

THE HONORABLE ANNE.

Ah Ging's welcome when I came, a bride, to the ranch was not the warmest. The dusky adobe wall, throwing him into picturesque relief, he stood on the ranch-house veranda, his face full of suppressed excitement.

'You tell me,' he muttered, 'who boss, now Mr. Allendale got married?'

'All same as before,' was my ready rejoinder.

The crafty features relaxed, and Ah Ging disappeared kitchenward, his pig-tail having struck the dominant note in my first impressions of Vaquero Water.

Cedric smiled at me approvingly. 'Glad you were so diplomatic, else he'd have left by the morning stage. It's awfully unromantic, darling, but the drive has made me beastly hungry. Let's see what the old chap has for us.'

We dined in a long, low room, hung with spurs and sporting prints, souvenirs of English days, the happiest couple in California.

In its lack of excitement, ranch life proved disappointing. Lynchings were unknown—bandits and desperadoes conspicuous by their absence.

So life flowed on, smoothly, monotonously, till after the birth of Billikins. Ah Ging then announced his departure. 'Better girl cook,' he declared. 'No likee baby. Heap trouble. Alles time cly.'

The next Celestial left after a hasty glance at the kitchen wall. 'Me flaid,' he explained, pointing to a red hieroglyphic unfortunately unnoticed by us. 'Ah Ging he write, 'Debbil in this house.'

'He meant the baby,' suggested Cedric. 'He say deevil. Me go. No china boy stay here. Heap scared of deevil.'

'Try a girl,' implored Cedric. 'It's no joke driving ten miles a day to the station. We tried, in turn; Gretchen, who left within the week to learn religion; Bridget who declined working under an Englishman; the widow, whose tears, as she recounted her woes, sizzled over the stove; Dicie, who disliked low wages, though she found no fault with me, and Samantha, who objected to the lack of scenery.'

'Useless to point out the Brush Hills' meadow, low charm, distant mountain, oak-dotted meadows, Samantha remained obdurate. 'It may suit you, Mrs. Allendale,' she continued, pityingly, 'to see nothing but land. I like it, like it was in Tulare. There you kin see houses thick as peas in a pod an' people passin' all day. That's the scenery for me, so I guess I'll pack my freight.'

Which she proceeded to do, and had barely driven out of sight when a young girl, tall, slim and neatly dressed, stepped on the veranda.

'If you please, ma'am,' she quietly said, 'I heard that you wanted a girl; can I have the place?'

I heard her history, which was simple. The previous year she had come from England to join her brother on a claim, had fallen ill, had gone to the county hospital at La Huerta, had come thence to me. While hearing these details, Cedric returned. But one conclusion could be drawn from his utter dejection. 'No girl,' was stamped on every feature. Samantha had recommended me to Odessa Green, who less exacting in regard to scenery, was willing to leave the family pig pen for a month's change, provided the washing was put out. Mrs. Allendale helped with the dishes, the afternoons were free, and a horse every Sunday was at her disposal. I knew the type, ignorant, slatternly, familiar. Contrasting with it the new-comer, my resolution was taken. 'No, Cedric, I have a servant already.'

'Where did she come from?'

'La Huerta, where she has been in the hospital.'

'Is she pretty?'

'That's an irrelevant question. Yes, rather—blue eyes and short, curly yellow hair.'

'You know nothing about her.'

'But I know that Billikins has the whooping cough. I must nurse him, and you can not cook. Help is needed, and behold Anne.'

'So that's her name?'

'Yes, Anne James.'

'He still demurred.'

'Prudence is an admirable virtue Cedric, but you carry it to an extreme.'

Cedric yielded, still holding to his own opinion. 'Keep her! Keep her!' he cried; 'but remember, if anything happens, be it on your head.'

Since the days of Ah Ging, life had not been worth living. Anne came, and comfort followed after. Capable, retiring, a vague sense of mystery pervading her, she proved in our monotonous existence a source of inexhaustible interest.

'I want a romance!' Cedric declared; 'when Anne draws near, find out about her.'

'She is so reticent—a contrast to Samantha.'

'Teach her something. Learning unlocks a woman's tongue.'

So Anne was instructed in more housewifely mysteries, and grew more communicative. But Cedric received all details of her past with scornful incredulity. 'Papa' was a barrister. Anne herself had been born in the sacred precincts of the Temple.

Their crest figured as a dove. 'Fancy one's parlor maid having a crest,' he ejaculated. For a briefless barrister he had done singularly well, marrying a niece of the celebrated Countess of Melligan. Many a torrid afternoon was whiled away with descriptions of the Irish castle where the wedding took place, the beauty of the bride, the eccentricities of the noble aunt. Cedric scoffed still crying for more.

