

about them. They are chilled into nervous silence and wait, afflicted by fear and discouragement, till the cloud passes and the air clears. Then the perpetual buzz of "feeling" begins again in the mixed bass and treble of complaint and rejoicing,—a kind of monotonous noise without harmony. External Nature has no part in it, for Man is the only creature that ever tries to explain the phenomena of existence. It is not in the least comprehensible why he alone should thus trouble and perplex himself,—or why his incessant consideration and analysis of his own emotions should be allowed to go on,—for, whatsoever education may do for us, we shall never be educated out of the sense of our own importance. Which is an odd fact, moving many thoughtful minds to never-ending wonder.

My heroine, Diana May, wondered. She was always wondering. She spent weeks, and months, and years, in a chronic state of wonder. She wondered about herself and several other people, because she thought both herself and those several other people so absurd. She found no use for herself in the general scheme of things, and tried, with much patient humility, to account for herself. But though she read books on science, books on psychology, books on natural and spiritual law, and studied complex problems of evolution and selection of species till her poor dim eyes grew dimmer, and the "lines from nose to chin" became ever longer and deeper, she could discover no way through the thick bog of her difficulties. She was an awkward numeral in a sum; she did not know why she came in or how she was to be got out.

Her father and mother were what are called "very well-to-do-people," with a pleasantly suburban reputation for respectability and regular church attendance. Mr. James Polydore May,—this was his name in full, as engraved on his visiting card—was