

The Smiling Hill-Top eBook

The Smiling Hill-Top

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INTRODUCTION

The following sketches are entirely informal. They do not cover the subject of Southern California in any way. In fact, they contain no information whatever, either about the missions or history—a little, perhaps, about the climate and the fruits and flowers of the earth, but that has crept in more or less unavoidably. They are the record of what happened to happen to a fairly light-hearted family who left New England in search of rest and health. There are six of us, two grown-ups, two boys, and two dogs. We came for a year and, like many another family, have taken root for all our days—or so it seems now.

The reactions of more or less temperamental people, suddenly transplanted from a rigorous climate to sunshine and the beauty and abundance of life in Southern California, perhaps give a too highly colored picture, so please make allowance for the bounce of the ball. I mean to be quite fair. It doesn't rain from May to October, but when it does, it can rain in a way to make Noah feel entirely at home. Unfortunately, that is when so many of our visitors come—in February! They catch bad colds, the roses aren't in bloom, and altogether they feel that they have been basely deceived.

We rarely have thunder-storms, or at least anything you could dignify by that name, but we do have horrid little shaky earthquakes. We don't have mosquitoes in hordes, such as the Jersey coast provides, but we do sometimes come home and hear what sounds like a cosy tea-kettle in the courtyard, whereupon the defender of the family reaches for his gun and there is one rattlesnake less to dread.

On our hill-top there are quantities of wild creatures—quail, rabbits, doves, and ground squirrels and, unfortunately, a number of social outcasts. Never shall I forget an epic incident in our history—the head of the family in pajamas at dawn, in mortal combat with a small black-and-white creature, chasing it through the cloisters with the garden hose. Oh, yes, there is plenty of adventure still left, even though we don't have to cross the prairies in a wagon.

People who know California and love it, I hope may enjoy comparing notes with me. People who have never been here and who vaguely think of it as a happy hunting-ground for lame ducks and black sheep, I should like to tempt across the Rockies that they might see how much more it is than that. It may be a lotus land to some, to many it truly seems the promised land.

“Shall we be stepping westward?”

[Illustration]

*The
smiling
hill-top*

No one should attempt to live on top of an adobe hill one mile from a small town which has been brought up on the Declaration of Independence, without previously taking a course in plain and fancy wheedling. This is the mature judgment of a lady who has tried it. Not even in California!

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When we first took possession of our hill-top early one June, nothing was farther from my thoughts. "Suma Paz," "Perfect Peace," as the place was called, came to me from a beloved aunt who had truly found it that. With it came a cow, a misunderstood motor, and a wardrobe trunk. A Finnish lady came with the cow, and my brother-in-law's chauffeur graciously consented to come with the motor. The trunk was empty. It was all so complete that the backbone of the family, suddenly summoned on business, departed for the East, feeling that he had left us comfortably established for the month of his absence. The motor purred along the nine miles to the railroad station without the least indication of the various kinds of internal complications about to develop, and he boarded the train, beautifully composed in mind, while we returned to our hill-top.

It is a most enchanting spot. A red-tiled bungalow is built about a courtyard with cloisters and a fountain, while vines and flowers fill the air with the most delicious perfume of heliotrope, mignonette, and jasmine. Beyond the big living-room extends a terrace with boxes of deep and pale pink geraniums against a blue sea, that might be the Bay of Naples, except that Vesuvius is lacking. It is so lovely that after three years it still seems like a dream. We are only one short look from the Pacific Ocean, that ocean into whose mists the sun sets in flaming purple and gold, or the more soft tones of shimmering gray and shell-pink. We sit on our terrace feeling as if we were in a proscenium box on the edge of the world, and watch the ever-varying splendor. At night there is the same sense of infinity, with the unclouded stars above, and only the twinkling lights of motors threading their way down the zigzag of the coast road as it descends the cliffs to the plain below us. These lights make up in part for the fewness of the harbor lights in the bay. The Pacific is a lonely ocean. There are so few harbors along the coast where small boats can find shelter that yachts and pleasure craft hardly exist. Occasionally we see the smoke of a steamer on its way to or from ports of Lower California, as far south as the point where the curtain drops on poor distracted Mexico, for there trade ceases and anarchy begins. There is a strip of land, not belonging to the United States, called Lower California, controlled by a handsome soldierly creature, Governor Cantu, whose personal qualities and motives seem nicely adapted to holding that much, at least, of Mexico in equilibrium. Only last summer he was the guest of our small but progressive village at a kind of love feast, where we cemented our friendship with whale steaks and ginger ale dispensed on the beach, to the accompaniment of martial music, while flags of both countries shared the breeze. Though much that is picturesque, especially in the way of food—enciladas, tamales and the like—strays across the border, bandits do not, and we enjoy a sense of security that encourages

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basking in the sun. Just one huge sheet of water, broken by islands, lies between us and the cherry blossoms of Japan! There is a thrill about its very emptiness, and yet since I have seen the Golden Gate I know that that thrill is nothing to the sensation of seeing a sailing ship with her canvas spread, bound for the far East. From the West to the East the spell draws. First from the East to the West; from the cold and storms of New England to our land of sun it beckons, and then unless we hold tight, the lure of the South Seas and the glamour of the Far East calls us. I know just how it would be. Perhaps my spirit craves adventuring the more for the years my body has had to spend in a chaise longue or hammock, fighting my way out of a shadow. Anyway, I have heard the call, but I have put cotton in my ears and am content that life allows me three months out of the twelve of magic and my hill-top.

There is a town, of course—there has to be, else where would we post our letters. It's as busy as a beehive with its clubs and model playgrounds, its New Thought and its "Journal," but I don't have to be of it. There are only so many hours in the day. I go around "in circles" all winter; in summer I wish to invite my soul, and there isn't time for both. I think I am regarded by the people in the village as a mixture of recluse and curmudgeon, but who cares if they can live on a hill?

One flaw there was in the picture, and that is where the first experiment in wheedling came in. A large telegraph pole on our property line bisected the horizon like one of the parallels on a map. It seemed to us at times to assume the proportions of the Washington Monument. I firmly made up my mind to have it down if I did nothing else that summer, and I succeeded, though I began in July and it was not till October that it finally fell crushing into the sage brush, and for the first time we saw the uninterrupted curve of beach melting into the pale greenish cliffs beyond.

The property on which the pole stood belonged to a real-estate man. He was pleasant and full of rosy dreams of a suburban villa resort, the gem of the Pacific Coast. That part was easy. He and I together visited the offices of the corporations owning the wires on that pole. As they had no legal right of way they had to promise to remove it and many others, to the tune of several hundred dollars. Nothing was left them but the game of delay. They told me their men were busy, that all the copper wire was held up by a landslide in the Panama Canal, that the superintendent was on a vacation, *etc.* However, the latter gentleman had to come back some time, and when he did I plaintively told him my troubles. I said I had had a very hard and disappointing summer, and that it would soothe me enormously to have one look at that view as the Lord intended it to be, before I had to go away for the winter, that it was in his power to give me that pleasure, *etc.*

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Perhaps it was an unusual method, but it worked so well that I have often employed it since. I may say incidentally that it is of no use with the ice man. Perhaps dealing with merchandise below zero keeps his resistance unusually good. I have never been able to extract a pound of ice from him, even for illness, except on his regular day and in my proper turn. I think I should also except the fish man, who always promises to call Fridays and never does; much valuable time have I lost in searching the highways and byways for his old horse and white wagon.

Next to the execution of the telegraph pole I felt a little grass lawn to be of the utmost importance. Nothing could better show how short a time I had been in California than not to realize that even if you can afford to dine on caviar, pate de fois gras, and fresh mushrooms, grass may be beyond your means. I bravely had the ground prepared and sown. First, the boys' governess watered it so hard that it removed all the seed, so we tried again. Then the water was shut off while pipes were being laid on the highway below, and only at dawn and after dark could we get a drop. I did the watering in my night-gown, and was soon rewarded by a little green fuzz. Then all the small rabbits for miles around gathered there for breakfast. They were so tame you could hardly drive them away, so I invited the brothers who kept the hardware store in the village to come up and shoot them. They came gladly and brought their friends, but were so very anxious to help that I thought they were going to shoot the children too, and had politely to withdraw my invitation. The gardener and I then made a luscious compound of bacon grease and rough-on-rats, which we served on lettuce leaves and left about the edges of the grass plot. Did you ever hear a rabbit scream? They do. I felt like Lucretia Borgia, and decided that if they wanted the lawn they could have it. Oddly enough, a lot of grass came up in quite another part of the garden. I suppose it was the first planting that Fraeulein had blown away with the hose! We often have surprises like that in gardening. We once planted window-boxes of mignonette and they came up petunias—volunteer petunias at that. Of course, it all adds to the interest and adventure of life.

After the water-pipes were laid the gas deserted us, and we had a few meals cooked on all the little alcohol lamps we could muster. Then the motor fell desperately ill, and from then on was usually to be found strewn over the floor of the garage. Jerome K. Jerome says about bicycles, that if you have one you must decide whether you will ride it or overhaul it. This applies as well to motors. We decided to overhaul ours with a few brief excursions, just long enough to give an opportunity for having it towed home. One late afternoon we were hurrying across the mesa to supper, when our magneto flew off into the ditch, scattering screws in all directions. Fortunately, a kind of Knight Errant to our family appeared just in the nick of time to take us home and send help to the wreck. I once kept a garage in San Diego open half an hour after closing time by a Caruso sob in my voice over the telephone, while my brother-in-law's miserable chauffeur hurried over for an indispensable part.

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Poppy, the cow, contributed her bit—it wasn't milk, either—to this complicated month, but deserves a chapter all to herself.

The backbone of the family found my letters "so entertaining" at first, but gradually a note of uneasiness crept into his replies after I had told him that Joedy had fallen out of the machine and had just escaped our rear wheels, and that the previous night we had had three earthquakes. I had never felt an earthquake before, and it will be some time before I develop the nonchalance of a seasoned Californian, whose way of referring to one is like saying, "Oh, yes, we did have a few drops of rain last night." One more little tremble and I should have gathered the family for a night in the garden.

After an incendiary had set fire to several houses in town, and Fraeulein had had a peculiar seizure that turned her a delicate sea-green, while she murmured, "I am going to die," I sat down and took counsel with myself. What next? I bought a rattlesnake antidote outfit—that, at least, I could anticipate, and then I went out with the axe and hacked out the words "Suma Paz" from the pergola. We are now "The Smiling Hill-Top," for though peace does not abide with us, we keep right on smiling.

[Illustration]

A
California
poppy

It would doubtless be the proper thing for me to begin by quoting Stevenson:

"The friendly cow, all red and white,
I love with all my heart," *etc.*

but I'd rather not. In the first place she wasn't, and in the second place I didn't. The only thing about it that fits is the color scheme; Poppy was a red-and-white cow, but I'd rather not. In the first place she wasn't, and in the second place I didn't. The only thing about it that fits is the color scheme; Poppy was a red-and-white cow, or rather a kind of strawberry roan. Perhaps she didn't like being inherited (she came to us with "The Smiling Hill-Top"), or maybe she was lonely on the hillside and felt that it was too far from town. Almost all the natives of the village feel that way; or perhaps she took one of those aversions to me that aren't founded on anything in particular. At any rate, I never saw any expression but resentment in her eye, so that no warm friendship ever grew up between us.

The only other cow we ever boarded—I use the word advisedly—did not feel any more drawn to me than Poppy. Evidently I am not the type that cows entwine their affections about. She was Pennsylvania Dutch and shared Poppy's sturdy appetite, though it all went to figure. Two quaint maiden ladies next door took care of her and handed the



milk over our fence, while it was still foaming in the pail. Miss Tabitha and Miss Letitia—how patient they were with me in my abysmal ignorance of the really vital things of life, such as milking, preserving, and pickling! They undertook it all for me, but in the end I had a small laugh at their expense. I gave them my grandmother's recipes for brandied peaches and pickled peaches, and though rigidly temperance, they consented to do a dozen jars of each. Alas! they mingled the two—now as I write it down I wonder if perhaps they did it on purpose, on the principle that drug stores now put a dash of carbolic in our 95 per cent alcohol. In which case, of course, the joke is on me.

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To return to Poppy. At first I was delighted with the thought of unlimited milk, bought a churn and generally prepared to enjoy being a dairymaid. I soon found out my mistake. Poppy was “drying up” just as the vegetation was. The Finn woman who milked her morning and night, and who seemed to be in much closer sympathy with her than I ever hoped to be, said that what she must have was green food. Having no lawn, for reasons previously stated, that was a poser. My brother-in-law’s chauffeur, who was lent to me for a month, unbent sufficiently to go to town and press a bill into the hand of the head gardener of “The Place” of the village, so that we might have the grass mowed from that lawn. Alas for frail human nature! It seems that he disappeared from view about once in so often, and that his feet at that moment were trembling on the brink. So he slid over the edge, and the next man in charge had other friends with other cows. I tried the vegetable man next. He was a pleasant Greek, and promised me all his beet-tops and wilted lettuce. That was good as far as it went, but Poppy would go through a crate of lettuce as I would a bunch of grapes, and I couldn’t see that we got any more milk. The Finn woman said that the flies annoyed her and that no cow would give as much milk if she were constantly kicking and stamping to get them off. She advised me to get some burlap for her. That seemed simple, but it wasn’t. Nothing was simple connected with that cow. I found I could only get stiff burlap, such as you put on walls, in art green, and I couldn’t picture Poppy in a kimono of that as being anything but wretched. Finally, in a hardware store, the proprietor took an interest in my sad tale, and said he’d had some large shipments come in lately wrapped in burlap, and that I could have a piece. He personally went to the cellar for it and gave it to me as a present.

Much cheered, I hurried home and we put Poppy into her brown jacket, securing it neatly with strings. By morning, I regret to say, she had kicked it to shreds. Also the Finn woman decided that she needed higher pay and more milk as her perquisite. Since we were obviously “city folks” she thought she might as well hold us up, and she felt sure that I couldn’t get any one in her place. I surprised her by calmly replying that she could go when her week was up, and I would get some one else. It was a touch of rhetoric on my part, for I didn’t suppose that I could any more than she did, though I was resolved to make a gallant fight, even if I had to enlist the services of the dry cleaner, who was the only person who voluntarily called almost daily to see if we had any work to be done.

The joke of it was that I had no trouble at all. A youth of sixteen, who viewed me in the light of “opportunity knocking at the door,” gladly accepted my terms. He was the son of the foreman at a dairy in the neighborhood, and rode over night and morning on a staid old mare loaned him by the dairyman.

