

HOW THE MONEY CAME.

I T was in the early seventies. I was living on Bay Street, North Beach, San Francisco. Not long before, while driving on the Alameda—that beautiful avenue, shaded by the wide-branching willows planted by the first Jesuit fathers of San José and Santa Clara, for which good work I hereby give my humble thanks—I had met with an accident that nearly ended my earthly experiences. The long-limbed, four-year-old trotter, taking fright by the collision of a hind wheel of the buggy with a heavily loaded lumber wagon, plunged forward, tearing off the entangled wheel; and then with a few frantic leaps came a crash, and I found myself describing a circle in the air. When I came down there was a blank in my recollection of events for I know not how long. When I regained my consciousness, a badly dislocated shoulder, and many bruises and wrenches, attested the combined effects of gravity, propulsion, and concussion on my *corpus*. I was taken to the house of my old friend, P. T. McCabe, where Drs. Caldwell and Thorne adjusted the dislocation and mollified my bruises. Blessings on the memory of the master and mistress of that hospitable home, where true hospitality always smiled a welcome, and from which no needy man, woman, or child was ever turned away empty-handed!

Long weeks of pain followed the accident. The surgeons of San Francisco even talked of amputation at the shoulder joint, doubtless a very

(312)

interesting operation scientifically considered, but one that I felt I would rather read of than endure in person. I objected, the doctors desisted, and this Sketch is penned with that same right arm, with an occasional twinge that reminds me of that ride and smash-up twenty years ago.

I was just able to move about the house, with my arm in a sling, walking softly, and trying to exhibit the patience that I had so often commended to other persons. One day as I stood looking out of the bay window upon the ever restless, ever changing sea, it suddenly occurred to me that on that very day I had to make a payment at the bank of one hundred and eighty dollars, or serious trouble would result. The money was not at hand; I was unable to go down into the city to attend to that or any other business matter; there was nobody to send; the hour for the bank to close for the day would soon come—what could I do? To my inner ear a voice seemed to speak: “You profess to believe in prayer; so you have been teaching others for many years; why not pray?” Heeding the voice still and small—this voice is always still and small—I sank into a chair, and, bowing my head upon the window sill, prayed. A calm indescribably sweet came upon me. It was the answering touch. (Whoso hath felt it will understand.) Lifting my head, I looked out, keeping my seat by the window. Across the flat between the end of the street-car line and my house I observed a man and a woman walking slowly along as if they were conversing on some subject of mutual interest. When they reached the foot of the terrace they turned and began to climb the steps that led up to our door. In answer to their ring the servant opened to them, and in reply to their inquiry told them that I was at

home, ushering them into the room where I was sitting.

"We are from Humboldt County," said the man. "By agreement we have met here in San Francisco to be married, and we want you to perform the ceremony."

"Yes," said the lady, who was a rapid talker. "We are both strangers in the city; and when we left the Lick House awhile ago to find a minister we were at a loss, but your name suddenly came into my mind in connection with the recollection of some correspondence between us when you were superintendent of public instruction and I was a teacher in the public school at Eureka. We agreed that if we could find you we would like to have you marry us, and here we are."

She was very pretty, and smiled very sweetly as she spoke.

"Do you feel strong enough to go through with it?" asked the expectant bridegroom.

A glance at the pretty schoolmarm's beaming face inspired me with fresh strength and resolution, and I replied that I thought I could go through with the ceremony; and I did, he looking triumphant and she radiant at the close.

When the last words were said, declaring them to be man and wife together, in the name of the Holy Trinity, he thrust his hand into his pocket, and taking out what seemed to me a whole handful of gold, with something of a flourish, he handed it to me, saying: "Will that do? If not, there's plenty more where it came from."

I told him that I thought it would do.

In a few moments they left, as happy-looking a pair as I ever met.

Restraining my curiosity until they had descended the first flight of steps, I then counted

the marriage fee. There were just ten twenty-dollar gold pieces, making the one hundred and eighty dollars that I needed, and twenty dollars more for good measure.

That was the way the money came.

At the very time my name suddenly occurred to the mind of the pretty little school-teacher I was bowed in prayer in the bay window at North Beach. Free agency is never overborne; but by the processes of memory, by suggestive touches and solicitations, it is moved upon by the Holy Spirit. A true prayer touches God, and he touches everything in the universe.

If there is here a suggestion for some reader, he will know what it is.

HAVING SOME FUN.

THE stage stopped to change horses on the road from Clear Lake to the coast. As I got out to stretch my cramped limbs, I noticed a group of rough-looking men across the way, watching the antics of a half-drunken young man with bushy red whiskers, mounted on a lean and sinewy California mustang, which was cavorting around in the style peculiar to that animal. The most of the men had drunk enough whisky to bring out all their vulgarity, profanity, and devilishness.

"Go it, Jim!" said one.

"You could ride the devil himself!" said another, as the horse and rider went on with the performance that so excited their drunken admiration.

Suddenly the animal, planting his fore feet firmly, and stiffening himself all over, refused to move. It is the nature of a mustang to go when he wants to, and to stop when he chooses so to do. He generally has his own way when his mind is made up. This mustang had evidently made up his mind to stay where he was. Despite the energetic spurrings and furious oaths of his rider, he budged not. With those stiffened legs firmly set, and the white of his wicked eyes visible, he stood immovable.

"Here, hold him a minute, boys," said the angry and inebriated horseman, "and we'll have some fun."

Dismounting, and giving the bridle to one of the

group, he went into the barroom and brought out a can of kerosene oil, which he proceeded to pour over the neck, breast, belly, flanks, and legs of the mustang; then remounting, he drew a match from his pocket, and igniting it by drawing it across his sleeve, he applied it to the animal's neck. Instantly the flames spread over the poor beast's body, and maddened by the pain, it frantically leaped, reared, and plunged, the bystanders applauding and laughing with the idiocy and brutality of drunkenness. It was drunken human nature. Nothing lower nor more cruel exists this side of the bottomless pit, and it makes a hell wherever it is. The mustang in its agony at last reared on its hind feet perpendicularly, and then fell backward upon its rider, who, with the ready instinct of an habitual horseman, drew his feet from the stirrups as he fell. The next moment the mustang was up again, dashing down the road with stirrups dangling, smoking sides, and eyeballs flashing. *The rider did not move.* His neck was broken. The blank, open eyes stared into the calm, pitying heavens. The "fun" was over.