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Poetry.

GOD'S WAYS.

God speaks to hearts of men in many ways:
Some the red banner of the rising sun
Spread o'er the snow-clad hills, has taught His
praise;
Some the sweet silence when the day is done;
Some, after loveless lives, at length have won
His word in children's hearts and children's gaze:
And some have found Him where low rafters ring
To greet the hand that helps the heart that
cheers;
And some in prayer, and some in perfecting
Of watchful prayer through unrewarding years.
And some not less are His, who vainly sought
His voice, and with his silence have been taught,
Who bare his chain that bade them to be bound,
And, at the end, in finding not, have found.

JOHN STEPHENS' PERICARDIUM.

BY ELEANOR KIRK.

"Now I am going to tell you just what my husband said to me this morning. Doctor, word for word," and the invalid, Mrs. Stephens, lay back again on the sofa pillows, the very picture of misery. The family physician, who was called on an average to the Stephens mansion three hundred and sixty times a year, drew a chair close to the couch, and waited quietly for his patient to open her book of complaints.

Last night, you see, Doctor, I had an ill turn, and he wanted to come for you; but when I got so he dared to leave me, he concluded then we'd better let you sleep.

Much obliged to him, said the Doctor, with a little sarcastic emphasis on the personal pronoun. Last night was the first undisturbed night's rest I have enjoyed for a week.

Mrs. Stephens continued: This spell was the same as I had the last time you were sent for, Doctor—

"A slight nervous attack," broke in the physician, "nothing more."

Well, it didn't make any difference what you call it, it was mighty hard to bear; but let me tell you what my husband said first, Doctor, before we go into symptoms. When he was going down to breakfast, he says to me, "Kate, what shall I send you up?"

Says I, "I don't want anything but a strong cup of tea. Tell Bridget to send it up in the little teapot." I saw, Doctor, that he didn't move after I said this, so I turned and looked up at him, and such a picture of rage and disgust I never saw in my life. Finally, says he, "Tea! tea! tea! it's nothing but tea from morning till night. Kate, says he, you are the color of a chissan now. Why don't you order a good piece of beefsteak, and a slice of brown bread, and a cup of chocolate; that would be a sensible breakfast!"

But John, says I, you forget that I am sick and have no appetite. I was all ready to cry, but I was determined that he shouldn't have the satisfaction of seeing the tears fall.

Forget, says he; forget? I wish to Heaven I could forget! It's nothing but grunt and groan from one year's end to the other! I have lost all patience with you, says he. When we lived in part of a house, and you did your own housework, you were as well and happy as anybody, and no man ever had a pleasanter little home than John Stephens; but what have I now to leave, or come back to? and this Doctor, is what he ended up with.

Kate, says he, you are nothing more nor less than a drunkard! and in the sight of God, more culpable than most of the men who stagger thro' the streets; because the majority of those poor devils have some sort of an excuse for their conduct, and you haven't the slightest. You have a luxurious home, a husband doing his level best to make you happy—everything under the light of the sun to please you, and yet you will persist in swilling tea. Yes, Doctor, 'swilling' was the word he used—'boo! hoo! hoo! Oh dear me! to think I should ever have lived to have heard such dreadful language out of my husband's mouth; and then says he—and making me as miserable a wretch as walks the earth.

Pretty plain talk, interrupted the Doctor, with a shrug of his broad shoulders.

Oh yes, sobbed the victim, and so awfully coarse and unkind. If I had a spell, and died there before his eyes, I don't believe he would have cared a snap of his finger. I tell you, Doctor, there is such a thing as a man getting hardened.

Evidently, replied the physician, with a tremulousness absolutely painful.

But my husband has nothing in the world to trouble him but just my poor health; and I am sure I can't help that. This remark was more in answer to her companion's tone and manner than the one single word that had accidentally escaped his lips, and this the Doctor felt.

Anybody would think, by the way he goes on, continued the irate woman, that I enjoyed myself with spasms, and cramps, and fainting fits. Anybody would think it was a pleasure to me to feel, every time I see a funeral procession, as if the hearse was going to stop at our door next. Oh yes! such a life is very enjoyable, very indeed.

Doctor Ellis took no notice of these last words; the man's eyes grew luminous, and his whole face declared that he considered himself master of the situation; and if Mrs. Stephens had not been so entirely taken up with her own ailments, mental and physical, the honest countenance would have betrayed him.

You say, he began, settling himself in the large easy chair, and assuming a strictly professional air, that your husband has nothing to trouble him but your health; how do you know that, Mrs. Stephens?

