The Coreopsis Classic

IS THAT ALL?

NEWTON DILLAWAY

"... a spontaneous little masterpiece."
IS THAT ALL?

Newton Dillaway

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The secret of heaven is kept from age to age ... We should have listened ... But it is certain that it must tally with what is best in nature ... It must be fresher than rainbows, stabler than mountains, agreeing with flowers...

—Emerson
Once upon a time, as legend has it, there lived a young man named Homer, who turned his back 'on the field.'
In earlier years Homer was 'tense as a hunting dog.' He had set out to find the secret of the ages; and everywhere he went, he finally was forced to say, as those driven by Marco Polo once said, 'Surely God never saw this place that He left it so terrible. Surely He was never here. He was never here.'

Rumor hath it that Homer studied all the popular religions and philosophies, seeking ever the secret of the ages — how to know God. The more he studied, the more tense he became. Then, with the hope of
relieving the tension, he visited all the sacred cities of the world, all the holy places; and he talked to all the men who presented themselves as holy to the populace. Finally Homer returned home, more tense than ever. He fell ill and lay in the tension of outwardness. Often he cried out in torture, 'He was never here.'

Years passed. Homer was now a broken young man, frail in body and confused in mind. But his spirit was undimmed — he had not lost the urge to know God.
Because of his health, he was obliged to live a quiet, contemplative life. He seldom read, for it tired his eyes. So he began to lose touch with the affairs of the world. He knew, however, that there was a war, that men still found it necessary to kill one another in their search for God. He knew the holy men still fought over religion; that the people of the world were still tense as hunting dogs; that happiness had somehow eluded the sons of men.

He knew also that there was nothing he could do about it. So he
just sat in his garden and, like Ferdinand, smelled the flowers. Also like Ferdinand, he was unable to fight. So he just sat — and smelled.

In the fall of the year, with no flowers to smell, Homer sat and listened to the popping of the coreopsis seeds. Pop they went, and things fell to the ground, as in the world. It was then that Homer learned to listen, for pops and for his own soul. Having so sat and so listened, he became relaxed. And it was then that the Powers That Be made him well. A new state of well-being
began to flow into this man who had been tense as a hunting dog.

One day as the coreopsis popped, he wondered if this was its way of talking — all of which reminded him of a man who was supposed to have talked with the flowers (a scientist, too, although it sounded crazy). The more he thought about it, the more tense he became. How could a man talk with flowers when there were things to do, places to visit, important men to see — all part of the search for God? At any rate, one must get about, tense as a hunting dog.
But Homer, even with his new state of well-being, did not get about. He just relaxed and listened to the pops. All winter he just relaxed and wondered what the flowers would say — if they talked.

In the spring, when the flowers came again, Homer wandered in his garden and smelled — and listened. And then a flower spoke to him.

'Now that you are relaxed, now that you listen, you can know God.'

Homer was startled, so much so that he became tense as a hunting
dog. He had never supposed the flowers really would talk, and he failed to see what being relaxed had to do with knowing God. He recalled the gatherings where every one was tense as a hunting dog, religious gatherings, too. And the holy men were leading them to God. Men were forever fighting and calling one another names when they sought God. Getting tensed up — that was it. So it seemed hopeless to try and find God when relaxed.

So he challenged the flower thus: 'By what authority do you
speak? You have no sanction from men, no sacred book, no seal to prove your worth.'

And the flower replied, 'I speak for the Powers That Be.'

This was all very puzzling to Homer, but he just relaxed and listened. And one day another flower spoke to him.

'Having become relaxed,' said the flower, 'you must now learn to gather the power unto yourself.'

'What power?' asked Homer.

'God,' said the flower.
Unto yourself — Homer mused long over that. And, thinking of the past, he became tense as a hunting dog. It was entirely wrong, this unto yourself. The books had said a man must deny himself to find God. One must punish himself as the martyrs of old. Look to all things outside and think of yourself as a hopeless and hapless sinner. Surely one could never find God by becoming self-centered, by drawing things unto himself. He distinctly remembered books — black-covered ones, too — which upheld these points of view.
So he challenged the flower thus: "By what authority do you speak?"

And the flower replied, "I speak for the Powers That Be."

For some reason Homer forgot to speak of sanctions and books and seals. He had fully made up his hunting dog state of mind that the flower was wrong. But lo! as the weeks rolled by and he relaxed once more, he found himself doing the very things he had resolved not to do. Something caught hold of Homer and made him draw power
unto himself. And he did it by smelling, by taking deep smells of the atmosphere.

'Strange,' thought Homer one day as he smelled, 'I thought of seeking God in almost every place but the atmosphere.' And then he smelled some more.

Having become relaxed, having learned to listen — for pops and other things, having become full of atmosphere, Homer began to grow. One day a flower winked at him and said, 'Just as we grow, by
filling ourselves with the atmosphere.'

By now Homer and the flowers were close friends. After talking with the flowers, Homer remained relaxed and filled with atmosphere. But when he ventured out into the world for a spell, he would again get tense as a hunting dog. Men told him he was crazy, that to find God one must read the black books, believe all the things they told one to believe, and do all the things the holy men suggested — or demanded. Having got tensed up in this atmosphere,
Homer would go home to his flowers and take deep smells. He liked these smells better than those of the world.

One day a morning glory bloomed outside his door, one rightly called, he felt, a Heavenly Blue. This flower was the first of dozens of buds to open, and Homer became attached to this Heavenly Blue. When it spoke, he did not challenge its authority. He just listened — and smelled.

And one day the Heavenly Blue said to Homer: 'Now you are ready
for the next steps. First there was relaxation, then listening, then gathering power and now — sublimation and release.'

Sublimation and release. It was all very puzzling to Homer. And how did the Heavenly Blue know what the other flowers had said?

'We all speak for the Powers That Be,' said the Heavenly Blue.

Sublimation and release. As Homer later learned from the Heavenly Blue and a few of its friends, the idea was to relax in order to be
fillable, then to become filled, then to dedicate the power to the Powers That Be, and finally to release it.

It took Homer some time to catch on, but finally he learned to fill himself with the atmosphere and then to release the ensuing power to the spirit of all men. And in so doing he came to know God.

Later on, so the legend goes, Homer picked up a book one day and read these lines: 'If the Deity should lay bare to the eyes of men the secret system of Nature, the causes
by which all the astronomic results are effected, and they finding no magic, no mystic numbers, no fatalities, but the greatest simplicity, I am persuaded they would not be able to suppress a feeling of mortification, and would exclaim, with disappointment,

"Is that all?"
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The quotations on the first and second pages are from *Messer Marco Polo* by Donn Byrne (Century).

The quotation on the last page is from Fontenelle.