

Choice Literature.

LAD'S LOVE.

BY L. B. COCKROFT.

It grew, long ago, in a corner of my neighbour's garden, together with many another old fashioned flower. Snowdrops and periwinkle blossomed, and still blossom there in early spring, side by side with primroses and white violets. Wall-flower grows there too, and English honeysuckle, sweet briar, gillflower, heart's-ease, lavender and silvery honesty. There are spicy sea pinks, roses in their season, sweet peas, mignonette and starry virgin's bower, and at midsummer annunciation-lilies lift their pure heads to receive God's benediction of sun and shower and dew.

The house around which this garden lies is a rambling building, with many wings and chimneys, gray with the wear of wind and weather. It stands sheltered by a hill-side, facing the sea, which stretches, unbroken by any shore, to the horizon line. Vines cling about the old house, and a giant oak casts a tremulous shadow across the threshold. No architect would call it beautiful, but I doubt whether any artist could resist its charm, and I know at least one of the brotherhood who, for love of the house and its owner, has pitched his summer tent in Bythesea for many a year. Bythesea itself, though a sleepy little hamlet, is a charming place. Few strangers find their way to it; there are quaint "bits" without number for the sketch book; old gowns do not come amiss there, and early hours and simple living are still the rule. All these things attract us to the place, and above and beyond them all, there is our neighbour, Dr. Shirley, our first and best friend in the little village which my husband and I look upon as our summer home. We were in sore trouble when we first went there, and there, when it seemed as if all the world had passed us by, our good Samaritan came to us in the guise of Humphrey Shirley.

I have sometimes had it in my mind to paint that old wayside picture, taking for its central figure no ideal Samaritan, tall and swarthy, no patriarch, venerable and gray haired, but the simple portrait of a man no longer young; a man tall and worn and thin, grave about the eyes and mouth, and rugged and ungainly alike in face and figure. But I should paint in vain, for the beauty of holiness which made Dr. Shirley what he was is a beauty not to be caught and reproduced by my hand through either brush or pen.

For me to say that he was strong and wise with the best of all strength and wisdom; truthful, gentle, just to all men; pitiful to the weak and faithful with rare faithfulness to those whom he loved, is to describe him in a measure; but the sketch falls far short of doing justice to its subject, and can never bring before the minds or eyes of strangers any true likeness of the friend whom I knew and loved.

He was a bachelor, a confirmed old bachelor, the village people said, but the half-shy, half-wistful interest which he took in all that concerned our welfare during our early months of struggle went far toward convincing me that he had remained unmarried from necessity rather than from choice. I was mistaken, for in those days there was no romance in the doctor's story, save such as was supplied by my lively fancy, which made him by turns faithful to the memory of a dead love or true to a false one. My dreams took in the future also, and I mourned over the unhappy attachment which had so filled his heart that there was no room in it for another love.

"He never was meant for a bachelor," I used to insist, to my audience of one. "He could not fail to make a wife happy, and she would make him like other people."

"It would be a doubtful improvement, my dear," my husband would answer; but, though I was fain to own the truth of his remark, my grievance still remained. Indeed it remained for many a year, though I soon ceased to dream of seeing it righted, and, after a time, contented myself with saying wistfully: "What a pity it is that he didn't marry and have his own home. He would have made the best of husbands to the right woman."

"Yes; but suppose he had married the wrong one? Square pegs find their way into round holes, you know. Let well enough alone, Nell; the doctor does very well as he is. As to a home of his own he has his mother and that handsome scapegrace, Rex, and what more does he need?"

Rex, by the way, was a half-brother, twenty years younger than Humphrey, toward whom he seemed to stand in a relation almost more filial than fraternal. Humphrey had watched over him from childhood, had sacrificed much for him, had educated him, had fairly fought life's battle for him, and, as is the way with generous hearts, now loved him all the better by reason of those very sacrifices and struggles.

Rex took this affection as he took the other good things of life, simply as a matter of course. Not that he was deliberately ungrateful; far from it. In his visions of the future he always saw himself doing something wonderfully generous for Humphrey, "poor, plodding, old Humph," who had thrown away all his chances in life, and who now, at forty years of age, was a mere country doctor—a failure, as Rex would have said. It was a humdrum life, and humdrum found little space in Rex's thoughts—those "long, long thoughts" of youth, which deal ever with the joy at a triumph of the future, rarely or never with its sorrow, its failure and its despair. And indeed, why should any shadow of these last mingle with the bright fancies of one who was, as yet, only a heedless boy, swayed by every passing influence, fired by every fleeting enthusiasm, and with no better purpose in life than such as sprang from vague dreams of that "some day" when he should achieve, by some bold stroke of fortune, that glorious meed of success which most men toil for through a weary lifetime, and even then fail to win.

