

# Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., February 5, 1909.

## A SONG OF THE ROAD.

Whatever the path may be, my dear,  
Let us follow it far away from here,  
Let us follow it back to Yester-year.  
Whatever the path may be:  
Again let us dream where the land lies sunny,  
And live, like the bees, on our hearts' old  
honey,  
Away from the world that slaves for money—  
Come, journey the way with me!

However the road may roan, my dear,  
Through sun or rain, through green or sere,  
Let us follow it back with hearts of cheer,  
However the road may roan;

Oh, while we walk it here together,  
Why should we heed the wind and weather,  
When there on the hills we'll smell the heather,  
And see the lights of home!

Whatever the path may seem, my sweet,  
Let us take it now with willing feet,  
And time its steps to our hearts' glad beat,  
Whatever the path may seem:

Let the road be rough that we must follow,  
What care we for hill or hollow,  
While here in our hearts, as high as the swallows,

We bear the same loved dream!  
However the road may roan, my sweet,  
Let it lead us far from mart and street,  
Out where the hills and the heavens meet—

However the road may roan;  
So, hand in hand, let us go together,  
And care no more for the wind and weather,  
And reach at last those hills of heather,  
Where gleam the lights of home.

—By MADISON CAWEIN.

## A POINT OF HONOR.

The sick man, with a sobbing sigh, turned his head on the pillow and closed his eyes. At the sight, the doctor, at the foot of the bed, turned on his heel with a brisk, boyish movement, the tight lines of his finely scored face indefinitely softening into relief. But the girl, at her father's head, did not stir. She was young and tall, with a little, imperious head that wore its bright hair consciously, like a crown. She had a small, fair, irregular face, very lovely; perplexing, too, in mingling of inherited force and dignity with a sort of wifely helplessness.

The doctor, after a brisk turn about the room, came and stood behind her, looking over her shoulder at the man. It was then that he noticed that the tenuous figure of the girl was trembling. Suddenly, standing behind her, he laid a hand on each of her shoulders.

Something in his touch communicated his relief to the girl. With wide eyes, and a movement that was almost violent, she turned about to look up into his face; and then, all at once, she had wilted like a crumpled rose-leaf against his breast.

That was the decisive moment. The doctor himself scarcely knew how it had happened. She had not fainted; he had not intended it. So many things had entered into it—his own strain, Winifred's immeasurably greater. If she had not been thoroughly unstrung, it would not have happened; and yet, he admitted, with a smile in the momentary somberness of his eyes, it had to come sooner or later.

He drew a sharp sigh. He was a man of forty; she was nineteen. That in itself was a cause for misgiving; but that was not his gravest anxiety. What if—

Well, the unspoken question had come to haunt the doctor through his days. It lay down with him at night; it rose with him in the morning. It went with him through his round of calls; it sat beside the patient in his office. Strangely enough, he was not a man familiar with the wrestlings of the spirit. His instinct had always been to keep out of disagreeable and morally difficult things rather than to get out; and the one incident in his life in which that instinct had failed him had served to intensify the natural tendency. For many years he had lived in a world of his own creating, a sort of numoral world, into which the more intimate questions of the spirit scarcely entered. It was a realm of the mind, and of the will in the service of the mind. Not an easy world, certainly: one could read that in the extreme thinness of his tall figure, in the many gray hairs about the temples, and in the intricate lines of the thin, fastidious face, with its delicate strength of chin, its kind eyes, and its domineering nose. But it was a world he gloried in.

He was rich in that unique idolatry of which people make their physician the hero. He had some enemies—men who resented his womanish delicacy of physique all the more because it seemed somewhat justified by his unequalled ability and success. Occasionally, they resented their wives' irrational faith in his power; but even envy itself could find nothing further to resent, for his moral record was immaculate. People wondered, of course, why he did not marry. He lived in the pleasant little brick cottage which served him for both house and office, with the silent old woman who had been his housekeeper ever since he had established himself in the town twelve or fourteen years before.

"Emma," he said to her one evening, as he paused in his impatient way on the top step, "if any one calls for me, say I shall be back in an hour." His motor runabout was at the curbstone.

Aquaintances he met that evening found him absent minded. For the most part, he stared straight ahead without seeing them, or glared at them with no sign of recognition. He went on through the pretty town without stopping. The soft chug chug of his little motor kept time to the throb of his thoughts. He was presently alone on a road that ran like a blue-colored ribbon out into the high, green plains, rich with purple flowering weeds, parallel with the distant mountains on the sky-line. The world was spread out around him like a crystal mirror, reflecting the face of an eternal beauty. The Rockies, golden buff in the evening light, stood out, as if cut from agate, against a sky of opal. The doctor drew a deep, sharp breath, and gasped about his breast.

He was as keenly alive as a pagan to the beauty of the world. The thought shaped itself in his mind, and instantly assumed its relation to his other thoughts. He must have been born a pagan at heart, he reflected impatiently. Most men do not live until they are forty to have their first experience of a moral struggle, he told himself. And with his history? The thought was keenly disquieting. He turned away from it. After all, why should he not go on as he was going?

