

conduct him—whither, he will not inquire. He will adventure towards the eternal May-be, the ever-expectant “Who knows?” He will stray delightfully, and “comprehend all vagrom men.” He will wander into undiscovered places and quaint obscure retreats. He will meet the absolutely unexpected, and acquaint himself with the wildly strange. He will learn what lies beyond the hills, and whither the byeways meander. He will travel toward the fascination of large horizons, he will trek into the unknown. He will walk and talk with the most casual and disreputable of wayfarers, he will question all and any of them, right and left. And coming finely hungry and pleasantly weary into some old little town at sunfall, he will eat and lie at a cosy inn, and be simple and careless and content. Hurrah!

Habit retires, and he goes forward, brisk and free. Impetuously, in a spurt, the village far behind, he goes, head down, and presently almost literally and actually runs up against his first tangible difficulty, which is a signpost. For the highway forks just there, a signpost stands between the prongs of the fork at their roots, and on it a magpie sits, perched; a single magpie, mateless, and therefore a bird of ill-omen.

He glowers down at Dick Stewart, Dick Stewart stares up at him.

“Scoot, you corbie crow, you ungainly fowl!”

The stick is lifted, and with a flirt of the tail the bird is off and away in looping flight. And then the man examines the arms of the post.

South-east and sou'-west the wooven-headed monitor points, with mute and scanty lore. “To Listrac—To Provenchel.” To Listrac or to Provenchel shall a waiter on chance and fortune go?

Or to neither? For Dick Stewart suddenly stands back a yard and frowns. He frowns at the post. Then he whistles. Whew-w-w! He whistles a descending chromatic scale. For the stolid monitor displays a warning. In the painted skin of the post at the level of the eye some cynical or jesting hand had scratched two words of warning: “*Va pas.*”