

PHOEBE.

Ere pales in Heaven the morning star,
A bird, the loneliest of its kind,
Hears Dawn's faint footfall from afar
While all its mates are dumb and blind.

It is a wee sad-coloured thing,
A shy and secret as a maid,
That, ere in choir the robins sing,
Pipes its own name like one afraid.

It seems pain-prompted to repeat
The story of some ancient ill,
But Phoebe! Phoebe! sadly sweet
Is all it says, and then is still.

It calls and listens: Earth and sky,
Hushed by the pathos of its fate,
Listen: no whisper of reply
Comes from its doom-dissevered mate.

Phoebe! it calls and calls again,
And Ovid, could he but have heard,
Had hung a legendary pain
About the memory of the bird;

A pain articulate so long
In penance of some moldered crime
Whose ghost still flies the Furies' throng
Down the waste solitude of Time;

Wail of the young World's wonder-hour,
When gods found mortal maidens fair,
And will malign was joined with power
Love's kindly laws to overbear.

Like Progne, did it feel the stress
And ool of the prevailing words
Close round its being and compress
Man's ampler nature to a bird's?

One only memory left of all
The motley crowd of vanished scenes,
Her's,—and vain impulse to recall
By repetition what it means.

Phoebe! is all it has to say
In plaintive cadence o'er and o'er,
Like children that have lost their way
And know their names, but nothing more.

Is it a type, since Nature's lyre
Vibrates to every note in man,
Of that insatiable desire,
Meant to be so, since life began?

I, in strange lands at gray of dawn,
Wakeful have heard that fruitless plaint
Through Memory's chambers deep withdrawn
Renew its iterations faint.

So sigh! yet from remotest years
It seems to draw its magic, rife
With longings unappeased and tears
Drawn from the very source of life.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL in the Century.

THE FIVE-LEAVED DAISY.

I.

THE FINDING OF THE DAISY.

A woman's figure blotted the bright sky background on the brow of the hill—a figure all gray, like a half-finished sketch in pencil, suggestive but undefined. Guy Forest, eldest of young dreamers, on the slope just opposite, pil- lowing his long young limbs on myriads of crushed blue daisies, shaded his eyes with his hand to watch her, for want of other interest in the landscape. On she came, her little prayer-book and hymnal swinging from her wrist, her soft gray skirt lifted in the other hand, and her face half-hidden by the drooping brim of the gray plush that she wore. Down the rough clay hill, worn into ridges by the constant friction of trickling, sluggish streams, and across the perilous stepping-stones over the brook at the hill, she came, like coming fate, with a free, glad motion that made Guy think of Hebe. But imagine a Hebe in a straight gray dress, made with a childish simplicity, very quaint and charming.

He had full time to note even the fine muslin kerchief folded on her breast, and the little brooch that pinned it there, and to think how like an old-fashioned picture she was; never dreaming, in his manly ignorance, that this grandmotherly primness was but in obedience to fashion's latest whim. The little face under the big gray hat was bent down towards the daisied turf, and, since the crossing of the brook she had lingered perceptibly as if seeking something. What could it be? Guy was beginning to feel interested. But true to the spirit of listlessness that had taken possession of him, he did not stir until the young lady, in her unseeing progress, stood, searching still, not more than a yard from his feet. Suddenly she stooped and reached out with her hand, her face breaking into dimples and a look of glee that was almost speech. Then she uttered a little cry, drew back her hand and blushed. She had become suddenly aware of the two unnoticed feet, and of Guy. That young man was on his feet in an instant, hat in hand. He was about to stand aside and let her pass when something familiar in her aspect topped him.

"Miss Mercy!—and I have been wondering who you were!"

"Have you?" she queried merrily. "I have seen you twice, in the campus, and I was wondering how long it would be before you condescended to recognize me. How you have changed!" Mercy went on, emphasizing her remark by a little significant motion of the hand over her short upper lip. Guy blushed. He was only a college boy, and given to blushing. A fair young hero of the Greek type, tall, but not gigantic; muscular, but not gladiatorial, with a pair of honest young eyes, and a dearly-cherished blonde moustache.

"How young you make me feel, Miss Mercy," he made answer, reproducing her mocking move-

ment soberly; "and yet the last time I saw you you were in a pinafore, eating molasses candy."

"I wear a pinafore, as you call it, still," she retorted, "and I am as fond of molasses candy as ever. That was no proof of youth, any more than your little moustache is a proof of age!" with sublime scorn.