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Donald was bright and willing, and eventually was able to get near enough to Poppy to milk her, though she never liked him. The Finn woman was the only person with whom she was in sympathy. I think they were both Socialists. Donald said we must do something about the flies. I told him about my attempts to dress her in burlap, and we concluded that a spray was the thing. Donald brought a nice antiseptic smelling mixture, and we put it on her with the rose sprayer. Probably we were too impulsive; anyway, the milk was very queer. Did you ever eat saffron cake in Cornwall? It tasted like that. The children declined it firmly, and I sympathized with them. After practice we managed to spray her in a more limited way.

By this time we were having sherbet instead of ice-cream for Sunday dinner, and my ideas of a private cow had greatly altered.

I have a black list that has been growing through life; things I wish never to have again: tapioca pudding, fresh eggs if I have to hear the hen brag about it at 5 A.M., tripe, and home-grown milk, and to this list I have lately added cheese. Every one is familiar with the maxim that rest is a change of occupation. J——, being tired of Latin verbs, Greek roots, and dull scholars generally, took up some interesting laboratory work after we emigrated to California. Growing Bulgarian bacilli to make fermented milk that would keep us all perennially amiable while we grew to be octogenarians, was one thing, but when the company, lured by the oratory of a cheese expert, were beguiled into making cream cheese—just the sort of cheese that Lucullus and Ponce de Leon both wanted but did not find—our troubles began. The company is composed of one minister with such an angelic expression that no one can refuse to sign anything if he holds out a pen; one aviator with youth, exuberant spirits, and a New England setness of purpose; one schoolmaster—strong on facing facts and callous to camouflage, and one temperamental cheese man. (It turned out afterward, however, that the janitor could make the best cheese of them all.) Developing a cheese business is a good deal like conducting a love affair—it blows hot and cold in a nerve-racking way. It is “the Public.” You never can tell about the Public! Sometimes it wants small packages for a small sum, or large packages for more, but mostly, what it frankly wants is a large package for a small sum! Some dealers didn’t like the trade-mark. It was changed. It then turned out that the first trade-mark was really what was wanted. Then the cheese man fell desperately ill, which was a calamity, as neither the Book of Common Prayer, an aeroplane, nor a Latin Grammar is what you need in such a crisis.

J—— waded dejectedly about in whey until a new cheese man took the helm. He also fell ill. I always supposed that making cheese was a kind of healthful, bucolic occupation, but I was wrong. Apparently every one that tries it steers straight for a nervous break-down. I have gotten to a point myself where, if any one quotes “Miss Muffet” to me, I emit a low, threatening growl.

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However, I'm digressing, for our life was not complicated by cheese or Bulgarian bacilli till much later (and when you think of what the Bulgos have done to the Balkans we can't really complain).

That first summer Poppy seemed care enough. A neighbor across the canyon, who had known her in her girlhood, took too vital an interest in her daily life. It was maddening to be called on the telephone at all hours and told that Poppy had had no fresh drinking water since such and such an hour, or to have Donald waylaid and admonished to give her plenty to eat. That she had, as my bills at the feed and fuel store can prove.

At this juncture the backbone of the family fell desperately ill, and I flew to the hospital where he was, leaving Poppy to kick and stamp and lose tethering pins and dry up at her own sweet will. After the danger and strain were over, I found myself also tucked into a hospital bed, while a trained nurse watched over the children and Poppy. One morning a frantic letter arrived. Poppy *had* dried up! According to what lights we had to guide us, it was far too soon, but reasoning did not alter the fact. There was no milk for the boys, and the dairyman had always declined to deliver milk on our hill, it was outside his route! Two helpless persons flat on their backs in a hospital are at a disadvantage in a crisis like that. However, one must always find a way. I think I have expressed myself elsewhere as to the value of wheedling. It seemed our only hope. I wrote a letter to the owner of that dairy, in which I frankly recognized the fact that our hill was steep and the road bad, that it was out of his way and probably he had no milk to spare, anyway, but that Billie and Joe had to have milk, and that their parents were both down and out, and that it was his golden opportunity to do, not a stroke of business, but an act of kindness! It worked. He has been serving us with milk ever since, and I'd like to testify that his heart is in the right place.

Before I leave the subject of wheedling, I might add that if it is a useful art in summer, in winter it is priceless. After a week of rain, such as we know how to have in these parts, adobe becomes very slippery. This hill is steep, and I have spent a week on its top in February, feeling like the princess in the fairy tale, who lived on a glass hill ready to marry the first suitor who reached the top; only in my case there were no suitors at all; even the telegraph boy declined to try his luck.

Speaking of telegrams, I think that as a source of interest we have been a boon to this village. One departing friend telegraphed in Latin, beginning "Salve atque vale." This was a poser. The operator tried to telephone it, but gave that up. He said, "It's either French or a code." The following season he referred to it again, remarking, "A telegram like that just gets my goat."

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But to return to the now thoroughly dry Poppy. We determined to sell her, in spite of the fact that we never are very successful in selling anything. Things always seem at their bottom price when we have something to dispose of, while we usually buy when the demand outruns the supply. Still, I once conducted several quite successful transactions with an antique dealer in Pennsylvania. I think I was said to be the only living woman who had ever gotten the best of a bargain with him, so I was unanimously elected by the family as the one to open negotiations. A customer actually appeared. We gradually approached a price by the usual stages, I dwelling on his advantage in having the calf and trying not to let him see my carking fear that we might be the unwilling godparents of it if he didn't hurry up and come to terms. At last the matter was settled. I abandoned my last five-dollar ditch, thinking that the relief of seeing the last of Poppy would be cheap at the price. There were four of us, and we would not hesitate to pay two dollars each for theatre tickets, which would be eight dollars, so really I was saving money.

A nice little girl with flaxen pigtails brought her father's check. She and her brother tied Poppy behind their buggy and slowly disappeared down the hill. There was the flutter of a handkerchief from the other side of the canyon, and that was all.

In the words of that disturbing telegram:

"Salve atque vale."

[Illustration]

GARDENERS

"Venite agile, barchetta mia
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia!"

accompanied by the enchanting fragrance of burning sage-brush, is wafted up to my sleeping-porch, and I know that Signor Constantino Garibaldi is early at work clearing the canyon side so that our Matilija poppies shall not be crowded out by the wild. It is a pleasant awakening to a pleasant world as the light morning mist melts away from a bay as "bright and soft and bloomin' blue" as any Kipling ever saw. It seems almost too good to be true, that in a perfect Italian setting we should have stumbled on an Italian gardener, who whistles Verdi as he works. True, he doesn't know the flowers by name, and in his hands a pair of clippers are as fatal as the shears in the hands of Atropos, but he is in the picture. When I see gardeners pruning I realize that that lady of destiny shows wonderful restraint about our threads of fate—the temptation to snip seems so irresistible.

Signor Garibaldi is a retired wine merchant driven out-of-doors by illness, a most courteous and sensitive soul, with a talent for letter-writing that is alone worth all the plumbago blossoms that he cut away last year. The following letter was written to J —— while Garibaldi was in charge of our hill-top, the bareness of which we strove to cover with wild flowers until we could make just the kind of garden we wanted:

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March 15.

Dear sir:

The last time I had the pleasure of see you in your place, Villa Collina Ridente, you exclaimed with a melancholic voice, "Only poppies and mignonette came out of the wild flower seeds." "So it is," said I in the same tune of voice. Time proved we was both wrong; many other flowers made their retarded appearance, so deserving the name of wild flower garden....Your place (pardon *me* as I am not a violet) could look better, also could look worse; consequently I consider myself entitled to be placed between hell and paradise—to have things as one wishes is an insolvable problem—that era has not come yet. Many people come over to the Smiling hills, some think it is not necessary to go any farther to collect flower to make a bouquet. With forced gentle manner I reproached some of them, ordering to observe the rule, "vedere e non toccare." It go in force while I am present, not so in my absence. Those that made proverbs, their names ought to be immortal. Here for one, "When the cat is gone, the rats dance." How much true is in the Say. Every visitor like the place profane or not profane in artistic matter. A glorious rain came last night to the great content of the farmers and gardeners—others not so. While I am writing from my Observatorio I can't see any indication of stopping. I don't think it will rain as much as when we had the universal deluge, but if the cause of said deluge was in order to get a better generation, it may. I don't think the actual generation is better than it was the anti-deluge, pardon me if you can't digest what I say. I am a pessimist to the superlative grade, and it is not without reason that I say so. I had sad experience with the World. Thank God for having doted me with a generous dose of philosophic! Swimming against the tide, not me, not such a fool I am! Here is another pardon that I have to ask and it is to take the liberty of decorate the Smiling hill with the American flag. La Bandiera Stellata (note: I am not an American legally, no; to say I renounce to my country, impossible, but I am an American by heart if U. Sam can use me. I was not trained to be a soldier, but in matter of shooting very seldom I fail to get a rabbit when I want it, more so lately that a box of shells from 60 cents jumped to \$1.00). As a rule the ridents colline are very monotonous, but when I am home, more so the Sunday, the "Marseillaise" no where is heard more than here; no animosity against nobody; Cosmopolitan, ardent admirer of C. Paine! The world is my country; to do good is my religion!

With fervent wishes of not having need of doctors or lawyers; with best regards to you and family, I am

Yours respectfully,
Constantino Garibaldi.

Unquestionably he has humor. After receiving more or less mixed orders from me, I have heard him softly singing in the courtyard, "Donna e mobile." I only regret that as a family we aren't musical enough to assist with the "Sextette" from "Lucia!"

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Ever since we came to California we have been lucky about gardeners. I don't mean as horticulturists, but from the far more important standard of picturesqueness. Of course no one could equal Garibaldi with the romance of a distant relationship to the patriot and the grand manner no rake or hoe could efface, but Banksleigh had his own interest. He was an Englishman with pale blue eyes that always seemed to be looking beyond our horizon into space. There was something rather poetic and ethereal about him. Perhaps he didn't eat enough, or it may have been the effect of "New Thought," in one of the fifty-seven varieties of which he was a firm believer. He told me that his astral colors were red and blue, and that a phrenologist had told him that a bump on the back of his head indicated that he ought never to buy mining stock. With the same instinct that undid Bluebeard's and Lot's wives he had tried it, and is once more back at his job of gardening with an increased respect for phrenology.

I have a grudge against phrenologists myself. I had a relative who went to one when he was a young man, and was told that he had a wonderful baritone voice that he ought to cultivate. Up to that time he had only played the flute, but afterwards he sang every evening through a long life.

It distressed Banksleigh to see me lying about in hammocks on the verandah. He usually managed to give the vines in my neighborhood extra attention—like Garibaldi, he was a confirmed pruner. He told me that he wished I would take up New Thought, and was sure that if I thought strong I'd be strong. I wonder? One summer, lying in bed in a hospital where the heat was terrific, I found myself repeating over and over:

"Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting,
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,"

and finding it far more cooling than iced orange juice. Was not I proving Banksleigh's contention? I was thinking cool and I was cool. In his own case New Thought seemed to work. He always looked ready to give up forever, and yet he never did.

California is full of people with queer quirks and they aren't confined to gardeners. I haven't had a hair-dresser who wasn't occult or psychic or something, from the Colonial Dame with premonitions to the last one, who had both inspirations and vibrations, and my hair keeps right on coming out.

I don't quite understand why gardeners should be queer. They say that cooks invariably become affected in time by so much bending over a hot stove, and that is easy to understand, but bending over nature ought to have quite the opposite effect, but it doesn't always. The lady gardener who laid out the garden that finally replaced our wild-flower tangle, proved that. She had a voice that would be wonderful in a shipyard, a firmness and determination that would be an asset to Congress and a very kind heart, also much taste and infinite knowledge of the preferences

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and peculiarities of California plants. Her right-hand man, "Will," was also odd. Unfortunately, his ideas were almost the opposite of hers. Before they arrived at our gate sounds of altercation were only too plain. She liked curves in the walks, he preferred corners; she liked tangles, he liked regular beds. What we liked seemed to be going to cut very little figure. All that was lacking was our architect friend, who had made the sketches and offered various suggestions of "amusing" things we might do. He also is firm, though his manner is mild, so the situation would have been even more "amusing" for the family on the side lines, had he been present. Owing to the placing of the house, we are doomed to have a lopsided garden whatever we do, but we want it to look wayward rather than eccentric. After a battle fought over nearly every inch of the ground the lady was victorious, for Will said to me as he watched her motor disappear: "I might as well do what she says or she'll make me do it over." In this J—— and I heartily concurred, for the simplest of arithmetical calculations would show that it would otherwise prove expensive.

Will had a worker whose unhappy lot it was to dig up stumps, apply the pick to the adobe parts of the soil, and generally to toil in the sweat of his brow. As a team they made some progress, and I began to have some hope of enjoying what I had always been led to believe was the treat of one's life—making a garden. I felt entirely care-free—the lady gardener was the boss and there was only room for one—directions were a drug on the market. This state of affairs was short-lived. Will failed to appear the third day out, and the lady gardener's pumping system for her nurseries blew up or leaked or lay down on the job in some way, so that the worker and I confronted each other, ignorant and unbossed. I will not dwell on the week that followed. The lady gardener gave almost vicious orders by telephone and the worker did his best, but it is not a handy way to direct a garden. When the last rosebush is in, including some that Will is gloomily certain will never grow, I think I shall go away for a rest to some place where there is only cactus and sage and sand.

J—— arrived on the scene in time to save the day, and the garden is very lovely. Next year it will be worth going a long way to see, for in this part of the world planting things is like playing with Japanese water flowers. A wall of gray stucco gently curves along the canyon side, while a high lattice on the other shows dim outlines of the hills beyond. In the wall are arches with gates so curved as to leave circular openings, through which we get glimpses of the sea. It makes me think of King Arthur's castle at Tintagel. In the lattice there is a wicket gate. There is something very alluring about a wicket gate—it connotes a Robin. Unfortunately, my Robin can only appear from Friday to Monday, but I'm not complaining. Any one is fortunate who can count

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on romance two days out of seven. At the far end of the garden is a screen designed to hide the peculiarities of the garage. The central panel is concrete with a window with green balusters; below is a wall fountain. The window suggests a half-hidden senorita. It really conceals a high-school boy who is driving the motor for me in J——'s absence, but that is immaterial. The fountain is set with sapphire-blue tiles and the water trickles from the mouth of the most amiable lion I ever saw. He was carved from Boise stone by one "Luigi" from a sketch by our architect friend. He has Albrecht Durer curls—the lion I mean—four on a side that look like sticks of peppermint candy and we call him "Boysey."