Yet the lad was popular with everybody, and was a special favourite of mine. Therefore, when we came for the sixth season to our summer home it was a disappointment to find that he had gone West for a stay of several months. That he had gone against the doctor's wishes I gathered

from the few words on the subject, which the latter let fall when he came in, as he said, "for a moment, just to shake hands," on the evening of our arrival. He was preoccupied, and looked old and careworn, and once or twice I heard him sigh in an anxious, heart-sick way, that stirred both my sympathy and my curiosity. Taxing him promptly with having overworked himself, I found that, far from claiming the idea, he seemed actually to catch it as a relief. It had been a trying season, he said, and added that he was tired and out of spirits.

He laughed, however, when I suggested a vacation, declared that he should certainly be himself again, now that we were there to cheer him up; and, finally, thinking better of his haste to be gone, took a chair and a fan, and gave us the local news of the past few weeks. At the end of it he said casually that he had a patient staying in the house, a child, to whom he hoped I would be kind. His own intentions were good, but, he added, hesitatingly, he knew nothing of girls or the way to manage them. If I would take pity upon his—his ward and himself he would be very grateful. Then, after a few more words, he took his leave.

His mother, Mrs. Tracey, gave me the history of his progress next day.

"I'mphrey spoke to you of our little girl, I suppose?" she asked, smiling; "but of course he told you only half the story. You know him so well that you will not be surprised to find that they were strangers to us, and, indeed, to everybody in Bythesea."

"They? Surely, Mrs. Tracey, there are not two of them?" I cried in surprise.

"One, now. The other—the mother—lies out yonder in the churchyard," said Mrs. Tracey, after a moment's pause.

"She was taken ill while travelling, and knowing, poor soul, that she could not live to reach her journey's end, she left the train here at Bythesea. Humphrey happened to be at the station, saw her, took in the situation at a glance and brought them here. She died before the morning, and we thought at first that Lillian would follow her. It almost seems as if it would have been the best thing for the poor child after all, for she has no money and no friends. There was some sort of a pension, I believe; but it ceased at the mother's death. Humphrey is greatly interested in Lillian; but he hardly seems to know how best to help her, or to put her in the way of helping herself. I wish we could keep her with us," she added, regretfully; "for she certainly is a dear child."

It was something of a surprise to me to find the "child" a girl of nineteen, younger than her years in face and figure, but older far than most girls of her age in the knowledge of grief and pain. Afterward I thought her pretty, but at that first meeting she left merely the impression of a pale, shy girl, too crushed and saddened to retain a trace of the brightness which properly belonged to her youth. Even the flowers with which she came in laden seemed out of place in her hand I thought, as I watched her deft fingers grouping them in the vases which the doctor liked to see freshly filled every day.

On one, which always stood on his study table, she spent some little care, putting into it from time to time a flower which specially pleased her critical taste. Yet when finished the whole was neither elaborate nor gay. There were a few white carnations, I remember, and a spray of sweet briar, some mignonette, three or four velvety pansies, and a piece of English honeysuckle. Last of all she added a bit of lad's love, looked at it, took it out again, held it for a moment irresolutely, then replaced it and set the vase aside.

"He likes it," she said simply, catching my glance of amusement.

"Lad's love? So do I; it has such a spicy, pungent smell," said Mrs. Tracey, rubbing a leaf between her fingers.

"It may be all very well while it lasts, but it must be fleeting, I fancy, or it would hardly have come by such a name," said I, laughing. "I don't believe it is worth having, even if the doctor is prejudiced in its favour."

"But it is sweet, too, in its own quaint fashion," said Mrs. Tracey.

"Like—" began Lillian, then paused.

"Like Humphrey himself," said Humphrey's mother, finishing the sentence.

"But the doctor is not fickle, no, nor yet odd; only good," said Lillian flushing.

"He is good enough to be very odd, indeed, my dear," said Mrs. Tracey, with something between a smile and a sigh. "As to fickle—no, he is not that. Perhaps, after all, we shall have to leave the lad's love for Rex."

I laughed, for Rex was wont to lose, or at least to lend, his heart to every pretty girl he met. Fortunately he met a good many, and, as the doctor said dryly, there was safety in a multitude.

Lillian, however, shook her head. "I don't know anything about the meanings of flowers," she said earnestly; "but this is the doctor's own flower, Mrs. Tracey, and I am sure it cannot mean anything about fickleness. Mr. Rex can have—"

"A petunia, I suppose," I said, laughing, "or anything equally cloying and flaunting. But, Lillian, I can't allow you to abuse Rex. Let me tell you that I have adopted him as my own special boy."

And Lillian laughed as she answered, "Keep him and welcome; only don't ask me to like him better than the doctor."