Guy groaned.

"And, oh, you naughty boy, you have been studying Greek on Sunday!" And Miss Mercy Addison dropped on her knees among the daisies, regardless of her pretty dress, and took up the shabby volume with an odd look, half-awe and half-disgust. "Ah, Guy, you used not to be so bad when you went to school with Charlie and me," she said, looking up at him reproachfully. Something in his look as he stood before her in the sunshine, bareheaded and smiling, seemed to strike her, for she added, quickly, "But, of course, it is none of my business, and I did not mean to call you 'Guy'! Here is your book, Mr. Forest."

Guy could have blessed her just now! She had looked so sweet and womanly, and her little sisterly scolding was something so new and charming to him. But he only leaned and took the book from her. "I was not studying," he said; "I meant to, but while I was making up my mind you came over the hill, as if you had dropped from the skies."

"No, I did not drop from the skies. I came from church, and I am going up to that brick house yonder. I am Doctor Copeland's governess now, not the Mercy Addison you used to know twelve years ago."

This was the third distinct change of voice, manner and face. She was no beauty, but there was something strangely fascinating in these swift and subtle changes.

"Governess!" Guy said. That was all, but the word held volumes. Mercy put one hand before her wistful face, then laughed aloud.

"I look like it, do I not?" mockingly. "A thing like me to pretend to teach!"

How Guy wished he had her glib tongue! He wanted to say so much. To ask how it came to pass that she, Mercy Addison, spoiled darling of a happy home, should be here in this little university town a governess. To say how sorry he was—yet glad. To tell her what he had been about these twelve long years, and how he had never forgotten the merry old school days, when she used always to be at the head of the spelling-class, and he at the foot. To vow that there was no reason why she should not be able to teach, or to do anything else she chose to undertake to perfection. But he was dumb. Ten minutes ago, had he been asked if he knew Mercy Addison, he would have said, doubtfully, "Y-e-s, I did know a family of Addisons once, and I think—yes, there was a little girl named Mercy."

"All he said was: 'Were you looking for something as you came along?'"

"Oh, my five-leaved daisy!" Mercy cried. "I saw one just by your foot," and down she went again.

A carriage drove along the brow of the slope just then, and the lady within raised her gold-rimmed eye-glass, and said, austere: "Doctor Copeland, can that possibly be Miss Addison?"

"Of course not!" Doctor Copeland answered.

"Where, my love, I see no one."

"Because you are looking up and Miss Addison is down. It is perfectly disgraceful! John—John—who is that young man with Miss Addison? A student, I do believe!"

"Yas'm, das her!" John, the coachman, answered, satisfactorily—"dat are Mars Guy fer true."

With a gesture of impatience, Mrs. Copeland leaned back in her carriage, with whole pages of unuttered speech in her severe and horrified countenance.

Meanwhile the search for the five-leaved daisy went merrily on.

"What do you want with it?" Guy asked.

"Why, don't you know, really? First, it is good luck to find one at all, and then you must eat it."

"Eat it?"

"Yes, of course; and then the next person you shake hands with will be your 'future'!"

Guy seized a handful of innocent four-petaled daisies and crammed them into his mouth.

"Oh, you great boy!" Mercy screamed.

"They'll do you no good whatever! They are four-leaved. Don't be silly. And look at the darling!"

With that, down she swooped and gathered daintily a tiny blue star, which she waved triumphantly before his eyes.

"Five!" she said. "Now I am satisfied."

"Are you going to eat it now?"

"Now? How absurd! Now, when you will probably shake hands for good-bye! What a question! No; I am going to press it in my prayer-book, and eat it—There, I won't tell you when I shall eat it!"

"Then, mark my words," Guy said, with vast solemnity. "From this time forth I shall haunt you like your shadow, and shake hands in season and out of season."

"I don't see how you can," Mercy said, seriously. "Doctor Copeland does not allow his governess to receive visitors, and classes college students with rattlesnakes and other dangerous reptiles. So, good-bye, Mr. Forest."

"But Miss Mercy—Miss Mercy!"

But she was gone. She looked back once and smiled at him from the shadow of the pines, and then she passed on, smiling, with her five-leaved daisy in her hand.

II.

THE SPELL.

Mercy took her scolding very philosophically. She had nothing to blush for, and so she did not blush.