The pool below him is a wonderful place for boat sailing. It fairly bristles with the masts of schooners and yachts, and the guns of torpedo destroyers, and while the architect and the grown-ups did not have a naval base in mind when the sketch was made, I do appreciate the feelings of my sons.

"There's a fountain in our garden,
With the brightest bluest tiles
And the pleasantest stone lion
Who spits into it and smiles!
It's shaded by papyrus
And reeds and grasses tall,
Just a little land-locked harbor
Beside the garden wall.

"They talked of water-lilies
And lotus pink and white—
We didn't dare to say a word
But we *wished* with all our might,
For how could we manoeuvre
The submarine we've got,
If they go and clutter up the place
With all that sort of rot.

"But mother said she thought perhaps
We'd wait another year,
'It's such a lovely place to play,
We ought to keep it clear.'
So there's nothing but a goldfish
Who has to be a Hun,
I don't suppose he likes it,
But gee, it's lots of fun!"

Some day we are going to have a sun dial. J—— thought of a wonderful motto in the best Latin, and now he can't remember it, which is harrowing, because it would be so stylish to have a perfectly original one. It was something about not wanting to miss the shady hours for the sake of having all sunny ones. At any rate, we are resolved not to have "I count none but sunny hours."

There are all kinds of responsibilities in life, and picking the right shade of paint for a house you have to live in is a most wearing one. Painting the trimming of ours in connection with the garden was very agitating. I had sample bits of board painted and took them about town, trying them next to houses I liked, and at last decided on a wicked Spanish green that the storms of winter are expected to mellow. As I saw it being put on the house I felt panic-stricken. For a nice fresh vegetable or salad, yes, but for a house—never! And yet it is a great success! I don't know whether it has "sunk in," as the painter consoled me by predicting, or whether it is that we are used to it; at any rate, every one likes it so much that I have cheerfully removed smears of it from the clothing of all the family, including the puppies' tails.

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As to ourselves in the role of gardeners—there were not two greener greenhorns when we first resolved to stay in California; we still are, though I think I do J—— an injustice in classing him with me. We can make geraniums grow luxuriantly, but we don't want to. I wish they would pass a law in Southern California making the growing of red geraniums a criminal offense. So many people love to combine them with bougainvillia and other brilliant pink or purple flowers, and the light is hard enough on eyes without adding that horror. We are resolved to progress from the geranium age to the hardy perennial class, and are industriously studying books and magazines with that end in view. The worst of garden literature is that it is nearly all written for an Eastern climate. Once I subscribed for a garden magazine, lured by a bargain three months' offer. Never again! At the end of the time, when no regular subscription came in from me, letters began to arrive. Finally one saying, "You probably think this is another letter urging you to subscribe. It is not; it is only to beg that you will confidentially tell us why you do not." I told him that all our conditions here are so different from those in the East. People want Italian and Spanish gardens, and there is the most marvellous choice of flowers, shrubs, and vines with which to get them, but we want to be told how, and added to this, it is heart-breaking to love a fountain nymph in the advertisements and to find that her travelling expenses would bankrupt you.

One marvellous opportunity we have—the San Diego Exposition, whose gardens are more lovely than ever, though soldiers and sailors are feeding the pigeons in the Plaza de Panama instead of tourists. The real intention of that exposition was to show people in this part of the world what they could do with the great variety of plants and shrubs that thrive here.

I used to wonder why so little has been written about gardeners when there are shelves and shelves of volumes on gardens. There are no famous gardeners in literature that occur to me at the moment except Tagore's, and the three terrified ones in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, who were hurriedly painting the white roses red. I should love to read the diary of the one who trimmed the borders while Boccaccio's gay company were occupying that garden; or to hear what the head gardener of the d'Este's could tell us, but I know now why it is so. With the best of intentions I haven't been able to avoid the pitfall myself.

[Illustration]

THORNS

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There may be a more smiling hill-top than “La Collina Ridente” somewhere on the Southern California edge of the Pacific Ocean, but deep down in my heart I don’t believe that there is. It is just the right size hill-top—except when I first began to drive the motor, and then it seemed a trifle small for turning around. It’s just high enough above the coast highway and the town to give us seclusion, and it’s just far enough from the waves to be peaceful. It used to be called “Suma Paz”—perfect peace—but we changed the name, that being so unpleasantly suggestive of angels, and, anyway, there isn’t such a thing. If “The Smiling Hill-Top” were everything it seems on a blue and green day like to-day, for instance, it would be a menace to my character. I should never leave, I should exist beautifully, leading the life of a cauliflower or bit of seaweed floating in one of the pools in the rocks, or to be even more tropically poetic, a lovely lotus flower! I should not bother about the children’s education or grieve over J——’s bachelor state of undarned socks and promiscuous meals, or the various responsibilities I left behind in town, so it is fortunate that there are thorns. Every garden, from Eden down, has produced them.

I haven’t catalogued mine, I have just put them down “higgledy-piggledy,” as we used to say when we were children. J——’s having to work in town, too far to come home except for an occasional week-end, the neighbors’ dogs, servants, Bermuda grass, tenants, ants, the eccentricities of an adobe road during the rains, and the lapses of the delivery system of the village. Of course they are of varying degrees of unpleasantness. J——’s absence is horrid but the common lot, so I have accepted it and am learning “to possess, in loneliness, the joy of all the earth.” Truth compels me to add that it isn’t always loneliness, either, as, for example, one week-end that was much cheered by a visit from our architect friend, who rode down from Santa Barbara in his motor, and made himself very popular with every member of the household. He brought home the laundry, bearded the ice man in his lair, making ice-cream possible for Sunday dinner, mended the garden lattice, and drew entrancing pictures of galleons sailing in from fairy shores with all their canvas spread, for the boys. As we waved our handkerchiefs to him from the Good-by Gate on Monday, Joedy turned to me:

“I wish he didn’t have to go!” A little pause.

“Muvs, if you weren’t married to Father, how would you like—” but here I interrupted by calling his attention to a rabbit in the canyon.

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One thing I do not consider a part of the joy of all the earth—the neighbors' dogs. On the next hill-top is an Airedale with a voice like a fog-horn. He is an ungainly creature and thoroughly disillusioned, because his family keep him locked up in a wire-screened tennis-court, where he barks all day and nearly all night. He can watch the motors on the coast road from one corner of his cage, and that seems to drive him almost wild. He ought to realize how much better off he is than the Lady of Shalott, who only dared to watch the highway to Camelot in a mirror! Sometimes he has a bad attack of lamentation in the night—he is quite Jeremiah's peer at that—and then we all call his house on the telephone. You can see the lights flash on in the various cottages and hear the tinkle of the bell, as we each in turn voice our indignation. Once I even saw a white-robed figure in the road across the canyon, and heard a voice borne on the night wind, "For heaven's sake, shut that dog up." We all bore it with Christian resignation when his family decided to take a motor camping trip, Prince to be included in the party. He is probably even now waking the echoes on Lake Tahoe, or barking himself hoarse at the Bridal Veil Falls in the Yosemite, but thank goodness we can't hear him quite as far away as that.

I dare say that he might be a perfectly nice, desirable dog if he had had any early training. Our own "pufflers," as the boys call "Rags" and "Tags," their twin silver-haired Yorkshire terriers, could tell him what a restraining influence the force of early training has on them, even on moonlight nights.

Prince is the worst affliction we have had, but not the only one. The people on the mountain-slope above us acquired a yellowish collie-like dog to scare away coyotes. He ought to have been a success at it, though I don't know just what it takes to scare a coyote. At any rate, he used to bark long and grievously about dawn in the road across the canyon. One morning I was almost frantic with the irregularity of his outbursts. It was like waiting for the other shoe to drop. Suddenly a rifle shot rang out; a spurt of yellow dust, a streak of yellow dog, and silence! I rushed to J——'s room, to find him with the weapon, still smoking, in his hands. I begged him not to start a neighborhood feud, even if we never slept after dawn. I even wept. He laughed at me. "I didn't shoot at him," he said. "I shot a foot behind him, and I've given him a rare fright!" He had, indeed. The terror of the coyotes never came near us again.

As to servants, the subject is so rich that I can only choose. Unfortunately, the glory of the view does not make up to them for the lack of town bustle and nightly "movies," so it isn't always easy to make comfortable summer arrangements. As you start so you go on, for changing horses in mid-stream has ever been a parlous business. A temperamental high-school boy who came to drive the

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motor and water the garden, though he appeared barefooted to drive me to town, and took French leave for a day's fishing, pinning a note to the kitchen door, saying, "Expect me when you see me and don't wait dinner," afflicted me one entire summer. I tried to rouse his ambition by pointing out the capitalists who began by digging ditches—California is full of them—and assuring him that there were no heights to which he might not rise by patient application, *etc.* It was no use. He watered the garden when I watched him; otherwise not. I came to the final conclusion that he was in love. Love is responsible for so much.

Another summer I decided to try darkies and carefully selected two of contrasting shades of brown. The cook was a slim little quadroon, with flashing white teeth and hair arranged in curious small doughnuts all over her head. She was a grass widow with quite an assortment of children, though she looked little more than a child herself. "Grandma" was taking care of them while the worthless husband was supposed to be running an elevator in New Orleans. Essie had quite lost interest in him, I gathered, for I brought her letters and candy from another swain, who used such thin paper that I couldn't avoid seeing the salutation, "Oh, you chicken!"

Mandy was quite different. She was a rich seal brown, large and determined, and had left a husband on his honor, in town. We had hardly washed off the dust of our long motor-ride before trouble began. A telegram for Mandy conveyed the disquieting news that George had been arrested on a charge of assault at the request of "grandma." It appeared that after seeing wifey off for the seashore he felt the joy of bachelor freedom so strongly that he dropped in to see Essie's mother, who gave him a glass of sub rosa port, which so warmed his heart that he tried to embrace her. Grandma was only thirty-four and would have been pretty except for gaps in the front ranks of her teeth. She had spirit as well as spirits, and had him clapped into jail. Telegrams came in—do you say droves, covies, or flocks? Night letters especially, and long-distance telephone calls—all collect. The neighbors, the Masons, the lawyer, and various relatives all went into minute detail. Grandma, being the injured party, prudently confined herself to the mail. As we have only one servant's room and that directly under my sleeping-porch, it made it very pleasant! The choicest telegram J—— took down late one night. It was from one of Mandy's neighbors, and ended with the illuminating statement: "George never had a gun or a knife on him; he was soused at the time!" Mandy emerged from bed, clad in a red kimono and a pink boudoir cap, to receive this comforting message. She wept; Essie, who had followed in order to miss nothing, scowled, while J—— and I wound our bath-robos tightly about us and gritted our teeth, in an effort to preserve a proper solemnity. Of course we had to let her go back to the trial, which she did with the dignity of one engaged in affairs of state. She and the judge had a kind of mother's meeting about George, and decided that a touch of the law might be just the steadying influence he needed.

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The sentence was for three months, which suited me exactly, as I calculated that his release and our return to town would happily synchronize. Mandy really stood the gaff pretty well and returned to her job, and an armed neutrality ensued, varied by mild outbreaks. Essie was afraid of Mandy. She said that she would never stay in the house with her alone; Mandy wouldn't stay in the house alone after dark, so it became rather complicated. We apparently had to take them or else find them weeping on the hillside, when we came back from a picnic. In justice to the dark heart I must say that when Billie was taken very ill they buried the hatchet for the time, and helped us all to pull him through.

The summer was almost over when I began to suffer from a strange hallucination. I kept seeing a colored gentleman slipping around corners when I approached. As Mandy was usually near said corner, I certainly thought of George, but calmed myself with the reflection that he was safe in jail. Not so. George had experienced a change of heart and had behaved in so exemplary a manner that his sentence had been shortened two weeks, and what more natural than that he should join his wife? It wasn't that I was afraid of George; I was afraid for George. I did not want him to meet Essie, for if Grandma's smile had cost him so dearly, I hated to think of the effect of Essie's black eyes and unbroken set of white teeth. I needn't have worried, for George was apparently "sick of lies and women," and never let go his hold on the apron-string to which he was in duty bound.

This summer I am unusually fortunate, owing to a moment of clear vision that I had forty-eight hours before leaving town. I had a Christian Science cook, a real artist if given unlimited materials, and she didn't mind loneliness, as she said that God is everywhere; to which I heartily agreed. I know that He is on this hill-top. So far so good, but her idea of obeying Mr. Hoover's precepts was not to mention that any staple was out until the last moment. At about six o'clock she usually came pussy-footing to my door in the tennis shoes she always wore, to tell me that there wasn't a potato in the house, or any butter. Not so bad in Pasadena, with a man to send to the store, but very trying on a smiling hill-top, one mile from town, with me the only thing dimly suggestive of a chauffeur on the place. At 3 A.M. I resolved to bounce her, heavenly disposition and all. I did, and engaged a cateress for what I should call a comfortable salary, rather than wages. She can get up a very appetizing meal from sawdust and candle-ends, when necessary, and that is certainly what is needed nowadays. Also, she has launched a wonderful counter-offensive against the ants. There was a time when we ate our meals surrounded by a magic circle like Brunhilde, but ours was not of flames, but of ant powder. Not that they mind it much. I'm told that they rather dislike camphor, but do you know the present price of that old friend?

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There are singularly few pests or blights in the garden itself. Bermuda or devil grass is one of our Western specialties, though it may have invaded the East, too, since we left. It is an unusually husky plant, rooting itself afresh at every joint with new vigor, and quite choking out the aristocratic blue grass with which we started our lawn. At first you don't notice it as it sneaks along the ground, some time above and some time below, as it feels disposed, and then suddenly you see it's cobwebby outlines as plainly as the concealed animals in a newspaper puzzle. If you begin to pull it out you can't stop. It reminds me of the German system of espionage, and that adds zest to my weeding. The other day I laboriously uprooted an intricate network of tentacles, all leading to one big root, which I am sure must have been Wilhelmstrasse itself. Being able to do so little to help win the war, this is a valuable imaginative outlet to me!

Everything about the place, as well as the lawn, seems to get out of order when we have tenants. No one likes tenants any more than we like "Central." There is a prejudice against them. They do the things they ought not to do and leave undone the things they ought to do, and there is no health in them. I have more often been one than had one, and I hate to think of the language that was probably used about us, though we meant well.

I am not going to tell all I know about tenants after all. I have changed my mind. I am also going to draw a veil over the adobe road during the rains, because we really do like to rent the place to help pay for the children's and the motor's shoes, and it wouldn't be good business.