One languorous September day, encoined in the veranda's shadiest nook, we gaz'd on the Brush Hills and sighed vainly for a breeze. Cedric broke the stillness. 'What about Anne? No news of late?'

'She has a sister who lives in France and is possessed of independent means.'

A look of reproach shot from his dark blue eyes. 'You told me that last week,' he murmured.

'And did not tell you that she goes by the name of the Lady Emily Brown?'

'Brown! Why, she married a Frenchman.'

'True.'

'Why lady? What title has he?'

'None. I particularly asked Anne.'

'Absurd! He could not be 'Brown' or she 'lady,' unless, indeed, the title is in her own right. In that case your pearl of a handmaiden is an 'honorable!'

The Honorable Anne brings out the tray,' he added, as she approached our corner. 'No, it's all false, you may depend upon it. Ask McPherson what he thinks; he is coming up the drive.'

Fergus McPherson—cautious personified—opined that Anne had lied. He put it plainly: 'Deceitful in speech, deceitful in deed. Better watch her, Mrs. Allendale.'

My suspicions were not excited. In California nothing is impossible. Had not a scion of a lordly house died on a neighboring ranch—a lonely, neglected sheep herder? No. It was the uneasy air and restless look increasing day by day. I heartily wished for some pretext whereby Cedric, dispatched into La Huerta, might inquire into the antecedents of the Honorable Anne. Chance favored me.

'McPherson has been telling me,' began my spouse, a few days later, 'about some bloodhounds in town that belong to the sheriff. They are at tracking criminals—borrow them all over the State. Beasty shame it's such a journey—it would be rather jolly to see them.'

'Why not go? A change would do you good.'

'Go! And who would milk the cow?'

'I, myself.'

'You? Nonsense!'

'Who is the sheriff? I idly asked, meditating my next move the while.'

'Wait—Hiram Waite.'

'Our Honorable,' who had entered bearing that ranch stand-by, a smoking bowl of 'mush,' started, growing visibly pale—fresh food for uneasiness. Clearly, to learn the art of milking was imperative. The woman won, as usual, and Cedric, before was over, started for La Huerta, with strict injunctions to interview both hospital superintendent and sheriff.

In charge of the ranch were myself, Billikins, and the Honorable Anne. Uneventfully passed the first few days; but on Monday, from the veranda, I espied a band of men, who, leaving the country road, came slowly up the drive.

Anne, perceiving them, grew white to the lips, and, bearing Billikins, precipitately fled.

'Good evening,' the leader began, as he lifted his sombrero. 'We're a kinder rough sight for a lady. You see, we're a posse over from Tulare, trying to find a man named Smith. His tracks, they seemed to pint this way. Ain't seen any stranger round here lately?'

'No, indeed.'

'No wood chopper nor nothing?'

'No, none. What has this man done? What does he look like?'

'Real nice and young and kind. Not more'n a boy. Murdered a man over there. Here's his description,' and he handed me a coarsely printed 'Reward.'

'Well, boys, get a move on. We're on our way to La Huerta,' he added, 'to borrow Waite's dogs. Well, good day, ma'am. Better not harbor any strangers.'

A moment more and, left alone, I thought over the situation. Cedric gone, no neighbor near, and a murderer at large whose steps 'pinted this way.' Suddenly it was borne in upon me that Anne was the fugitive.

A firm believer in woman's intuitions, yet hoping desperately that mine was at fault, I unfolded the paper the sheriff gave me. It tallied well. Moroseness, agitation, all were explained.

Did Anne guess that her identity was known, my life, I feared, would pay the penalty. To ignore the situation, live through the night if possible, and trust to someone turning up in the morning was all that could be done.

Milking-time brought fresh terrors. How guard one's self, with both hands engaged letting down floods of warm, innocent milk? Dinner was eaten hurriedly, with the same feeling of uneasiness. Billikins tucked in his crib, Anne retired early, and, every sense on the alert, I was left alone to watch the nursery door.

It fascinated me. Who would open it? Anne, to hide among the canons fill the posse and return to its Tulare home? Or Henry Smith, to make an end of me and flee? Truly, the ranch monotony was broken at last. Solemnly the clock ticked, slowly the hands went round, an hour passed. A movement in the adjoining room, and literally my blood ran cold. That had hitherto seemed a mere figure of speech. The sound ceased, and still I watched the nursery door. At last, when my brain would have turned with more, I heard a sound which, faint at first, grew louder and louder.

'Oh, heaven,' I cried, 'the bloodhounds!' and tell senseless to the ground.

Slowly returned to consciousness, my gaze fell on Cedric, the La Huerta sheriff, and Anne—Anne anxiously applying restoratives!

'Take him away,' I gasped, 'he will murder us.'

'You are raving!' cried Cedric; 'that is Anne.'

