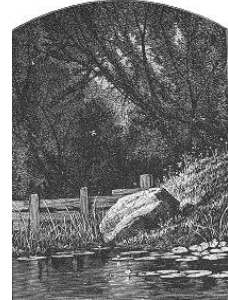


## Four, Three, Two, and One by Albert E.S. Smythe

As I went on my way through the Enchanted Land, I saw two of the quaintest fellows I had ever dreamed about. They were some way ahead of me, and as I had not yet seen anyone who could tell me anything I wanted to know, I ran after them and shouted.

They swung around and faced me, and I was puzzled to see that they always kept a little distance apart, but with always the same distance between them, as if, indeed, each held a hand of the same invisible companion.



"How do you do?" I said.

"How do we do?" said one of them. "He doesn't do a thing," said the other.

"We do it all," they both shouted, and then laughed so much that I grew quite red in the face and thought them very rude.

"He thinks we have no manners," said one of them.

"Neither we have," said the other.

"Isn't it jolly?" they both shouted, and one catching hold of my right hand, the other my left, they swung me around in such a swift and giddy dance that the flowers and the grass and the sky and the clouds all got tangled up in great coils of red and green and white and blue ropes, whirling and spinning in endless circles. I was so dizzy when they stopped that I staggered about and had to sit down. They stood beside me and laughed so much I felt sure they could not have any ribs, as mine always ached distressfully if I laughed half so much.

"Why do you laugh like that?" I asked them.

"Why do we laugh?" they shouted, and immediately went into such an uproarious fit I was afraid something might happen. It did not seem right to laugh so much, almost. I was even afraid I might get over my indignation and begin to laugh also, and I was quite certain that if I did I should need a doctor.

"He hasn't seen us cry," said one.

"Nor laugh on the other side of our mouths," said the other.

"Do you cry as badly as you laugh?" I asked.

"Of course we do," they replied.

"Please don't then."

"Oh, we won't; we were crying just a little while ago. Generally one of us laughs while the other cries, but that never occurs except with strangers. Didn't you feel miserable when you were climbing the Far Hills?"

"Yes," I said; "dreadfully."

"Well, we were crying then, and so we had to laugh when you came here, and couldn't see Number One."

"What's Number One?" I asked.

"Oh, you're a silly," said one of them. "You were dancing with Number One just now. We are Two and Three. You are number Four. Can't you see Number One between us?"

"No," I replied, "I can only see the air."

"And you can't see that, you stupid. But if you will try and tell the truth we can show you lots of things, and perhaps you can learn to see Number One."

"Which of you is Two and which is Three?" I inquired.

"Either you please," said one of them. "Sometimes I am Two and sometimes I am Three. But you are always Four, and One is always one."

"Have you no other names? I have another name than Four," I said.

"Yes; I am Mister Cause, and this is Master Consequence. Or if you like I am Master Consequence and he is Mister Cause."

"We are both each other," said his quaint companion.

"I am everybody's Daddy," said one of them.

"I am everybody's Sonnyman," said the other.

"I am Day," said the first.

"And I am Night," said the other.

"And I am Night," said the first.

"And I am Day," said his fellow. And so they began such a chant that I cannot remember the tenth part of it, and my head quite reeled with the confusion and the extent of it all. For they seemed to exchange places and characters with each response, and they assumed so many and so various forms and appearances that the whole world seemed to pass before me in a vision.

"I am Birth."

"And I am Death."

"And I am Death."

"And I am Birth."

"I am Past."

"And I am Future."

"I am Future."

"And I am Past."

And so they continued until they seemed to have named and represented all the things and all the ideas I had ever heard of, and far more that I had not, all of them arranged in couples and all of them apparently interchangeable. At last they stopped with a repetition of the names they began with.

"I am Mister Cause."

"And I am Master Consequence."

"And I am Master Consequence."

"And I am Mister Cause."

"I am the Daddy."

"And I am the Sonnyman."

"And I am the Sonnyman."

"And I am the Daddy."

"Have you quite finished?" I asked when they ceased.

"Oh dear, no! We are the Twins of May. We go on forever," cried one. "If we didn't, we would be suspended. You remember we told you that we did it all?"

"Yes," I admitted, "but I wasn't sure if you were not joking."

"We never joke," he replied.

"Not when you laugh as you did?"

"That was a most serious matter," he said.

"Well, it was," I conceded. "You are a queer couple. Still, if you can tell me something about the Enchanted Land I shall be very much obliged."

"Don't mention it," said one, "for there is nothing to tell. You must just go with us and see it all. We can show you everything. That is what Number One keeps us for."

"And does Number One go with us?" I asked.

"I told you he was between us. If Number One wasn't here we couldn't be together. Number One takes our hands and we take yours, you see. Would you like another dance?"

"Not just yet," I said, though I felt that I would like to see everything change into coils of colored rope again.

"Sometimes people can see Number One in the dance," remarked one of them; I never was quite sure which of them spoke."

"Is that the only way to see Number One?"

"No, there is another way."

"What is it?" I enquired, for I was strangely curious, and longed to look on the face of this Invisible and Silent One.

"You must become a Number One yourself," they said.

"But is that possible?"

"For some it is," answered one. "For all it will be," said the other.

"And how can it be so?"

"When the First is Last and one lives for others," they told me.

"Has Number One any other name?"

"Yes; many others. Love and Justice, and Karma, and Fate, and Mercy, and Providence, and The Law, and a host of others. But those who speak these names often forgot that Number One always holds our hands, and can only be found between us."

"And which of the Names do you like best?" I asked them.

"We have no desire," said they. "We see with clear eyes."

"But you have better names?" I persisted.

And one said, "There is Life, and to it belong Peace and Eternity."

And the other said, "There is the ever unfolding Beauty."

"And Life and Beauty are two of the names?"

"These are two of the names," they said.

And I went forth with them, and I dwell in the Enchanted Land, Number Four with these three, and three of us are shadows.

*(Universal Brotherhood, August 1898)*