The village delivery system enrages and entertains me by turns. I was frankly told by the leading grocery store that they did not expect to deliver to people who had their own motors, and when I occasionally insist on a few necessities being sent up to my house, they arrive after dark conveyed by an ancient horse, as the grocery manager is conservative. A horse doesn't get a puncture or break a vital part often (if he does, you bury him and get another) and it is about a toss-up between hay and gasoline.

Every now and then I am marooned on my hill, if the motor is "hors de combat," and then I get my neighbour to let me join her in her morning marketing trip, sometimes with disastrous results. One day the boys and I sat down to dinner with fine sea-air appetites, to be confronted by a small, crushed-looking fish. I sent out to ask the cook for more. She said there was no more, and as no miracle was wrought in our behalf, we filled up the void with mashed potatoes as best we could. Just as the plates were being removed the telephone rang, and my neighbor's agitated voice asked if I had her cat's dinner! Light flooded in on my understanding. We had just eaten her cat's dinner. She went on to say that the fish-man had picked out a little barracuda (our household fish in California)

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from his scraps and made her a present of it. I faintly asked if she thought it was a very old one, visions of ptomaine poisoning rising vividly. Oh, no, she said, "it wasn't old at all, he had merely stepped on it." My own perfectly good dinner was at her house. I told her to take off a portion for her cat, and I would send the boys for the rest. I heaved a sigh of relief—a fresh young fish, even if crushed, would not have fatal results.

I will pass rapidly on to my last thorn, which isn't on the list because I'm not quite sure that it is one. It is a small, second-hand, rather vicious little motor, which I have learned to drive as a war measure. After the first time I ever tried to turn it around, and it flew at our lovely rose-garlanded lattice fence at one hundred miles an hour, I christened it "the little fury." I missed the fence by revolving the steering wheel as though I were playing roulette. I almost went round twice, but J—— rescued me by kicking my foot off the throttle. Since then I have sufficiently mastered it to drive to town for the laundry and the newspaper. I am like a child learning to walk by having an orange rolled in front of it. I must know how far the Allies have driven the Germans, so I set my teeth and start for town in the "little fury." Every one told me that I'd have to break something before I really got the upper hand. I have. I bravely drove out to a Japanese truck garden for vegetables and came to grief. One of the boys tersely expressed it in his diary, "Muvs ran into a Japanese barn and rooked the bumper!" Now that that is over, I begin to feel a certain sense of independence that is not unpleasant. It is some time since I have stalled the engine or tried to climb a hill with the emergency brake set. The boys and the "puffers" are game and keep me company; we live or die together.

After all, the loveliest rose in my garden, the Sunburst, lifts its fragrant flower of creamy orange on a stalk bristling with wicked-looking mahogany spikes. If I'm very careful about cutting it, I don't prick my fingers and the thorns really add to the effect.

[Illustration]

THE GYPSY TRAIL

A friend of mine once wrote an article on motoring in Southern California for one of the smart Eastern magazines. In it she said that often a motor would be followed by a trailer loaded with a camp outfit. What was her surprise and amusement to read her own article later, dressed for company, so to speak. "A trailer goes ahead with the servants and outfit, so that when the motoring party arrives on the scene all is in readiness for their comfort." Great care must be taken that the sensibilities of the elect should not be offended by the horrid thought that ladies and gentlemen actually do make their own camp at times! So the trailer has to go ahead, and that is just where the lure and magic of Southern California slips through the fingers.

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Most of us have a few drops, at least, of gypsy blood in us, and in this land of sunshine and the open road we all become vagabonds as far as our conventional upbringing will let us. When you know that it won't rain from May to October, and the country is full of the most lovely and picturesque spots, how can you help at least picnicking whenever you can?

Trains are becoming as obsolete in our family as the horse. We wish to take a trip: out purrs the motor; in goes the family lunch-box, a thermos bottle, and a motor-case of indispensables, and we are off. No fuss about missing the train, no baggage, no tickets, no cinders—just the open road.

I had heard that every one deteriorated in Southern California, and after the first year I began earnestly searching my soul for signs of slackening. Perhaps my soul is naturally easy-going, for somehow I can't feel that the things we let slip matter so greatly.

This much I will admit. There is no deadlier drug habit than fresh air! The first summer on our Smiling Hill-Top kind ladies used to ask me to tea-parties and card-parties, but I could never come indoors long enough to be anything but a trial to my partners at bridge, so now I don't even make believe I'm a polite member of society. Of course, there are people who carry it further than I do, and can't be quite happy except in their bathing-suits. I'm not as bad as that. I can still enjoy the sea breezes and the colors and the sound of the waves with my clothes on. I don't even wear my bathing-suit to market, which is one of the customs of the place. It is a picturesque little village; half the houses are mere shacks, a kind of compromise between dwelling and bath-houses, everyone being much too thrifty to pay money to the Casino when they can drip freely on their own sitting-room floor, without the least damage to the furnishings. Life for many consists largely of a prolonged bath and bask on the beach, with dinner at a cafeteria and a cold bite for supper at home or on the rocks. It is surely an easy life and yet a great deal of earnest effort and strenuous thinking goes on, too, women's clubs, even an "open forum," and there are many delightful people who live there all the year for the sake of the perfect climate. Also, there are a few charming houses perched on the cliffs, most suggestive of Sorrento and Amalfi. An incident J—— is fond of telling gives the combined interests of the place. He was on his way to the post-office when he met two women in very scanty jersey bathing-suits with legs bare, wearing, to be sure, law-fulfilling mackintoshes, but which, being unbuttoned, flapped so in the breeze that they were only a technical covering. The ladies were in earnest conversation as he passed. J—— heard one say, "I grant all you say about the charm of his style, but I consider his writing very superficial!"

It is a wonderful life for small boys. My sons are the loveliest shades of brown with cheeks of red, and in faded khaki and bare legs are as good an example of protective coloring on the hillside as any zebra in a jungle. Quite naturally they view September and the long stockings of the city with dislike.

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There is a place on the beach by the coast road between Pasadena and San Diego where we always have lunch on our journeys to and from town. Just after you leave the picturesque ruins of the Capistrano Mission in its sheltered valley, you come out suddenly on the ocean, and the road runs by the sand for miles. With a salt breeze blowing in your face you can't resist the lunch box long. With a stuffed egg in one hand and a sandwich in the other, Joedy, aged eight, observed on our last trip south, "This is the bright side of living." I agree with him.

One late afternoon a friend of ours was driving alone and offered a lift to two young men who were swinging along on foot. "Your price?" they asked. "A smile and a song," was the reply. So in they got, and those last fifty miles were gay. That is the sort of thing which fits so perfectly into the atmosphere of this land. Perhaps it is the orange blossoms, perhaps it is that we have extra-sized moons, perhaps it is the old Spanish charm still lingering. All I know is that it is a land of glamour and romance. J—— said he was going to import a pair of nightingales. I said that if he did he'd have a lot to answer for.

Places are as different as people. The East, and by that I mean the country east of the Alleghanies and not Iowa and Kansas, which are sometimes so described out here, has reached years of discretion and is set in its way. California has temperament, and it is still very young and enthusiastic and is having a lot of fun "growing up." I love the stone walls, huckleberry pies, and johnny cakes of Rhode Island, and I love the associations of my childhood and my family tree, but there is something in the air of this part of the world that enchants me. It is a certain "Why not?" that leads me into all sorts of delightful experiences. Conventionality does not hold us as tightly as it does in the East, and a certain tempting feeling of unlimited possibilities in life makes waking up in the morning a small adventure in itself. It isn't necessary to point out the dangers of an unlimited "Why not?" cult—they are too obvious. "Why not?" is a question that one's imagination asks, and imagination is one of the best spurs to action. I will give an example of what I mean: When war was declared J—— suggested putting contribution boxes with red crosses on the collars of "Rags" and "Tags," the boys' twin Yorkshire terriers, and coaxing them to sit up on the back of the motor. I never had begged on a street corner, but I thought at once, "Why not?" The result was much money for the Red Cross, an increased knowledge of human nature for me, as well as some delightful new friends. I should never have had the courage to try it in New York—let us say; I should have been afraid I'd be arrested.

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At first to an Easterner the summer landscape seems dry and dusty, but after living here one grows to love the peculiar soft tones of tan and bisque, with bright shades of ice plant for color, and by the sea the wonderful blues and greens of the water. No one can do justice to the glory of that. Sky-blue, sea-blue, the shimmer of peacocks' tails and the calm of that blue Italian painters use for the robes of their madonnas, ever blend and ever change. Trees there are few, the graceful silhouette of a eucalyptus against a golden sky, occasional clumps of live oaks, and on the coast road to San Diego the Torrey pines, relics of a bygone age, growing but one other place in the world, and more picturesque than any tree I ever saw. One swaying over a canyon is the photographer's joy. It has been posing for hundreds of years and will still for centuries more, I have no doubt.

Were I trying to write a sort of sugar-coated guide-book, I could make the reader's mouth water, just as the menu of a Parisian restaurant does. The canyons through which we have wandered, the hills we have circled, Grossmont—that island in the air—Point Loma, the southern tip of the United States, now, alas, closed on account of the war (Fort Rosecrans is near its point), and further north the mountains and orange groves—snow-capped Sierras looming above orchards of blooming peach-trees!

Even the names add to the fascination, the Cuyamaca Mountains meaning the hills of the brave one; Sierra Madre, the mother mountains; even Tia Juana is euphonious, if you don't stop to translate it into the plebeian "Aunt Jane," and no names could be as lovely as the places themselves. So much beauty rather goes to one's head. For years in the East we had lived in rented houses, ugly rented houses, always near the station, so that J—— could catch the 7.59 or the 8.17, on foot. To find ourselves on a smiling hill-top—our own hill-top, with "magic casements opening on the foam"—seemed like a dream. After three years it still seems too good to be true.

They say that if you spend a year in Southern California you will never be able to leave it. I don't know. We haven't tried. The only possible reason for going back would be that you aren't in the stirring heart of things here as you are in New York, and the *Times* is five days old when you get it. Your friends—they all come to you if you just wait a little. What amazes them always is to find that Southern California has the most perfect summer climate in the world, if you keep near the sea. No rain—many are the umbrellas I have gently extracted from the reluctant hands of doubting visitors; no heat such as we know it in the East. We have an out-of-door dining-room, and it is only two or three times in summer that it is warm enough to have our meals there. In the cities or the "back country" it is different. I have felt heat in Pasadena that made me feel in the same class with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, but never by the sea.

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One result of all this fresh air is that we won't even go indoors to be amused. Hence the outdoor theatre. Why go to a play when it's so lovely outside? But to go to a play out-of-doors in an enchanting Greek theatre with a real moon rising above it—that's another matter. I shall never forget "Midsummer Night's Dream" as given by the Theosophical Society at Point Loma. Strolling through the grounds with the mauve and amber domes of their temples dimly lighted I found myself murmuring: "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree." In a canyon by the sea we found a theatre. The setting was perfect and the performance was worthy of it. Never have I seen that play so beautifully given, so artistically set and delightfully acted, though the parts were taken by students in the Theosophical School. After the last adorable little fairy had toddled off—I hope to bed—we heard a youth behind us observe, "These nuts sure can give a play." We echoed his sentiments.

I should make one exception to my statement that people won't go indoors to be amused. They go to the "movies"—I think they would risk their lives to see a new film almost as recklessly as the actors who make them. The most interesting part of the moving-picture business is out-of-doors, however. You are walking down the street and notice an excitement ahead. Douglas Fairbanks is doing a little tightrope walking on the telegraph wires. A little farther on a large crowd indicates further thrills. Presently there is a splash and Charley Chaplin has disappeared into a fountain with two policemen in pursuit. Once while we were motoring we came to a disused railway spur, and were surprised to find a large and fussy engine getting up steam while a crowd blocked the road for some distance. A lady in pink satin was chained to the rails—placed there by the villain, who was smoking cigarettes in the offing, waiting for his next cue. The lady in pink satin had made a little dugout for herself under the track, and as the locomotive thundered up she was to slip underneath—a job that the mines of Golconda would not have tempted me to try. Moving-picture actors have a very high order of courage. We could not stay for the denouement, as we had a nervous old lady with us, who firmly declined to witness any such hair-raising spectacle. I looked in the paper next morning for railway accidents to pink ladies, but could find nothing, so she probably pulled it off successfully.

Every year new theatres are built. We have seen Ruth St. Denis at the Organ Pavilion of the San Diego Exposition, and Julius Caesar with an all-star cast in the hills back of Hollywood, where the space was unlimited, and Caesar's triumph included elephants and other beasts, loaned by the "movies," and Brutus' camp spread over the hillside as it might actually have done long ago. There is a place in the back country near Escondido, where at the time of the harvest moon an Indian play with music is given every year. At Easter thousands of people go up Mount Rubidoux, near Riverside, for the sunrise service. Some celebrated singer usually takes part and it is very lovely—quite unlike anything else.

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So we have come to belong to what the French would call the school of “pleine air.” I once knew an adorable little boy who expressed it better than I can:

“Sun callin’ me, sky callin’ me,
Comin’ sun—comin’ sky.”

[Illustration]

AN ADVENTURE IN SOLITUDE

My windows were all wide open one lovely April day, the loveliest time of all the year in Southern California, filling the house with the sweetness of wistaria and orange blossoms, but also, truth compels me to add, with so many noises of such excruciating kinds that I followed Ulysses’ well-known plan and then tried to find quiet for my siesta in the back spare-room. The worst of this house is that it really has no back—it has various fronts, like the war. The spinster next door but one has a parrot—a cynical, tired parrot, but still fond of the sound of his own voice. The lady across the street is raising Pekinese puppies, who apparently bitterly regret being born outside of Pekin. She puts them in baskets on the roof in the sun and lets them cry it out, in that hard-hearted modern method applied to babies.

A sight-seeing car had paused while the gentleman with the megaphone explained to a few late tourists the Arroyo Seco, that great river-bed with only a trickle of water at the bottom, on whose brink our house perches. At home two plumbers were playfully tossing bricks about our courtyard in a half-hearted endeavor to find out why our cellar was flooded. Hence the back bedroom. No amount of cotton wool in one’s ears, however, could camouflage a telephone bell.

“The Red Cross Executive Committee will meet at ten on Wednesday.”

A short interval followed. “Will Mr. S—— make a ‘four-minute’ speech on Friday at the Strand Theatre for the Liberty Bond Campaign?”

