

Chapter XI

FIRST THINGS FIRST

IN the very heart of this jungle of conflicting interests, contradictory energies and perplexingly tangled cross purposes, there is a sign-post erected. It has a score of directing pointers, radiating like the spokes of a cart wheel, every one being inscribed 'This way to Beulah'. A Babel of advice from multitudinous friends, philosophers and guides makes discord and confusion, but brings little light to the prevailing uncertainty. This possibly arises from the fact that none of our wise masters can see any further from his own nose than the distance between it and the nearest dear comrade's nose, which it is his noble and disinterested desire to flatten. I suppose the main controversy does not range round the fact of the jungle, or what caused its growth and development, but that unanimously granted, the difficulty appears to be to make a decision as to which of the many prescribed avenues to blessedness should be taken.

To me, as a potential pilgrim, the difficulty is not a choice of roads so much as a choice of company. They all lead somewhere, and by some fortuitous chance may lead the way I want to go. I have, however, had so much advice in my time that I hesitate taking any more. Experience may not always teach much, but it does engender caution. Before I could decide upon my path, I must take cognisance of the fact that, whichever way I decide upon, it will be a very long way. First