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For a Birthday.

At two years old the world he sees,
Must seem expressly made to please!
Such new-found words and games to try,
Such sudden mirth, he knows not why,
So many curiosities!

As life about him, by degrees,
Discloses all its pageantries,
He watches with approval shy
At two years old.

With wonders tired he takes his ease
At dusk upon his mother's knees;
A little laugh, a little cry;
Put toys to bed, then "Seepy-bye"—
The world is made of such as these
At two years old.

—Chris. Morley.

Blue.

Blue is a precious color;
In it lapis lies,
Kingly sapphire, lordly turquoise,
Persian tiles and Chinese dyes,
Cobalt of a Kurdish lake,
Kashmir's high-set sky,
Beads that shield my camel and son,
From the baleful Evil Eye.

—Mary Fleming Labaree.

He who knows himself best esteems
himself least.

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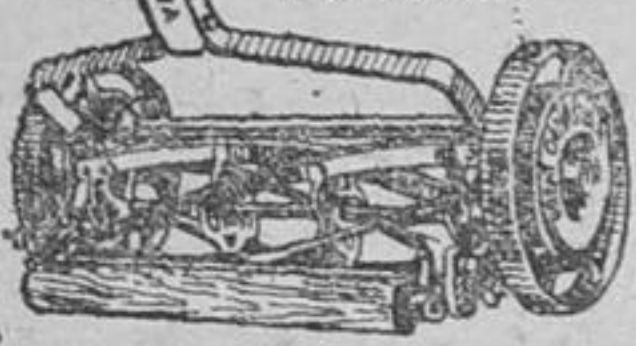
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MOWERS

To An Old Friend.

I like to dream of some established spot,
Where you and I, old friend, an evening through
Under tobacco's fog, streaked grey and blue,
Might reconsider laughter's unforget.
Beside a hearth glow, golden, clear and hot,
I'd hear you tell the oddities men do;
The clock would tick, and we would sit, we two—
Life holds such meetings for us, does it not?

Happy are men when they have learned to prize
The sure unvarnished virtue of their friends,
The unchanged kindness of a well-known face;
On old fidelities our world depends,
And runs a simple course in honest wise,
Not a mere taxicab shot wild through space.

—Christopher Morley.



He—"I wonder what it is about spring that gets into the blood?"
She—"Spring tonics, I guess."

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Repaying Mrs. Mullaney

BY ELIZABETH GUILFOILE.

"I'd like to get my fishing-tackle. Forgot it when I moved out. I think there is a good mess of bass in Duvall's pond. Got a lantern handy, Joe?"

"Take a lamp," said Ruth. "You will find things about as you left them, Al. I haven't been able to clean your room and I don't think Mrs. Mullaney got in there."

Joe reached for another lamp but it had no oil.

"I'll fill this, Al, if you'll wait a minute. I'm not keeping the house-keeping checked up very well since Mrs. Mullaney left. Ruth says she is going to take the helm to-morrow and I don't much blame her."

The hired man dropped easily into a chair.

"How do you like things now?" asked Ruth.

"Bully!" declared Al with a little more emphasis than was needed to carry conviction.

"Aren't you glad that I persuaded Joe that the eight-hour day was the best arrangement? Now you are getting fifteen dollars more on the month and you have your spare time to yourself."

"Yes'm, that's so," said Al thoughtfully.

"Farmers will simply have to come to it. System and management pay in every other line of business. This business of 'boarding the hands' on a farm is poor arrangement. What city employer would expect his clerks to stay in his home? Pay the men enough, I say, and let them lead their own lives, away from the farm they work on."

"I reckon it's some cheaper for you too, ain't it?" suggested Al mildly.

"No," answered Ruth thoughtfully, "as I've figured it, it is about the same. Of course we are paying you more salary now, for less work. It balances up about even. But then, you see," she added ingeniously, "when you're paid, you're paid. You don't owe us anything and we don't owe you anything."

"That's so," said Al slowly, "that's so."

Joe returned with the light and the two men went into the bedroom that had been Al's before he moved to his sister's under the new arrangement. When the fishing-tackle was located the hired man set off. "The boys will be waiting for me over at the pond," he explained.

"Aren't you coming, Joe?" Ruth called as he lingered in the room down the hall.

"In a moment, dear." He locked the door and carried in the key on the palm of his hand.