'No; Smith, the murderer. The bloodhounds tracked him to the very door. Here Hiram Waite thought fit to interpose.'

'Guess I can straighten out this kink, Mrs. Allendale. You did hear the hounds, there up at the barn now. Your husband, he heard at La Huerta we was beatin' up this part of the country, so he lit out for home thinkin' you'd be scared. We ought our men hidin' by the Dobe Hill, and the Tulare boys took him back to town. Your husband and me was tired, so we made tracks for there. Sorry 'bout the dogs. Might be known they'd scare you.'

The Honorable Anne next day gave warning. 'If you please, ma'am, you and Mr. Allendale have been very kind, and I love Mr. Billikins like my own, but I can't stay where I have been so misjudged.'

'More candor on your part would have prevented you being misjudged.'

She blushed. 'I often wanted to tell you, ma'am—what I first said wasn't true. I came from England when I was a baby. I haven't any brother, and I never went to La Huerta.'

'Ah!'

'The kinder you was, ma'am, the meaner I felt; and I was afraid Mr. Allendale would go to the hospital; and, worst of all, my heart stood still when he spoke of Mr. Waite. For he and my stepfather are cousins, and I was afraid he would guess who I was.'

'Your stepfather?'

'Yes, ma'am, mother married Jim Waite the second time, and it was him that came with the posse and frightened me. He was such a bad cruel man that I couldn't stand it, so I ran away.'

'How did you happen to reach Vaquero Water?'

'With some friend in one of those big wagons they call "prairie schooners." Twelve folks go to the coast every year; but they don't dare go there straight, it's too much change. They always stop at the Iron Spring to cool off first.'

'To cool off at ninety in the shade!'

'Soon as we came to the spring, I heard about you, and though I'd try for the place.'

'But how much better to have told me the truth.'

'I knew Mr. Allendale was English, ma'am, and they are that particular I was afraid he send me home.'

'Surely the story of Lady Emily Brown was unnecessary.'

Annie's eyes flashed. 'It's every word true, ma'am. Not that I ever saw her; she was by father's first marriage; but it's true. Why, they lived in a beautiful house in St. John's Wood, and the night before they went to Paris the Prince of Wales dined with them.'

'And do you believe it, my dear?' asked Cedric on hearing the last version.

'She believes in the family traditions. But she will care less about such nonsense when she is Mrs. Hiram Waite.'

'Why, she met the man only last night.'

'Something will come of it, trust a woman's intuition.'

'Thanks, no!' he retorted, with a cheerful grin. 'No telling into what mare's nest I might be led. Never mind, darling, you did your best. We can't all be born detectives.'

Cedric to the contrary, my prophecy came to pass, and our Honorable Anne was transformed into Mrs. Hiram Waite. At last accounts she was as well and happy, supplying the boarders at Waite's Hotel with meals at 'four-bits a head.' While we on the ranch are still wondering whether the Countess of Melligan and the Lady Emily Brown are myths.—The Argonaut.

WHY MIKE STOPPED DRINKING.

It Cost Him \$300 to Reform but it was well spent.

Mike Bryan is now a highly respected well-to-do farmer in a Western community, but he has not always been so highly respected or so well-to-do. In times past Mike, as he is familiarly called, spent his spare money in the saloons. The story of his reformation is given in the words of an old neighbor and friend:

'Yes, Mike drank a good deal in them days, and treated more than he drank. When old Judge Henry came back from the legislature, we made up a purse and bought him a handsome gold watch to show him our 'preciation.'

'That night, in the saloon, one of the boys said that Mike ought to have a new gold watch, too; for if he hadn't gone to the legislature he had raised the first sack of oats in the county, and raising oats for folks to eat was much better than making laws for them to quarrel over.'

'Then somebody said that he would subscribe ten dollars. Mike was that pleased that he called all the boys up for a drink, and threw down a twenty.'

'Some one else subscribed another ten, and Mike treated again, throwing down another twenty. He had just sold his crop and had nothing but twenties in his pocket. Of course he never got a cent of change back, nor wanted any, he was feeling so pleased.'

'Well, they kept on subscribing, and Mike kept on treating, until he had spent over three hundred dollars. The boys went and woke the jeweler up that very night and bought the watch. Mike went to bed as proud as a peacock.'

'But the next morning, when he came to take a good look at his watch, he found that it was only an old brass thing, worth about two dollars and a half. Mike walked straight out to the river-bank and threw it into the water. Since then he has never been inside a saloon. It was the luckiest three hundred he ever spent.'



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A STRANGE CUSTOM.

They Commemorate Judas' Betrayal by Flogging a Man.

