

LOVE IN A LOG CABIN.

"And this is home!"

Ruth Delano gazed about her with a mingled feeling of wonder, joy and disappointment. Three thousand miles had she traveled across the continent to reach the home her husband had prepared for her, and this is what she found:

A lonely ranch among the foothills in Southern California, with a plain log cabin for a home. Not a vestige of a plant or flower around it, hills stretching brown and bare under the July sun, and not a shade tree in sight.

"One might know there never had been a woman near this place," said Ruth, her eyes slowly filling with tears. It seemed so comfortless and barren after leaving her mother's old-fashioned farm-house in Maine, full of overflowing with inviting, comfortable things, and surrounded with flower gardens and orchards, and where every nook and corner suggested the deft hands of a woman. She felt her very heart sinking within her. Then, seeing the eyes of her husband fixed upon her she forced back the tears. Had she not said, like the Ruth of old, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge?"

Would any place, no matter how full of comfort it might be, ever be home without him? Had she and her baby Ruth not wept tears of joy when the letter came telling them that papa was coming from California to take them home? And had not every foot of the way been a joy to think he was once more with them and that they were to have a home? She stroked the hand of her husband, who held their little Ruthie in his arms, smiling through her tears.

"I know, dear, it is a new country," she said, cheerfully, "and you have done the best you could."

It was the truly wifely spirit, and in his heart he blessed the true woman who said it.

"All the ranches look kind of desolate," he said, "where there's no one but men about; but now we've got a little woman here, things will soon be looking different."

Inside of the house she found everything neat, at least, and that was a great comfort to her, and if the parlor was barren-looking, with no carpet upon it, the kitchen was full of contrivances which women like, and she knew that John had thought of them for her. After supper they sat down on the little porch in front of the cabin to talk of plans for future work. It was just at sunset, and as Ruth sat placidly looking at the view in front of her—which, after all, was a fine one, taking in a glimpse of the blue Pacific and a background of purple mountains—she began to lose the undertone of homesickness which had so marred her home-coming. She thought how beautiful a home might really be under the shadow of the lifted pines, and she resolved, with John's help, she could make hers one to be proud of. As if in answer to her thought, John went into the house and returned in a moment laden with two parcels, which he dropped into her lap.

"There, Ruth," he said, "you can't guess what these are, can you?"

"I am afraid not," Ruth said, eyeing the mysterious-looking packages wonderingly.

"Well, you know the house isn't very beautiful yet," said John, his good face fairly shining with the little secret he had in store for her. "But I guess you'll find something in each of those parcels that will help you beautify it."

"What could he mean? Ruth took up the lighter but larger one first. To her surprise it was full of garden seeds, small packages of every kind, almost, she could think of.

"Well, how lovely!" she said. "Now we shall raise all the vegetables we need, and our garden will rival dear mother's at home."

"Yes," said John, "and go ahead of it; for California beats the world for flowers, and your garden will be just as lovely in Winter as in Summer. There are twenty varieties of roses alone among that collection of seeds."

"Isn't it wonderful to think of?" cried Ruth, as delighted as a child over her treasures. "And what can be in here?" she continued, as she opened the second parcel. "Wonders will never cease," she exclaimed the next moment, as he poured a whole bag of silver into her lap. "And what is this for?"

"To buy your parlor furniture," he replied, laughing at her amazement.

"Honest?" She looked at him, her brown eyes sparkling.

"It is for Mrs. Delano to do with as she pleases," he said. "I have saved the money to furnish the cabin with, and thought to have fixed it up before you came, but concluded on second thought that you could do better than I; so there's the money. Buy what you please, and fix up the place to suit yourself."

