

to see that he was not observed, bent down and whispered confidentially in her ear:—

"Say, do you like peanuts?"

The old lady's eyes beamed.

"Like them! I just love them."

Again he gave an apprehensive glance around, then brought to view a huge paper bag which he had artfully concealed beneath his coat.

"Look here!" he said, triumphantly. "Ever see so many in your life?"

She gave a little cry of delight.

"Oh, where did you get them?"

"Hush! don't speak so loud. Someone might hear us." He had lowered his own voice to a whisper again. "The folks sent me to get some meat for dinner. Seventy-five cents! And I spent it all for peanuts!"

He laughed gleefully over the embezzlement, and the old lady gave vent to a funny little bubble of laughter. The sound of her merriment seemed to reassure him, dispelling any latent suspicions he may have cherished concerning her good faith.

"There are some hills over there," waving his long, thin hand toward the north, "where we could go and eat them, and no one would catch us."

She looked at him gratefully. "That would be splendid," she assented.

For some moments they strolled along in silence, then he broke the silence.

"I once read a capital book—if I could only remember the name. I have it—'Crusoe,' 'Robinson Crusoe' —"

"Precisely what I was thinking about," interrupted his companion pensively. "I could be Robinson Crusoe, and you could be my man Friday."

"Pho! That wouldn't do at all. You'd make a pretty Crusoe! I will be Crusoe, and you shall be my man Friday."

The old lady, who did not seem to be of a combative turn, relapsed into a hurt silence. As they passed a little fruit stand on Folsom street her face brightened.

"We ought to have something else," she suggested. "We should grow tired of nuts."

Her comrade looked gloomy. "Wish I had thought of that. Haven't got another cent," he added, plaintively.

"Oh, I have plenty of change. I always carry my purse in my reticule," the old lady remarked, and from the depths of the large embroidered bag which hung upon her arm, she drew forth a little beaded purse, within whose glittering meshes the gleam of silver could be discerned.

"Give me ten cents' worth of oranges, ten cents' worth of grapes, and a dollar's worth of peppermint drops," she said, smilingly, to the young fellow who came forward to wait upon her. The boy made up the packages with a repressed chuckle, and looked curiously at the coins she tendered in payment, the most recent of which bore the date of twenty years before.

The old couple left the store and wandered off in the direction of Twin Peaks, which loomed before them in the distance. They had not gone many blocks before the old lady exhibited signs of weariness.

"It is so far to the hills," she murmured. "There is a place," pointing to the east, "where there are no houses. Why not go there, instead?"

"That's always the way with girls. They never stick to anything." He darted a keen look of suspicion upon her. "Perhaps you think I'm not capable of taking care of myself? Might get run over, or lost, or something of the kind?"

"No, indeed," returned the lady, placidly. "Such an idea never entered my head."

As they passed along the streets those who met them commented upon their stately and venerable aspect. "Some old people going to see their grandchildren, and laden down with all sorts of goodies, with which to gladden the little folks," remarked one. "More probably their great grand-children," quoth the one addressed; and both turned to follow with their eyes the aged and benevolent couple.

Passing tasteful homes surrounded with large grounds and a wealth of flowers, they came to smaller houses, whence issued the sound of childish prattle with now and then an aristocratic pioneer, raising its three-storied walls haughtily above its humble neighbors. Leaving these far behind, they reached at last a point where the street narrowed into a single wagon-road, which disappeared over a small eminence beyond. Toiling up this rise they found themselves in a broad, depressed tract, sloping down to a small marsh on the west, and securely cut off from observation save from distant houses on the hill beyond.

"Isn't it lovely?" cried the old lady in an ecstasy of delight.

Her companion looked somewhat contemptuously about the barren ground on which they stood, and at the geese waddling through the mud flat below.

"Not much chance to scrape a living here," he responded, "unless I might perhaps fetch one of those ganders with a stone."

"Surely you wouldn't do anything so cruel," she cried, grasping his arm and shaking it. "With a sullen grace he loosed his hold upon the stone he had picked up."

"Let's begin eating," he said, eagerly.

"That wouldn't be nice at all. We must fix our house first, and our tables and our dishes."

"Fudge! Where you going to get all those things?"

She looked up at him triumphantly, and, opening her reticule, drew forth a number of odd bits of broken crockery and glassware she had slyly picked up from time to time as they wandered through the streets.

"Aren't they beautiful? See this pretty flowered china, and this with a gilt stripe across."

"Humph! That's not so bad," he commented, with an air of mild approval.

"Now, be a good boy and make me a little cupboard," she urged, "while I am getting the dishes ready," and drawing from her pocket a snowy handkerchief she began to polish them vigorously.

The old man strolled about and found a few broken planks, which he converted into shelves, separated from each other by fragments of bricks and stones. As he completed his task his companion called out:

"Do come here and see what a sweet flat rock I have found for a table. We'll eat right now, and build the house afterwards."

With tremulous eagerness they marshalled out their comestibles. The broken bits of glass and china were heaped with dissected oranges and grapes plucked from the stem. A little pink and white pyramid of candy ornamented the centre, and about it they arranged some sprays of wild lupine. A liberal allowance of peanuts was placed at either end of the rock. The old gentleman attacked the banquet with the careless gusto of a greedy boy, while the old lady ate in a dainty, fastidious way. They had not progressed far before she gave a little shocked exclamation.

"Mercy! We haven't any napkins."

"Glad of it! I despise napkins," retorted her reckless vis-a-vis. She viewed him with a delicate air of wonder.

"Joshua is just so—my brother Joshua. You don't know what a smart boy he is for figures. Dear me I am so thirsty"