

Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., Jan. 12, 1894.

THE POET'S HEART.

To James Whitcomb Riley.
"Yes, there is ever a song somewhere,
Yes, somewhere beneath the skies;
But what does it matter and who shall care
If none in the heart arise?"
The trilling and crooning of wild-cod brooks
Though sweet as a Seraph's hymn—
The tenderest strain of the mountain brooks
Are distant too far and dim.
No music for such hath the moaning sea,
No anthem the wind swept pine,
"Tis only the poet, and none but he
Is blessed by these chorus divine.
The "Psalm of Life," its low, sad symphonies
Enwrought in each undertone
That swells and rolls from the hidden keys
Are heard by his heart alone.
—Juliette Estelle Mathis.

MY NEIGHBOR'S BOY.

He seems to be several boys in one,
So much is he constantly everywhere!
And the mischievous things that boy has done,
No mind can remember nor mouth declare.
He fills the whole of his share of space
With his strong, straight form and his merry face.
He is very cowardly, very brave,
He is kind and cruel, is good and bad,
A brute and a hero! Who will save
The best from the worst of my neighbor's
lad?
The mean and the noble strive to-day,
Which of the powers will have its way?
The world is needing his strength and skill,
He will make hearts happy, or make them
sick!
What power is in him for good or ill!
Which of life's paths will his swift feet take?
Will he rise and draw others up to him,
Or the light that is in him burn low and dim?
But what is my neighbor's boy to me,
More than a nuisance? My neighbor's boy,
Though I have some fears for what he may be,
Is a source of solace, hope, and joy,
And a constant presence, because I pray
That the best that is in him may rule some
day.
He passes me with a smile and a nod,
He knows I have hope of him, guesses to,
That I whisper his name when I ask of God,
That men may be righteous, his will to do,
And I think that many would be more joy
If they loved and prayed for a neighbor's boy.
—Christian Advocate.

HELEN.

BY F. C. PHILLIPS.

When she died—and she was an old woman—the two little cardboard boxes, tied with white ribbon, and containing a tiny morsel of wedding cake, were found in her bureau. But when the first of these keepsakes came into her hands she was quite young, and, in a way, even beautiful, though hers was never a beauty which commanded general attention, or caused her to be looked after in the street.

Understand that, although I loved her, and might, perhaps, have won her for my wife, had it not been for him, I am not blaming him at all. I am not animated by any spirit of vindictiveness in setting forth these facts, which he will never see. I write them only with a deep sense of their pathos; and with a feeling of eternal pity for her and for him, and for myself. Who am I? Be easy—no conscious egotism is influencing me either. I am merely the man who loved her, and my personality need not be much obtruded on you. I am the man who loved her, and I tell the tale because I am absolutely the only person who is able to tell it. Helen herself is dead, and Arnold Seymour never understood it. That is why I pity and do not blame him; he did not understand, he was dense, and obtuse, and blind.

She lived with her younger sister in a village in the shires. Since they lost their mother, she had taken the mother's place. Her eyes were deep and her face was grave; she had many responsibilities, and they had left their mark upon her. She earned a hundred, or may be a couple of hundred, pounds a year by her pen—little sentimental stories in the ladies paper—and this, coupled with her mother's small bequest, provided for the two girls' wants. Their cottage, which was free hold, was the prettiest thing you ever met with. It would almost reconcile you to poverty to see it so refined. Everything was of the cheapest, but dainty and well chosen. And there was a garden, with a few fruit trees and many flowers, so that their table never looked poor, although their means might be but the cold remains of yesterday's joint.

The younger girl, Lillian, was exceedingly lovely; but after that not much remains to be said of her. It was Helen who contrived, Helen who decided everything. It was even Helen who made the little sacrifices. "Lillian is such a child," she would say apologetically when this was pointed out to her, "she does not see; she is really more unselfish than I am!" It was declared that she felt herself repaid for anything she might have done if Lillian gave her a passing kiss, and exclaimed, "What a dear you are!" And Lillian often exclaimed, "What a dear you are!"—carelessly, lightly. It was the way she discharged her obligations and showed her gratitude. One almost expected her to ask for a receipt afterwards, the phrase on her lips grew to have such a commercial bitterness.

Many people noticed these details besides myself, I beg to say. And I would also mention that it was not because Lillian showed small respect for my sacred calling that I disliked her. Were that so, I should have been as unfair as she was. I disliked her simply and solely for her selfishness towards her sister. Nevertheless her raillery and laughter hurt me sometimes in the presence of the other. I told her once, "I was a man before I was a curate." She answered me, "I wish you had remained one afterwards." And Helen turned her face away to hide a smile. Poor Helen; life held so few smiles for you, it was petty of me to grudge you one!

Arnold Seymour and I had been at Cambridge together. Of recent years I had sometimes met him, though we had never been more than acquaintances. One summer he appeared in

Whitebridge, and told me he had come here to spend the vacation—he was at the Bar—and to blow away the cobwebs of his chambers. I had not thought till then that the briefs were very many with him, but he spoke as if his practice were a large one, and, seeing no reason why he should deceive me, I viewed him as a man who was already doing well.

