

Poetry.

IF WE HELP ONE ANOTHER.

If we help one another
Along the path of life,
Each be to each a brother
Through quiet and through strife,
Our hopes will shine the brighter,
Our hearts will be the lighter,
If we help one another.

Though trouble's clouds may gather,
The sky is still above;
Though it be stormy weather,
The sun will constant prove,
And every shadow banish;
The mists will surely vanish
If we help one another.

Life hath its meed of sorrow,
And all must have their share;
To-day there's joy, to-morrow
May bring its load of care;
But trouble will be lightened,
And happiness be brightened,
If we help one another.

Oh, struggling heart! ne'er languish,
But press with bravery on;
You'll conquest gain o'er anguish
By every good act done;
And life will be less dreary,
And labor be less weary,
If we help one another.

Then let us help each other,
And do all good we can,
Each be to each a brother
Through all of life's brief span;
For hearts will be the lighter,
The world be better, brighter,
If we help one another.

C. D.

IF WE KNEW.

If we knew the sore temptations
Surging in our neighbor's breast—
If we knew his anxious longings
After quietness and rest—
If we knew the daily crosses
Placed upon his shoulders bowed—
If we knew the thoughts which often
Through his heart's best sanctum crowd,

Would we then, in wretched blindness,
Seek to lead his steps astray?
Or with ignorance assuming
Place a block within his way?
Some there are about us groaning,
Overcome with strife and sin;
Longing for that heavenly morning,
Which will let the sunlight in.

Their footsteps never falter,
Their faint souls are sore oppressed,
Yet we never, in our blindness,
Consolation give, or rest.
Others stagger wildly onwards,
Looking for a helping hand,—
We in selfishness and grieving,
Cease to think of how they stand.

If we knew, alas! how often
Would a little pity bring
Balm to hearts all bruised and broken,
And teach lips long shut to sing.
If we knew, alas! how often
Is that sad and weary strain
Echoing through my soul's dim chambers,
Working thoughts of life again.

In the years which have rolled onward,
I have pondered long on this,
Wondering how it is, that friendship
Of brings pain instead of bliss.
For, could I examine closely,
All that in my neighbor lies,
Feel some pity for the longings
After ruined hopes and ties.

Then methinks sweet consolation
Sure would fill each aching breast,
Then would vanished be temptations
And the seeker taste of rest;
If we knew, alas! how often
Does that sad and weary strain
Echo through my soul's still chamber,
And wake dreams to life again.

MARIE OLIVER.

Tales and Sketches.

ROBERT PICKLIN'S STORY.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

"A quarter past twelve! So much the better! It's no use to go to bed now; the train'll be along about three. I'd rather have no sleep at all than be fooled out of my first nap before it's half over.

"My name's Robert Picklin. I don't know why, unless a sort of warning that I was to have a smart time of it in this world. When I was sixteen years old, my step-father kicked me out of doors; anyway, he tried to; so I knocked him down with a chair, and walked out; and that was the last of him as far as I was concerned.

"Ours was a sea-going place, so I did what any boy would do in such a little family jar, went aboard of a whaling-vessel that happened to be ready to leave port. Well, you may bet I had eighteen blessed months of it, for I wasn't a sailor, like the chaps in story-books. When I wasn't licked for one thing, I was for another; and when I wasn't licked, I was

banged on the head with whatever came handiest; and between this and that, I caught it pretty much the whole time. It wasn't because anybody had a special spite against me, but that was the way boys had always been treated aboard-ship, and sailors don't take easily to new ways.

"When I got home again, my mother was dead, so there wasn't either kith or kin belonging to me. I was as much alone as Noah's family, when they walked out of the ark, only it was my own family, all by myself. I went to school a year, for I'd a tolerably good start before father died, and I'd wit enough to know that if I hitched a little more book knowledge on what I had, before getting any older, it would be much in my favor.

"After the schooling was over, I did pretty well whatever turned up for awhile; from photographing and teaching a district, to being treasurer in a circus, and sometimes riding the donkey when the clown was too drunk. It was just jilling up time, whatever I chanced to be at; so it's no matter to pay out a long yarn about it.

