

THE SILENT VOICE

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BY J. A. PHILLIPS.

The waves with thousand voices come babbling to the shore, And each one tells a different tale, with a varied roar; The wind is singing changeful songs—now roaring in its might, Now whispering like a lover fend, who sues his lady bright; The little birds are chirping all—each sings a different tune, For some will tell of the coming fall, some sing of the leafy June; The trees are rustling in the breeze—some sigh with wearied moan, Some laugh, some dance for joy, while some with sorrow groan.

All things of nature and of art speak with a varied voice, As they come to us in our sober moods, or come when we rejoice; But there is one voice, whose constant tone ever remains the same— It comes when silent and alone; it speaks—but has no name; It speaks, and yet is never heard; it comes when silence reigns, When darkness wraps the vasty deep and night is on the plains, When the flowers and birds are all asleep, each folded in its nest, When the wind is tired of blowing and hath laid him down to rest.

When the silent moon without a sound peers at us from on high, And a million stars are scattered around, each like a watchful eye— Then comes the voice; I know its tones, and yet I hear no sound; Its words are graven on my heart, as a tablet there were found; 'Tis a voice of love—of my only love—who weary years ago, When the dreary winter had begun was laid beneath the snow; And as earth closed o'er the beautiful form, was no more to see, The world became a desert space—a barren waste to me.

My heart was broken, all joy was fled, the future dark and drear— I only wished that pitying death would end my mission here; That He, whose unrelenting hand had plucked my tender flower, Would now in mercy take my life, and speed my parting hour. But soon there came a calmer time; I learned to think it best That one so holy and so pure should with the angels rest; At first I did not note the change that now my heart came o'er— How thoughts and feelings now were there that never came before,

How purer thoughts and holier thoughts came softly in the night, And gently nestling in my heart, filled it with calm delight. I could not tell, when night came on and silence reigned around, How then these purer, better thoughts were in my bosom found; But now I know—'tis her sweet voice, the love I still adore, Who comes and whispers tender things as she oft-times did of yore. But now her tones are purified—no touch of dross is there; She tells me now of purer joys in another, brighter sphere;

She bids me bear the weary load of life without a sigh, That when the earth hath passed away, I may join my bride on high; She bids me bravely do the work allotted me below— To bind another's sorrows up, to heal another's woe, To bear my cross with patience on till God's good judgment see Fit to remove this earthly case, and set my spirit free. All other sounds sing changefully—the sea, the birds, the wind;



"GOOD NIGHT," HE ANSWERED.

But this voice ever sings the same, and ever pure and kind.

O! gentle spirit, to whose care my better thoughts are due! Ever thy faithful help extend in journeying this life through; I am weak from worldly cares, which bear me to the earth, But thou art pure, and bright, and fair, in thy glorious, heavenly birth! So let thy silent, gentle voice, which comes without a sound, Ever be present in my heart, and its teachings there be found; Lend me thy aid to guide my steps in the holy path and true, So that at last I may come home to rest with God—and you!

HOW AUNT AVICE CHAPERONED HER NIECE.

"I say, look here, aunt Avice, here's a pretty go!" said Hugh Wayland, bursting into the Mountfield drawing-room, where his aunt was reading by the fire, one winter afternoon. "Oh, aunt Avy! such a dreadful disappointment, I don't know what can be done," said Ella Marlowe, Hugh's cousin, one of the daughters of the house, as she threw herself on the rug at her aunt's feet, her pretty face clouded with vexation, while Hugh leant his shoulders on the mantelpiece, a picture of disgust.

turquoise locket the same day that Pepper died!" said Ella.

"What crushes me is that aunt Frances coolly told me I could go," said Hugh. "Just as though it would be any fun without Ella; it added a needless insult to our sorrows; she might as well have proposed to send my new dress shirt without me in it."

"Well, then, Hugh, the little frills would command individual attention," said Ella, laughing. "Come along and have a romp with the children; it does our hard fate no good to lament over it, but I knew you would be sorry for us, aunt Avy."