"And you," he said, stretching his legs in my sitting room on the evening of his arrival, "what do you do in this little Heaven deserted hole, my boy? Your conscientious sermon, your district-visiting, your amicable teas with the provincial tables, no more? And are you satisfied with it, have you no ambition? Or do you look forward one day to being made a Bishop?" He did not wait for an answer—he was never a man to be answered—but blew a high cloud of cavendish from his pipe, and vowed a moment later that he would make me introduce him to all the people in the place.

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"You are engaged to Lillian?" I stammered.
He nodded, beaming at me from my rocking-chair.
"Yes," he said, "I am engaged. At twenty, I scoffed; at thirty, I fall! And to a village beauty—strange, isn't it?"

"Your village beauty," I replied, suggests a dairymaid. You are marrying a gentlewoman; what more do you want?"
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"Have you spoken to Miss Townsend yet?" I asked.
"Miss Townsend has consented," he answered. "Between ourselves, old fellow, I do not fancy she is too well pleased to be left alone. Not that she said anything naturally; but I could see! Her manner gave me one the impression of something held in reserve. I had thought more highly of her, but human nature is frightfully selfish at its best."

Not a perception, not an inkling of the real truth! At the moment I hated him with all my heart.
I called the following day at the cottage to tender my felicitations to the fiancé.

She was in the room alone. Helen, she told me, was sitting in the garden, the victim of a bad headache.
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of marriage without any of its joys.
When I presented myself at the house again I was asked to enter, and the maid of-all-work supplemented the invitation by saying—
"Mrs. Seymour is dead."
Prepared in a measure as I had been for it the intelligence dealt me a severe blow. I felt my face turn white, and for a moment I could not reply.
"Dead!" I said at last. "When did it happen?"
"The poor lady died about a hour after you went, sir," she answered; "and Mr. Seymour he's just took on awful."
Helen came in as she was speaking. Her eyes were red with weeping, and for a few seconds after the servant's withdrawal we were both silent. When I tried to express my compassion she silenced me, in pity for the effort—
"I know," she murmured, "there is no need—I know!"
She sank into an armchair, and I stood on the hearth, watching her. The clock ticked loudly, and confused me; I could still think of nothing to say. But it was she who broke this pause, and I who was required to listen. She was good enough to tell me she wanted my advice, and, though this was scarcely the truth, she gave me her confidence, which was honor enough.
"What is it about?" I inquired.
"It is about Arnold—about the children," said she. "Something must be done at once. He has no means to give them a home, and it would be preposterous besides to leave such young children to a man's care."
"You must not harass yourself with matters of that sort yet awhile," I interposed; "we will discuss everything later."
"It is not so sudden as you may imagine," she answered. "I had looked for my poor girl's death three days." She sobbed, and turned aside a little. "I have seen for some time that the children must come to me; I want to know what you think of the plan?"
"Have you suggested it to Mr. Seymour himself?" she said.
"Not yet; but he cannot refuse," she said.
"It will be very—very hard on you, Miss Townsend."
"Hard? On me? Ah, no, it will be hard on the father who must let them go. It is that that makes me so reluctant to propose it. To lose his wife and part from his children at one fell swoop, it seems cruel!"
"May I speak quite freely?" I demanded.
"If you please."
"Is he, then, not in a position to retain them if he wishes it? His income is not decreased in any way by this sad event. What he could do before, it appears to me he might do still. Peculiarly he does not suffer."
"You do not understand," she said. "There have been complications all the time."
"And you?" I ventured next.
"Forgive me, but, if I follow you exactly, the cost of the children's maintenance would devolve upon yourself. Can you afford it either?"
"!" She smiled sadly. "It will be a joy to me! I do not commit many extravagances; I am entitled to one, I think, without comment. Besides, Arnold will assist, of course, when he is able. My idea is this: that he should be free of the cares that have weighed upon him so heavily during the last two years; that he should live as a single man until his practice improves. He can give up these rooms; he can live cheaply and easily at one half of the expense he is put to now. He will feel new born when his misery begins to fade a little. The duns, the bills, the perpetual effort to pay ten pounds out of a five pound note, all that will be a thing of the past with him. Before you go you must see him, if it is only for an instant; you will be startled at the alteration the worries have made in his appearance. I propose to give him a fresh lease of life, to give his talents scope to exert themselves. Poor fellow, he has been crippled and bound by all his anxieties. And then I love the little ones; and I loved her. Who should take care of my darling's babies but I?"
"What could I answer? though in my own mind I thought that for the support of Arnold Seymour's children to devolve upon the woman he had not married was the cruellest irony of fate. I shook the widower by the hand less cordially than had been my wont, and returned home by an early train next morning. A fortnight later Helen took up her residence in Whitebridge once more, and turned the room in which she was accustomed to write into a nursery.
The children thrived and grew sturdy under her care. She lavished on these two little nieces a wealth of tenderness and solicitude that rendered her spinsterhood an even more pathetic sight to witness than it had been before. She was a mother to them in the highest, the noblest meaning of the word. And as the children grew strong and gay, so more and more of Helen's youth seemed to vanish from her. It was as if the lives she watched absorbed it; as if, like parasites, they flourished on the stem they sapped. When they had been with her for two years there was an additional sedateness in her manner; when they had been with her for five, she no longer looked a young woman. Indeed, she no longer regarded herself as a young woman; she spoke of things 'unbefitting to my age.' Yet she was more beautiful than ever; more than ever I loved her; more than ever, I was secretly convinced, her own heart belonged to the man who had not guessed the tenderness he had inspired.
He was latterly, I gathered, making some progress in his profession; and I gathered it from the fact that during the last twelve months Helen had several times spoken to me proudly of remittances that he had sent. Previously she had omitted all men-

