

sufficient to destroy mankind and all his works. A little escaped in sparks we call lightning and discharges we name thunder; but by far the greater part was silently drained off by leaves and blades of grass; and when the western hills were reached, human existence became further safeguarded by craggy summits which caught at the storm-cloud, robbing it swiftly of the elements of destruction; and causing its myriads of bubbles to break and descend at last in rain.

All that the blend of snow-crystals, morning mist, vapour, dust, and acid had been able to accomplish, when so highly charged with electric energy, was to flash light, growl in the language of Thor, and throw back rain upon soil which did not appear to need more moisture. The drops, merry as children, tumbled and nestled together, whispering, laughing, chattering. They knew everything, and could speak all languages; for they were older than light, having been present at the beginning of adventures very early Monday morning, and seen all the wonders unfolding one by one; some of them, perhaps, had been allowed to moisten the palm of the Gardener. Remember this is a vision. The historian can do no more than record a rainfall, but the dreamer is free to regard each drop as a living, breathing, speaking personality, a vesicle of knowledge, a philosopher of the commonplace, a recorder of incidents, and truthful gossip withal.

"Once again I fall upon this altar. Ages ago I hissed into its fire."

"My present duty is to feed this root of heather; that I can manage without assistance, because I am the largest of all the raindrops."

"Early this morning I was a snowflake."

"And I a dewdrop."

"Only yesterday I ran down a gutter in London."

"My last resting-place was a filthy hole in Flanders," cried another, so loudly that all the other drops ceased their bragging; until one, spreading its tiny moisture complacently upon a peat bed, remarked simply, "Tell us a story before we sink into the ground."

"I will tell you about Ernest Southcombe and Gilda Dewstone," promised the Flanders drop.

"I have a clear recollection of that young woman," said the drop in the heather. "Once, in the streets of