"I guess I was past twenty-one, when I met old Bob Mosely in Boston. He was the chap I'd been named for, and he had piled up the dust since then, but he had a kind of liking to me for the sake of the time when he and father were boys, provided he could show it without costing himself anything. So he said wouldn't I go out to Rio on a ship of his he was sending loaded with Yankee notions, and sell them there, for the agents he'd had were gone up the spout; and I said I would. Why not?

"I'd picked up Spanish enough a winter I dropped down on to Cuba, to make a shift with it; and I'd had dealings before with the old man, so that he knew what I could do, and that I'd do it on the square; besides, it pleased his grit to see I made my way so far without asking a boost from him or anybody else.

"Well, I sailed on the White Feather, and we had a stormy trip of it. Old Nick blew a gale behind and before all the way; and the men swore the ship was unlucky, and that we'd all take tea at Davy Jones', instead of seeing dry land again. But we didn't; and in spite of Old Nick we landed at last, or else with his help, for I guess he must have contrived my going there. I got acquainted with the men Mosely wanted me to find, and I did his business up in style for him; I did, indeed. It happened that the cargo was just in time to be wanted, and I sold the whole job at a rousing premium. The old chap had done fairly enough by me; I was to have a certain percentage on the goods, and they went off so confoundedly above what we expected that I had a cool eight hundred in my pocket, and old Mosely's checks and accounts ready to go out to him by the next steamer.

"In one of the houses I had dealings with, I got to know a young Spanish chap, who had lived in New York, and spoke English like a clipper. He was so very civil and polite, that though somehow at first I didn't take much to the fellow, I couldn't help being polite too, at least in my way, which at its best, was never of the smoothest. The upshot of it was, that before long I forgot I had not liked him in the beginning, he had such a faculty for making himself agreeable. He used to invite me out of an evening, and as I wasn't any more steady in those days than most fellows at the age I was, the drinking and gambling didn't frighten me a bit. But if ever a chap had a warning against both, it was me; though I daresay you won't believe the story when I tell it to you. I was wonderfully lucky at cards, and used to win every night; whether I was let or not makes no difference; the fact was there.

"One evening, after we'd had dinner together, Alvarez got more friendly than ever, and told me I was better than a brother to him, and that he hadn't a secret in the world he would wish to keep from me. Now, when anybody, high or low, begins that sort of rubbish in your ears, you just remember Bob Picklin's advice—give 'em a wide berth; cut the whole concern; for they mean mischief in some fashion.

"Among the rest of the trash, he spun a wonderful story about a fix he'd got into with some young woman, whose relations didn't seem just what a body would care about a family tea-party. Her old grandmother kept a house where they gambled and danced; and it had a bad name into the bargain, from the fact that a French fellow once went in there and was never heard of afterward, though there was nothing proved against the people, and they found plenty to swear that he had gone away from the place. He proposed that we should go there. I was so duced keen, according to his view, that I'd be sure to spy out some way of helping him, after I'd seen how the land lay. I'd got outside of enough wines and spirits at dinner to be ready for anything, so I was not likely to fight shy of the expedition.

"Up to that very day I'd had old Mosely's matters in my pocket, all in a draft that was payable to me. But that morning I got everything straight; made the exchanges and sent old Bob his paper ready to turn into yellow boys; for we had 'em in those days. Alvarez knew I always carried the drafts and my own eight hundred about me, because it seemed safer to me; and how on earth it happened that I hadn't told him about sending them off, and five hundred of my own added, is more than I can tell. They used to be snug in a little memorandum book, in a pocket in the

lining of my vest, and the book was there yet. I remembered afterwards, how in telling me his story, he laid his hand on my heart to feel, as he said that it was a friend's, and found it all right, the book and the heart too.

"Off we started. What part of the town the house was in I cannot tell, but it was among the dark, foul streets, and altogether the roughest spot I had come across in all my travels. But anyhow, we got there. We found several men playing round a game something like faro, and an old woman, mighty handsome yet—an odd thing for a Spaniard at her age—tending the bank. Alvarez said that was the girl's grandmother; and there was no reason handy why I should say it wasn't. We had drinks round, and got friendly with the fellows, and after awhile two girls came in. One of them was the prettiest creature you ever set your eyes—not a day over seventeen, I don't believe. She and Alvarez had a little talk by themselves, and though I couldn't hear a word they said, I thought the confab wasn't any of the pleasantest. He seemed in a great way about something, and there was a wicked look in his face that made me recollect the prejudice I had against him when we first got acquainted. The girl, she seemed half-way as mad as sin, and ready to burst out crying—woman-fashion, you know. But they settled matters somehow, and came back with the rest of the party.

