valley and went on his wandering way again. But, strange as it seemed to him, there were minutes—sometimes half-hours—when, without his knowing why, the black burden seemed to lift itself again and he knew he was a living man and not a dead one. Slowly—slowly—for no reason that he knew of—he was 'coming alive' with the garden.

As the golden summer changed into the deeper golden autumn he went to the Lake of Como. There he found the loveliness of a dream. He spent his days upon the crystal blueness of the lake or he walked back into the soft thick verdure of the hills and tramped until he was tired so that he might sleep. But by this time he had begun to sleep better, he knew, and his dreams had ceased to be a terror to him.

When the nurse came in he gave his orders.

'I want my chair,' he said. 'Miss Mary and I are going to look at the part of the house which is not used. John can push me as far as the picture-gallery because there are some stairs. Then he must go away and leave us alone until I send for him again.'

Rainy days lost their terrors that morning. When the footman had wheeled the chair into the picture-gallery and left the two together in obedience to orders, Colin and Mary looked at each other delighted. As soon as Mary had made sure that John was really on his way back to his own quarters below stairs, Colin got out of his chair.

'I am going to run from one end of the gallery to the other,' he said, 'and then I am going to jump and then we will do Bob Haworth's exercises.'

And they did all these things and many others. They looked at the portraits and found the plain little girl dressed in green brocade and holding the parrot on her finger.

'All these,' said Colin, 'must be my relations. They lived a long time ago. That parrot one, I believe, is one of my great, great, great, great aunts. She looks rather like you, Mary—not as you look now but as you looked when you came here. Now you are a great deal fatter and better looking.'

'So are you,' said Mary, and they both laughed.

They went to the Indian room and amused themselves with the ivory elephants. They found the rose-coloured brocade boudoir and the hole in the cushion the mouse had left but the mice had grown up and run away and the hole was empty. They saw more rooms and made more discoveries than Mary had made on her first pilgrimage. They found new corridors and corners and flights of steps and new old pictures they liked and weird old things they did not know the use of. It was a curiously entertaining morning and the feeling of wandering about in the same house with other people but at the same time feeling as if one were miles away from them was a fascinating thing.

'I'm glad we came,' Colin said. 'I never knew I lived in such a big queer old place. I like it. We will ramble about every rainy day. We shall always be finding new queer corners and things.'

That morning they had found among other things such good appetites that when they returned to Colin's room it was not possible to send the luncheon away untouched.