

Democratic Watchman

Belleville, Pa., May 26, 1893

A LIE.

She told a lie, a little lie— It was so small and white, She said, "I cannot help but die Before another night."

But oh, the lie! It larger grew, Nor passed by day or night, And many watched it as it flew, And, if it made delay,

Like something that was near to death They blew in onward with their breath, And on its track the midwife fell, And there were grief and shame,

And many a spotless lily fell, Was shriveled as with flame The wings that were so small and white Were large, and strong, and black as night.

One day a woman stood aghast, And trembled in her place, For something flying far and fast Had smote her in the face.

Something that cried in thunder-tone, "I come! I come! Take back your own!" —Elen W. H. Gates in the Century.

BESSIE.

"You're fallin', Georgie; your work is not what it was." Mrs. Carr held up to the light an end of the web the weaver had laid on the table. "It's thin in places, and there are knots," she said.

"The knots were in the yarn; I did not make them," said a good web, "Georgie answered with conviction. He was a little man, with an irregular featured, dreamy face, and gray hair that curled in small tight knots over his head.

"There's a power of folk send their wool to the big factories," the farmer's wife continued, Georgie having seemed to acquiesce: "but I always hold by the old neighbors; an' till your work gets still worse, Georgie—"

"It's a good web," I showed it to Bessie, an' she said it was a good web, the man maintained stoutly. "It's not to be expected that Bessie would want to hurt your feelings, an' I respect her for it. 'How is Bessie?'" Having made her point, Mrs. Carr did not wish to be needlessly cruel in driving it home.

"If you'll sit down a minute, I'll put up a bit of butter an' an egg or two for her." "Ah! m' obliged to you, Mrs. Carr."

"I was very glad to hear the good news of Bessie," she began, a few minutes later, as she deposited a small covered basket with a slight flourish on the table. "What good news?"

"Why, about her an' Dan'l Pryce, that she is keepin' company with Dan'l Pryce."

"Dan'l Pryce drops in of an evenin' now an' then, but there's no keepin' company."

"Of course not, Georgie." Mrs. Carr burst into a laugh that showed all her white teeth. "Where a young man goes where a young woman is, there's never any keepin' company. It's always the father the young man goes to see, an' to hear about the price o' farms an' such. To be sure, it is."

generations, and with an untarnished record on both sides. Mrs. Pryce was a widow; that her bereavement dated only two years back was one of the things the neighbors habitually forgot, for James Pryce had, through an accident, been bedridden during nearly all their married life. It was worse than if he had died outright, Mrs. Pryce said often, when discussing the matter dispassionately, for it had added attendance on him to all her other troubles.

James Bryce's bondage lasted two decades, and when he died he spoke of heaven as green fields among which he would wander, a strong young man again. That Daniel would inherit the farm was a foregone conclusion; he was the eldest, and birthright bulks largely in communities that are somewhat patriarchal. He was a good fellow, entirely free from small vices, but somewhat dull, even in the eyes of neighbors not remarkable for brilliancy. He was moderately tall, moderately good looking, more than moderately muscular, entirely amiable, a man no way out of the common or likely to assume heroic proportions in the eyes of a clever girl somewhat older than himself.

But the fact was Bessie Dennet was so deeply, silently, unconsciously in love with Daniel Pryce that neither she nor I could put it into words. They had been keeping company three months, but in such a reserved, unobtrusive, brotherly and sisterly way, that even shrewder people than Georgie might have noticed nothing. Daniel would drop in of an evening when Bessie sewed or knitted by the window, or filled the quilts with yarn for a loom, the reel gyrating noiselessly under her deft manipulations like a big daddy-long-legs in the middle of the kitchen floor, and the talk would be all together neighborly, Georgie taking the chief part often. When Dan was going away, Bessie would sometimes accompany him to the little rustic gate that shut in the house and the flower patch from the road, and the pair would stand talking there a while, under the moonlight or the stars, while the soft breezes shook the alder bushes, and the landrails called in the standing corn. Occasionally Dan would execute a small commission for Bessie in the market town when he went with the farm produce, and now and then he would bring her a fairin', a packet of seeds, a story book in a gay cover, or a ribbon for her neck.

The Dennets' cottage was as pretty as a picture. There are people in whose presence flowers seem to thrive. Bessie's garden had once been a piece of waste ground, but now every breath that blew through the open door was laden with a score of delicate odors. Dan could not fancy a greater joy in existence than to sit on the window sill or lean against the lintel talking to the girl, while the bees reveled in the honeysuckle and the linnets twittered in the elms. He had sown her initials in mignonette in a bed just beneath the window, and if, when the seedlings first showed above the surface, both he and she saw that B. D. stood for Bessie and Daniel as well as Bessie Dennet, and if they looked into each others eyes, as the consciousness struck them simultaneously, what did it matter to any one but themselves, and who cared?

This had all lasted about three months, and not a word of love, not a caress had ever passed between them, when, about the same period, Georgie Dennet and Mrs. Pryce heard from different sources that their children were keeping company. Daniel had dressed to go out for the evening. In his attire there was that special something which signifies that a young man's toilet has a purpose in view. He came down stairs softly, tiptoeing on the carpetless treads. At the foot of the stairs was the seldom-used best room. The door stood open, which was unusual, and through it came Mrs. Pryce's voice, which was more unusual still: "I want you, Daniel."

