

The Story of the Travellers

and other remedy stories

Edward Bach

“The Story of Clematis Itself” and “The Story of Centaury Itself” were written in 1933. “The Story of the Travellers”. “The Story of the Oak Tree” and “A Story of the Zodiac” were written in 1934. “The Walnut Tree” was written in 1935.

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A note from the editor

The short pieces collected here all touch on remedy indications. The first and longest dates from early 1934, when Dr Edward Bach had discovered sixteen remedies that he divided into twelve “healers” and four “helpers”. The last and latest was written in 1935, shortly before Bach completed his system and reclassified its 38 remedies into seven groups, dropping the healers/helpers structure and refining and refocusing the indications for each flower.

Used to having 38 remedies to choose from, modern readers may find some of these early descriptions confusing; we would be correct for example to wonder whether Beech would be a better name for the Rock Water character in “The Travellers”. But viewed as a historical record, even the more doubtful indications are valuable. They give a glimpse of Bach's work at a time of change, when its creator was edging towards the final, simple understanding that he achieved before his death.¹

The Bach Centre, 2014

1 See e.g. www.bachcentre.com/centre/simple.htm for more on the historical development of the system.

The Story of the Travellers

(1934)

Once upon a time; and it is always once upon a time, sixteen travellers set out to journey through a forest.

At first all went well, but after they had journeyed some distance one of the number, Agrimony, began to be worried as to whether they were on the right path. Later in the afternoon as they went deeper into the shadows, Mimulus began to be afraid, afraid that they had lost the road. When the sun set and the shadows deepened and the night noises of the forest were heard around them, Rock Rose became full of terror and was in a state of panic. In the middle of the night when all was blackness, Gorse lost all hope and said, "I can go no further; you go along, but I shall stay here as I am until death relieves my sufferings."

Oak, on the other hand, though feeling all was lost and that they would never again see the sunshine said, "I shall struggle on to the very last", and he did in a wild way.

Scleranthus had some hope but at times he suffered so from uncertainty and indecision, first wanting to take one road and almost at

once another. Clematis plodded on quietly and patiently, but caring oh so little if he fell into the last sound sleep or whether he got out of the forest.² Gentian at times much cheered the party, but at others fell into a state of despondency and depression.

Others of the travellers never feared but that they would get through and in their own way wanted so much to help their companions.

Heather was very sure he knew the path and wanted all the company to take his way.³ Chicory had no concern about the end of the journey but was full of solicitude as to whether his fellows were footsore or tired or had enough to eat. Cerato had not much confidence in his judgement and wanted to try every path to be sure they were not wrong, and meek little Centaury so wanted to lighten the burden that he was ready to carry everybody's baggage. Unfortunately for little Centaury, he generally carried the burden of those most able to bear their own because they called the loudest.

Rock Water, all afire to help, a little depressed the party because he would criticise what they were doing wrong,⁴ and yet Rock Water knew the way. Vervain should also have known the path well enough, but although he had become a little confused, held forth at length as to the only way out of the wood. Impatiens, too, well knew the pathway home, so well that he was impatient with those less speedy than

2 With the full system to choose from we might interpret this as more likely to be a Wild Rose state. See www.bachcentre.com/healers, page 20.

3 Bach's draft indications for Heather included characteristics he would later find better reflected in Vine.

4 See the introductory note, page 4.

himself. Water Violet had travelled that way before and knew the right road and yet was a little proud and a little disdainful that others did not understand. Water Violet thought them a little inferior.⁵

And in the end they all came through the forest.

Now they go as guides to other travellers who have not made the journey before, and, because they know there is a pathway through, and because they know the darkness of the forest is but the shadows of the night, they walk as “gentlemen unafraid”, and each of the sixteen sojourners teach in their own way the lesson, the example needed.

Agrimony strides along free of all care, and jests on everything. Mimulus can know no fear; Rock Rose in the darkest moments is just a picture of calm, serene courage. Gorse in the blackest night tells them of the progress they will make when the sun rises in the morning.

Oak stands steadfast in the strongest gale; Scleranthus walks with perfect certainty; the eyes of Clematis are fixed with joy on the journey’s end, and no difficulties or set-backs can discourage Gentian.

Heather has learnt that each traveller must walk in his own way and quietly strides in front to show it can be done.⁶ Chicory, always waiting to lend a hand, but only when asked, and then so quietly. Cerato knows so well the little paths that lead to nowhere, and Centaury ever seeks the weakest who find their burden heavy.

5 Compare the final indications for Water Violet, where self-reliance and independence are more characteristic of this personality than pride and disdain. See www.bachcentre.com/healers, page 23.

6 Like the negative state, the positive quality associated here with Heather also has in it a strong echo of Bach's later description of Vine.

Rock Water has forgotten to accuse, he just spends all the time encouraging.⁷ Vervain no longer preaches but silently points the way. Impatiens knows no hurry, but lingers among the hindmost to keep their pace; and Water Violet, more like an angel than a man, passes amongst the company like a breath of warm wind or a ray of glorious sunshine, blessing everyone.

⁷ Again, see the introductory note, page 4.