"Pretty soon this girl went from one extreme to the other, just as they all will, whatever age they may be; and from acting as if she had a fit of the hysterics pat to treat us with, she began to chatter and sing like a blackbird. Two of the men could talk some English, and they stumped Alvarez and me for a game of poker, for they'd learned it they said in San Francisco. I wasn't a bit afraid, and I felt sure if there were any cheating I should be wide enough awake to settle it. But we hadn't much more than got set down to the business, when there was quite a lot of people came in from some concert or something, and we had a little dance; but it was agreed among us that after the visitors were gone we'd have our game out.

"I danced as hard as the best of them, and finally the young woman that Alvarez said was such a drag on him—Rosalia, they called her—came up and asked me to dance with her.

"I never saw any creature spin over the floor the way she did. I felt as if I had my arm round a cloud, or a meteor; and she acted as if she thought it great fun to try and put me completely out of breath, and hadn't another idea in her mind.

"But while we were flying about so fast, that I should think it must have made anybody dizzy to watch us, she whispered in my ear, in her pretty broken English, 'I want to say something to you! Laugh and act as if it were only nonsense, and pretty soon we'll manage to get in the other room.' 'All right,' said I, and began to wonder what her little game might be. I was getting so waked up that I wasn't to be fooled by anybody in that crowd. 'He's looking at us,' she said, with a kind of nervous shiver. 'He's watching us every minute!' 'Who's that?' said I. 'Alvarez. Don't stop—faster, faster!'

"I thought to myself, if she were pretending, she did it mighty well, anyhow, and began to think too that, in trying to be extra sharp, I might overreach myself, if I wasn't careful. I took to watching Alvarez on my own hook, and, sure enough, I could see that, no matter how much he danced, or appeared to be busy about his own affairs, he always kept an eye on us. But, before we got through dancing, somebody I hadn't noticed before—people were coming and going every little while—went up to him, and, after a bit of talk, the two walked out.

"Now let's go into the other room," I said. "Nobody paid any attention to us, and when we got near the door of the next chamber, we just slipped in, and let them partly swing to behind us.

"I began to talk some sort of nonsense; but she stopped me with such a face as I wouldn't wish to see again. Whatever was up, I knew she was mightily in earnest. There was no making her face grow so pale, or her eyes so scared and angry, just at her own pleasure.

"We got out into a little balcony, that overlooked a sort of garden, inside the courtyard, and first I thought she was going to waste time by fainting away, or having hysterics; but she didn't.

"It was a pretty little story she had to tell me, and you may think the blood tingled in my veins before she got through.

"She was Alvarez's wife, and he kept her there among those dreadful people, just to help him, when he had such a pigeon as he took me for to pick. She was to get the money out of me, they had all failed to lay hands on, during these days and nights Alvarez had been taking me about among his friends. She was to coax me to play for her, and while she sat by me, she was to make signs to them what cards I held; and between drink and her deviltry, they hoped to drive me crazy enough to stake everything, even to old Rob's drafts.

"But suppose it don't prove a go?" says I. "Then look out for yourself," she sort of gasped.

"I gave a little whistle, and made a motion of passing a knife across my windpipe.

"That sort of thing, eh?" said I. "Not to-night, maybe. They might let you away safe enough to-night! But don't

ever come back; don't trust yourself ever here again."

"I thank you," said I; "but I guess you needn't be afraid of my getting into this box twice. For that matter, I don't know what keeps me from going away now."

"No, no!" she began to cry. "They'd think I told you. Oh, he'd kill me, he'd kill me!"

"She set to crying like a regular tempest, and I promised to see the thing out—to keep her from getting into trouble. I can't say I felt afraid. I'd been in too many serimmages in the course of my life to turn white-livered; besides, I was getting my temper up by now, and it would have needed more Spaniards than there were in Rio to put me in a funk.