Winifred? Ah yes; that was it. He had not thought he was capable of such tenderness as the child had called up out of his heart. It was her bitter trust, the extraordinary force of her innocent pas-

sion, that had shaken him. Yet, surely, she would not love him any less if she knew. With the thought, as always, came the terror that turned him cold, and the sick disgust that unmanned him at the notion of dragging anything unequal into that soaring temple her girlish love had built for him.

How her insistent love had lighted up the chambers of his heart—so empty that he had not even realized their emptiness! And still, without his own solution, he had let it move on toward its fulfillment. A week-only a week to decide, and to face the consequences! We see still, to see Winifred face them! With an inward groan, he bent his head forward, and let the little machine out to the top of its speed. The road was good; the blithe mountain wind raced across his face; but Winifred, with her sweet, searching eyes and her soft, uplifted mouth, always innocently eager to be kissed, sped beside him.

He sat at his desk that night until long after midnight. Just as he was finishing the last sheet his desk telephone rang, and after a brief dialogue he took his hat and coat and went to answer the night call.

This, in part, was the letter:

"LITTLE child, if you suffer when you read this, please know that I have suffered, too—so long! But I will not keep you waiting; I will tell you what I have to tell you, and explain, as much as may be, afterward."

"It is something about my early youth; it happened before you were born, I suppose. I was a medical student in Richmond. There was a girl at the place where I boarded, the landlady's daughter. A dark, handsome girl she was, little child, and I was in love with her. Never mind how or why; those are questions I have not been able to answer for many years. I see now that the love did not go very deep. It was what is called infatuation. Nevertheless, she was a good girl when I went there, and she promised to marry me."

"Among others, there was a young doctor boarding at the same place. He was somewhat older than I, had influential connections, and was already successful. He was a friendly, handsome, open-faced fellow, whom I liked. The girl, the landlady's daughter, liked him, too; she grew to like him so much that she broke her engagement to me. And then, one night, when I chanced to be in my room at work, she came to my door and knocked. I saw instantly from her face that she was in great agony, which she was trying to conceal. She asked me to come to the sitting-room, and I followed her at once. I remember how she sat down uncertainly, her hand fluttering at her throat, her eyes wide with misery and terror. And, remember, I loved her. She handed me a little empty bottle. 'I've taken it,' she said; and then she told me why.

"We tried to save her; but she died that night. A few weeks later, the man's engagement was announced. His fiancee was a handsome young woman whom the other girl had known only as she saw her sometimes getting in and out of her carriage. One night there was a sort of informal party celebrating the close of the year's work at the medical school. I had never given up drinking; my absorption in my work had kept me from any special temptation. But now I had got to the point where I would do anything to forget the horrible obsession of hate that possessed me. Even if I had not cared for her, the injustice of the thing would have maddened me, or so I believed. We had been drinking till after midnight, when a number of other fellows happened in. He was among them. Up to this time I had kept out of his way. Now the mere sight of him sobered me; but it was a sober madness worse than any drunken frenzy. Everything about him I had liked—the easy prosperity, the frank friendliness—I cannot describe their effect upon me. The others were congratulating him upon his approaching marriage. Then somebody referred jokingly to his past record. Not to the poor girl who was dead, —God knows, that must have slipped out of their drunken brains for the moment, or even they would have kept silent,—but to other girls like her. He stood with his hands in his pockets, and laughed. And I shot him. And I was as sober as I am tonight."

"What did he say, master?" she whispered, her arms about his neck.

"That he can't spare you yet—dear," he answered, not at all disturbed by his news. He bent his head and brushed her lips with a peculiar, absent tenderness, as a preoccupied man caresses a dear child while he follows his thoughts.

Winifred struggled free. She looked about to cry; then, she made a face at him.

"On, I didn't mean to leave him—sister!" she cried. And through the rest of the evening she nestled brooding at his side, as he would be could get no word of enlightenment out of her.

But the next evening when he came she ran to him, and put up her soft, wifelike mouth for kisses, her arms about his neck. "Can't you come here to me, master?" she whispered, and then bid her face on his shoulder. At last, when he had coaxed her to let him lift it, like a burning rose, and wipe away the tears, she talked to him quite frankly.

"I want you all the time," she said with wifelike passion. "It's so long waiting till evening, and then so often you don't come—you can't come! And when you do come,

"Winifred! I have told you. It is nineteen years ago, and even yet the taste of that disgrace is in my mouth. Even yet I cannot be as much ashamed of the crime as I am of the uttermost self-abasement of these six months. As soon as I was out, I came to this Western country, where nobody knew me—where nobody yet knows."

"The rest you know. Since then I have kept a record for conduct such as few men can show. But I know—I have become strangely aware since I have known you—that my morality has been singularly selfish and prudential—only an intense moral fastidiousness. I have been a moral man without being a good man. My remorse—yes, you will say you are—dear," he said, "is not at all disturbed by his news. He bent his head and brushed her lips with a peculiar, absent tenderness, as a preoccupied man caresses a dear child while he follows his thoughts.

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