The Story of Clematis Itself

(1933)

And do you wonder that I want to go away? You see, I have fixed my thoughts on earthly things, on earthly people, and if they go I so want to follow them. I just want to fly away and be where they are. Can you blame me? My dreams, my ideal, my romance. Why should I not be with all these things, and what can you offer me that is better? Nothing that I can see. You only offer me cold materialism, life on the earth with all its hardships and sorrows, and there far away is my dream, my ideal. Do you blame me if I follow it?

And Clematis came along and said, "Are your ideals God's ideals? Are you sure that you are serving Him Who made you, Who created you, Who gave you your life, or are you listening just to some other human being who is trying to claim you, and so you are forgetting that you are a son of God with all His Divinity within your soul, and instead of this glorious reality you are being lured away by just some other human being.

I know how we long to fly away to more wonderful realms, but, brothers of the human world, let us first fulfil our duty and even not our duty but our joy, and may you adorn the places where you live and strive to make them beautiful as I endeavour to make the hedges glorious, so that they have called me the "Travellers' Joy".⁸

8 Travellers' Joy is a country name for *Clematis vitalba*.

The Story of Centaury Itself

(1933)

I am weak, yes, I know I am weak, but why? Because I have learnt to hate strength and power and dominion, and if I do err a little on the weakness side, forgive me, because it is only a reaction to the hatred of hurting others, and I shall soon learn to understand how to find the balance when I neither hurt nor am hurting. But just for the moment I would rather that I suffered than that I caused one moment's pain to my brother.

So be very patient with your little Centaury, she is weak, I know, but it is a weakness on the right side, and I shall soon grow bigger and stronger and more beautiful until you will all admire me because of the strength I shall bring to you.

A Story of the Zodiac

(1934)

When our Lord, the Great Brother of the race, deemed it time for us to learn yet another lesson from the great Book of Life, the messenger came all shining in the darkness of night, in the cold of winter when the physical life is inward drawn, and heralded the new revelation of yet another aspect of Love which man was now growing strong enough to bear. But men were terribly afraid of the Light and the Angels, so that instead of feeling joy and happiness, they had to be told to fear not that Peace and Goodwill would come to them. To these tidings they listened with bended knees, with eyes downcast, to make sure that the safe earth, which they knew, was still beneath their feet, for of this alone they were sure. Now the soil on which they lived and which gave them food in abundance, held many herbs for their healing but these they would have to find for themselves.

The wise Brothers of the race who had long ago received the joyful news from the stars sought for these herbs,⁹ these true friends of man, which held powers for their healing and they found the Twelve Healers through virtue of the Four Helpers.

9 Bach's search for correspondences between remedies and astrological signs may be one root of his early conjecture that there would be twelve main remedies, although a letter written in 1933 already expressed doubts: "I am being cautious as regards astrology... I do not wish to be associated with anything dogmatic, until one is sure." By 1936 it was clear that astrology was one of the pieces of "scaffolding" that Bach used to help construct the system, but for which the finished system had no use.

The Four Helpers were the faith in a better world which they hoped one day to attain, now reflected in the flaming Gorse bush. The perseverance of the Oak which braved all tempests, offering shelter and support to the weaker things. The willingness to serve of Heather, which was glad to cover with its simple beauty the arid wind-tossed spaces, and the pure springs gushing from the rocks,¹⁰ bringing brightness and refreshment to those weary and sore after battle.

¹⁰ A reference to the Rock Water remedy, the only Bach remedy that doesn't use flowers.

The Story of the Oak Tree

(1934)

One day, and not very long ago, a man was leaning against an oak tree in an old park in Surrey, and he heard what the oak tree was thinking. Now that sounds a very funny thing, but trees do think, you know, and some people can understand what they are thinking.

This old oak tree, and it was a very old oak tree, was saying to itself, "How I envy those cows in the meadow that can walk about the field, and here I am; and everything around so beautiful, so wonderful, the sunshine and the breezes and the rain and yet I am rooted to the spot."

And years afterwards the man found that in the flowers of the oak tree was a great power, the power to heal a lot of sick people, and so he collected the flowers of the oak trees and made them into medicines, and lots and lots of people were healed and made well again.

Some time after this on a hot summer's afternoon, the man was lying on the edge of a cornfield very nearly asleep, and he heard a tree thinking, as some people can hear trees think. The tree was speaking to itself very quietly, and it was saying, "I don't any longer envy the cows who can walk about the meadows, because I can go to all the four quarters of the world to heal the people who are ill": and the man looked up and found that it was an oak tree thinking.

The Walnut Tree

(1935)

This remedy, Walnut, is the remedy of advancing stages: teething, puberty, change of life.

Also for the big decisions made during life, such as change of religion, change of occupation, change of country.

It is the remedy for a great change. The remedy for those who have decided to take a great step forward in life. The decision to step forward, to break old conventions, to leave old limits and restrictions, and to start on a new and better way, often brings with it physical suffering because of the slight regrets, the slight heart-breakings at severance from old ties, old associations, old thoughts.

This remedy will soothe and help to abolish the physical reactions under such conditions, whether the step forward being taken is of a mental or physical nature.

It is the remedy which helps us to pass through all such states without regrets, without memories of the past, without fears for the future, and therefore saves us from the mental and physical suffering which is so often associated with such events.

Undoubtedly a great spell-breaker, both of things of the past commonly called heredity, and circumstances of the present.