"The young man paused on the threshold. His mother was at the far end of the room, with her back to the light, her knitting in her hands, the long end of her worsted stocking caught under her arm. The light that lingered in the west after the setting sun fell on poor Daniel's best coat, his well-black boots, and the flower in his buttonhole.

Mrs. Pryce looked at this splendor derisively. "Where are you off to?" she asked with a little disdain. "I was minded to look in for half an hour at Georgie Dennet's."

"I thought that. Well, this is just what I wanted to say, Daniel Pryce, that I'm against these goings-on. I want no sweet heartin', an' no daughter-in-law; least-ways one as old as myself, an' without a penny in her pocket. If folks mind their business it's enough for them without larkin' o' evenin's. I'm fair surprised at Georgie Dennet, that he would encourage any widow's woman's son to waste his time an' make a fool of himself; an' you can tell him I said so."

Daniel stood staring at his mother, the ruddy color in his face gone a kind of gray with the shock. "There is nothing against Bessie Dennet," he stammered helplessly. "No, nothin' at all, in her own place but her place is not alongside of my son. You can tell her to-night that I'm not minded to allow any carryin's on between you."

"What has happened?" she asked. He did not attempt to evade the question or make light of the trouble. "Mother thinks I come here too often."

Bessie understood perfectly. "An' won't she let you come again—never?" she asked a little huskily. "Oh, yes, sometimes."

"But it will be different?" "Yes, it will be different."

Bessie drew a small, strangled sigh. If their places had been reversed she thought she would have rebelled a little; but before she spoke she had accepted the woman's part of acquiescence. "Well, we can always be good friends," she said with an attempt at cheerfulness.

He put out his hand and wrung hers so that it hurt her, and then he turned away without a word. It is dangerous to interfere with these slow and silent natures. Daniel obeyed his mother, but it was with that obedience that is a growing revolt. What harm did his visits to Bessie Dennet do any one? His heart hardened against his mother. She was a cold woman, caring for no one's happiness, not even her own, valuing a man, even if he were her own son, more than an ox, thinking nothing mattered but labor. Well, he would labor, but after that he would please himself. If he could not go to the weaver's he would go to a worse place. Who could spend all his leisure in the dull, overworked kitchen, with men too tired, and a woman too ill-tempered to speak?

Daniel sulked. He obeyed because he was too proud to do furtively anything so blameless as visiting Bessie Dennet, but he was not the less resentful and wrathful. Instead of going to the weaver's, Daniel went to the public house, and when his mother forbade this indignantly and shrilly he only scowled at her.

Daniel Pryce was tipsy. To be the worse for liquor on a fair day or a market day or on the occasion of a merry-making was in the course of nature, and with your work all undone, was so disgraceful that none of the Pryces could stand it. The mother had her say; then Reuben spoke about drunken wastes, and Caleb, the youngest, waded where folks would the money to get drunk on, since for his part he could never feel the price of a smoke in his pocket. The three brothers were working together unstacking corn to remove it to the barn for threshing. Without answering, Daniel threw down the long fork with which he had been working and left the field.

Things were too bad to tolerate, and his shame of himself was a large factor in them. He felt in a bad way toward the whole world, as he moved aimlessly along the road, his hands in his pockets, his chin fallen on his breast. It was a remote country road, deserted, except by the local farmers, since the making of the highways. Tufts of grass grew here and there amid the paving stones, and briars flung their long arms across the gaping ditches. Daniel threw himself down on one of the tufts and soon fell asleep. It was late October weather, and though there was a little tardy sunshine in the air, the earth was damp and cold. Daniel sighed in a strangled way now and then, as the chill stuck to his bones, but he did not awake.

Bessie Dennet was on her way to a neighboring farm for her daily milk supply when she found the man she loved asleep like a tramp by the wayside. She did not cry, the pain she felt was too acute for that; she only said to herself half aloud: "They have done him more harm than I should."

For and About Women.

Paris and London are using far more satin, velvet and fancy ribbons than we are and we are doing quite well. Plain fine serges have been succeeded by the wide ribbed varieties which show to such advantage in the plain skirts.

The latest use for silk is a plaid, striped or changeable blouse, with collar, puff sleeves and a skirt of black woolen goods.

Most of the dresses that are now being made have no darts at the top of the skirt, the fullness being gathered into the waistband.

Waists are inclined to be short and are finished at the bottom with either a frill or soft folds of silk, and have enormous drooping sleeves.

Red cloth driving capes are finished with triple shoulder capes of velvet and trimmed with black silk guipure lace and jet ornaments.

In skirts, first of all, the circular shape is considered the most popular. It resembles a fluted lampshade when worn. All rumors to the contrary, skirts continue to be close fitting at the top, unless for sheer or summer materials.

Miss Mary Redmond, the Irish sculptress, whose colossal statue of Father Mathews was recently unveiled in Dublin, is only 20 years old. Her first work was entirely destroyed by the youth who served as her models, but she pluckily went to work and reproduced it.

The old fashioned half-moon back comb for a little girl's hair is now replaced by an elastic band, which is passed behind the hanging tresses at the base of the neck and fastens on top of the head with three small rosettes of baby ribbon matching the dress in color.

Mrs. Christine Ladd Franklin is one of the few women who have won a well-deserved reputation as a scientific thinker and writer. She is an American by birth and the wife of an American savant, and her name is frequently found in German periodicals among such writers as Helmholtz and Muller.

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