Another interval during which I began to feel drowsy. “Will Mr. S—— say a few words of appreciation and present a wrist watch to the Chapter Secretary just starting for France?” etc. Just here I made a resolve. Escape I would, for one week, to my lovely hill-top by the sea, and leave J——, the two boys, the two dogs, the two white mice, the Red Cross, the Red Star, Food Conservation and Liberty Bonds to manage beautifully without me. I even had the reckless idea of trying to forget that there was a war going on! I was furnished with a perfectly good excuse; we had rented “The Smiling Hill-Top” for two months, and it must be put in order. Hence my “Adventure in Solitude.”

Everything is called an adventure nowadays, and to me it was a most exciting one, as I had not gone forth independently for many years. One chauffeur, one smiling Helen to

clean house for the tenants and cook for me, my worst clothes and my best picnic lunch went into the motor, and I followed. I think my family expected me back next day, when I bade them a loving farewell. Not!! My spirit was craving silence. I wanted not to curl my hair or be neat or polite or a good mother, or any of the things I usually try to be, for just one week. Longer, and I would be lonely and homesick.

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It was a lovely day. The coast road to San Diego runs through orange groves for miles, and the perfume of the blossoms hung about us till we came to the sea, where a salt breeze blew away the heavy sweetness. I lunched on the sand and watched the waves for an hour. There, at least, are endless re-enforcements! As fast as the front ranks break more come always to fill their places.

I felt no hurry, as the Smiling Hill-Top is some fifteen miles nearer Pasadena than San Diego—an easy day's run—and I had no engagements, but at last my impatience to see how much our garden had grown started me once more on my way, and we arrived at our wicket gate in the late afternoon. There were twenty-seven keys on the ring the real-estate agent gave me—twenty more than caused so much trouble at Baldpate—but none fitted, so I had the chauffeur lift the gate bodily from its hinges and I was at home!

In California things grow riotously. Grandparents who haven't seen their grandsons for years, and find that they have shot up from toddling babies to tall youths, must feel as I did when I saw the vines and shrubs, especially the banana trees planted only six months before! The lawn over which I had positively wept lay innocent and green—almost English in its freshness. The patio was entrancing with blooming vines. The streptasolen, which has no "little name," as the French say, was like a cascade of flame over one end of the wall. The place was ablaze with it. The three goldfish in the fountain seemed as calm as ever, and apparently have solved the present problem of the high cost of living, for they don't have to be fed at all. The three had picked up what they needed without human aid. I really felt like patting them on the head, but that being out of the question, I was moved to rhyme:

"I wish I were a goldfish,
All in a little bowl;
I wouldn't worry whether
I really had a soul.
I'd glide about through sun and shade
And snatch up little gnats,
My heaven would be summer
My hell—well, call it cats!"

All this time the chauffeur had been wrestling with the key ring, and finally had our bare necessities in the way of doors open. I had telegraphed our agent that I was coming only long enough before for the house to have what is vulgarly known as "a lick and a promise," but it looked just as comfortable and pleasant as I knew that it would, and the terrace—no need to bother about that. The south wind does the housework there.

That night I went to sleep between sheets fragrant with lavender from my own garden, while the ocean boomed gently on the beach below the hill. In the week that followed I abolished a number of things. First of all, meal hours. I had my meals when I felt like it; in fact, I didn't wind the clock till I was leaving. I only did it then on account of the

tenants, as some people find the ticking of a clock and the chirping of a cricket pleasant and

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cosy sounds. I don't. Then I cut out the usual items from my bill of fare, and lived on young peas, asparagus, eggs, milk, and fruit, with just a little bread and butter—not enough to agitate Mr. Hoover. I never had had as much asparagus as I really wanted before. I wore an old smock and a disreputable hat, and I pruned and dug in my garden till I was tired, and then I lay on the terrace and watched the waves endlessly gather and glide and spread. Counting sheep jumping over a wall is nothing to compare with waves for soothing rasped nerves.

My first solitary day was so clear that the Pasadena Mountains, as we call that part of the Sierra Madre, rose soft over the water on the far horizon, so that I couldn't feel lonely with home in sight. Long unused muscles expostulated with me, but smoothed-out nerves more than balanced their twinges. Of course I couldn't forget the war. Who could, especially with flocks of aeroplanes flying over me as I lay on a chaise longue on the terrace, listening to the big guns of Camp Kearny roaring behind the hills; but it no longer gave me the sensation of sand-paper in my feelings. I thought about it all more calmly and realized a little of what it is doing to us Americans—to our souls!—that is worth the price; and in addition, how much it is teaching us of economy, conservation, and efficiency, as well as more spiritual things.

It has also brought home to me the beauty of throwing away. In a fever of enthusiasm to make every outgrown union suit and superfluous berry spoon tell, I have ransacked my house from garret to cellar, and I bless the Belgians, Servians, and Armenians, the Poles and the French orphans for ridding me of a suffocating mass of things that I didn't use, and yet felt obliged to keep.

My wardrobe is now the irreducible minimum, the French Relief has the rest, and at last I have more than enough hangers in my closet to support my frocks. The shoes that pinched but looked so smart that they kept tempting me into one more trial have gone to the Red Cross Shop. No more concerts will be ruined by them. The hat that made me look ten years older than I like to think I do, accompanied them. It was a good hat, almost new, and it cost—more than I pay for hats nowadays. I do not need to wear it out. My large silver tea-pot given me by my maid of honor did good work for the Belgians—I hope if she ever finds out about its fate that she will be glad that it is now warm stockings for many thin little Belgian legs. Nora, from Ireland, viewed its departure with satisfaction—it made one less thing to polish. Many odds and ends of silver followed, and were put into the melting-pot, being too homely to survive—I'm saving enough for heirlooms for my grandchildren, of course. One must not allow sentiment to go by the board; we need it especially now that we have lost such quantities of it out of the world. So much was "made in Germany," that old Germany of the fairy tales and Christmas trees which seems to be gone forever.

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I need not go on enumerating my activities. Every one has been doing the same thing, and in all probability is now enjoying the same sense of orderliness and freedom that I feel. Even the children have caught the spirit. I was just leaving my house the other day when a palatial automobile stopped at the gate and a very perfect chauffeur alighted and touched his cap. "Madam," he said, "I have come for a case of empty bottles that Master John says your little boy promised him for the Red Cross." There was a trace of embarrassment in his manner, but there was none in mine as I led him to the cellar and watched with satisfaction while he clasped a cobwebby box of—dare I whisper it?—empty beer bottles to his immaculate chest and eventually stowed it in the exquisite interior of the limousine. How wonderful of the Red Cross to want my bottles, and how intelligent of my "little boy" to arrange the matter so pleasantly!

To do away with the needless accumulations of life, or better still, not to let them accumulate, what a comfort that would be! Letters? The fire as rapidly as possible! No one ought to have a good time reading over old letters—there's always a tinge of sadness about them, and it's morbid to conserve sadness, added to which, in the remote contingency of one's becoming famous, some vandalish relative always publishes the ones that are most sacred.

J—— has the pigeon-hole habit. He hates to see anything sink into the abyss of the waste-basket, but I am training him to throw away something every morning before breakfast. After a while he'll get so that he can dispose of several things at once, and the time may come when I'll have to look over the rubbish to be sure that nothing valuable has gone, because throwing away is just as insidious a habit as any other.

If only one could pile old bills on top of the old letters, what a glorious bonfire that would make! But that will have to wait until the millennium; as things are now, it would mean paying twice for the motor fender of last year, and never feeling sure of your relations with the butcher.

It isn't only things that I am disposing of. I've rid myself of a lot of useless ideas. We don't have to live in any special way. It isn't necessary to have meat twice a day, and there is no law about chicken for Sunday dinner. Butter does not come like the air we breathe. Numerous courses aren't necessary even for guests. New clothes aren't essential unless your old ones are worn out—and so on.

And so I'm stepping forth on a road leading, even the graybeards can't say where, with surprises behind every hedge and round every corner. There hasn't been so thrillingly interesting an age to be alive since that remote time when the Creation was going on. Except for moments of tired nerves, like this, it is very stimulating, and I find myself stepping out much more briskly since I threw my extra wraps and bundles beside the road. Here on my hill-top I have even enjoyed a little of that charm of unencumberedness that all vagabonds know—and later if I come to some steep stretches I shall be more likely to make the top, for I'm resolved to "travel light."

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There is usually one serpent in Eden, if it is only a garter snake. Ours was a frog in the fountain. He had a volume of sound equal to Edouard de Reske in his prime. I set the chauffeur the task of catching him, but after emptying out all the water one little half-inch frog skipped off, and John assured me that he could never be the offender. But he was “Edouard” in spite of appearances, for he returned at dusk and took up the refrain just where he had left off. I decided to hunt him myself. It was like the game of “magic music” that we used to play as children: loud and you are “warm”; soft and you are far away. I never caught him. He was ready to greet the tenants instead of the cosy cricket, and may have been the reason why they suddenly departed after only a three weeks’ stay, but as it was a foggy May, as it sometimes is on this coast, that is an open question. J—— tersely put it, “Frog or fog?”

The smiling Helen smiled more beamingly every day, but the chauffeur hated it. He was a city product and looked as much at home on that hill-top as a dancing-master in a hay-field. He smoked cigarettes and read the sporting page of the paper in the garage, where gasoline rather deadened the country smells of flowers and hay, and tried to forget his degrading surroundings, but he was overjoyed when the day to start for home arrived. I did not share his feelings, and yet I was ready to go. It had been a great success, and the only time I had felt lonely was in a crowded restaurant in San Diego, where J—— and I had had many jolly times in past summers. On the Smiling Hill-Top who could be lonely with the ever-changing sea and sky and sunsets. I dare not describe the picture, as I don’t wish to be put down as mad or a cubist. Scent of the honeysuckle, the flutter of the breeze, the song of pink-breasted linnets and their tiny splashings in the birds’ pool outside my sleeping-porch, the velvet of the sky at night, with its stars and the motor lights on the highway like more stars below—how I love it all! I was taking enough of it home with me, I hoped, to last through some strenuous weeks in Pasadena, until I could come back for the summer, bringing my family.

Much bustling about on the part of the smiling Helen and me, much locking of gates and doors by the bored chauffeur, and we were off for home! After all is said and done, “home is where the heart is,” irrespective of the view.

The first part of the way we made good time, but just out of one of the small seaside towns something vital snapped in the motor’s insides. It happened on a bridge at the foot of a hill, and we were very lucky to escape an accident. I will say for the chauffeur that while, as a farmer, he would never get far, as a driver he knew his business. One slight skid and we stopped short, “never to go again,” like grandfather’s clock. It resulted in our having to be towed backwards to the nearest garage, while the chauffeur jumped on a

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passing motor bound for Pasadena, and was snatched from my sight like Elijah in the chariot—he was off to get a new driving shaft. The smiling Helen followed in a Ford full of old ladies. I elected to travel by train and sat for hours in a small station waiting for the so-called “express.” In a hasty division of the lunch I got all the hard-boiled eggs, and of course one can eat only a limited number of them, though I will say that a few quite deaden one’s appetite.

I had an amazing collection of bags, coats, and packages, and was dreading embarking on the train. However, I have a private motto, “There is a way.” There was. The only occupant of the waiting-room besides myself was a very dapper gentleman of what I should call lively middle age, with very upstanding gray mustaches. I took him to be a marooned motorist, also. He was well-dressed, with the added touch of an orange blossom in his button-hole, and he had a slightly roving eye. His hand-baggage was most “refined.” I had noticed him looking my way at intervals, and wondered if he craved a hard-boiled egg; I could easily have spared him one! While I am certainly not in the habit of seeking conversation with strange gentlemen, there are always exceptions to everything, and I concluded that this was one. I smiled! We chatted on the subject of the flora and fauna of California in a perfectly blameless way till my train whistled, when he said, “I am going to carry those bags for you, if you will allow me!” I thanked him aloud and inwardly remarked, “I have known that for a long time!”

What made it especially pleasant was that I was going north and he was going south. So ended my Adventure—not all Solitude, if you like, but as near it as one can achieve with comfort. The amazing thing about it was how well I got on with myself, for I don’t think I’m particularly easy to live with. I must ask J——. Probably it was the novelty.

[Illustration]

A SABINE FARM

I once remarked that I thought New York City a most friendly and neighborly place, and was greeted with howls of derision. I suppose I said it because that morning a dear old lady in an oculist’s office had patted me, saying, “My dear, it would be a pity to put glasses on you,” and an imposing blonde in a smart Fifth Avenue shop had sold me a hat that I couldn’t afford either to miss or to buy, for half price, because she said I’d talked to her like a human being, the year before—all of which had warmed my heart. I think perhaps my statement was too sweeping. Since we have changed oceans I notice that the atmosphere of the West has altered my old standards somewhat. There is an easy-going fellowship all through every part of life on this side of the Rocky Mountains.

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Take banks, for instance. Can you picture a dignified New York Trust Company with bowls of wild flowers placed about the desks and a general air of hospitality? In one bank I have often had a pleasant half-hour very like an afternoon tea, where all the officers, from the president down, came to shake hands and ask after the children. Of course, that is a rather unusually pleasant and friendly bank, even for California. Always I am carefully, tenderly almost, escorted to my motor. At first this flattered me greatly, till I discovered that there is a law in California that if you slip and hurt yourself on any one's premises, they pay the doctor's bill. Hence the solicitude. I was not to be allowed to strain my ankle, even if I wanted to.

Probably the same geniality existed in the East fifty years ago. I have been told that it did. It is a very delightful stage of civilization where people's shells are still soft, if they have shells at all. There is an accessibility, a breeziness and camaraderie about even the prominent men—the bulwarks of business and public life. We are accused of bragging and “boosting” in the West. I am afraid it is true. They are the least pleasant attributes of adolescence.

Banking isn't the only genial profession. There is real estate. Of course about half the men in California are in real estate for reasons too obvious to mention. Providence was kind in putting us into the hands of an honest man, better still, one with imagination, when we came to look for a winter bungalow. He saw that we had to have something with charm, even if the furniture was scarce, and took as much pains over realizing our dream as if we had been hunting for a palace. It was he who found our “Sabine Farm,” which brought us three of the best gifts of the gods—health, happiness, and a friend. We had almost decided to take a picturesque cot that I named “The Jungle,” from its tangle of trees and flowers, even though the cook could reach her abode only by an outside staircase. The boys had volunteered to hold an umbrella over her during the rainy season, but I wasn't quite satisfied with this arrangement. Just then we saw an enchanting bungalow set in a garden of bamboos, roses and bananas, and looked no further! It belonged to an English woman who raised Toggenburg goats, which made it all the more desirable for us as the goats were to stay at the back of the garden, and provide not only milk but interest for the boys.

