

# **THE INNUMERABLE COMPANY**

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The Innumerable Company by David Starr Jordan

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**DAVID STARR JORDAN**

**THE INNUMERABLE  
COMPANY**



## **The Innumerable Company**

The  
Innumerable Company

By

David Starr Jordan

President of Leland Stanford Jr. University



Boston

American Unitarian Association

25 Beacon Street

To my Wife  
Jessie Knight Jordan

When man shall rise to manhood's destiny,  
When our slow-toddling race shall be full grown,  
Deep in each human heart a chamber lone  
Of holies, holiest shall builded be,  
And each man for himself must hold the key.  
Each man must kindle his own altar fires,  
Each burn an offering of his own desires,  
And each, at last, his own High Priest shall be!

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**T**HERE was once a great mountain which rose from the shore of the sea, and on its flanks it bore a mighty forest. The slopes of the mountain were green with soft grass and white and rosy with the flowers of spring. But beyond the crest the mountain grew harsh and wild, then ridges and gullies, peaks and chasms, springs and torrents. Farther on lay a sandy desert, which stretched its monotonous breadth to the shore of a wide, swift river. What lay beyond the river no one knew, because its shores were always hid in azure mist.

Year by year there came up from the shore of the sea an innumerable company of men and women. Each one must hasten over the green meadows to cross the mountain and the forest, faring onward toward the desert and the river. And this was one condition of the journey,—that whosoever came to the river must breast its waters alone. Why this was so, no one could tell; nor did any one know aught of the land beyond. For of the multitude

who had crossed the river not one had ever returned.

As time went on, there came to be paths through the forest. Through its meadows no one seemed to need a path, . . . but on the mountain to go without a guide seemed hopeless. Those who went first left traces to serve as guides for those coming after. Some put marks on the trees; some built little cairns of stones to show the way they had taken in going around great rocks. Those who followed found these marks and added to them. And many of the travellers left little charts which showed where the cliffs and chasms were, and by what means one could reach the hidden springs. So in time it came to pass that there was scarcely a tree on the mountain which bore not some traveller's mark; there was scarcely a rock that had not a cairn of stones upon it.

In early times there was One who came up from the sea and made the journey over the mountain and across the desert by a way so fair that the memory of it became a part of the story of the forest.

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Men spoke to one another of his way, and many wished to find it out, that haply they might walk therein. He, too, had left a Chart, which those who followed him had carefully kept, and from which they had drawn help in many times of need.

The way he went was not the shortest way, nor was it the easiest. The ways that are short and easy lead not over the mountain. But his was the most *repaying* way. It led by the noblest trees, the fairest outlooks, the sweetest springs, the greenest pastures, and the shadow of great rocks in the desert. It was as if the breath of the fresh blooming meadows followed one all the way through the forest. And the chart of his way which he left was very simple and very plain, — easy to understand. Even a child might use it. And indeed there were many children who did so.

On this chart were the chief landmarks of the region, — the mountain with its forest, the desert with its green oases, the flower-carpeted pastures of the high lands, the paths to the hidden springs. But there were not many details. The old cairns