How? why how do I know anything? By the evidence of my senses. Don't I know that John Stephens has a splendid business that looks after itself a magnificent income, and money enough to live on the bare interest, as well as a family need to live; if he never entered his office again while he has breath?

But money isn't everything, Mrs. Stephens, proceeded the physician, with a calmness almost stoic. There are other troubles beside money troubles. How about health, madam?

"Health?" repeated the lady with a smile, she intended to be sarcastic to the last degree. Health, Doctor Ellis! Why, there isn't a healthier or a sounder man than my husband in the country. He eats more in one meal than I do in three months.

There is nothing the matter with your husband's stomach, Mrs. Stephens. Dr. Ellis shaded his face with his hand, and waited further developments. Mrs. Stephens mistook this attempt at forced concealment for emotion, and immediately assumed a sitting posture, brushed her hair away from her forehead, and looked piercingly into her companion's face.

Why do you accept the word 'stomach' so strongly, Doctor Ellis? she inquired in anxious tones. Mrs. Stephens was forgetting herself, and this the Doctor hailed as an excellent omen.

Only that I might make you understand that a man's digestion could be most unexceptionable, and yet he be far from sound in other directions.

Then you mean to tell me that my husband is sick?

I do.

Perhaps you will go still further, and say dangerously?

If you desire it.

Oh, Doctor Ellis, how cold and unfeeling you are! I should think you ought to know by this time, and just here Mrs. Stephens broke down entirely, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Ought to know what, Mrs. Stephens? inquired the Doctor, with uncalculated deliberation.

You ought to know—no, that my husband's health and life are of a good deal more consequence to me than my own.

Ah, indeed, interrupted the physician, with an elevation of his bushy eyebrows, immensely suggestive of a contrary opinion, as well as several excellent reasons for said opinion.

Doctor Ellis, will you be kind enough to tell me what's the matter with my husband?

Mrs. Stephens was now on her feet—tears all wiped away, eyes flashing with resentful spirit, and only a little quiver of the lip, to show how deep a wound the kind heart in her bosom had sustained.

There she stood, reproachfully, defiant, determined, womanly. The doctor was carried, and such an honest face it was, that he darted round with him from door to door, from sunrise to sunset, every day in the year, that it was a mighty hard matter to keep it from an immediate betrayal of the whole purpose.

Mrs. Stephens, said he, you have no cause to be alarmed. If I can only get your cooperation in this business, I feel certain that I shall be able to make a well man of your husband in a few months, at the longest; but, as true as I sit here before you, I cannot do this alone.

Why have I not been informed of this before? broke in Mrs. Stephens, imperiously.

Who was there to inform you, madam? Your husband does not know his condition, and I should really like to be told when you have been sufficiently calm to hear all that was necessary for you to know?

Hot, Doctor Ellis, I should think you ought to have understood that my own health and comfort are nothing, compared to my husband's. Mrs. Stephens was weeping again. There is no sacrifice I could not make for him.

Carous creatures! muttered the Doctor; delightful bundles of contradictions. How the mischief should I know, Mrs. Stephens, how much you care for your husband? I am sure you have spent the last half hour complaining about him, is that the way women generally testify their regard for their husbands?

Oh, don't, Doctor Ellis, please don't, pleaded the terrified woman. I will never complain again

never—if you will only let me know what I can do for him. Do you know, Doctor, I had begun to think lately that something must be amiss with him, he was growing so irritable. Poor dear! how wicked and thoughtless I have been.

"This then is the trouble. I shall take it for granted, madam, that you know something about physiology, and can follow me without difficulty? Oh yes—yes, for mercy's sake, go on.

Very well, I find that the pericardium—the pericardium," repeated Mrs. Stephens.

You know what that is, I suppose? Evidently Mrs. Stephens' anatomical knowledge was limited. She shook her head in despair. Something about the heart, isn't it? she asked at last.

Yes, the pericardium is the membranous sac that holds the heart. Well, sometimes this sac—it is no matter about particulars, Mrs. Stephens, and Doctor Ellis suddenly came to a stand still.

It is enough, thought, for me to say that we are both passably anxious that this heart should remain where it belongs. Mr. Stephens must be amused. He wants the opera, the lecture, the social circle, entertaining books—a happy home—music. You play and sing, do you not, Mrs. Stephens?

Oh yes—I used to, and Mrs. Stephens' answer was so pitiful now that big Doctor Ellis really and truly was obliged to wipe both his eyes and his nose. Before he was aware, the lecturing dust had got the upper hand. Well, try it again; get a teacher, and go to practicing.