J—— dubbed it “El rancho goato” at once. Our friends in the East were delighted with the idea, and many were their gibes. One in particular always added something to the address of his letters for the guide or diversion of the R. F. D. postman: “Route 2, Box so-and-so, you can tell the place by the goats”; or during the spring floods this appeared in one corner of the envelope: “Were the goats above high water?”

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It wasn't just an ordinary farm. There was a certain something—I think the names of the goats had a lot to do with it—Corella, Coila, Babette, Elfa, Viva, Lorine, and so on, or perhaps it was the devotion of their mistress, who expended the love and care of a very large heart on a family that I think appreciated it as far as goats are capable of appreciation. If she was a little late coming home (she had a tiny shack on one corner of the place) they would be waiting at the gate calling plaintively. There is a plaintive tone about everything a goat has to say. In his cot on the porch J—— composed some verses one morning early—I forget them except for two lines:

“The plaintive note of a querulous goat
Over my senses seems to float.”

Of course that was the difficulty—creatures of one kind or another do not lie abed late. Our Sabine Farm was surrounded by others and there was a neighborhood hymn to the dawn that it took us some time to really enjoy—if we ever did. Sopranos—roosters; altos—pigeons, and ducks; tenors—goats; bassos—cows, and one donkey. There was nothing missing to make a full, rich volume of sound. Of course there is no place where it is so difficult to get a long, refreshing night's sleep as the country.

One rarely comes through any new experience with all one's preconceived ideas intact. Our first season on the Sabine Farm shattered a number of mine. I had always supposed that a mocking-bird, like a garden, was “a lovesome thing, God wot.” Romantic—just one step below a nightingale!

There was a thicket of bamboos close to my window, and every night all the young mocking-birds gathered there to try out their voices. It was partly elocutionary and partly vocal, but almost entirely exercises—rarely did they favor me with a real song. This would go on for some time, then just as I dared to hope that lessons were over, another burst of ill-assorted trills and shrills would rouse me to fury. I kept three pairs of boots in a convenient place, and hurled them into the bamboos, paying the boys a small reward for retrieving them each morning. Sometimes, if my aim was good, a kind of wondering silence lasted long enough for me to fall asleep. There is an old song—we all know it—that runs:

“She's sleeping in the valley, *etc.*, *etc.*,
And the mocking-bird is singing where she lies.”

That, of course, would be impossible if the poor little thing hadn't been dead.

By day I really enjoyed them. To sit in the garden, which smelled like a perpetual wedding, reading Lafcadio Hearn and listening to mocking-birds and linnets, would have undermined my New England upbringing very quickly, had I had time to indulge often in such a lotus-eating existence.

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Then there was “Boost.” He was a small bantam rooster, beloved of our landlady, which really proves nothing because she was such a tender-hearted person that she loved every dumb creature that wandered to her door. Had Boost been dumb I might have loved him too. He had a voice like the noise a small boy can make with a tin can and a resined string. He had a malevolent eye and knew that I detested him, so that he took especial pains to crow under my windows, generally about an hour after the mocking-birds stopped. I think living with a lot of big hens and roosters told on his nervous system, and he took it out on me. Great self-restraint did I exercise in not wringing his neck, when help came from an unexpected quarter. Boost had spirit—I grant him that—and one day he evidently forgot that he wasn’t a full-sized bird, and was reprovved by the Sultan of the poultry-yard in such a way that he was found almost dead of his wounds. Dear Miss W——’s heart was quite broken. She fed him brandy and anointed him with healing lotions, but to no avail. He died. I had felt much torn and rather doublefaced in my inquiries for the sufferer, because I was so terribly afraid he might get well, so it was a great relief when he was safely buried in the back lot.

Though I love animals I have had bloodthirsty moments of feeling that the only possible way to enjoy pets was to have them like those wooden Japanese eggs which fit into each other. If you have white mice or a canary, have a cat to contain the canary, and a dog to reckon with the cat. Further up in the scale the matter is more difficult, of course. One of our “best seller” manufacturers, in his early original days, wrote a delightful tale. In it he said: “A Cheetah is a yellow streak full of people’s pet dogs,” so perhaps that is the answer. The ultimate cheetah would, of course, have to be shot and stuffed, as it would hardly be possible to have a wild-cat lounging about the place. I think the idea has possibilities. So many of our plans are determined by pets. “No, we can’t close the house and go motoring for a week, because there is no one with whom to leave the puppies.” “Yes, we rented our house to Mrs. S—— for less than we expected to get for it, because she is so fond of cats and promised to take good care of Pom Pom”—which recalls to my mind a dear little girl who had a white kitten that she was entrusting to a neighbor. The neighbor, a busy person with eight children, received the kitten without demonstration of any kind. Little Lydia looked at her for a few moments and then said, “Mrs. F——, that kitten must be loved.” That is really the trouble, not only must they be loved, but they are loved and then the pull on your heart-strings begins. We have a pair of twin silver-haired Yorkshire terriers, who are an intimate part of our family circle. I sometimes feel like a friend of mine in San Francisco, who has a marvellous Chinese cook, and says she hopes she will die before Li does. I hope “Rags”

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and “Tags” will live as long as I do—and yet they are a perfect pest. If they are outdoors they want to come in, or vice versa. It is practically impossible to sneak off in the motor without their escort and they bark at my best callers. Since they made substantial sums of money begging for the Red Cross, they have added a taste for publicity to their other insistent qualities and come into the drawing-room, and sit up in front of whoever may be calling, with a view to sugar and petting. And the worst of it is I can’t maintain discipline at all. Rags has had to be anointed with a salve compounded of tar and sulphur. It is an indignity and quite crushes his spirit, so that after it has been put on he wishes to sit close to me for comfort. The result is that I become like a winter overcoat just emerging from moth-balls rather than hurt his feelings. Of course it makes some difference whether the pet that is annoying you belongs to you or a neighbor. I doubt whether I could have loved Boost, however, even if I had known him from the shell.

In spite of these various drawbacks we led a most happy life. It was so easy. The bungalow was so attractively furnished; our own oranges and limes grew at the door. There was just room for us with nothing to spare, that had to be kept in order, and our landlady was as different from the cold-hearted ones we had known as the bankers and real-estate men. She seemed to be always trying to think of what we might need, and to provide it. Dear Miss W——, she will never be a good business woman from the world’s point of view; she is too generous and too unselfish! We all loved her. Many were the hours I inveigled her into wasting while we sat on bales of the goats’ hay and discussed life and the affairs of the country—but mostly life with its curious twists and turns—its generousities and its stinginesses. The boys spent their time in the goat-pen making friends of the little kids, whose various adventures added so much interest to the spring, and learning much from Miss W——, whose attitude towards life was so sane and wholesome for them to know.

“Buckaboo,” the only buck on the ranch when we came, was a dashing young creature, prancing about and kicking up his heels for the pure joy of living. Joedy informed J—— that he reminded him of him, “only in a goat way, father”—a tribute to the light-heartedness that California had already brought to at least one member of the family.

If our Sabine Farm’s vocation was goats, its avocation was surely roses. We were literally smothered in them. A Cecil Brunner with its perfect little buds, so heavily perfumed, covered one corner of the house. The Lady Bankshire, with its delicate yellow blossoms, roofed our porch, and the glorious Gold of Ophir, so thorny and with little fragrance, concealed our laundry from the road. There was a garden of bush roses of all kinds to cut for the house, and the crowning glory of all was a hedge of “Tausend Schoen,” growing luxuriantly, and a blaze of bloom in May. After years of illness and worry, it was good to feel life coming back joyously in a kind of haven—or heaven—of roses.

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[Illustration]

THE LAND OF WHYNOT

When Alice stepped through the looking-glass and ran out into that most alluring garden, she must have felt much as I did long ago when I stepped off the Santa Fe Limited and found myself in Southern California for the first time! It isn't just the palm trees and the sunshine, though they are part of the charm. It isn't even the mocking-birds and the orange blossoms altogether. It is something you can't really put your finger on, that lures you from your old habits and associations. At first you are simply glad that you have left the cold and snow behind you, and that the earth is so sweet with flowers, and then you begin to find a new world of possibilities. There are all sorts of little garden gates with golden keys on glass tables, and you set about growing shorter or taller, as the case may be, to make yourself a proper height to reach the key and slip through the door. You don't even need to hurry, if you are firm about not grasping the hand of any Red Queen that may come your way, and yet it isn't a land of manana; it's a land of "Why Not?" The magic has nothing to do with one's age; I feel it now even more than I did twenty years ago, and Grandmother felt it at eighty just as I did at eighteen. Ulysses could have himself lashed to the mast and snap his fingers at the Sirens, but I know of no protection against the Southwest except to somehow close the shutters of your imagination. However, let me not be a Calvinist; because it is enchanting, why should I fear it?

I shall never forget my first experience of the spell. I was invited by my Grandmother to go to California for several months. There were four of us, and we were all tired, for one reason or another; Grandmother because she was eighty, and it's a strenuous matter to live eighty years; my Aunt because she had been desperately ill; C. C. because she had nursed my Aunt back to comparative health, and I because I had been a debutante that winter, and every one knows that that is the hardest work of all. We went as far south as the train would take us, and settled ourselves at Coronado to bask in the sunshine until the tiredness was gone and we became a band of explorers, with the world before us! A pair of buggies drawn by nags of unblemished reputation for sagacity and decorum, driven by C. C. and me, carried us over many a picturesque and rough road. It invariably took us all day to get anywhere and back, irrespective of what the distance was supposed to be. The outfit was so old that I often had to draw up my steed and mend the harness with a safety-pin. Trailing Ramona was our favorite game. Fortunately for that part of the country, she and Alessandro managed to be born, or sleep, or marry, or die in pretty nearly every little settlement, ranch, or mission in San Diego County, and it's a great boon to the country. Now, of course, with a motor you can cover the ground in a day, but then, with a guaranteed horse and a safety-pinned harness, Ramona was good for weeks.

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We usually took a picnic lunch, and it was on one of these trips that I first saw the Smiling Hill-Top and knew it not for my later love. How often that happens! Jogging home, with the reins slack on the placid mare's back, Grandmother liked me to sing "Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms" and "Araby's Daughter," showing that she was a good deal under the spell of the palm trees and the sunset, for I have the voice of a lost kitten. It also shows the perfect self-control of the horse, for no accidents occurred.

It was a very different Coronado from the present day, with its motors on earth and water, and in air. I liked ours better and hated to leave it, but after six weeks of its glory of sunshine I was deputed to go north to Pasadena to rent a bungalow for two months. It was my first attempt of the kind, and aided by a cousin into whose care I had been confided, I succeeded in reducing the rent twenty-five dollars a month for a pretty cottage smothered in roses and heliotropes and well supplied with orange and lemon trees. I was rather pleased with myself as a business woman. Not so Grandmother. She was thoroughly indignant and announced her firm intention of paying the original rent asked, a phenomenon that so surprised our landlord, when I told him, that he insisted on scrubbing the kitchen floor personally, the day of her arrival. Thus did Raleigh lay down his cloak for the Queen!

Everything was lovely. It only rained once that spring—the morning after we had gone up Mount Lowe to see the sun rise, to be sure, but it would be a carping creature who would complain when only one expedition had been dampened. For twenty years I cherished the illusion that this was a land of endless sunshine. I don't know where I thought the moisture came from that produces the almost tropical luxuriance of the gardens and the groves. I know better now and, strange to say, I have come to love a rain in its proper time and place, if it isn't too boisterous. We discovered a veteran of the Civil War turned liveryman, who for a paltry consideration in cash was ours every afternoon, and showed us something new each day, from racing horses on the Lucky Baldwin Ranch to the shadow of a spread eagle on a rock. Grandmother's favorite excursion was to a picturesque winery set in vineyards and shaded by eucalyptus trees. She was what I should call a wine-jelly, plum-pudding prohibitionist, and she included tastes of port and fruit cordials as part of the sight-seeing to be done. You can be pretty at eighty, which is consoling to know. Grandmother, with a little curl over each ear and the pink born of these "tastes" proved it, and she wouldn't let us tease her about it either. It was an easy life, and so fascinating that I even said to myself, "Why not learn to play the guitar?" for nothing seemed impossible. It shows how thoroughly drugged I was by this time, for my Creator wholly omitted to supply me with a musical ear. I always had to have my instrument tuned by the young man next door, but I learned to play "My Old Kentucky Home" so that every one recognized it. Now, if years had not taught me some fundamental facts about my limitations, I should probably render twilight hideous with a ukelele, for a ukelele goes a guitar one better, and Aloha oee wailed languorously on that instrument would make even a Quaker relax.

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It was in the late spring that the Great Idea came to Auntie and me. I don't know which of us was really responsible for it, and there was a time when neither of us would own it. A course in small "Why Nots?" made it come quite naturally at the last. Why shouldn't we drive into the Yosemite Valley before we went home? By the end of May it would be at its loveliest, with the melted snows from the mountains filling its streams and making a rushing, spraying glory of its falls. It did seem a pity to be so near one of the loveliest places on earth and to miss seeing it. Auntie and I discussed the matter dispassionately under a palm tree in the back yard. We honestly concluded that it wouldn't hurt Grandmother a bit, that it might even do her good, so we began to put out a few conversational feelers, and the next thing we knew she was claiming the idea as her own and inviting us to accompany her! In her early married life she was once heard to say to Grandfather, "Edwin, I have made up our minds." So you can see that Auntie and I were as clay in her hands! Where we made our great mistake was in writing to the rest of the family about our plans until after we had started. They became quite abusive in their excitement. Were we crazy? Had we forgotten Grandmother's age? What was C. C., a trained nurse, about, to let a little delicate old lady take such a trip? They were much shocked. We had to admit her age, but Auntie and I weren't so sure about her delicacy, and anyway her mind was made up, so we burned their telegrams and packed the bags.

It happened twenty years ago, but I can see her sitting in a rocking-chair on the piazza of Leidig's Hotel in Raymond, surrounded by miners, all courteously editing their conversation and chewing tobacco as placidly as a herd of cows, while Grandmother, the only person whose feet were not elevated to the railing, rocked gently and smiled. Of course we planned to make the trip as easy as possible, and had engaged a spring wagon so that we could take more time than the stage, which naturally had to live up to a Bret Harte standard. We made an early start from Raymond after a rather troubled night at Leidig's Hotel. You hear strange sounds in a mining camp after dark. Every one in town saw us off, as Grandmother was already popular, and looked on as rather a sporting character. Al Stevens, who drove us, was a bitter disappointment to me, not looking in the least romantic or like the hero of a Western story. I shan't even describe him, except to say that he smoked most evil-smelling cigars, the bouquet of which blew back into our faces and spoiled the pure mountain air, but we didn't dare say a word, for fear that he might lash his horses round some hair-pin curve and scare us to death, even if we didn't actually go over the edge. I don't think he would really have rushed to extremes, for he turned out to be distinctly amiable, and our picnic lunches, eaten near some mountain spring, were partaken of most sociably and Al Stevens didn't always smoke. How good everything tasted! I don't believe I have ever really enjoyed apple pie with a fork as I enjoyed it sitting on a log with a generous wedge in one hand and a hearty morsel of mouse-trap cheese in the other.

