

answered, with conviction. "Of course, you know her very well, and I have only just met her; but surely one can see with half an eye that—well, that she isn't by any means dead to this wicked world."

"Ah, there's where you make a mistake," said Blake, with earnestness. "She belongs to the good fairies."

"And you believe in fairies," Robin added.

Blake took the remark perfectly seriously. "Well," he said, "I won't say in *fairies* exactly; but I believe that we are surrounded by unseen forces of good and evil, some helpful and strengthening, some capricious and elfin, and some wicked and deadly."

"The trouble is," said Robin, "that when a person begins to probe into these mysteries he never knows which class of influences he may come into contact with."

"Yes," Blake answered, "that's so. But you can be quite sure that Daisy, in her occult studies, has got into touch only with the powers of good, or at any rate with nothing worse than the elfin ones."

"And what about yourself?"

An extraordinary change came over his face. He stared long and silently at Robin with his round, black eyes; and, as he looked, the whole atmosphere and condition of the conversation altered. The young explorer had been feeling a sort of good-humoured, rather friendly tolerance for this strange creature and his outlook. Now, however, there crept over him an overwhelming horror of the man. It was a sensation such as he had once felt on coming across a leper in a native village: horror mingled with pity, horror without hatred, horror intensified by sympathy.

"What about myself?" Blake repeated, his voice rising; and then, in tones which conveyed the strangest admixture of anguish and laughter, he said: "I don't know. That's the trouble. *I don't know!*"