tion of his promised assistance, and it had not needed much acumen on my part to understand that the promise was not being fulfilled. Her silence on the point and the redoubled assiduity with which she worked were explicit enough.
On the few occasions upon which he had run down to the village I had seen but little of him, though he appeared to see me. His well-cut clothes, his admirable boots and hat, his silver-headed walking cane itself, jarred upon me, contrasting them with the rigid economy of the woman who supported his children. I know, however, that he wrote to her frequently, and did not fail to express his gratitude and appreciation to her in well-balance periods, which she thought as beautiful as they were undeserved. Now that he was actually sending a little money towards the expenses she held him a veritable hero, rising, Phoenix-like, above the misfortunes of a malignant fate.
Yes, it is quite the truth that to his sister-in-law Arnold Seymour was a hero. She read his letters; she prayed for his success; his little girls believed him the most noble man who had ever lived. She talked to them of their father in a voice which, to me who listened, was a confession of her love. When he was coming to see them her eyes would sparkle, her cheeks would flush, almost she was young again. More than once I had been tempted to plead my cause with her, and always unconsciously she would in this way give me my answer before I spoke. What she anticipated—I could not judge, but that she still loved Arnold Seymour with all her soul I had no manner of doubt.
One afternoon when I went to see her she told me she had heard from him by the morning's post. She was quite gay. The children were romping in the garden, where, seven years before, I had asked her to be my wife, and she and I sat chatting by the window.
"He is coming down," she said, "with a delighted tremor in her tones; 'he will be here by tea-time. You must stay and meet him.'"
I made some objection, but she overruled it.
"He would be hurt," she said, "if you ran away. He even refers to you in his letter. Take down a book from the shelves, and amuse yourself while I make the chicks nice and smart for 'papa.'"
She called them in, and retired with them upstairs, whence I could hear laughs and splashing. The servant came in with the tea-things, and laid the table with the best service and little glass bowls full of flowers, in whose arrangement I detected the handiwork of Helen. The brilliancy of the day was subsiding, and the fruit trees beyond were mellowed in the radiance of the declining sun. The breath of the hay blew in with the light breeze. It was very charming when Arnold Seymour sauntered up the path. Nothing was incongruous but Arnold Seymour.
He was so kind as to profess himself enchanted to find me there, though, when I looked at Helen's eyes as she greeted him, I could easily have wished myself away.
He kissed his daughters ardently, and produced for their delectation some trifling presents from his bag.
"As a matter of fact, old fellow," he said to me, "I was coming round to your quarters to see you presently. And I want you to put me up for the night, if you will; we can have a talk together, you and I."
To Helen he said, "Send the children away for awhile, will you? We can get on better without them."
I took this as a hint to make my departure, but he detained me.
"After all, you may just as well hear what I have to say now," he observed.
"Helen won't mind, I am sure."
I resumed my seat, and he lit a cigarette before continuing.
"Helen," he said, "and you, my dear fellow, you are the two best friends I have in the world. One of you is the sister of my poor wife, and the other introduced me to her. When I lost her, life seemed finished to me; and I have no hesitation in declaring that everything I have to day is due to the tenderness of the woman who has been a comrade to myself and a mother to my babies."
He flickered the ash off the cigarette, and paused a moment. I took advantage of the pause to lit my eyes from the floor and glance at Helen, whose color was fluttering in her cheeks.
"But Helen, here," I am sure," Helen, whom the world calls my sister-in-law, but whom I, as I have said, call my 'comrade,' I should now have been an adventurer in the Colonies. She took my children, she permitted me to continue my profession, she has been loyal and tender and devoted. I owe her so much that I am glad, and indeed proud, to acknowledge it before another—to have another present to see how I have come to her to-day."
"Arnold!" she said, and something I had never seen there before was in her face.
"I am succeeding," said Arnold, "by slow degrees I am making a respectable practice; and I propose to take a step which I want to discuss with you, but you have been everything to me, and I cannot do it without your sanction and approval. It will advance me very much in my profession, the marriage I project; it will bring me many briefs, and, later on, in all probability, a very fine appointment. But if you think I should be wronging your sister's memory, if you think I should be behaving badly to the children in giving them a stepmother, I will waive my interests, and my affection for the lady and obey your wish. There is nothing to cry for—I will obey your wish."
I had not known she was crying, for I could not look.
"Answer me," he said; "what is your view?"