

CHAPTER VIII.

COURTSHIP AND RUNAWAY MARRIAGE.

1861.

AGE, 22.

MISS FOX'S family must have marked a change in the appearance of young Mr. George, who at first had dressed well, but whose clothes now, though neat, showed wear. The grandmother had died after displaying every sign of tender care and affection for her daughter Elizabeth's children, orphaned as she felt by her unwise, though most loving interference. Matthew McCloskey, Miss Fox's uncle, had now become virtually the young girl's guardian, and careful man that he was, he wrote privately to Philadelphia to learn something of the young suitor's antecedents, which he found to be satisfactory.

Matthew McCloskey shared his mother's force of character. He was one of those strong, commanding men seen at greatest advantage in pioneer conditions. In "Happy Valley," the section of the city in which he lived and owned considerable real estate, his word was his bond, and his conclusions in ticklish land-title disputes, which his neighbours brought to him to settle rather than go to law, had the respect accorded to decisions of court. And while a just man, he had the generosity of a courageous man, one night during the campaign of '60 going home in a passion because he had been unable to prevent a mob

of Douglass Democrats stopping a Breckinridge Democrat from making a public speech; for though a strong Douglass Democrat himself, he wanted all men to have a fair chance to be heard. Thus no man in his neighbourhood was better known or more highly respected. His house, a frame building, like many others at that time, made in Australia and brought to California in sections, was when erected one of the best in that part of the city.

Matthew McCloskey took no exception to the character or possible abilities of young George, but his own nature was too masterful long to brook the same trait in the young man who came courting his niece. For the time he said nothing; while all unconscious, or careless, of smiles or frowns from such a quarter, the young printer was showing in his wooing the strength of his nature and bent of his mind. He brought Miss Fox books, mostly of verse, and they had reading tasks together. One work used in this way was Charles A. Dana's "Household Book of Poetry," a large volume just published containing an admirable collection from the writings of the great poets of the language. The lovers read, memorised and discussed.

One day Henry George said he had just heard his rival's love story, and that he thought the other man ought to have the right to press his suit, and that he himself ought to withdraw. The lady intimated that the other gentleman had few friends at court, whereas Mr. George was well represented. The young printer needed no further word of encouragement, and at all hours, early in the morning, at midday or late at night—for one hour was as pleasant to him as another—he came dropping in at the Flintoff's on Twelfth Street, near Folsom, until unexpectedly the storm broke and Matthew McCloskey, who came out that night to his brother-in-law's, told Mr. George that until he could show more evidence of pros-

perity—for he was now out of the “Evening Journal,” and indeed, of all regular employment—he should make his visits less frequent. The young fellow replied with spirit, and the two quick, hot tempered men would have come to blows had not Miss Fox, who had been the terrified spectator of the quarrel, rushed between them. Her uncle, forgetting that his brother-in-law and not he was master there, ordered the young man from the house and forbade him ever again to enter it.

Much of that night Miss Fox spent praying and next morning, December 3, 1861—a stormy, rainy morning—when Henry George came out, she said that she would no longer remain under the roof of either of her uncles, and had resolved to go to Los Angeles and accept a position as teacher in the school of the Sisters of Charity.

The young man said: “If you go I’ll not see you,” to which the girl replied that since she could not stay with her relatives in San Francisco, she saw nothing else to do. The young man drew from his pocket a single coin. “Annie,” said he solemnly, “that is all the money I have in the world. Will you marry me?”

She gravely answered: “If you are willing to undertake the responsibilities of marriage, I will marry you.”

He told her when he came again later in the day that at nightfall he would send a carriage for her to the door inquiring for “Mrs. Brown” and that she should be ready at once to leave. All day long she sat in the parlour of Joseph Flintoff’s house waiting for night and the carriage, while Henry George was off telling some of his friends of the matter, getting credit for two weeks’ board for two persons, borrowing a little money and some better-appearing clothes than his own, and hiring a carriage. There was some difficulty about the carriage, for when the driver grasped the fact that he was about to take part in

a runaway marriage, and that he was to get into the very thick of it by inquiring at the door for "Mrs. Brown," he declined, saying that he already had "a bullet in one leg" for participating in another just such affair. But he agreed to hold his conveyance in readiness at a discreet distance from the residence. Isaac Trump, one of George's *Shubrick* friends, with coat collar turned up and soft felt hat drawn down, went to Mr. Flintoff's residence and asked for "Mrs. Brown." Miss Fox was ready, and followed him out, handing him a heavy cloth-covered package, which from its form and feeling he afterwards said he thought must be boxes of jewels, but which to his astonishment turned out to be the "Household Book of Poetry," and all the other volumes that Henry George had given the young lady, she preferring to take these to any other of her personal possessions. Presently Mr. George joined them and they proceeded to the carriage where the lady that Isaac Trump was engaged to marry was awaiting them. Rev. S. D. Simonds, the Methodist clergyman whom Henry George had been going to hear the year before, was to perform the ceremony. But he was out of town at that hour and would not be back until nine that night. The party, therefore, went to a restaurant to supper. After the repast they walked to Mr. Simond's little Methodist church called the Bethel. The night was bright with moonlight, but wet under foot from the day's storm and when they came to a pool, Henry George lifted his bride-elect over it—a habit which the young man continued, at night at least, for many years.