"Well, if you ain't the best John in the whole country," Ruth said, almost laughing and crying in the same breath. How could she ever be homesick again? And that night, instead of crying herself to sleep, as she had thought that afternoon to do, she lay awake from very joy, thinking of the pretty things she could buy and make for the cabin, and imagining how picturesque it would look covered with Lady Banks roses, and how sweet the violet bells would be in the springtime. And so the very next day she set the hired man to work laying off a garden, and all that week and the next she spent her spare time in digging and hoeing and spading. The following week John took her to the nearest town, and she selected the various articles she desired for the house. She managed to furnish it quite comfortably, and under her deft fingers all things began to bear a home-like look. The place lost its barren and shiftless look, and even the dog Harold seemed to feel the change. He no longer wandered aimlessly about as

though seeking a comfortable spot, but went to sleep a picture of perfect contentment on one of the soft rugs in the sitting room, keeping one zealous eye always half-open upon his playmate, Ruthie.

The months sped by in spite of all the hardships she had to endure—for life is hard for a woman in a new country—on light wings for Ruth. She made the best of all her trials, and was as sweet and contented as if she had been in the fair home they had owned and lost. Though often her limbs ached and her head was weary with the weight of work which fell to her share, she never complained. Not once did she grow fretful or reproach her husband for taking her so far from all that she loved.

"He is doing the best that he can," she always said to herself, "and what would a palace be without his love? Besides, how much I have to be grateful for." And somehow the remembrance of their first evening in the log cabin would always bring tears to her eyes. It was such a real proof of his love and thoughtfulness for her.

When the next Spring lengthened into Summer, and her sweet face began to wear a tired look that he did not like to see, he came to her one evening, saying gravely:

"Ruth, pack your trunk to-night; tomorrow I want to take you with me to San Diego. Important business calls me there, and you and Ruthie both need a change."

"But how can you leave the ranch?" Ruth asked, "just now when you are most needed?"

"Oh, Ruthie will take charge of the place, and the men will work for him as well as for me."

If Ruth had noticed him just then very carefully she might have seen a twinkle in his eyes that would have made her suspicious as to this "business trip" to San Diego, but like a dutiful wife she packed up and asked no foolish questions. When they reached San Diego, much to her surprise her husband did not go to a hotel. He gave the coachman some directions, and they were driven to an elegant-looking house in the suburbs.

"Why, I didn't know you had friends here!" exclaimed Ruth, in surprise.

"Oh, yes," said John. "I have a number of them. This is the home of the best friend I have in the world."

"Why?" John nearly took her breath away. She thought of her shabby travelling dress and Ruthie's shabby cloak with dismay, but she made up her mind to make the best of it for John's sake, anyway. A lady could always be a lady, no matter how she was dressed. A neat servant opened the door and ushered them into a handsome reception room. The house was beautiful inside, and everything was new and of the latest fashion. Ruth sank into a finely upholstered easy chair with a feeling of momentary content. For a moment she almost wished she might be the possessor of such a home, and then she put aside the envious wish.

"Make yourself at home, dear," John said, "while I see the master of the house. He is probably in his study. I will return when I have spoken to him privately. I know he will be delighted to know you are here, and will welcome you."

"How strange John never told me of this friend of his," Ruth said to herself, looking at the handsome engravings on the table near her. Presently he returned, but not as she expected, with the master of the house, whom she was feeling a little in awe of.

"Where is he?" she asked.

"Here."

"Here? Why, John, have you lost your mind? There is no one with you. You and I are alone." She began to look frightened. What if John had really lost his senses? He had certainly acted queer about this San Diego trip.

To her further amazement he burst into a loud laugh, and, taking a stand in the middle of the room, said, with a polite bow:

"Dear Mrs. Delano, allow me to introduce to you the master of this house, John Delano, esq., your humble servant. I am monarch of all I survey."

"John, you are surely going mad, and I with you. For heaven's sake," she entreated, "tell me what you mean!"

"I'll tell you what I mean, little wife," he said. "I mean that I came to San Diego last year during the land boom, went into real estate business and cleared a small fortune. This is your home, and all that is in it belongs to Ruth and John Delano. The ranch and the log cabin were simply a trial of your love. I wanted to find out what kind of stuff my wife was made of."

"And did you find out?" she asked of him, woman-like, not knowing whether to laugh or cry over this great joy.

"Indeed I did. She was weighed in the balance and not found wanting. I know now that her love for me was strong enough to brave all trials for me. Henceforth she shall be queen of my prosperity."