"That room is empty—and there are six people in John Olsen's cabin," he said slowly.

"Al likes this way best, doesn't he?" his wife asked sharply, feeling a division of thought she could not analyze. "It means more money to him."

"Yes, he says he does," answered Joe absently and he laid the key on the mantel beside the notepad. Ruth turned away and then they talked of other things.

PART II.

Ruth felt an odd hesitancy to reintroduce the subject of Mrs. Mullaney's payment. In the week that followed she had much to do. Joe warned her not to overtax her strength. She knotted a little fist that was gaining a brown tinge again and pointed to the tight muscle on her forearm.

"Look at that! I'm young and strong and my muscles are hard. I use my brain and my heart is in my job. But I wonder why I can't accomplish as much as Mrs. Mullaney? She is much older, she looks far frailer and she certainly hasn't the incentives to do her best that I have. Yet she is much surer and swifter in the race than I am."

"I think," said Joe slowly, as if he were feeling his way in his own thought, "that it is because you are carrying a handicap."

She wondered why she did not ask him to explain.

Late Sunday afternoon, as she tugged at a viciously-rooted burdock in the back yard, Joe was milking in the barn. Supper was ready and Ruth had started out to meet him when she observed that bed of burdocks. She attacked it with a kind of fierce energy.

"There just isn't time to do all the things that ought to be done and I haven't the strength to do them! Oh, dear! I wonder what Joe meant by 'a handicap.'"

"Ruth, it's Sunday!" Joe came through the picket gate. "Besides you're exhausting yourself. You look worn out."

She straightened up, flushed and nervous with exertion and started to speak. She would ask him about that handicap. A shout at the gate caused both of them to turn.

"Hullo! Mrs. Hayden, come quick!" the voice was imperative. Dr. Kellar was bringing his car to a halt beside the gate.

"Mullaney's oldest girl is in bad shape. Hurry! I haven't a minute to lose."

"What is the matter with her?" "Swallowed laudanum."

Ruth turned white with horror. She glanced at Joe.

"Your supper—the milk."

"Go, dear," he said quickly and swung open the door of the car for her. "I'll come later."

In the mile that lay between them and the Mullaney house, the doctor explained more fully. Ruth had seen Mary Mullaney, a shy girl of sixteen, poorly dressed.

"Wanted to go out with her beau," said the doctor, "like any blessed young thing would. They've been keeping it dark from Mullaney. He's too much of a s'ouch to clean himself up Sundays. He's usually off in the woods, hunting and fishing. That suited Mary very well. He happened along just at the wrong minute this afternoon. She was getting into a machine with a strange young fellow. He ordered her to get out and stay at home. It's bad business to humiliate one's child. Even if he didn't like the looks of things he could have gone about it in a different way."

They drove into the yard. The doctor blighted leaving Ruth to look out for herself. Mullaney met them.

"Quick, Doc! For God's sake! We can't keep her awake much longer."

"Mrs. Mullaney knelt beside a couch, sobbing aloud and beating the hands of the girl who was slipping into stupor."

"Oh, honey, don't go to sleep! Mary, Mary! Mother's darling! Don't leave me! Wake up, Mary! Listen, child, and I'll tell you something wonderful. . . . Something . . ."

A little, inarticulate cry of joy and relief fell from her when she saw the doctor. She flung herself into Ruth's arms.

"To think you'd find me like this the first time you came to see me! Oh, my baby! my baby! Oh, what if he can't save her!"

Ruth pressed her gently into a chair.

"Hush, dear," she said tenderly, "we're going to save her. Mary is strong and Dr. Kellar knows."

The doctor gave some quick, low-voiced orders, which Ruth obeyed swiftly. They did what they could but the drug had already got in some of it deadly work. Then they lifted the girl to her feet and began the march against death. Dr. Kellar on one side and Ruth on the other, they half dragged, half carried her back and forth, back and forth, the length of the room. Crouched in a chair, her work-worn hands clutching her shoulders, Mrs. Mullaney watched them and whispered broken prayers. Through the window came the sound of a man's racking sobs. Ruth did not know how long they kept up that walk, with the girl pleading inarticulately to be left alone. Joe came after a while and relieved his wife. The doctor nodded to her. "Better look after the rest of them. Mary is reviving."