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We spent three days driving into the valley, staying at delightful inns over night, and stopping when we pleased, to pick flowers, for wonderful ones grow beside the road; Mariposa tulips with their spotted butterfly wings, fairy lanterns, all the shades of blue lupin, and on our detour to see the big trees I found a snow-plant, which looks like a blossom carved out of watermelon—pink and luscious! It is hard to realize how big the big trees are! Like St. Peter's, they are so wonderfully proportioned you can't appreciate their height, but I do know that they would be just a little more than my tree-climbing sons would care to tackle. Stevens was a good driver and approved of our appreciation of "his" scenery, and I think he was proud of Grandmother, who really stood the trip wonderfully well. At last came the great moment when a bend in the road would disclose the valley with its silver peaks, its golden-brown river, and its rainbow-spanned falls. We had never suspected it, but Stevens was an epicure in beauty. He insisted on our closing our eyes till we came to just the spot where the view was most perfect, and then he drew in his horses, gave the word, and we looked on a valley as lovely as a dream. I am glad that we saw it as we did, after a long prelude of shaded roads and sentinel trees. Nowadays you rush to it madly by train and motor. Then it was a dear secret hidden away in the heart of the forest.

We spent five days at the hotel by the Merced River, feasting on beauty and mountain trout, and lulled by the murmur of that gentle stream. Moonlight illumined the whiteness of the Yosemite Falls in full view of the hotel verandah as it makes the double leap down a dark gorge. We could see a great deal with very little effort, but after a day or two I began to look longingly upward toward the mountain trails. At last a chance came, and "Why Not" led me to embrace it. A wholesale milliner from Los Angeles invited me to join his party. We had seen him at various places along our way, so that it was not entirely out of a clear sky. He was wall-eyed—if that is the opposite of cross-eyed—which gave him so decidedly rakish a look that it was some time before I could persuade my conservative relatives that it would be safe for me to accept the invitation, but as the party numbered ten, mostly female, they finally gave me their blessing. Being the last comer, and the mules being all occupied, I had to take a horse, which I was sorry for, as they aren't supposed to be quite as sure-footed on the trail. The party all urged me to be cautious, with such emphasis that I began to wonder if I had been wise to come, when Charley, our guide, told me not to pay any attention to them, that I had the best mount of the whole train. Charley, by the way, was all that Al Stevens was not, and added the note of picturesqueness and romance which my soul had been craving. He was young, blond, and dressed for the part, and would have entranced

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a moving-picture company! The wholesale milliner called me “Miss Black Eyes,” and was so genial in manner that I joined Charley at the end of the parade and heard stories of his life which may or may not have been true. Every now and then Jesse James, an especially independent mule, would pause, and with deliberation and vigor kick at an inaccessible fly on the hinder parts of his person, while his rider shrieked loudly for help, and the procession halted till calm was restored. At last we reached the end of the trail. Somewhere I have a snap-shot of myself standing on Glacier Point, that rock that juts out over the valley, clinging to Charley’s hand, for I found that standing there with the snow falling, looking down thousands of feet, made me crave a hand to keep the snowflakes from drawing me down. The wholesale milliner and the rest considered me a reckless soul, and many were the falsetto shrieks they emitted if I went within ten feet of the edge of the precipice. They did not realize the insurance and assurance of Charley’s hand.

Of course I endured the anguish of a first horseback ride for the next day or two, but it was worth it, and by the time we were ready to start for home I could sit down quite comfortably. The trip was accomplished without a jolt or jog sufficient to disarrange Grandmother’s curls. Aunty and I were always so thankful that we defied the family and let her have her last adventure, for soon afterward her mind began to grow dim. For myself, I treasure the memory both for her sake, and because I can’t climb trails myself any more, and that is something I didn’t miss. Was it Schopenhauer or George Ade who said, “What you’ve had you’ve got”?

Twenty years later another party of four, consisting of a husband and two boys, were led by a lady Moses into the promised land, and were met by an old friend, the Civil War veteran, with a motor instead of his pair of black horses! He was too old to drive, but he had come to welcome me back. Billie and Joedy were thrilled. They adored the tales of his twelve battles and the hole in his knee, even more than their mother had before them, being younger and boys. It was as lovely a land as I had remembered it, only, of course, there were changes. The motor showed that. I should not say that the tempo of life had been quickened so much as that its radius had been widened, or that the focus was different; the old spell was the same. To reconcile the past and the present, I have thought of a beautiful compromise. Why not a motor van? The family jeered at me when I first suggested that we spend J——’s next vacation meandering up the coast in one. Of course, the boys adored the idea at first, but sober second thoughts for mother made them pause.

Billie: “But, Muvs, you’d hate it, you couldn’t have a box spring!”

Joedy: “And you don’t like to wash dishes.”

Quite true. I had thought of all that myself. I don't like to wash dishes, but we use far more than we really need to use, and anyway I had rather decided that I wouldn't wash them. As to the bed-spring, I could have an air mattress, for while it's a little like sleeping on a captive balloon, it doesn't irritate your bones like a camp cot.

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The family distrust of me, as a vagabond, dates from a camping trip last August to celebrate Billie's twelfth birthday. It lasted only one night, so "trip" is a large word to apply to it, but I will say that for one night it had all the time there could be squeezed into it. We selected a site on the beach almost within hallooing distance of the Smiling Hill-Top, borrowed a tent and made camp. I loved the fire and frying the bacon and the beat of the waves, but I did not like the smell of the tent. It was stuffy. I had been generously given that shelter for my own, while the male members of the party slept by a log (not like one, J—— confessed to me) under a tarpaulin—I mean "tarp"—with stars above them except when obscured by fog. My cot was short and low and I am not, so that I spent the night tucking in the blankets. The puppies enjoyed it all thoroughly. Though they must have been surprised by the sudden democratic intimacy of the situation, they are opportunists and curled themselves in, on, and about my softer portions, so that I had to push them out every time I wanted to turn over, which was frequently. I urged them to join the rest of the party under the "tarp," but they were firm, as they weren't minding the hardness of the cot, and they don't care especially about ventilation. I greeted the dawn with heartfelt thanksgiving, and yet I'm as keen about my vacation idea as ever. I have simply learned what to do and what not to do, and it won't matter to me in the least whether my ways are those of a tenderfoot or not. Why not be comfortable physically as well as spiritually? Think of the independence of it! To be able to sit at the feet of any view that you fancy till you are ready to move on! Doesn't that amount to "free will"? Yes, I am resolved to try it out and Billie says if I make up my mind to something I generally get my way (being descended from Grandmother probably accounts for it), so if you should see a rather fat, lazy green van with "Why not?" painted over the back door, you may know that two grown vagabonds, two young vagabonds, and two vagabond pups, are on the trail following the gypsy patteran.

[Illustration]

WHERE THE TRADE WIND BLOWS

Mr. Jones meets his friend, Mr. Brown:

"Surprised to see that your house is for sale, Brown."

"Oh—er—yes" replies Brown; "that is, I don't know. I keep that sign up on the lawn." Then with a burst of confidence: "Mrs. Brown meets so many nice people that way, don't you know!"

So it is that we have a reputation for being willing to sell anything in California, even our souls. Of course, it isn't at all necessary to have a sign displaying "For Sale" to have constant inquiries as to the price of your place. After the days of "The Sabine Farm"

were only a lovely memory, we bought a bungalow in Pasadena, or, rather, we are buying it on the instalment plan.

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It is really an adorable little place with a very flowery garden, surrounded by arbors covered with roses, wistaria, and jasmine (I think I should say we have been very fortunate in our dwelling-places since we emigrated), and passers-by usually stop and comment favorably. Young men bring their girls and show them the sort of little place they'd like to own, and often they ring the door-bell for further inquiries. Driven to bay, I have put a price of half a million on our tiny estate. When I mention this, the investigators usually retreat hastily, looking anxiously over their shoulders to see if my keeper is anywhere in sight. As to the real-estate men, they are more in number than the sands of the sea, and the competition is razor-edged. If you have the dimmest idea of ever buying a lot or house, or if you are comfortably without principle, you won't need to keep a motor at all. The real-estate men will see that you get lots of fresh air, and they are most obliging about letting you do your marketing on the way home. We have an especial friend in the business. He never loses hope, or his temper. It was he that originally found us "The Sabine Farm." He let us live there in peace till we were rested, for which we are eternally grateful, and then he began to throw out unsettling remarks. The boys ought to have a place to call home where they could grow up with associations. Wasn't it foolish to pay rent when we might be applying that money toward the purchase of a house? Of course it told on us in time and we began to look about. "The Sabine Farm" would not do, as it was too far from J——'s business, and the lotus-flower existence of our first two years was ours no longer. Every lot we looked at had irresistible attractions, and insurmountable objections. At last, however, we settled on a piece of land looking toward the mountains, with orange trees on either hand, paid a part of the price, and supposed it was ours for better or worse. Just then the war darkened and we felt panicky, but heaven helped us, for there was a flaw in the title, and our money came trotting back to us, wagging its tail. It was after this that we stumbled on the arbored bungalow, and bought it in fifteen minutes. I asked Mr. W—— if he liked bass fishing, and whether he'd ever found one gamier to land than our family. He will probably let us live quietly for a little while, and then he will undoubtedly tell us that this place is too small for us. I know him!

In case of death or bankruptcy the situation is much more intense. Every mouse hole has its alert whiskered watcher, and after a delay of a few days for decency, such pressure is brought to bear that surviving relatives rarely have the courage to stand pat. Probably a change of surroundings *is* good for them.

If people can't be induced to sell, often they will rent. There is an eccentric old woman in town who owns a most lovely lot, beautifully planted, that is the hope and snare of every real-estate man, but, though poor, she will not part with it. She has a house, however, that she rents in the season. One day some Eastern people were looking at it, and timidly said that one bath-room seemed rather scant for so large a house.

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"Oh, do you think so?" said Mrs. Riddle. "It is enough for us. Mr. Riddle and I aren't what you'd call bathers. In fact, Mr. Riddle doesn't bathe at all; I sponge!"

Real estate isn't the only interest of the West. We all read the advertising page of the local paper just as eagerly as we do the foreign news. If I feel at all lonely or bored I generally advertise for something. Once I wanted a high-school boy to drive the motor three afternoons a week. The paper was still moist from the press when my applicants began to telephone. I took their names and gave them appointments at ten-minute intervals all the following morning, only plugging the telephone when J—— and I felt we must have some sleep. In the morning, forgetting the little wad of paper we had placed in the bell, I took down the receiver to call the market, when a tired voice started as if I had pressed a button:

"I saw your 'ad' in the paper last night, *etc.*" When they arrived they ranged in age from sixteen to sixty. The latter was a retired clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Bain, who said he drove for his wife, but (here he fitted his finger-tips together, and worked them back and forth in a manner that was a blend of jauntiness and cordiality) he thought he could fit us both in!

I blush to state that I selected a younger chauffeur! Emboldened by the success of my first advertising venture, I decided to try again. This time I wished to sell our superfluous old furniture. The war has made me dislike anything about the place that isn't really in use. Having lived some years in Pennsylvania, and having amassed quite a collection of antique mahogany furniture, I felt justified in thinning out a few tables and odd pieces that our desirable bungalow is too small to hold. The results weren't as pronounced as before, but they quite repaid me. I sold my best table to a general, which gave me a lot of confidence, but my greatest triumph was a hat-rack. It was a barren, gaunt-looking affair, like a leafless tree in winter, but it was mahogany, and it was old. Two ladies who were excitedly buying tables spied it, and exclaimed in rapture. I rose to the occasion:

"That is the most unusual piece I have," I unblushingly gushed. "It is solid mahogany and very old. I never saw another like it. Yes, I would sell it for twenty-five dollars."

They both wanted it—I was almost afraid it might make feeling between them, till I soothed the loser by selling her an old brass tea-kettle that I had picked up in a curiosity shop in Oxford years ago. It was so old that it had a hole in it, which seemed to clinch the matter. I sent for the packer the moment they were out of the house, and had the things boxed and away before they could change their minds. When I showed J—— the money, he said I was wasting my time writing, that he was sure I had a larger destiny.

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Speaking of having furniture boxed carries me back to the time when we lived in Pennsylvania and I bought many things of a pleasant old rascal who just managed to keep out of jail. One time he showed me a lovely old table of that ruddy glowing mahogany that adds so much to a room. I said I would take it, but told him not to send it home till afternoon. I wanted time to break it to J—— after a good luncheon. J—— was very amiable and approving, and urged me to have it sent up, so I went down to the shop to see about it. To my dismay I found it neatly crated and just being loaded into a wagon. I called frantically to my rascally friend, who tried to slip out of the back door unobserved, but in vain. I fixed him with an accusing eye.

“What are you doing with my table?” I demanded.

“Did you really want it?” he queried.

“Of course I want it. Didn’t I say I’d take it?” I was annoyed.

“Oh, well,” to his men, “take it off, boys.” “You see,” turning to me, “a man from Seattle was in after you left, and he said he’d take that round table over there if I’d sell him this one too. I showed him another one every bit as good as this, but he wouldn’t look at it; still, I guess I’ll box it up in that crate with his round one, and when it gets to Seattle I reckon he won’t want to send it way back. It’s a long way to Seattle!”

“That’s your business, not mine,” I remarked coldly, though I felt an unholy desire to laugh. “Just send mine home before any one else tempts you.”

I still sleep in a Hepplewhite four-poster that he wheedled out of an old Pennsylvania Dutch woman for a mere song. The posts at the head were sawed off so that the bed could stand in a room with a sloping ceiling, but, fortunately, the thrifty owner had saved the pieces instead of using them for firewood, so I have had them neatly stuck on again.

I think perhaps a subconscious recollection of his methods was what made me so successful with the hat-rack.

