

AN OLD-FASHIONED NEIGHBOR.

It's oh! for an old-fashioned neighbor, like the one I remember of yore, who always neat calico aprons and gowns except on the Sabbath day wore, and who in my care-laden hours, with a sunbonnet perched on her head, ran in bringing bowls of nice jelly or jam, or loaves of her freshly-baked bread, and then, without asking me whether I needed her help, fairly flew to do in the kindest and quietest way, whatever she saw was to do.

Nowadays though a friend may assure me that over my burdens she grieves, she really can't aid me for fear of mishap to her faces or very big sleeves.

And as for the clubs women govern, why, they are but schools for the arts, where minds are improved in an elegant way.

But no time is devoted to hearts, or else they are pledged to the seeking of those whom most people condemn as lost beyond hope—so it's plain to be seen.

There's no chance of assistance from them.

And it's oh! for an old-fashioned neighbor, when my sky with dark clouds is over-spread.

To run in neatly dressed in a calico gown with a sunbonnet perched on her head.

THE FATE OF EVERETTE AUSTIN.

"Whose place is this?" I inquired of a man who was digging a ditch near the water trough.

He stopped his work, and looked up and pushed his sombrero on the back of his head, giving a sigh and passing his hand across his brow. "It is the Circle-A ranch. It belongs to Everett Austin. Can I be of service to you?"

"Eh—well, yes; at least the boss can. I've tamed my horse, and as I'm a small master of fifty miles from my destination I can't walk in this weather."

"It is rather warm," he assented.

"Slightly. Is Mr. Austin in, or anywhere around?"

"He's not in, but he's around. I'm Mr. Austin."

"Oh! indeed. Well, I am Mr. Brant—William R. Brant—Mr. Austin, and I must ask you if you can let me put up my horse until its foot is rested or until I find some way of getting to Miles City?"

Mr. Austin stepped forward, lifted the ragged sombrero, and put out his grinning hand. "I'm happy to meet you, Mr. Brant. I am sorry I can't call a man to take your mount, but if you will turn him over to me I'll stable him and attend to the foot, and you can go up to the house and ask Mrs. Austin to make you comfortable. The men are all off on the range."

"I'll go with you," I answered, and we set off to the barns.

"They were beautifully kept, as few but Englishmen keep their stables, and I was glad that my weary steed should be so well installed. I saw in a moment that my host was accustomed to being his own veterinary surgeon. It puzzled me to reconcile the fact of his manual labor and ragged working clothes with his large possessions, his perfectly appointed stable, and his yet more perfect language, so unmistakably British, for I was new to Montana and its people; though not a tenderfoot, by many years of Arizona experience.

The doctoring of my horse finished, Austin led the way to his house—a long, low, unpainted structure, set up a foot or so from the ground on posts. There was a wretched attempt at a bed of flowers near the door, but the sun and wind gave it small chance of success. A few stunted petunias, a straggling line of mimosa, and several bushes of sapless red and pink geraniums were all that rewarded evidently patient care. My host was not communicative, nor did he expect me to be so. I started to give him a reference, but he cut me off by changing the subject. In a moment more we had gone up the steps and stood on the porch, which boasted of neither roof nor railing. Austin handed me a feather duster, and we brushed the white dust from our boots. Then we went in.

"Sit down and I will announce you to Mrs. Austin," he said, with no apparent perception of the incongruity of the language and his attire. It was a tidy little drawing-room—as I did my host the honor of calling it all through my visit—with some well-chosen colored prints from English papers on the rough board wall, clean white curtains, a few cane chairs, and a box covered with cretonne, which served as a divan. There were no new books or papers, but the old and much used ones were of the best. There was a pot of "wandering Jew" in the little fireplace, which made a very pretty effect.

I was just looking at my travel-stained countenance in a small mirror, when a door opened, and Austin, holding it back, stood aside to admit his wife.

"We are very glad to see you, Mr. Brant," she said, with the most delightful of well-bred English accents. "Mr. Austin told me of your accident. I am sorry for the horse, of course, and for you if you had need to make haste, but for ourselves it cannot be looked upon as a misfortune."

"Your husband has treated the poor animal so skillfully that I fancy I may promise not to encroach upon your hospitality very long."

"Please put aside the idea that you are not, or may not be, welcome. We are most happy to have you."

"Now, Brant," said my entertainer, "Mrs. Austin will give you your room. We cannot do much for you, but there is plenty of water, both hot and cold, and that will not be amiss, as I know by experience, after a midsummer ride in this country. I will see you at tea."

He went back to his digging and

Mrs. Austin conducted me to my room. The ceiling and the floor were of solid boards, like the rest of the house, but the partitions were of white manila and every sound in the place was perfectly audible. However, it was clean and darkened and cool, and there were no flies, which I took as the crowning blessing of Providence. I sat upon the chintz-covered potato box, which served for my chair, and gazed at myself in the mirror again and wondered, profanely, what the woman must think of me. I sighed for my calling suit, which was safe in Miles City, and considered my surroundings; my hostess, in chief. In absolute regularity of features, she was not a beauty; but she had the fine gray eyes, finer brown hair, strong chin, sensitive mouth and dignified carriage of the best examples of the women of her nation, and, above all, an air of grave sweetness which is peculiarly and distinctively English. Her figure was indifferent and her gown had not and never had any style of cut, which also gave evidence of her English birth; but it was pleasing and harmonious, in some way. Altogether she was a fascinating woman—a woman that a man must absolutely worship. She knocked at the door and brought me a big wooden bucket of hot water. My sensations at being served by this woman, with her air of the daughter of a hundred earls, were not pleasant.

My toilet made, I went back to the drawing-room and read "Pelham" until, at 5 o'clock, tea was served—teas only the English serve it, with slices of bread and butter, as thin as cloth, and rich cream, and good tea, none of the bitter, nerve-shattering, green decoction which is dignified by that name in the average American house. I found out afterward that this was the one meal of the day where there was any approach to luxury.

Austin came in, after having washed his hands and brushed his smooth British head. With the exception of a coat slipped over his flannel working shirt, he wore the same clothes in which he had been digging. So we sat there—we three—and talked of the doings in the outer world in quite the same strain as we should have talked in London. My host in his boots and work suit and my queenly hostess in her calico gown might have been seated in a lordly mansion.

After a time a bell rang. "The dressing bell," said Mrs. Austin; "we dine at half after 6, and it is now 6 o'clock.

I retired to dress, a simple operation, which consisted of running my fingers through my hair and retying my necktie. However, I devoted as much time as possible to this, and together with sitting on the potato box and meditating I succeeded in consuming twenty minutes before I returned to the drawing-room. Mrs. Austin was already there, looking even sweeter and more girlish, in an ancient but fresh white muslin and white ribbons. Mr. Austin joined us at the end of five minutes, fully attired in evening clothes, with a spray of mimosa in his buttonhole.

One explanation of the purpose of these pictures, according to Mr. J. W. Fewkes, is that they are believed to attract good spirits. To step on a sand painting brings bad luck.

A woman, who has observed certain preliminary ceremonies, takes the sand in her hand, and allowing it to trickle out as she moves her arm forms upon the prepared ground in front of the door curious colored designs, inclosed with a border and representing human figures, crosses, semicircles or circles.

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