"Lillian," I called her from that first day, for she seemed too much of a child to need a more formal title. Indeed, there was very little formality in our treatment of her, for we soon learned to love her for her own sake as well as to pity her for the sorrows through which she had passed. If she was not a sunbeam in the house she might at least have been likened to a ray of purest moonlight, touching with softest radiance the dimness of the quiet house. It was a house where there had long been a lack of young life, for Rex, between school and college, had spent little time of late years at home, and Lillian slipped into the vacant place and filled it as of right. She grew to be almost indispen-

sable to Mrs. Tracey, as day by day the elder woman leaned more and more upon the younger one, much as she might have leaned upon her own lost daughter, had the little life been spared to blossom into womanhood. To me the girl was the most charming of companions, and my husband found her an equally charming model. She sat for him by hours together, and sketches of her face in all sorts of mediums found their way into his portfolio. One of them, a study in oils, he afterward elaborated into a "Elaine" which attained a great success, and another picture, a very faithful likeness, found its way into the doctor's hands and still hangs above his study fireplace, the Lillian of long ago. It was painted for a wedding gift, for none of us were blind to the little drama which was played before us that summer. He must have been dull, indeed, who could have failed to read the doctor's story in his face, in the thrill in his voice when he uttered Lillian's name, or in the light kindling in his eyes when they rested upon her. Love had come at last, and perhaps it was all the stronger by reason of its long tarrying. We all knew the open secret before any glimmer of the truth came to Lillian. Humphrey had been, from the first, the gentlest and kindest of guardians, and the brotherly manner which he had at first adopted toward his ward changed so imperceptibly into something warmer and deeper, that I doubt whether even he himself understood the meaning of the change until it was too late to struggle against the power which had mastered him.

I think that he did struggle, even then, but all his doubts and scruples were for Lillian's sake. Mine, and I had many of them, were for him. To wait forty years, and then give his heart into the keeping of a child, "fitter," as I thought at first, to myself, "for Rex" than for the grave elder brother whose love she surely could not value at its worth, even though she should accept it when he laid it at her feet.

Mrs. Tracey did not seem to share my misgivings as to Lillian's fitness, but she feared greatly that Humphrey would be unsuccessful.

"She is too frankly fond of him as her friend to have thought of him in any other relation," she said, sadly, "and besides, the difference in age is great. She can hardly be expected to think of him as a lover."

"Just at present she doesn't know what to think of him," I answered, with an inward laugh, as I recalled a question put to me by Lillian earlier in that same afternoon:

"Is the doctor displeased at me; I don't know what I have done, but he has changed toward me, and I don't know how to set matters right."

Not daring to enlighten her, I had merely answered that Humphrey had a good deal on his mind. Certainly she had not vexed him in any way.

"Then perhaps it is about his brother. Maybe I ought not to speak of it, but he half told me about it, and of course you know the whole story."

(To be continued.)

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF NIAGARA FALLS.

While hundreds of tourists visit the Falls of Niagara every season, not one in a thousand actually sees the river. But with the "freeing of Niagara," celebrated by New York State, and Canada July 15, 1885, the river experienced a new birth. Hereafter, in the true spirit of this international bond, the traveller, having enjoyed restored nature at the points comprised within the limits of the International Park Survey, may explore Niagara River to where, actually freed from its high, precipitous mural boundaries, it pours the waters of our upper inland seas into the broad Ontario. Here culminates the historic interest of the Niagara frontier, as at the Whirlpool modern rock-readers tell us to seek a clue to its geological past. For of few other rivers may it be said that they have a threefold charm, appealing alike to artist, historian and man of science.

True lovers of Niagara hope that the day is not far distant when the International Park will consist of not merely a mile strip on the American bank, but a grand double boulevard, running from Buffalo to Kingston, and on the Canadian cliffs from the Horseshoe Falls to Queenston. As a site for country villas, Lewiston Ridge, with the unnumbered beautiful drives in its neighbourhood and its picturesque historical associations, must, as the cities of western New York grow in wealth and population, become not less famous than the cliffs of Newport.

Below the cataract, the Niagara, although comparatively few tourists discover this fact, has a beauty and grandeur no less imposing than the falls themselves. Not content with its mighty plunge of 165 feet, the river goes surging and tossing downward another 104 feet in its rocky bed over the obliterated falls of a preglacial stream, the remains of a third cataract being still perceptible in the Whirlpool Rapids. At the Whirlpool the river entwines itself like some mighty serpent from its sinuous contractions in this concave prison, to pour itself an emerald green wave into a channel at right angles with its former course, and henceforth trends north east with many a gentle curve.

Not until we leave Lewiston Ridge do we turn our backs on the Niagara's stupendous exhibition of power. From this height, described by Father Charlevoix as "a frightful mountain which hides itself in clouds on which the Titans might attempt to scale the heavens," is a view worthy the expansive canvass of a Bierstadt. The table land terminates abruptly in an escarpment. Beneath stretch boundless meadowlands as rich as any in agricultural England. They slope gently to the river, which, coming headlong down the gorge, with the leap and roar of the Whirlpool upon it, gradually subsides into a tranquil stream as the bold outlines of the banks above Lewiston fall away into broad, smiling plains. Across the gorge is the Bunker Hill of Canada, crowned by its lofty shaft. Few monuments in the world have so imposing an effect in the landscape as the lonely form of Brock towering in the blue clouds far above the heights of Queenston.