

JAY, A CALIFORNIAN STORY.

It was at a rather late hour in the evening, about a year ago, that the Piedmont, arriving at the ferry-landing, at the foot of Market street, deposited, among other travellers, a handsome young fellow, broad-shouldered, bronzed, and manly, but with much of the air of a stranger about him. This latter characteristic, however, was amply accounted for by the fact that he had just arrived from Northern Mexico and had never before set foot outside his native country. He betook himself to the Palace Hotel, and soon was sleeping the sleep that comes to a man who has been shut up for forty-eight hours in a drawing-room car after twenty-four years of active life on a cattle ranch.

At seven the next morning he appeared at breakfast, and half an hour later he strolled down to California street and soon found the insurance office of Mr. George Russell, to whom he had a letter of introduction. Fortunately, a sleepy porter was opening the offices for the day, and from him the stranger learned that Mr. Russell, being a young gentleman of fashion and having a nice regard for his personal comfort, would probably reach his office at about ten o'clock. So he left the letter with the porter, and, jumping on a car, spent a few hours in looking about the city.

Presently Mr. Russell appeared at the office and found, among his letters, the following, from his brother, who, some six months before, had gone down to Mexico to look after his business interests there:

DEAR GEORGE—This will introduce to you Mr. Ricardo Armstrong, who is making a visit to San Francisco, where he knows absolutely no one. I commend him to your care. Trot him around and show him the town. He is a thoroughly good fellow; his father is one of the leading men down here, having married into one of the old Spanish families about thirty years ago and since then several large cattle ranches up in the mountains, and he naturally has no end of money. You need not hesitate to keep him in funds if he runs short (which he is not likely), and if you have any to spare (which is even more problematical), and you can introduce him to your friends and tradesmen, for he does not cheat at cards and pays his bills with a promptness that is almost reprehensible. As to your fair friends, they will think none the worse of you if you present him; he is good-looking, as you can see for yourself, and as generous as a prince in the matter of flowers or suppers, as the exigencies of the case may require. Your affectionate brother,
HARRY.

Naturally, the young cattleman was received with open arms. "It is unfortunate," said Russell, "that you make your first visit to San Francisco just at this time. It is the most disagreeable part of the year here, and everybody is out of town. You would not find me here if it were not for this confounded business. However, I shall do my best to show you the sights and make your visit a pleasant one. Meanwhile, we may as well go out and get some lunch."

A quarter of an hour later, the two new friends were seated at one of the little tables in a swell restaurant. They had a rather elaborate lunch, judging by the bill, which the visitor would not let Russell look at; and, after that, Russell took the young cattleman around to his tailor's, his bootmaker's, and other shops, where he left considerable orders. In each of these places, as they were leaving, Russell managed to take the shop-keeper aside for a moment and intimate to him that Mr. Armstrong was going to be a very good customer, and that, by the way, "that little account" might be allowed to run a while longer—"one good turn, you know," and much more to the same effect.

Russell took the stranger around to his club that evening, and gave him a very good dinner—very good for a dollar a plate, without wine. Then they strolled into another room and had a *ponche cafe* and a cigar. A number of Russell's friends dropped in, and had a cigar, and the cattleman was formally presented to them. At about nine o'clock they adjourned to the rooms of one of the men, who had an apartment near by, and indulged in a quiet game of poker, with the result that, when the party separated, every one was "broke" except the young cattleman, who was seventeen hundred dollars ahead—five or six hundred in coin and bills and the remainder in I. O. U's.

"By the way, Armstrong," said Russell, as they were leaving, "let me give you a card to the club. You will find it a great convenience, and, besides, you can meet our friends there and get into a little game almost any evening."

"Thanks, you are very good," returned the young cattleman, and Russell's listening friends plucked up spirit at the prospect of revenge, only to become savage and dejected again as he added, "but I really don't care for poker. I think I shall spend most of my evenings at the theaters."

Mr. George Russell caught it hot and heavy the next day when he strolled into his club at lunch time.

"Where the devil did you pick up that jay you sprung on us last night?" demanded one. "He had hayseed in his hair and aces in his sleeves, I'll take my oath."

"Did you get on to his diamonds?" snarled another. "Worst taste of any man I ever saw brought into this club. Why, he looks like a country bar-keep."