"The poor thing told me how dreadfully he had misused her many a time. He'd given her an awful beating only that day; and I expect half that made her split on him was, that her Spanish blood was up to the highest notch, and she wanted a little revenge for the black marks she showed me on her arms. Anyhow, I had reason to thank her; and if there had been anything I could do for the creature, I wouldn't have thought twice about it. But she said no; she was going to get away from him; she'd laid her plans, and, the next day, she was going. She had some other relations out in the country somewhere, and, according to her tell, they were decent sort of people; and though she didn't know them much, she hoped they'd take care of her. Then she began to shiver, and pinched my arm.

"It was his step," she whispered. "He'd kill me if he heard—he's sworn so ever so many times lately."

"I slipped back into the room, and squinted about; but there wasn't a soul in it. I could see them all dancing in the saloon beyond, and Alvarez going it as hard as any.

"There's nobody near," I said, stepping out on the balcony again. "There's nothing to be scared for."

"I got her quiet at last, and went through the empty room, and mixed with the dancers. Maybe it was an hour longer before the visitors finally scattered. Then we settled down to our cards, as I promised the Senorita to do. I wasn't coward enough to get her into a scrape. But I made up my mind, that the rest of the time I was in Rio I'd fight shy of Mr. Alvarez; only if I could get a chance at a fair, stand-up tussle, without any knives hidden, we'd see which was the best man, just before I started for home.

"After awhile, the girl and Alvarez went away; but I'd got so deep in my game, watching that they didn't outwit me, that I paid no attention. All of a sudden there came a scream from a long distance, which made me jump out of my chair. The old woman, who had been dozing near the end of the table, got on her feet, muttering something, and tottled off as fast as she could.

"What the deuce was that?" I asked of the men.

"They shrugged their shoulders, and one of them said,

"Nothing, nothing! Don't disturb yourself."

"It's only Alvarez and Rosalia having a little scene," said another. "They've both got the devil's own temper, and fight like two wild cats, three quarters of the time."

"It sounded like a pretty fierce quarrel," said I.

"It's only Rosalia's way," they insisted. "She gets up a fury, and works herself into hysterics. He'll coax her now, after likely boxing her ears, and, in ten minutes, they'll be as good friends as ever—they'll come back peaceable as a pair of doves, you'll see."

"It was plain enough they believed what they said, and I was ready to believe it, because it wasn't probable anything very bad would happen with us sitting there. The fellows were holding their cards that had just been dealt for a new game, and were waiting for me; but, somehow, though I thought the story was clear and straight, that scream kept whizzing through my ears, till I could hardly tell what I held in my hand.

"Before very long, Alvarez came in. I looked at him, and he was as white as the wall. He was always pale; but now he was that blue-white, such complexions turn in sickness or dreadful fright.

"Where's the little lady?" I asked, for he met my eyes so oddly, so defiant like, that I didn't quite know what to say, and, whatever had happened, it was no use for me to make a sign till I was a long way safe out of that den.

"She's gone to bed," he answered. "She gets raving, without rhyme or reason; but she's quiet now, and she'll stay so for to-night."

"He began to laugh, and tell ridiculous stories; then he must have more to drink, and called out for the old woman to come and serve us, but she did not show.

"Gone to bed, likely, the lazy hag," said he. "Luckily I know where the wine and brandy are."

"I did my best to act as usual; indeed, I was so much excited by what I had drunk, and my luck at cards, that I did not think a great deal, though I recollected after that some quick words and signs passed between Alvarez and the others, and they were as eager as he to play no more till we had a fresh bottle. He hunted in the closets, and found brandy, and filled our glasses himself, handing me mine as I sat at the table.

"You're awfully polite," said I, taking his tumbler; but I set it down again in a hurry, for there was a stain of blood on his shirt

bosom. He saw me staring at it, and burst out laughing.

"Don't look at me, as if I was Cain," said he. "It's off my hands. See what a pretty love-scratch my tigrass gave me."

"Sure enough, the backs of his hands were gouged and bleeding, though he had put some plaster over them.

