

Finger-Posts

By Eva Gore-Booth

I

THIS is the way of Heaven : you may kneel
And beat your breast for hours in futile prayer ;
No faint light flickers on the golden stair,
No spirit hearkens to your soul's appeal ;
No hand draws back the curtains that conceal
The land of shadows men imagine fair ;
And the belovèd shade who wanders there
Invisible, no magic may reveal.
Men talk of all the strength of love and faith—
Vain words! and false it is as idle boast
To dream you hold communion with a ghost,
And bring to earth again a vanished wraith.
No shadow answers to a shadow's call—
This is the way of all things spiritual.

II

This is the way of Nature : as of old
When from the primal darkness first there grew
Flowers, and the sun shone and the sky was blue,

And

And life's bright promises were manifold—
Her hidden wealth is now as then untold.
He who digs deep enough shall find her true ;
Each miner gains at last his honest due
Of her great buried store of gems and gold.
This is the way of Earth : she hears the call
Of every ploughman's prayer ; the labourer,
If he be worthy, has his will of her ;
From the rich furrows where the good seeds fall
She brings forth life, and all the hope that clings
Round the strong patience of material things.

III

This is the way of Sorrow : wearily
Should one set out with such a weary guide ;
The path is narrow, and the world is wide,
And no man knoweth any reason why.
And yet 'tis foolishness to strive or cry ;
The doom must fall on whom the gods decide.
They walk with pain for ever at their side,
Through her long wilderness of mystery.
Yet though sweet Sorrow hath few words^r to^r say,
A dull companion on a lonely road,
Yea, though she hath not strength enough to pray,
And on life's shoulders binds a heavy load,
Her heart is true, her footsteps shall not stray,
She leads at last unto the gods' abode.

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IV

This is the way of Joy : the artist knows
 The secret that makes all things fresh and fair.
 She gives a fragrance to the summer air,
 And, flashing by where life's dull river flows,
 She shakes the languor of its slow repose,
 And drives it, scattering music everywhere,
 Up to the foot of Heaven's golden stair,
 Through the wild tangles of the mystic rose ;
 There in the shade beside the river's bed
 She rests awhile, and dabbles in the stream—
 Till down the giddy mazes of her dream
 She finds the little peaceful hour has fled.
 Then forth into the startled sky she springs
 With swift wet feet and shining golden wings.

V

This is the way of Life when Joy has fled :
 She passes through a wilderness of cloud,
 And, wrapped in music for a mimic shroud,
 She comes unto the dwellings of the Dead.
 No river now, a mournful nymph instead,
 By Joy's short sojourn with a soul endowed,
 She seeks for her among the nameless crowd
 That throng the gateway of the Halls of Dread—
 Seeks for the long lost Joy, the light divine,
 The Paradise that she shall never win—
 Content at last, and glad to enter in
 Despair's abode, and rest with Proserpine,
 Sorrow, whose eyes are dark with unshed tears,
 And all the ghostly company of fears.

This

VI

This is the way of Love : a ray of light
In the mid forest through the foliage shines,
And makes green shadows of the serried pines,
Bringing a secret pathway into sight,
Where two may walk alone in their delight,
And half in darkness; for the thick set lines
Of mighty trees their narrow road confines
With the black limits of enshrouding night.
Yet has the forest fortress failed in strength,
Swift windy beams split through the leafy screen,
And pierce the heavy shroud of waving green,
Until the narrow pathway feels at length
The strength of sunshine and the light of rain,
And broadens out into the open plain:

VII

This is the road of Hope, that some men call
The way of Love, far out of human sight,
Amid strange mansions of austere delight :
A way of shadows, pale, æthereal,
High among stars and storm, outsoaring all
The silent glories of each lonely height,
Above the tumult of the windy night,
Beyond the bounds of Heaven's cloudy wall.
Still God's calm splendour shineth overhead,
The great white way where light and gladness are—
This is the Joy of earth transfigurèd,
Set high in heaven, very faint and far,
The glorious Highway of the holy Dead,
The path of Love from star to scattered star.