"Oh, let go," said Russell. "He's all right. My brother Harry vouches for him—says he's a big cut-throat in Northern Mexico and has no end of rocks. But I must confess it is rather nasty—he's ahead about seventeen hundred good California dollars, and if he doesn't care for poker, I don't see how the mischief we are to get them back."

From that evening the young cattleman was marked for vengeance by the joyous band to whom Russell had introduced him. They always alluded to him as the jay, and declaimed loudly, even in his presence, on their hard luck in allowing themselves to be "done up in that shape by a rank outsider." He was courteous and kindly, however, constantly inviting the entire crowd to little dinners and taking their jibes in good part. The result was that they made him the victim of all sorts of practical jokes. The third night after his arrival they took him to a South-of-Market street variety show, telling him it was one of the swellest theaters in town, and introduced him to the distressingly light-hearted young women there as leading members of the Daly company. They pointed out all manner of dilapidated hotel loungers as the eccentric millionaires and powerful politicians of the state. They even tried to get up a pretended quarrel with him, which unfortunately resulted in his knocking the belligerent down. But as he good-humoredly apologized, and insisted on sealing the peace with a supper

for all concerned, the affair was soon smothered over.

There was no denying the fact that the young cattleman was a thoroughly good fellow. He was generous to a fault; and, if he "threw his money round loose," he did it without any flourish. Nevertheless, his new friends made constant remarks to one another about his "confounded presumption" and his "vulgar ostentation." "These jays," they said, "always want to make a display. And it doesn't cost this one much, seeing he does it all on our seventeen hundred dollars."

One day, as Russel was strolling up Market street, he met a demure young person who smiled at him discreetly, as becomes a young person who knows her place and remembers that a lady's-maid, however pretty, is still a lady's-maid.

Russel stopped to speak to her. "If I am not mistaken," he said, "I have had the pleasure of seeing those pretty dimples before, Marie. Is Mrs. Pollock in town?"

"No sir," replied Marie; "she will arrive tomorrow evening, but only for the one night. She is coming down from the ranch, and will stop in town over night on her way to Monterey. I was sent down a day or two earlier to prepare the house for her and make some purchases."

"Then you are mistress of the house for twenty-four hours," said Russell. "Do you know, Marie, you have quite the air of a fine lady about you, with your pretty face and, and your suede gloves, and that stunning little handkerchief peeping out of your pocket. It's a very foolish little handkerchief, too; if I were in its place, I would never try to get out of such a delicious hiding place."

"Oh, Mr. Russell, you are always poking fun at a poor girl."

"No, on my word, Marie, that gown became you amazingly. I shall have to tell Mrs. Pollock that you bring out all the good points of her costumes."

"Then I would lose my place, sir, for Mrs. Pollock is none too patient."

"As you say, Marie; I have found that out to my cost—and so have you in another way."

The maid was about to proceed on her way, when Russell detained her, for an idea had just entered his head.

"Marie," he said, "how would you like to have a pretty little pair of diamond earrings, or a gold bracelet, with an M in pearls on it?"

"I would rather have a little gold watch, sir," said Marie, with sparkling eyes, "for a lady's-maid can't wear jewelry. But if it is anything wrong—you know, sir, I am an honest girl."

"Certainly, Marie; but even an honest girl likes a good laugh. Now, listen to me. I want to play a huge joke on one of my friends, and Russell proceeded to unfold his plan and instruct Marie in the role she was to play.

"Well, sir," said Marie, hesitatingly, "if it were only to put on one of Mrs. Pollock's evening gowns—but to take her name—oh, I never could in the world!"

"Your scruples do you honor, O model of maids, and I share them with you. You can call yourself Mrs. Porter, so as not to change the initial. Now there remains only to find a servant to announce the guests. Haven't you a young man who can do the trick?"

"Yes, sir; but what if Mrs. Pollock should find out and discharge me?"

"How could she find out if you didn't tell her?"

"Well, shall I have the watch?"

"A gold one—a stem-winder, guaranteed for five years."

"With a chain?"

"Oh, Mr. Russell, it is very wrong, what you want me to do. But what tempts me most isn't the watch. It is to spend a whole evening with fine gentlemen, who will call me 'madam' and pick up my fan whenever I drop it."

"That evening, after posting his friends, Russell said to the young cattleman, who had taken him to dinner, a thing he permitted quite often:

"It is about time you were meeting some of our best families, Armstrong. In an hour or so, if you like, I shall take you out to call on Mrs. Pollock, who is going to have a few friends at her house this evening. We can go around to the club and pick up some of the fellows who are going."