Ruth slipped away from them and went to look for Mullaney. She found him crouched against the side of the barn, moaning through his locked hands—a conscience-stricken man.

"I meant her no harm, Mrs. Hayden," he repeated over and over. "I love my children. I'm not much shakes at makin' a nice livin' for them but I'd shield them from danger if I had to walk on fire to do it. I want my girls to be good girls. Mary's young and I didn't know that feller. I done the wrong thing but I'll make it up her."

Ruth sat beside him on the long grass and talked steadily. Her voice gradually released him from his agonized tension. Ruth would never have another such opportunity. She used it and he responded. He would dress up on Sundays and meet Mary's friends. He would buy new dresses for the girls. Yes, he would, he would be a real man, husband and father!

Finally quieted, but spent as if from a life wound, he went back to the house with Ruth. It was past midnight. The doctor said the worst was over.

"I sent Joe home," the doctor said. "He has his own hay to do to-morrow and I think he'll be wanting to lend Mullaney a hand with this week's work. You and I will watch."

At last the heart-shaken family were all in bed. The doctor built a fire in the little grate. Then they prepared a lunch for themselves and ate it beside the fire.

"When you called me I was very tired," said Ruth. "Now after all this I feel strong and fresh. What an experience!"

"My dear lady," said the old doctor, "you have had your first baptism of neighborhood service. I would not have called on you to-night if there had been any other woman near enough. I didn't know you had the courage and the strength—and the love—to do it."

"I am not sure that I had. It seemed to be given to me at the moment. I owe Mrs. Mullaney a great deal. She found time and strength to come to me when I was ill. Not until to-night did I realize the kind of service she rendered me. I had calculated her service in terms of money. I wanted to pay her with a cheque."

"You knew no better," said the doctor gently, "you had not learned the uselessness of trying to measure the value of kindness in coin."

He sat silent for a little watching the flickering fire light. Then he spoke again.

"The great minds that wrestle with financial problems have never tackled

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the subject of neighborhood credit. In my thirty-five years of practice in this community I have seen hoarded treasure that all the gold in the government vaults could not replace. The goodness and tenderness and mercy of neighbors is the greatest treasury in the world. You can never in anywise repay your neighbor for what he has done for you. Rates of exchange cannot be figured in the country. You can reward your neighbor only in terms of his need. You'll be growing stronger than you have ever been, Mrs. Hayden," he went on. "These are your people, here in this community where you have chosen your husband and your home. You owe Mrs. Mullaney something money cannot pay. In turn, you have made her your debtor to-night. Sympathy and love and understanding are the safest currency in the world."

The old man was very tired. His watching spirit was stronger than his mortal body. His voice began to trail huskily. He nodded once or twice, turned his head on the worn upholstery of the chair and went to sleep.

Ruth had much to ponder and she kept the watch until dawn when she tapped softly on Mrs. Mullaney's door and gently shook the doctor. Then she set off to walk through the dew-covered field to her own house. Her heart was leaping with the joy of a great discovery.

She saw Joe coming toward her across the field with a bride over his arm.

"I was going to hitch up and bring you home," he said. "I knew you would be very tired."

There was a light in her eyes like that of the morning sky as she looked up at him.

"I am not tired, dear! I—I have discovered my handicap!"

"You are looking wonderful!" "Smoke was curling up from the chimney."

"You haven't had your breakfast!" "No, you know I'm not much of a cook. But Al is there fixing things up. He came up three hours early this morning, Ruth," he said slowly at last. "He wants to go back on his bargain. He says he would rather work for less wages. . . . This has always been his home."

For answer she squeezed the big, brown hand that held hers. Words are not always needful. They went together into the pretty sitting-room and Ruth took something from the mantel beside the clock. Still holding Joe's hand she went into the kitchen. Al stood beside the stove shaking the coffee pot and grinning sheepishly.

With a smile Ruth handed him the key to his door. Then she lifted the lid of the stove and dropped into the flame a notepad with some figures on it and a long line drawn through the middle of them.

"I've discovered what I left out of my calculations, Joe," she said as she replaced the smoking pancake griddle.

"Breakfast's ready," said Al Grimes. "I reckon'd you'd not feel like gettin' it so I turned to. Your Pa, Joe, used to say my flapjacks were the beatnest! I used to make 'em when your Ma was short-handed. Sit up!"

(The End.)

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ISSUE No. 21—24.

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