Charles Coddington and Mrs. Simonds, the wife of the clergyman, were waiting at the church. James George could not get there, but his newly wedded wife, Sophia George, came and brought his hearty good wishes.

Miss Fox, a Catholic in good standing, would have pre-

ferred her own church for the place of the marriage, but fearing the delay that that seemed to present, was willing to have Mr. George's Methodist friend, Rev. Mr. Simonds, perform the ceremony, though soon afterwards in Sacramento she had Rev. Nathaniel Gallagher of St. Rose's Church give the Catholic sanction. Broad-minded man that the Rev. Mr. Simonds was, he voluntarily read the service of the Episcopal Church in which the bridegroom had been bred, and which, as he said, "more nearly approached the Catholic" than his own short Methodist service. And in this way Henry George and Annie Fox—the one twenty-two, the other eighteen—became husband and wife, the ring being the one used at the wedding of Miss Fox's grandmother.

When the ceremony was over Mr. George wrote out and sent advertisements to all the newspapers; and the clergyman took down Charles Coddington's name as one of the witnesses. He then turned to Mr. Trump, who was to be second witness, but whom he did not know. "I. Trump," the witness responded. "I perceive that you do," said the clergyman, "but what is your name?" and it was several minutes before the reverend gentleman could be made to believe that the witness was not joking, and that "I" stood for "Isaac."¹

There was no honeymoon trip for this bridal pair; in-

¹ Six months later, (July 5, 1862) writing from Sacramento to his Sister Caroline, Henry George said: "Both friends who were at our marriage are now in the same fix — Ike Trump and Charlie Coddington (of whom I have spoken in connection with Hoppel). Charlie ran away with his girl, or rather Hoppel did it for him, and they had a queer old time. When I was in San Francisco I met Hoppel with a big revolver buckled around him and he told me the whole story. Ike's girl went up to Marysville last week to be married to him, he writing to me to hurry her along; for if she lost a day the new licence law would go into effect and he would have to pay \$3 for the privilege."

deed, the young groom arose at five o'clock next morning to go out and look for work. This he found as a "sub" type-setter, and worked all day; and in the evening getting another chance, he worked that night until the small hours next morning. By irregular "subbing" of this kind he was able to earn enough to pay their board bills. After a few days, learning of an opening in Sacramento, the Capital of the State, he went up and got "subbing" work on the "Union," a morning daily, and earned good wages. He at once sent for his wife and for a time at least felt some sense of security, though adversity was soon again upon him.

All this while the George family was without knowledge of what had happened, nor did any but his Sister Jennie even so much as know of the existence of Miss Fox. Before the crisis came in the love affair, and before he had drawn out of the "Evening Journal," he had written in confidence to his sister to tell her of his affection, withholding the intelligence from the others because he would not have his father and mother think that he would so much as contemplate the taking on of new responsibilities at a time when they were down in their fortunes, and when he could do so little to help them—a time, indeed, when, under the circumstances, he could only with difficulty support himself. His sister's reply, without date, bears evidence of great haste, and runs:

"I felt a sudden choking, a sudden loneliness and jealousy, when I first read your letter. I have got over that now; and first of all, no matter what else I say, my advice to you is: *If you really love Annie, you marry her as soon as you are able to support her.* I have no doubt you are sure of loving her . . . though you cannot be too sure.

"I am sorry she is a Catholic, very sorry. Be care-

ful about that. You say you often talk on religious subjects; let them not be doctrinal points. The ground is dangerous to you, no matter how well balanced your mind may be. I know that our family will object to that, Ma especially; but still I do not think she will withhold her consent on that account. The great objection is that you should be married away from home. Do not, I beg of you. Come home and bring her with you. I will love her; so will they all, I know.

"I love her already—at least I feel as if I had found a new friend somewhere by the name of Annie. I call her Annie to myself; her name is familiar to me now. . . . Marry her if you love her, for love is too precious a thing to be thrown away. 'For beauty is easy enough to win, but one isn't loved every day.' . . .

"In the meantime do not forget me; do not cease to love me as much as ever, will you? There can be two places in your heart—one for Annie and one for me."