"But I am in a bob-tailed coat," objected the young cattleman.

"That makes no difference at this time of the year. But I must inform you of some of our customs. The first time a man is received in a house, it is considered in good taste to make some little gift to the lady to whom he is presented."

"A custom worthy of your Californian generosity," affirmed the stranger. "What would you advise me to give?"

"Well, if I were you, I would give a watch—say, a nice little watch and chain."

"A watch! Give a watch to a lady! She would laugh at me."

"No, she won't, you'll see. Besides, don't you see, any indiscretion on your part would count most heavily against me. Oh, you can rest easy on that score."

So they went to the jeweller's where they were shown a great variety of watches, ranging in price up to three hundred dollars, with chains to match.

"No use going so high," said Russell. "Spend fifty dollars for the watch and say ten dollars for the chain. That will be good enough."

thought of presenting to Mrs. Pollock—they imagined nothing unusual in the situation, for they had never before seen Mrs. Pollock or her sister.

"What a delightful surprise!" cried Mrs. Pollock, a jolly widow of thirty-odd. "Why, you are veritable wizards. We were not to arrive until to-morrow, Bessie and I, and it is only by the merest chance that we are here twenty-four hours ahead of time. How did you find out we had arrived? We have seen no one and told no one we were coming."

"Yes—er—quite so—I shall explain presently," said the badly flustered Russell; then, plunging boldly in, he continued: "but first allow me to present two friends whom—it is not quite usual, perhaps, but—it was a mere chance you know, the merest chance in the world. And one of them has just arrived from Mexico—such a distance, you know. Mr. Ricardo Armstrong begs that you will excuse his not appearing *en tenue*."

Mrs. Pollock could not imagine the cause of the intense embarrassment of Russell and the men she knew, who turned white and red by turns, while great beads of perspiration stood out on their faces. Being a woman of tact, however, she thought to put them at their ease by turning to the young cattleman.

"Mexico is such a distance from here," she said. "Did you have a pleasant journey, Mr. Armstrong?"

"Quite pleasant, madam, I thank you," said the young stranger, with a bow, that dated from the last century. Then he drew the watch from his pocket, removed the paper that enveloped it, drew it from its box, and placing it in the hand of the astonished Mrs. Pollock, he continued, in the midst of a dead silence:

"As I have for the first time, madam, the honor of paying my respects to you, permit me to conform to an old custom—"

"An old custom?" repeated Mrs. Pollock, her eyes wandering over the horrid-stricken faces about her. "I—do not understand."

Poor Russell, who by this time had not a dry stitch on him, stepped up to her and whispered in her ear: "Take it. You would wound him horribly if you refused. I shall explain later. The poor fellow thinks he is acting quite properly."

"Truly, Mr. Armstrong," said Mrs. Pollock, "you overwhelm me with your kindness. We San Franciscans are not accustomed to such attentions."

Meanwhile Clark thought he was witnessing the farce arranged beforehand with Marie, and was enjoying it all hugely. Unable longer to restrain his admiration, he sauntered over to Mrs. Pollock.

"Gad, girlie, I must compliment you on your style," he whispered in her ear. "Nobody could tell you from the real lady."

"Sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Pollock, with a look that would have frozen any man not gitted with such an utter lack of perception as Clark. But that assume young person chatted on, airily.

"No, on my honor," he said; "it is astonishing. If I were not on to the whole thing, I would have been taken in myself. Why, with your looks and your style, there's no saying where you'll end up."

As to the young cattleman, who did not catch much of this scene, his brown eyes were centered on Miss Bessie Barton. Nothing so disposes a man to admire a refined and pretty blonde as the constant sight of the dusky women of Mexico, and Mrs. Pollock's sister was a peachy vision of delight.

By this time, Mrs. Pollock, who knew, by long and sad experience, the lengths to which George Russell would go to carry out a practical joke, had got that man into a corner of the room.

"Well, sir," she said, her blue eyes flashing ominously, "what last folly has that rattlebrain of yours led you into?"

