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*Cornelia's study*

1928

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INDIA  
CALLING

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*The Memories of*  
CORNELIA SORABJI

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*To*

**E.**

**my Friend, greatly beloved**



## INTRODUCTION

**A**T one of the many delightful visits which I paid in my youth to the Grant Duffs at York House, Twickenham—Sir Mountstuart said of me, making a necessary introduction, “A Friend who has warmed her hands at two fires, without being scorched.” . . . Yes—it is true that I have been privileged to know two hearthstones, to be homed in two countries, England and India. But though it is difficult to say which “home” I love best, there has never, at any time, been the remotest doubt as to which called to me with most insistence. . . . Always, early or late, throughout the years, it has been “India Calling.” . . .

And it has been such a happy life that, before I begin to try and tell what can be told in words, I want to glance back over my shoulder and savour it . . . patches of dappled sunshine lying all along the road from the very beginning—sunlight scented with rosemary and lavender. I inhale the Past in great whiff. The eyes of my Mother, whatever her mood : my father’s laugh : the clearings in the woods near our home and the many games we played as children : the branches of the forest trees on moonlit nights as we swung from one to another : the stars hanging like lamps out of an indigo sky reaching immeasurably :

the thrill of knowing that no one could rob me of dying, and the thrill of the "pretend" slipping out of my skin to go tiptoeing from star to star, as I meant to do when I was dead : the smell of the earth after the rains : the wonder of thunder and lightning : camping in India and waking in the dawn hour to sniff the sour-sweet mango blossom and hear the lovely sounds of a camp astir. The fun of cross-country journeys by palanquin or elephant, in canoe or dug-out. . . . Dawn at Darjeeling with the snows coming alive with colour : early morning rides in the hills, the trees dripping dew—"And all growing things I offer, thus, before the World has soiled them" . . .

Sunsets—flaming gold and red-gold : or bruised and blue : or pale mauve and primrose : the deep shadows on the hills, folds in the brodered mantle of God : gold mohur trees trailing bloom : the green paroquets at Budh Gaya : the blue wood-smoke in an Indian village. A thrush in an English garden, his throat swelling with song : the dark wood of trees in early spring bursting with swollen buds, or powdered with blossom : chestnuts alight : sheets of bluebells set in woods of grey beeches. Somerset, and the view from my window—old trees and flower-beds and sloping fields where the quiet cattle grazed : a dinghy on the Cher : Bagley Woods and fritillaries : tramps in Oxfordshire or over Welsh hills, or in the Riviera : and always and always the Earth springing flowers.

Burnham Beeches aflame at Autumn's ending : beeches again in the New Forest ; the lovely brown

leaves on the browner earth and the feel of crushing them as you walked. Scotland and the look of heather in the distance, and the feel of heather when you lay upon it : and the little streams in Scotland and in Cumberland, with the stones showing through, held so safe and cool among the peat of their green-and-brownness.

London, and the way it caught one's heart, first seen . . . the feeling of standing at the core of the traffic, one morning at the Exchange, and knowing one's self utterly insignificant and alone, yet alive and perfectly companioned. My first robin : my first fall of snow : the ache when snow melted and got dirty : the Irish crossing-sweeper with her bonnet awry, who smiled at me—"One must keep up one's speerits, *and* one's appearance!" : the exhilaration of London fogs : dream cities : the Towers of Westminster in a white mist : the lion in Trafalgar Square with whom I shared all my jokes and my anxieties—the one nearest the Strand : tiredness after work done : many an apt phrase heard or read : special loves in Books and Music and Pictures. Venice and Assisi : things seen, loved, felt, admired : and best of all, Friendships everywhere, and the faces of little children.

No ! The goodness and happiness of it all can never really be gathered up to be bound into a book ; it spills too much elusive golden grain, which only the heart remembers and recognizes.

But the Giver will know, and will take this for my inarticulate *Te Deum*.





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