When the two victims had left the room, Miss Wayland did not take up her book again, but sat still a little, making up her mind. It was growing dusk, and only the fire lighted up her pretty little figure and small, delicately-featured face. She was carefully and handsomely dressed in black silk, with a little bit of white lace twisted into the knot of carnation-colored ribbon in her hair. She was only six-and-thirty, and her light brown hair was abundant and fashionably dressed; but she always wore the white lace as becoming her years, while from time beyond Ella's memory carnation had been her favorite color. Her complexion and eyes were dark for the color of her hair, giving her rather a singular and piquant expression; and though she looked her age, it was not because her small, regular features were sharpened, or her face lined and faded, but from her quiet manner and the settled, patient look about her mouth. She was as pretty as she had ever been, for in her youth she had never been round, rosy or blooming, and was too small to have commanded attention to a style of good looks which, that if she had been three times magnified, would have made her a handsome woman. Since her father's death Miss Wayland had lived with her widowed sister—a home that suited her better than Beaconhill, under the new régime of her brother's wife. If Mrs. Marlowe had been asked why her sister had never married, she would have said—"Oh, Avice was always devoted to papa, and was such a quiet little thing, that one never thought of her marrying till it seemed too late. She had offers, though, and I think would have accepted Robert Ayrton, but he was only a lieutenant then, and papa did not fancy him, or like the idea of her going to India. She would have nothing to say to Sir Francis Kelmore, which was a pity, for he was nice enough, and Kelmore would have been a charming place for the girls to visit."

Miss Wayland's meditations were interrupted by her sister's entrance.

"Here you are, Avice! I have sent for our tea here, for I am tired and there is such a noise in the school-room."

"Ella and Hugh have been here, to tell me about the ball."

"Ah, yes, poor children! I am sorry they should be so disappointed, but Mrs. Walker is certainly worse, and though I should not really neglect her, I find her feelings would be terribly hurt if I went to this ball."

Mrs. Walker was Mr. Marlowe's aunt; she lived in the village near Mountfield, and for a long time had claimed and received a daughter's care from her nephew's widow.

"Is there no one else to take Ella?" asked Miss Wayland.

"No one that I care to ask, and I do not like her to go with only George and Hugh. I am sorry she should be disappointed, but she is young enough to wait for another year."

"If you like, I will go with them."

"You, Avice!" and Mrs. Marlowe paused, astonished, while her memory took her back to balls long ago, at their old home, when little Avice was always sought after for her beautiful dancing. One particularly, when she was chaperoning her sister, during a visit to Beaconhill after her marriage, and she had been too much taken up with her husband and her old friends to notice how much Avice danced with Robert Ayrton, and their father had been vexed. Mr. Ayrton went to India not long after that, then their mother died, and their father fell into bad health.

"I will take great care of her, Frances."

Mrs. Marlowe came back from the past to answer her sister.

"Oh, yes; but, really, I have not left off thinking that you require a chaperon yourself, Avice. It does not seem so long since I was scolded because of you and your doings."

"Why, Frances, it is more than thirteen years since I was at a ball! If I am to be useful in this way it is time I began, before I forget the customs of society; they have been modified a good deal as it is."

"What is the matter?" asked Miss Wayland, in a tone of sympathy rather than of alarm, she was used to Ella's terrible misfortunes.

"It is really dreadful this time," answered the girl; "only think, mamma says she cannot go to the Downhurst ball, for old aunt James is so ill, and won't do without her; and so we are not to go after all—and Hugh and uncle George came on purpose!"

"It is all about a chaperon; such nonsense, as if Ella would do anything she ought not. My father and I are going, and though he plays whist all night, I can take care of her. Lots of girls go about with their brothers, you know," urged Hugh, who was eighteen, and younger and more scatterbrained than Ella at seventeen, while both were of an age to feel that a ball was a very serious and important matter.

"But then you are not really her brother, and I think she must have a more efficient chaperon than you could be at her first public ball," answered Miss Wayland.

"Well, if she must, I thought any old woman would do, but aunt Frances says she will not let her go with any old woman. She has got her new dress and all her fall-lals, too; it is too bad."

"We thought so much of this ball," said Ella; "it will be the last this winter, and I did want to go. Of course we should not mind so much if aunt James were really ill, but I do not believe she is worse than usual, and it is always half-fidget."

"Your mother would go if she could, I am sure, Ella; but I am very sorry for you both, it is a great pity," said aunt Avice.

"It is more than a pity—it is a shame and a nuisance, and bother and bore, and the heaviest affliction that has befallen me since I lost my