Poor Russell! There was nothing for it but to make a clean breast of it and throw himself on Mrs. Pollock's mercy. At first she was inclined to be angry and turn the whole crew out of doors. But the adventure struck her as droll at bottom, and, beside, Russell and his accomplices looked so utterly pitiable that she judged them sufficiently punished. After all, the young cattleman was the only one who had a right to be angry at this school-boy prank; and that is just what he was on the point of becoming when he discovered the role he had been led to play. But Mrs. Pollock smoothed it all over, for she was a wise as well as a charming woman. She forgave them all on condition that there should be no further words about it.

The young cattleman soon became a great favorite with Mrs. Pollock. She conceived a great liking for him, made him an intimate at her home, and launched him in society, where, indeed, he was presently quite in his element. Perhaps she had her designs on him. At any rate, in the spring, Grace church was the scene of a very pretty wedding which united the lives of her sister, Bessie Barton, and the wealthy young cattleman.

The only one who was not forgiven was poor Marie, who was dismissed that very evening. So in all ages have the lesser ones paid for the follies of the greater. —*The Argonaut.*

What It Will Cost.

Aside from the cost of the great buildings at the world's fair, which will not be far from \$7,000,000, the following are among the sums which have been or will be spent in preparation of the exposition grounds: Grading and filling, \$4,500,000; landscape gardening, \$323,500; viaducts and bridges, \$125,000; piers, \$70,000; waterway improvements, \$225,000; railways, \$500,000; steam plant, \$800,000; electric lighting, \$1,500,000; statuary, \$100,000; vases, lamps, etc., \$50,000; lake front adornment, \$200,000; water supply and sewerage, \$600,000; other expenses \$1,000,000; total \$5,943,500. The total expense of organization, administration and operation of the Exposition is estimated at nearly \$5,000,000. This takes no account of the sums to be spent by the government, the states or foreign nations.

When Japan Was in Darkness.

Two centuries ago the traveller in Japan, had such been allowed, would have seen in public places the following declaration in Chinese characters: "As long as the sun shall warm the earth, let no Christian be so bold as to come to Japan; and let all know that the King of Spain himself, or the Christian's God, or the Great God of all, if He violate this command, shall pay for it with his head."

SOME SNUFF STORIES.

Amusing Experiences of Scotchmen who took "the sneeshin."

Some of the snuff experiences of the Scotch are not without humour. There was the minister—somehow most Scotch snuff stories have a minister in them—who set forth to kirk one very windy day, thinking over his discourse as he went; when he got half way, and had reached the thirdly in the sermon, his chain of thought missed a link; to regain it he took out his snuff-box and rapped it, but the wind was in his face, and as he could not take a pinch to windward he turned round, and enjoyed one, two, three; hah! the missing phrase came in, the sermon went on smoothly, and so did the minister, who had forgotten to turn again to face the wind, and by-and-by astonished his servant by walking into the house instead of into the kirk two miles away!

Snuff, of course, had some virtues. At Craithie church to wit, it is reported that a stranger lady came one Sabbath and sat in a large pew with certain farmers and their wives. Just before the sermon a big snuff-mull was handed round, which the lady passed without helping herself to. "Tak' the sneeshin, mem, tak' the sneeshin," said the mull-holder in a hoarse whisper. "Ye kinna ken oor meenister; ye'll need it afore he's done."

Dean Ramsay has several strange stories to tell of snuff-taking among the Scots. "When the text had been given out," he says, "it was usual for the elder branches of the congregation to hand about their Bibles amongst the younger members, marking the place and calling their attention to the passage. During service another handing about was frequent amongst the seniors, and that was a circulation of the sneeshin-mull or snuff-box. Indeed, I have heard of the same practice in an episcopal church, and particularly in one case of an ordination, where the bishop took his pinch of snuff, and handed the mug to go round amongst the clergy assembled for the solemn occasion within the altar rails."

In another place the Dean tells us of the honest Highlander who saw at the hotel door a magnificent man in full tartans, and noticed with much admiration the wide dimensions of the nostrils in a fine up-turned nose. The Highlander, a genuine lover of "sneeshin," went to the stranger, and as his most complimentary act offered him his mull for a pinch; but the stranger drew himself up, and said rather haughtily, "I never take snuff." "Oh," said the other, "that's a peety, for there's grand accommodation!"