War work has brought out much latent ability of this kind. Lilies of the field, who had never needed to toil or spin for themselves, were glad to do so for the Red Cross. In Pasadena we had a small Spanish street (inside a building), with tiny shops on either side, where you could buy anything from an oil painting to a summer hat. In front was a gay little plaza with vines and a fountain, where lunch and tea were served by the prettiest girls in town in bewitching frilled caps with long black streamers and sheer lawn aprons over blue and green frocks. The Tired Business Men declined to lunch anywhere else, and there was a moment when we feared it might have to be given up, as there was some feeling in town on account of the vacant stools at their old-time counters! It all went to prove that you don’t need to be brought up in “trade” to be a great success at it.

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No one has stuck to his or her usual role in the past two years, which has added a piquancy to life. We have all wanted to do our bit and the “Why not?” that I feel so strongly in California has spread over the whole country. In order to make the most efficient use of the newly discovered talents on every side, the Red Cross sent out cards with blanks to be filled by all those ready to work, asking what they felt themselves fitted to do, when could they work, and how long. One card read “willing but nervous, might possibly pray.”

Our Red Cross Street brought in many people full of enthusiasm and energy, who might never have rolled a bandage. I shan’t soon forget the strenuous days of its opening. J—— and another diplomat, who also has a talent for pouring oil on troubled waters, were in charge of the financial part of the enterprise, and theirs was the task of seeing that none of the chapter funds were used, so that no possible criticism could arise. A pretty young actress offered to give a premiere of a comedy which she was about to take on the road, for the benefit of the street, and every one was delighted until they saw a rehearsal. It was one of those estranged-husband-one-cocktail-too-many farces, full of innuendo and profanity. J—— and his partner were much upset, but it was too late to withdraw. The company, in deference to the Red Cross, agreed to leave out everything but the plain damns. Even then it wasn’t what they would have chosen, and two very depressed “angels” met in the hall of the High School Auditorium, on the night of the performance. Nothing had gone right. The tickets were late coming from the printer, the advertising man had had tonsillitis, every one was “fed up” with Red Cross entertainments, and it was pouring in torrents. There was a sprinkling of gallant souls on the first floor of the big hall, and that was all. The fact that they wouldn’t make much money wasn’t what was agitating the “angels” nearly as much as the wrath of the pink-and-white lady about to appear. Then came the inspiration. I wish I could say it was J——’s idea, but it was Mr. M——’s. A night school of several hundred is in session in that building every evening, and a cordial invitation to see a play free brought the whole four hundred in a body to fill the auditorium, if not completely, at least creditably. They loved it and were loud in their applause. The “damns” didn’t bother them a bit. They encored the lady, which, combined with a mammoth bouquet, provided by the “management,” gave the whole thing quite a triumphant air. When we all went behind the scenes after the play, the atmosphere was really balmy. The lady expressed herself as greatly pleased and gratified by so large and enthusiastic an audience. (“On such a bad night, too!”) I retired behind a bit of scenery and pinched myself till I felt less hilarious. One thing I know, and that is that if J—— should ever change his business it won’t be to go into any theatrical enterprise. I don’t think even the “movies” could lure him, and yet she was a very pretty actress!

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It is a far cry from blonde stars to funerals, but J—— feels no change of subject, however abrupt, is out of place when talking of his “first night,” so I would like to say a few words about that branch of California business. In the first place, no one ever dies out here until they are over eighty, unless they are run over or meet with some other accident. J—— says that old ladies in the seventies, driving electrics, are the worst menace to life that we have. When our four-score years and ten have been lived—probably a few extra for good measure—an end must come, but a California funeral is so different! A Los Angeles paper advertises “Perfect Funerals at Trust Prices.” We often meet them bowling gayly along the boulevards, the motor hearse maintaining a lively pace, which the mourners are expected to follow. The nearest J—— ever came to an accident was suddenly meeting one on the wrong side of the road, and the funeral chauffeur’s language was not any more scriptural than J——’s. As we were nowhere near eighty, we felt we had a lot of life still coming to us and gave grateful thanks for our escape.

Life is a good thing. I maintain it in the face of pessimists, but it is a particularly good thing in California, with its sunshine and its possibilities. I shan’t go on because I believe I have said something of this same sort before. It makes you ready for the next thing, whatever that may be, and you feel pretty sure that it will be interesting. It’s a kind of perpetual “night before Christmas” feeling. Some time ago when I picked up my evening paper my eye fell on this advertisement:

“Wanted: A third partner in a well-established trading business in the South Seas. Schooner now fitting out in San Francisco to visit the Islands for cargo of copra, pearls, sandalwood, spices, etc. Woman of forty or over would be considered for clerical side of enterprise, with headquarters on one of the islands. This is a strictly business proposition—no one with sentiment need apply.”

When I read it first I couldn’t believe it. I rubbed my eyes and read it again. There it was next to the Belgian hares, the bargains in orange groves and the rebuilt automobiles. It was fairly reeking with romance. I felt like finding an understudy for my job at home, boarding the schooner and sailing blithely out of the Golden Gate. The South Seas is the next stop beyond Southern California. I think I could keep their old books, though I never took any prizes in arithmetic at school. How amusing it would be to enter in my ledger instead of “two dozen eggs” and “three pounds of butter,” “two dozen pearls at so much a dozen” (or would they be entered by ounces?) and “fifty pounds of sandalwood,” or should I reckon that by cords? I could find out later. I would wear my large tortoise-shell spectacles (possibly blinders in addition), and I should attend strictly to business for a while, but when a full moon rose

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over a South Sea lagoon, and the palm trees rustled and the phosphorescence broke in silver on the bow of the pearl schooner, where she rode at anchor in our little bay, could I keep my contract and avoid sentiment? How ridiculous to suppose that stipulating that the lady should be forty or over would make any difference! What is forty? If they had said that she must be a cross-eyed spinster with a hare-lip, it would have been more to the point. I'm not a spinster or cross-eyed, but why go on? I don't intend to commit myself about the age limit. I don't have to, because I am not going to apply for the position, after all. I have a South Sea temperament but as it is securely yoked to a New England upbringing, the trade wind will only blow the sails of my imagination to that sandalwood port.

[Illustration]

SUNKIST

We saw a most amusing farce some time ago which contained much interesting information concerning the worth of advertising. I forget the fabulous figure at which "The Gold Dust Twins" trade-mark is valued, but I know that it easily puts them into Charley Chaplin's class. I am sure that "Sunkist" cannot be far behind the "Twins," for no single word could possibly suggest a more luscious, delectable, and desirable fruit than that. It would even take the curse off being a lemon to be a "Sunkist" lemon. It contains no hint of the perilous early life of an orange. Truly that life is more chancey than an aviator's. They say that in the good old days there were no frosts, but that irrigation is gradually changing the climate of Southern California. We would not dare to express an opinion on this much discussed point, as we have never gone to any new place where the climate has been able to stand the shock. It is always an unusual season. I do know, however, that bringing up a crop of oranges is as anxious an undertaking as "raising" a family. Little black smudge pots stand in rows in the groves, ready to be lighted at the first hint of frost. The admonition of the hymn applies to fruit growers as well as to foolish virgins:

"See that your lamps are burning,
Your vessels filled with oil."

On sharp mornings the valleys are full of a gray haze still lingering protectingly over the ranches. Then there are blights. I don't pretend to know all the ills the orange is heir to. Sometimes it grows too fat and juicy and cracks its skin, and sometimes it is attacked by scale. Every tree has to be swathed in a voluminous sheet and fumigated once a year at great expense. After living out here some time, I began to understand why even in the heart of the orange country we sometimes pay fifty cents a dozen for the large fruit. There is a way, however, of getting around the high cost of living in this

particular—you can go to a packing house and buy for thirty-five cents an entire box of what are called culls—oranges too large or too small for shipping, or with some slight imperfection that would not stand transportation, but are as good for most purposes as the “Sunkist” themselves.

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In California, Orange Day is next in importance to Washington's Birthday and the Fourth of July. I shall never forget our first experience of its charms. We were motoring, taking a last jaunt in an old machine which we had just sold for more than we ever had expected to get for it. It was a reckless thing to do, for we had no spare tire and it is very like speculating in oil stocks to start for a run of any length under those circumstances. It worked out about as it would have done if we had been trifling with the stock market. A rear tire blew out, and we were put under the disagreeable necessity of giving our purchaser more nearly his money's worth. This was a poor start for a holiday, but being near a delightful inn, we crept slowly to town on our rim and found a fete awaiting us. We also found friends from the East who asked us all to lunch, thereby, as one member of the party put it in Pollyanna's true spirit, much decreasing the price of the new tire. The inn is built in Spanish style and we lunched in a courtyard full of gaudy parrots, singing birds in wicker cages and singing señoritas as gay as the parrots, on balconies above us. The entire menu was orange, or at least colored orange. It was really charming, and our spirits rose to almost a champagne pitch, though orange juice—diluted at that—was the only beverage served. (I believe that there is a Raisin Day, also, but on account of its horrid association with rice and bread puddings we have let that slip by unnoticed.)

Our California color scheme is the very latest thing in decorative art. There is nothing shrinking about us, for we come boldly forth in orange and yellows in true cigar-ribbon style—even our motor licenses of last year had poppies on them. Speaking of poppies, I heard the other day of a lady who voiced her opinion in all seriousness in the paper, that Mr. Hoover should have California poppy seeds sent to him for distribution among the Belgians to sow over the ruins of their country. Of course there is something in the power of suggestion, and I suppose it would brighten up the landscape. Joedy is strong on the color idea. We had a neighbor who had a terrible attack of jaundice, which turned her the color of a daffodil. I was saying what a pity it was, then Joedy observed: "Well, Muvs, I think she makes a nice bright spot of color!"

There is a road leading toward the San Fernando Valley, with fruit stalls on both sides, very gay with oranges, grape-fruit, and lemons. One particularly alluring stand is presided over by a colored mammy in bandana shades, turban and all.

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All this profusion makes one feel that it is no trick to get a living out of this very impulsive soil, but before buying a plot of one's own, it is wise to see the seasons through. California is a very unexpected country. You see a snug little ranch, good soil, near a railroad, just what you were looking for, but three months of the year it may be under water. After the spring rains we once went for a change of air to one of the beaches, which we particularly disliked, because it was the only place that we could get to, bridges being out in all directions. For the same reason it was so packed with other visitors, maybe as unwilling as we, that we had a choice of sleeping in the park or taking a small apartment belonging to a Papa and Mama Dane. It was full of green plush and calla lilies, but we chose it in preference to the green grass and calla lilies of the park. We passed an uneasy and foggy week there. I slept in a bed which disappeared into a bureau and J—— on a lounge that curled up like a jelly roll by day. Mama Dane gave us breakfast in the family sitting-room where a placard hung, saying, "God hears all that you say." J—— and I took no chances, and ate in silence. Anyway, the eggs were fresh. We explored the country as well as we could in the fog, and found quite a large part of it well under water. On one ranch we met a morose gentleman in hip boots, wading about his property, which looked like a pretty lake with an R. F. D. box sticking up here and there like a float on a fishing line, while a gay party of boys and girls were rowing through an avenue of pepper trees in an old boat. The gentleman in the hip boots had bought his place in summer! J—— and I decided then and there that if we ever bought any property in California, it would be in the midst of the spring rains, but we know now that even that wouldn't be safe—another element has to be reckoned with besides water—fire.

Of course Rain in California is spelled with a capital R. Noah spelled it that way, but we didn't before we came West. It swells the streams, which in summer are nothing but trickles, to rushing torrents in no time. Bridges snap like twigs, dams burst, telegraph lines collapse; rivers even change their courses entirely, if they feel like it, so that it would really be a good idea to build extra bridges wherever it seemed that a temperamental river might decide to go. I have heard of a farmer who wrote to one of the railroads, saying, "Will you please come and take your bridge away from my bean-field? I want to begin ploughing."

This adds natural hazards to the real-estate game. There are others—Fire, as I said a moment ago. I have a very profound respect for the elements since we have come West to live. A forest fire is even more terrifying than a flood, and in spite of the eagle eyes of the foresters many are the lovely green slopes burned over each year. I have seen a brush fire marching over a hill across the canyon from us, like an army with banners—flying our colors of orange and yellow—driving terrified rabbits and snakes ahead of it, and fought with the fervor of Crusaders by the property owners in its path.

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The very impulsiveness of the climate seems to give the most wonderful results in the way of vegetables and fruit. Around Pasadena there are acres and acres of truck gardens, developed with Japanese efficiency. I love al fresco marketing. If I can find time once a week to motor up the valley and fill the machine with beautiful, crisp, fresh green things of all kinds, it makes housekeeping a pleasure. The little Japanese women are so smiling and pleasant, with their “Good-by, come gen,” the melons are so luscious, the eternal strawberry so ripe and red, the orange blossom honey so delectable, and everything is so cheap compared to what we had been used to in the East! I think that in San Diego one can live better on a small income than anywhere in the country. Once some intimate friends of ours gave us a dinner there in January that could not have been surpassed in New York. The menu included all the delicacies in season and out of season, fresh mushrooms, alligator pears and pheasants. J—— and I looked at one another in mingled enjoyment and dismay that so much was being done for us. Finally our host could not help telling us how much for each person this wonderful meal was costing, including some very fetching drinks called “pink skirts.” You wouldn’t believe me if I told how little!

One more delicacy of which we make rather a specialty: I should call it a climate sandwich. If you live in the invigorating air of the foothills, to motor to the sea, a run of some thirty miles from where we live in winter, spend several hours on the sand, and before dark turn “Home to Our Mountains” gives a mountain air sandwich with sea-breeze filling—a singularly refreshing and satisfying dainty.

Perhaps my enthusiasm for California sounds a little like cupboard love. There is a certain type of magazine which publishes the most alluring pictures of food, salads and desserts, even a table with the implements laid out ready for canning peaches, that holds a fatal fascination for me. I have even noticed J—— looking at one with interest. When my father comes out to visit us every spring, the truck gardens, the packing houses, and the cost of living here, I think, affect him in much the same way that those magazines do me, and I wonder if every one, except a dyspeptic, doesn’t secretly like to hear and see these very things! Could it be the reason people used to paint so much still life?—baskets of fruit, a hunter’s game-bag, a divided melon, *etc.* I frankly own that they would thrill me more if I knew their market price, so that I might be imagining what delightful meals I could offer my family without straining the household purse, which is my excuse for the intimate details concerning food and prices which I have given.

Surely human beings ought to respond as the fruits do to this climate, in spirit as well as in body, and become a very mellow, amiable, sweet-tempered lot of people, and I think they do. Even the “culls” are almost as good as the rest, though they won’t bear transportation. It is the land of the second chance, of dreams come true, of freshness and opportunity, of the wideness of out-of-doors—“Sunkist!”

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THE END