"She patched them up for me herself," he went on. "She's always extra amiable after one of her tantrums. Here, boys, I'll give you a toast: America, the land of liberty and hope! Bob, you'll drink that—empty the glasses!"

"I drained mine. How long it was after that the room began to swim, the table to dance, the faces about me to float in the air, and the voices to sound a great way off, I can't tell. I was conscious of slipping off my chair. I could neither speak nor hold fast from falling. I knew they were all standing about me, as I lay on the floor, talking very fast; but I couldn't so much as lift up my hand, try as hard as I could, or catch a word they said, anymore than if I had been horn stone deaf.

"Then everything was gone. The next I remember was a rush of cold air. I was sensible enough to know I was being carried through a damp passage, and up a flight of stairs; but all the effort I could make was to half open my eyes, and the lids fell as if they were made of iron. Then I knew I was put on a bed, somebody passed a lighted lamp near my face, and I heard Alvarez's voice say,

"He's safe till morning! I began to think I had given him an over-dose, and settle him as completely as the other; but he'll do."

"There was considerable moving about in the room, and some low talk. I lay there, and tried to stir, to call; but, if I'd been dead a week, I couldn't have been more helpless. Then the light disappeared. I heard a door close and lock, and steps go away over a stone floor, that would tell of them in spite of their being so careful.

"I lay and stared out into the darkness, wondering vacantly if they meant to come back later and murder me, or whether I was locked up as a joke. I heard a bell strike three somewhere in the distance. After that, it seemed to me I lay there a thousand years!

"Then the bell pealed out again—just one stroke; it had only been half an hour in all!"

"Now I tried to move again. I could stir my hands and feet. After a little, I could sit up, and put my legs over the side of the bed, and feel that my feet rested on a carpeted floor. Just then I heard some steps in the passage, or some room next me. I knew there were two men, and I heard Alvarez say,

"There's no sound; he'll not stir before nine o'clock! Come away, and let's settle matters for the morning."

"My senses all came back just as quick as they had left me after swallowing the brandy. I could think and hear clearer than ever in my life. I suppose he had made a mistake, and given me an over-dose of the drug, and that the reaction left me wider awake than a hawk, instead of making me sleep, or keeping me in that first lethargy, as he expected.

"I waited some time to be sure the listeners were gone, then I tried to bear my weight on my feet. I could hardly stand at first; but I kept moving my hands and legs, till gradually the numb feeling went off, and I could use them easily. I felt in my inside-coat-pocket, where I always carried matches, a lot of little tapers, such as burn a minute apiece. The first thing I saw on a stand by my bed was a lamp. I lighted it, and began to look about me.

"I was in a large room; the floor was covered with matting; there was not much furniture. There were women's articles scattered around, and at the far end of the chamber was another bed. I put my hand over the place where I carried the pocket-book. It was gone! I sat down and tried to think what it was best to do, and what the idea of shutting me up there could be. I left the light burning. I knew from what I had heard that nobody would come near me till morning. I thought and thought, till I decided that Alvarez meant to lay the robbery on the men, and say we had both been drugged. Perhaps he meant, before I was awake, to go into the other bed, so I might think we had been brought up stairs at the same time. I can remember laughing to think how sold he was—only three hundred dollars in the pocket-book, instead of the haul he had expected. Then I went into a towering passion, and wouldn't have been afraid of twenty Spaniards. I had half a mind to raise a row, and bring them up; but it struck me as the nearest thing would be to lie down, and wait peaceably till that villain came to get into his bed, and then I'd have it out with him, and get my money back, and give him the confounded hiding ever a rascal took.

"But first, I wanted to examine the room. Without any warning or reason, there came over me a feeling that somebody was hidden in it, though I couldn't hear so much as a mouse. I had a big clasp knife in my pocket. I opened it, took up the lamp, and began the hunt. There wasn't a spot for a flea to hide, except in the other bed. That had some sort of red curtains about it, and they were drawn close in front.

"I walked toward it, and that awful quail grew stronger. I was not afraid, but my hair stood up, and my teeth fairly chattered! I knew something not of this world was near me, else some dreadful sight hidden behind the curtains. Anyway, I must go and look;