But how am I going to manage my spasms? sobbed the lady.

Well, perhaps between us both—you trying your will power, and thinking of your husband, going out with him, and taking care of him—and I doing my best in my way, we may be able to subdue them; but you must remember this, madam—do not let Mr. Stephens have the faintest suspicion that you think anything is the matter with him; and above all, do not treat him like an invalid. Just amuse him, and all that you know just as you used to when you were first married.

Another series of sobs from Mrs. Stephens. The doctor arose to go. His patient had entirely forgotten that he had left no prescription.

About tea, Doctor? she asked as she prepared to leave. Do you think it very hurtful?

As an occasional tonic, I have no objection to tea; but as a daily beverage, madam, it is an invention of the devil. Good morning.

John Stephens sought his home that evening with a heavy heart. His wife he loved—a confirmed invalid, or hypochondriac—if matters little which; one was as bad as the other. His remonstrances and pleadings had proved of no avail; he was doubtful even whether his wife loved him. He opened the door softly with his latch key. This had become a habit; seldom did the gentleman show himself to his wife until after the dinner bell had summoned the family to the dining room.

A strain of music met and transfixed him or the very threshold. Ah! a beautiful song was being rendered, and his wife was the musician. He was just in time to hear—

"The eyes that cannot weep
Are the saddest eyes of all."

For a full year this charming voice had been as silent as the grave.

Company, perhaps, he muttered. Curiosity overcame him. He opened the parlor door and peeped in. There was Mrs. John Stephens, he was obliged to admit, as on the threshold over the fine rendition of a piece of music as he had never seen her.

What does this mean, Kate? he asked, with outstretched arms.

That I have given up tea, and am going to try hard and be well! I guess my voice will all come back, John.

I guess so, he replied, folding her tight to his heart.

Three months after this, the cure was so radical, that Doctor Ellis made a clean breast of the whole thing; and there is no word or set of words that can provoke so hearty a laugh in the happy home of the Stephens as this physiologically scientific one—

Pericardium.

The following is a touching epitaph: Strange pause—My tale attend.

And learn the cause Of Hannah's end.
Across the world, the wind did blow,
She latched a cold What laid her low.
We shed a quart Of tears 'tis true,
But life is short—Aged 82

A WITTY COMPLIMENT.—No witty compliment is rarely made as that of Sydney Smith's to his friends Mrs. Tighe and Mrs. Cuffe: "Ah, there you are—the cuff that every one would be glad to wear, and the tie that no one would loose."

Here is the latest description of a kiss: "Two men. A real couple stood in the pale, cold moon beams. Their lips touched, and there was a sound like a cow hauling her hoof out of the mud."

THE STOLEN NOTE.

Except that he indulged too freely in the use of the intoxicating cup, John Wallace was an honest, high minded man. His one great fault hung as a shadow over his many virtues. He meant well, and when he was sober he did well.

He was a better by trade, and by industry and thrift he had secured money sufficient to buy the house in which he resided. He had purchased it several years before for three thousand dollars, paying one thousand down, and securing the balance by mortgage to the seller.

The mortgage rate was almost due at the time circumstances made me acquainted with the affairs of the family. But Wallace was ready for the day; he had saved up the money—there seemed to be no possibility of an accident. I was well acquainted with Wallace, having done some little collecting and drawn up some legal documents for him. One day his daughter Annie came to my office in great distress, declaring that her father was ruined, and they should be turned out of the house in which they lived.

Perhaps not, Miss Wallace, said I, trying to console her, and give the affair, whatever it was, a bright aspect. What has happened?

My father, she replied, had money to pay the mortgage on the house in which we live, but it is all gone now.

Has he lost it?

I don't know; I suppose so. Last week he drew two thousand dollars from the bank and lent it to Mr. Bryce for ten days.

Who is Mr. Bryce?

He is a broker. My father got acquainted with him through George Chandler, who boards with us and who is Mr. Bryce's clerk. Does Mr. Bryce refuse to pay it?

Yes, he has paid it.

Well, what is the trouble then?

Father says he has not paid it.

Indeed! But the note will prove that he has not paid it. Of course you have the note.

No, Mr. Bryce has it.

Then of course he has paid it.

I suppose he has, or he could not have the note.

What does your father say?

He is positive that he never received the money. The mortgage, he says, must be paid tomorrow.

Very singular. Was your father—I hesitated to use the unpleasant word which must have grated harshly on the ear of the sensitive girl. Mr. Bryce says father was not quite right when he paid him, but not very bad.

I will see your father.