"I knew Guy Forest as far back as I can remember," she explained. "We were at school together. He is a very nice boy. I was gathering daisies and he was helping me. Will you have some? They are so pretty," offering a great blue cluster.

It was very simple. Yet, somehow, Mrs. Copeland could not remember the points of her speech upon propriety. She looked at her governess as she stood before her in her Quakerish costume, with a level light in her eyes that corresponded with a certain peculiar straightening of the slim, white throat, and forbore to utter her scorching words of rebuke. After all, Miss Addison made a very good governess, quiet and firm (and cheap), but she was apt to be strangely childish in her manner at times. Perhaps, after all, she had been unconscious of any impropriety. And Mercy, on her part, forbore to utter the thoughts in her mind, which ran somewhat in this fashion:

"What a handsome fellow he is! What a pity he should be so wicked! But he certainly is nice! I am sure he never studied on Sunday when he was a boy!" This "he" did not refer to Guy. And then primitive little Mercy went to her room and wrote a letter which she signed "Always your own Mercy."

That was the last Sunday Guy devoted to Greek and dreaming. He developed a sudden passion for church-going, and Mercy, looking out with dove-like eyes from her dusky corner under the stained glass window, hoped that Guy Forest was "getting good" at last. No ban having been put upon her walks, it became a regular thing, Sunday after Sunday, that two figures, side by side, should descend the steep clay-hill and cross the stepping-stones. What more natural than that they should linger on the sunny slope, where the pink flowers of the trailing arbutus, and great golden clusters of yellow jasmine, and spreading beds of blue-and-white violets, had altogether eclipsed the little daisies? And so, step by step, week by week, in this half-stolen, idyllic intercourse, it became only natural, too, that Guy's world should grow small enough to be contained within the limits of two lovely eyes. Yet it seemed altogether unnatural to Mercy that when she knelt to say her prayers at night Guy's name should find its way upon the list of those for whom she offered special petitions, and when she sat, all in white, like a little saint, to think, with her two bare feet crossed before her, Guy—tall and fair, and splendid as Paris himself, with eager blue eyes and a reticent tongue—should appear always to lead the battalions of fancy. Always Guy, and always in the sunshine; whereas the other figure, the figure she strove to recall, had never any halo. And, so unwittingly, Guy brought sunshine, even in the dark, to Doctor Copeland's governess, for the monotonous weeks began to be lighted at both ends by a Sunday gone and a Sunday to come; and she would sometimes smile over her books to think of Guy's persistent hand-shakings, supplemented always by her production of her daisy from between the leaves of her prayer-book.

One Sunday a gentleman is used boldly from the forbidden precincts, side by side with Mercy, carrying her books, with an air of proprietorship. He sat beside her in her dusky corner, and was very devout, bowing his iron-gray head beside her drooping gray feathers, and following the ritual step by step through his glasses. In the little church there was one worshipper who sat bolt upright all the time, gnawing his blonde moustache, and Mercy, casting a fleeting glance in his direction, met a look that pierced her heart.

"The peace of God that passeth all understanding keep your minds and hearts," the minister said, and two, at least, passed out with their souls in tumult, feeling that "peace" not meant for them. Yet Mercy chatted, as she passed down the steep clay hill, with more animation than she had shown for many Sundays. Her laugh rang out along the babbling brook, as she crossed the stepping-stones. Her face was somewhat pale, but her eyes were bright and steady, as she stopped deliberately on a grassy slope, and, with a quizzical look on her little face ate her five-leaved daisy.

"I'll have to leave you just here," her companion was saying, "this is the nearest point from which to reach the depot, and my train is due in fifteen minutes. Are you sorry to say 'good-bye'?"

"Sorry! Why, of course, Mr. Howard!" Was it Mercy's mocking voice so meek and docile now?

"And you are not yet tired of the life you have chosen, my child?" He was facing her, and they were standing together just where she had stood with Guy, seeking the five-leaved daisy. He was a handsome man, though somewhat gray, and the unmistakable radiance of undying devotion lighted his eyes as he bent them on Mercy's face.

"Not yet!" Mercy said, hastily. "Oh, not quite yet! I have not yet proved myself!"

Mr. Howard stifled a sigh. "I would not hurry you," he said; "but remember, when you feel the need of them, a home and love await you—love, which I do not dare to express to you, my child. I will bide your time, but, oh, Mercy, remember how I have waited, and how I wait your will!"