"It was a very pretty little drama you chose to make me take the principal part in," she said, "but I forgive you and I am satisfied if you are."

"Completely," he answered, with a lover's kiss.

"Do you know, dear John," she whispered that night as she held Ruthie up for her papa's good-night kiss, "that I doubt if I can ever be as happy anywhere as I was in that little log cabin of ours, in spite of all the hard work I did. Love never seemed before such a sweet compensation for all of life's trials."

"Well, if that isn't just like a woman," laughed her husband. "Like Lot's wife, forever looking back. Give her heaven, and two to one she'll be sorry she ever left earth."

Ruth only smiled and held her peace. She knew that he would ever hold their log cabin days in sweet and sacred remembrance.—Omaha World.

A Gold Bullet.

From London Answer.

Mr. Fred Leslie used to carry about with him, and once showed to the writer, a good-sized bullet of solid, pure gold, and this peculiar charm had a somewhat curious history.

One of the many millionaires of San Francisco gave the bullet to Mr. Leslie and told how that when he, the giver, at the time a comparatively poor man, was prospecting for gold in the early days of the gold fever in California he came, in a wild, rugged mountain pass, upon a ghastly bleached skeleton, near which was a rusty old revolver.

Examining the skeleton closely the prospector found among the remains the golden bullet. In explanation it may be said that during the period of gold madness the rough, wild miners not uncommonly realized fortunes in a few weeks or months, and many of them indulged in the most outrageous excesses of extravagance, even going the length of having bullets of gold cast for their firearms.

The probability is that the dead man had been shot with one of these or had taken his own life with one. The finder of the bullet discovered a mine which yielded him his great fortune near the skeleton.

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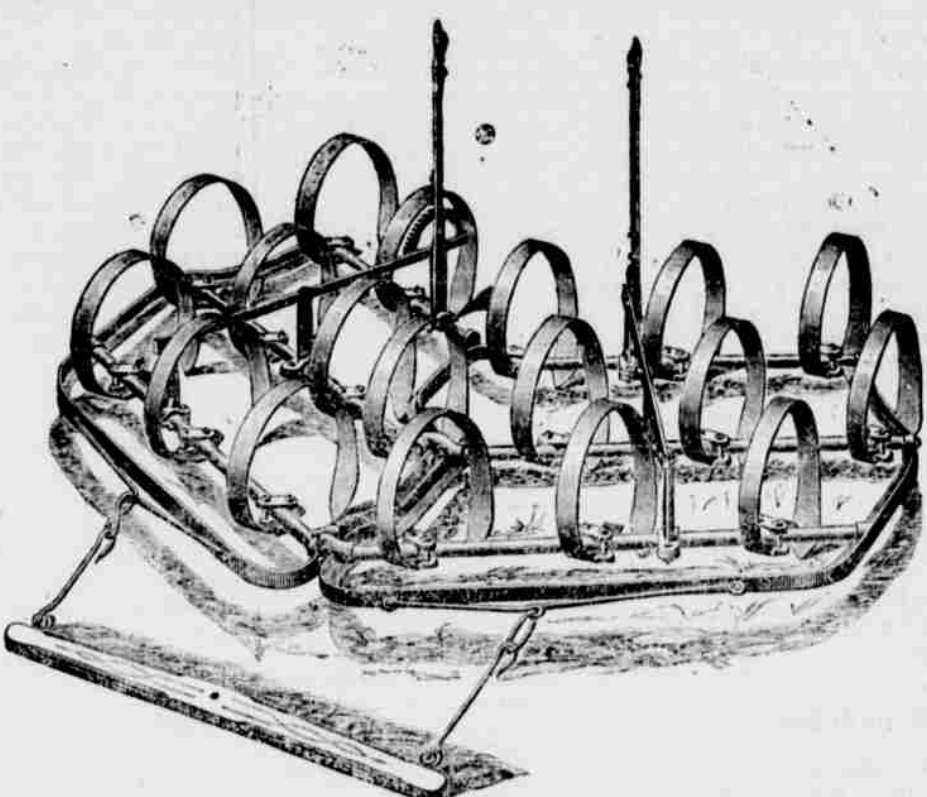
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