Another of Ramsay's reminiscences tells us how a severe snow storm in the Highlands had lasted for several weeks and stopped all communication betwixt neighboring hamlets, and reduced the snuff-boxes to their last pinch. Borrowing and begging from all the neighbors within reach were first resorted to; but when these failed, all were alike reduced to the longing which unwillingly abstinent snuff-takers alone know. The minister of the parish was amongst the unhappy number; the craving was so intense that study was out of the question, and he became quite restless. As a last resort the beadle was despatched through the snow to a neighboring glen, in the hope of getting a supply, but he came back as unsuccessful as he went. "What's to be done, John?" was the minister's pathetic inquiry. John shook his head, as much as to say he could not tell; but immediately thereafter started up, as if a new idea had occurred to him. He came back in a few minutes, crying, "Hae!" The minister, too eager to be scrutinising, took a long, deep pinch, and then said, "Whaur did you get it?" "I soupit the poupit," was John's expressive reply. The minister's superfluous Sabbath snuff had not been swept up in vain.—*W. J. Gordon, in the Leisure Hour.*

MISTAKES OF REPORTERS.

They All Caused Mirth, and Were Wondered at and Remembered.

A very well-known, witty, and popular parliamentary reporter confessed the other day to the writer that it was his pen which once perpetrated the funny sentence attributed to the late Dean of Wells, who spoke at a diocesan conference in a debate on vestments. The dean was reported to have said that he did not mind what "coat" he wore so long as it had a dozen sleeves. The strange partiality for a garment with a plurality of sleeves passed unnoticed in the local sub-editing room, and a proof of the speech was handed into the telegraph office to be "wired" to a London daily newspaper. Here again the dean's taste in the matter of sleeves did not strike the sub-editor as at all peculiar. The metropolitan publicity given to the strange utterance drew the attention of the professional wits to it, and it was not till then that somebody found out that what the dean had really said was that he did not mind what *cope* he wore so long as it had *decot* sleeves. The ear in regard to the first word had played the reporter false; and in the second, the phonographic shorthand character might easily have been mistaken; for unvocalized and written hastily, the signs standing for the words decent and dozen have a dangerous family likeness to each other. Poetical quotations, when unfamiliar, are the bane of reporters, not always because the rhyme and rhythm are apt to confuse the ear accustomed to prose, but frequently because public speakers seldom quote correctly.

It was a lady lecturer on "The Rights of Women" who was at fault when she recited—

The rights of women, what are they?
The right to labor and to pray;
The right to nurse when others bless,
The right to succour in distress.

At the same time, the attentive transcriber should not have done his work mechanically, but made the third line run—

The right, when others curse, to bless.

The economic world, the late Professor Hodgson, again, was made to declare, "was a chaos of discordant and conflicting demons." The professor really said "atoms," which was more scientific and less satanic. Mr. W. E. Forster must have been amazed to learn that he was held responsible for the astounding statement that "intoxication is the best thing in England," whereas he had said, "Intoxication is the besetting sin of England."—*Cassell's Saturday Journal.*

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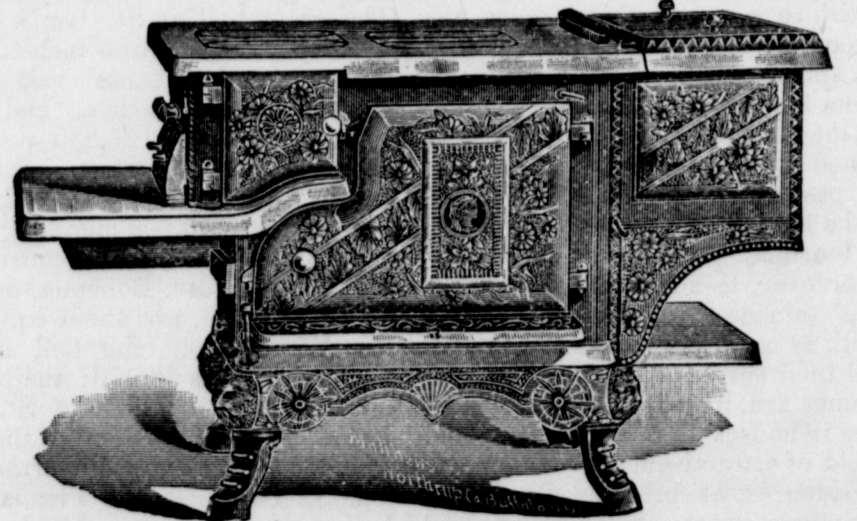


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