Two men, one evening last spring, were strolling through the winding streets of the ancient town of Florence. One of them was a native of the old Tuscan city, the other an American. They entered a plaza, or square surrounded by porticos. On every side were statues or busts of the old rulers of Florence, and on the walls the blue and white bas-reliefs of the Robbias and some frescoes by the great masters, covered now with glass to preserve them. Hoyt, the American, paused before them. 'Of course this is marvellous art,' he said; 'but do you know, there is something childish to me in the incessant repetition here of religious subjects. I do not want to see the torture of some martyr at every turn! I can read of it and then put it out of my mind.'

'Ah, certainly!' cried the Italian, his eager eyes and face talking as earnestly as his tongue; 'but you forget that ancient pictures and statues were the books of the poor. They told the story of the life of Christ and his followers to those who could not read. You will understand our art and our customs better if you keep that in mind. By the way, I can show you a singular custom which is practised only in this church in Florence, and only upon this day of the year.'

The day was Good Friday. Since dawn devout Italians had crowded all the churches, but now the tide of people set into this one, splendid in ancient frescoes and noble chapels.

'It is the church of the Annunziata,' said the Florentine. 'They sing the "Tenebrae" here to-night.'

The church from the high altar to the farthest portico, was a solid mass of human beings, dimly seen, for all lights had been put out except twelve great candles which burned around the crucifix. As the story of the day was chanted, one after another of these lights went out, and the darkness deepened into night. But one remained, typical of Him Who hung upon the cross—the Light of the world.

'This was the way,' whispered the Italian, in which the story of the cross was told to those who could not read.'

The chanting ceased. The vast kneeling crowd prayed silently, many with sobs and tears. When the last light flickered, the women's faces grew pale. They prayed in agony, as if they could, even now, hinder the death of Jesus.

The point of light grew dimmer and went out. Then—silence.

The next moment the night was filled with a furious clamor; a tempest of heavy blows. Every man and woman was armed with a whip, and was beating the ground or wall in a frenzy of rage.

Hoyt caught his friend by the arm. 'Have they gone mad?' he shouted. 'What is it?'

'They are scourging Judas. The early converts, when Christ was first preached here, took this way to show their horror of the death of Jesus, and the ceremony has been kept up in this church ever since—though it is no ceremony to them, it is real! He added, as they went out. 'Look at that old peasant wrapped in a goatskin coat, beating the wall. It is no wall to him. It is the back of Judas that he strikes.'

'I understand,' said the American. 'He is learning his lesson as no book would

teach him. After all, we cannot understand the art or literature or the life of any man unless we try to see with his eyes think for a time with his brain, and feel with his heart.'

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE.

The Serious Uses to Which One May Put a Diary.

There are serious uses to which a diary can be put, although it is commonly kept mostly as a record of one's personal experiences, impressions, and dislikes, or daily expenses.

Mr. Grumbull came home from his office one day in July and threw himself on the lounge with the remark that it was the hottest day he had ever lived through; he had never seen the like in all his experience.

'I think you mistake, dear,' said Mrs. Grumbull, opening a small drawer in the secretary and taking out an indexed blank book of pocket size.

'I find,' she proceeded to say, after examining it a moment, 'that on the 30th day of June last year the mercury stood at 92 degrees. It is now—and she consulted the thermometer hanging on the wall—87 degrees.'

'Well,' rejoined Mr. Grumbull, slightly taken aback, 'at any rate, I never came so near melting as I have to-day.'

I think that is an error, too. On the 13th day of August in the same year, you were "absolutely melted." There can't be any mistake about this. I wrote it down at the time.'

'I suppose you think that's pretty smart,' he growled, fanning himself desperately. 'All I know is that I never suffered from the heat in all my life as I've suffered to-day.'

'Poor George!' feelingly responded his wife. 'Your sufferings must be terrible. I find you made that precise remark on the 4th, 6th, 9th, 10th, 15th, and 27th of last July, and the 18th and 17th of last September.'

And poor George didn't say anything more for a long time.

HEART RELIEF.

Eight Years Hanging Between Life and Death with Acute Heart Disease—And in 30 Minutes After Taking First Dose of Dr. Agnew's Cure for the Heart, Relief Comes—What It Did for Alfred Coudry, West Sheffield, Que., it Can do for Any Sufferer from the Same Cause.

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Cheering Indication.

The fact that \$14,225, the largest amount ever paid at one time into the 'conscience fund' of the United States Government, has been received within the last year, is a cheering indication that some men are growing better instead of worse.

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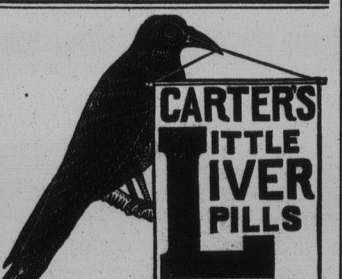
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