"You are very good," Mercy cried, with a

sob in her throat—"too good to me. But I am not good enough for you. You are kinder to me than mother and the rest. They would have made me marry you at once, with all my doubts, or send you off; but you understood me better, and made them let me come off here to puzzle out my life in my own way. I could not marry you until I had grown up nearer to you. You are so far above me. But, remember, you have my promise. I am always your Mercy." So intent was she in her impulsive speech, that she did not heed the eager footsteps beating along the hillside until Guy paused beside them. He had a daisy between his lips, but when he began to speak the daisy disappeared. His manner was a trifle embarrassed, as it should be, Mercy thought, a little proudly. What did he mean by such an unwarrantable intrusion? So her words of introduction were gravely uttered. Guy bowed, then held his hand out smilingly to Mercy. To Mr. Howard's surprise Mercy put hers behind her back like a petulant child.

"How do you do," she said.

"But it is good-bye," Guy answered her. "I want to say good-bye. I am going away. Won't you shake hands, Miss Mercy?"

"Mercy, my dear," Mr. Howard said, reprovingly.

But Guy did not need his help. He took Mercy's hesitating hand in his and wrung it hard, and, before another word could be uttered, had disappeared among the pines.

Mr. Howard raised his eyeglass to look after him. "A very impulsive young man," he said, and Mercy, smiling, answered, "Very," and sent a wistful glance, with the smile, out towards the pines. Her hand ached yet with the force of that good-bye, and Mr. Howard, as if reading her thought, took it in his and stroked it softly. "Good-bye, my little one," he said; then, after a pause, "What can I do for you, Mercy?"

"Do?" Mercy said, in a quivering voice. "Do? Forgive me!" And then, too, he was gone, and Mercy walked up the slope regardless of the flowers, because she was crying as she walked.

It seemed to her almost cruel that Guy should suddenly come forth from the pines and bar her path. She felt as one suddenly awaked, to whom waking is pain. And she had tried so hard to do right, and be true to herself and that other.

"I am not going away at all," Guy said, laughing. "I knew no other way to make you shake hands with me, and I am as sure you ate that daisy to-day as if I had seen you. And my good fairy put one in my path, too, and so, to make assurance doubly sure, I swallowed that!"

Mercy looked up at him, and then there was no use to try to joke any more. The tears in her piteous eyes were his undoing. In moody silence he walked at her side, while she tried to regain voice to express the displeasure that she ought to feel. Suddenly he stopped, and cried abruptly:

"Mercy, who is he that has a right to come between us? Why can he go in where I am shut out? Why can he sit with you in your own little corner at church, while I sit afar off, and can only look?—his tongue was glib enough now—and why can he take your hand and stroke it, while I only have a cool little hand shake for my pains? Oh, Mercy, I am a brute, but tell me why, or I shall go mad!"

"Because," Mercy answered, looking straight out towards the pines—"because I have promised to be his wife some day."

Why could she not remember that Guy Forest was only a foolish college boy, after all, and nothing to her? That he was a boy who studied on Sunday, and went to church, but did not pray? Why did her heart throb so as if it would break? Why did he suddenly seem to her no boy at all, but a man, and such a man that she felt almost afraid of him, in the passionate strength of his youth?

"His wife?" Guy laughed aloud, and gathering in his her trembling hands he held them close against his trembling breast. "His wife? Never! You are mine, my love! Mine, because you let me learn to love you! Mine, by the prophecy of the daisy! Mine, because I will have no other wife but you!"

The light poured on her from those two blue eyes dazzled poor Mercy till she shut her own. What masterful wooing was this!

"Mercy," he said, dropping her hands and bowing his head before her, "I await your sentence!"

The proud and tender humility of his voice was harder to bear than the authority he had usurped just now. His tones seemed to pulse through every fibre of her being, slaying her sense of duty, pride and truth. But they should not! Albeit feebly, Mercy repulsed the outstretched hands.

"Do you think?" she asked, with a scorn born of the exigencies of the moment, and fated to perish at its birth—"do you think a childish superstition would weigh with me against my plighted faith? You little know me," and she went bravely past him up the slope.

When she looked back, he was lying face downwards on the grass. She put her hand to her heart, but she walked on stealthily and did not cry any more.

III.

THE SPELL WORKS.

The great hall of the university was crowded to overflowing. The whole town of Burleigh had turned out to do honor to the young men about to issue from academic shades into the