He is coming up here in a few moments—I thought I would see you first and tell you the facts before he came.

I do not see how Bryce could have obtained the note unless he had paid the money. Where did your father keep it?

He gave it to me, and I put it into the secretary.

Who was in the room when you put it into the secretary?

Mr. Bryce, George Chandler, my father and myself.

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Wallace. He looked lean and haggard, as much the effect of anxiety as from the debauch from which he was recovering.

She has told you about it, I suppose, said he, in a very low tone.

She has.

I pitied him, poor fellow; for two thousand dollars was a very large sum for him to accumulate in his little business. The loss of it would make the future look like a desert to him. It would be a misfortune which one must undergo to appreciate it.

What passed between you on that day?

Well, I merely stepped into his office—it was only the day before yesterday—to tell him not to forget to have the money for me tomorrow. He took me into his back office, and as I sat there, he said he would get the money ready the next day. He then left me and went to the front office where I heard him send George out to the bank to draw a check of two thousand dollars; so I supposed he was going to pay me then.

Had you the note with you?

No, now I remember, he said, he supposed I had not the note with me, or he would pay it. I told I would come the next day, and would have it ready; that was yesterday.

When I came to look for the note it could not be found. Annie and I have hunted the house all over.

You told Bryce so?

I did. He laughed and showed his note, with his signature crossed over with ink, and a punch hole through it.

do nothing of the kind.

I am sure he did not, repeated Annie, earnestly.

How else could Bryce obtain the note but through him? What time does he come home at night?

Always at ten time. He never goes out in the evening.

But, father, he did not come home till ten o'clock the night before you went to Bryce's. He had to stay in the office to post books, or something of that kind.

How did he get in?

He had a night key.

I must see Chandler, said I.

No harm in seeing him, added Mr. Wallace; I will go for him.

In a few moments he returned with the young man Chandler, who, in the conversation I had with him, manifested a lively interest in the solution of the mystery, and professed himself ready to do anything to forward my views.

When did you return to the house on Tuesday night?

About twelve.

Twelve, said Annie; it was not more than ten when I heard you.

The clock struck twelve when I turned the corner of the street, said Chandler, positively.

I certainly heard some one in the front room at ten, said Annie, looking in astonishment at those around her.

We're getting at something, said I, how did you get in?

The young man smiled, as he glanced at Annie, and said:

On arriving at the door I found that I had lost my night key. At that moment a watchman happened along, and I told him my situation. He knew me, and taking a ladder from an unfinished house opposite, placed it against one of the second story windows, and I entered in that way.

Good! Now who was it that was heard in the parlor at ten, unless it was Bryce or one of his accomplices? He must have taken the key from your pocket, Mr. Chandler, and stolen the note from the secretary. At any rate I will charge him with the crime, but what may happen. Perhaps he will confess when hard pushed.

Acting upon this thought, I wrote a lawyer's letter—demanding against you, etc.—which was immediately sent to Mr. Bryce. Cautioning the parties not to speak of the affair, I dismissed them.

Bryce came.

Well, sir, what have you got to say to me? he asked stiffly.

A claim on the part of John Wallace, for two thousand dollars, I replied, looking over my papers and appearing supremely indifferent.

Paid it, he said, short as pie crust.

Have you? said I, looking him sharply in the eye.

The rascal quailed. How that he was a villain.

Nevertheless, if within an hour you do not pay the two thousand, and one hundred dollars for the trouble and anxiety you have caused my client, at the end of the next half hour you will be lodged in jail, to answer a criminal charge.

What do you mean?

I mean what I say. Pay, or take the consequences.

It was a bold charge, and if it had been an honest man I should not have dared to make it.

I have paid the money, I tell you, said he. I have got the note in my possession.

Where did you get it?

I got it when I paid the—

When you reluctantly entered the house of John Wallace on Thursday night at 10 o'clock, and took the said note from the secretary.

You have no proof, said he, grasping a chair for support.

That is my lookout. I have no time to lose. Will you pay, or go to jail?

He saw the evidence I had against his denial, and he drew his check on the spot for twenty-one hundred dollars, and, after begging me not to mention their affair, he sneaked off.

I searched the check and fastened to Wallace's house. The trader may judge with what satisfaction he received it, and how rejoiced were Annie and her lover. Wallace insisted that I should take the one hundred for my trouble, but I was magnanimous enough to keep only twenty. Wallace signed the pledge and was ever after a temperate man. He died a few months ago, leaving a handsome property to Chandler and his wife, the marriage having taken place shortly after the above narrated circumstances occurred.

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