When he wrote in November that he was out of the "Evening Journal" his mother answered (December 11):

"I see, my son, that you get the blues sometimes as well as other folks, and I don't wonder. I think you have had a hard time of it, but don't, I beseech you, ever allow that to prevent you from writing home. Remember, a whole household is made blue in that case, though they say they are not, to keep up the mother's spirits. Keep up your spirits, my dear boy. All will yet be well. I feel persuaded you will yet come out right. You know the darkest hour is just before day. I have always boasted of your happy, cheerful, encouraging tone. Never till late have I detected a shadow of gloom. Put your trust in God, my dear child."

Then, owing to the disturbed condition of the country, mails accumulated, and there was a three months' silence from California. When the mails resumed, a bunch of letters arrived together, among them one from the son tell-

ing of his marriage and one from his wife, for both of them wrote just after the wedding. Perhaps the folks were too happy on hearing from their son once more in those troublous times and too much astonished at the news that the letters brought, to think of deprecating his marriage. At any rate, the whole family united in a warm and earnest welcome to the new daughter and sister, and nearly all of them wrote messages of love by the next mail. His Sister Kate wrote (March 4):

“My new relationship never struck me so forcibly as it did last night at family prayers, when father prayed for his beloved son and daughter. Before we used only to pray for our dear absent one; now it is for our dear absent ones.”

The young couple had on their side waited with something like trepidation through the long months for word of recognition from home, and though neither spoke of it, both had almost settled down into despair when the bundle of letters came to hand, telling of the warm taking into the heart, and then the time slipped merrily along. But his mother and his Sister Jennie pleaded with them in every letter to come home. To her brother, Jennie wrote with a tender love (April 20):

“There are a great many more things here to remind us of you than there are out there to remind you of us. . . . Here everything is associated with you. We live the same as we did when you went away; in the same house, doing the same things over and over again, only each time we do them less light-heartedly, feeling that we are gradually growing older, that things will not always be so.

“We had pretty nice times when we were children, didn't we? Yesterday I was forcibly reminded that

every one of us is growing older. You know it was Easter Saturday. Don't you remember Ma always dyed us two or three eggs apiece? Well, yesterday she did not dye one. She never thought of it and none of the children asked for it.

"What nice times we used to have Christmas, too. How sleepless we used to be all night. You used to be up about 4 o'clock in the morning.

"Hen, in the Spring we used to have such a time planting seed in our garden. What a handsome garden! Time has not improved it. It is the same little 'snub' it used to be. We thought it was nice though, didn't we? Don't you remember Tom and Val used to plant things and pull them up about a week after to see if they were growing?

"Tell Annie about Tom sitting in the air. I tell him that that one act is enough to immortalise and hand his name down to posterity."¹

The bond between brother and sister was never closer than now, as shown by his letter a couple of months later:

Sacramento, June 5, '62.

"MY DEAR JENNIE: We are having Summer at last; and hot enough it certainly is. I feel it more, perhaps, than I would otherwise from the fact that since leaving Panama I have experienced no really warm weather, the winds which draw in through the Golden Gate, making San Francisco almost as cool in summer as in winter. But we are now living in one of the pleasantest parts of the town—a square from the State Capitol—and surrounded by trees of all kinds and the largest growth, and roses in greater profusion than I ever saw

¹ Tom George, the brother next in age to Henry, had been told that sitting in the air was possible." So following directions, he procured one of the household wash tubs, filled it with water, placed a board across it, stood on the board and then told a younger brother and sister to draw the board away when he leaped up into the air. He leaped and they pulled — and then, of course, down he came and took an unpremeditated bath.

before. Aunt Mary would be delighted with this country, barring the floods.

"A short distance from the house is the slough—formed by the back water of the American River, which unites with the Sacramento at this point—a beautiful sheet of water on which we have a boat, and over which we frequently sail. In a word, we are as pleasantly situated as we could desire, but Annie will tell you all about how we are fixed. She will write to-night, being at the present moment 'amusing' herself by nursing a baby, the property of one of the ladies in the house, and of which I must in justice say that I have not yet heard it cry. She is a regular woman, and has all the notions and fancies that seem so strange to a man.

"But while we are so pleasantly situated, 'Old Adversity' walks as close behind as ever. The Legislature has adjourned, as I told you before, and though the weather and roads have much improved, the Overland Mail stage has not yet commenced running. We were under the impression that it had started from the other side and the first budget of news would be here in a few days, but on Sunday a telegraphic despatch was received from New York dated May 26 stating that operations would probably be resumed in about fifteen days. This is disheartening, for to its regular arrivals we are looking for the revival of our business, which just now is unprecedentedly dull. The proprietors of the 'Union' state their determination to commence to run two double sheets a week as soon as the Overland Mail resumes, which will give me all the work I care to do. But we have been expecting and looking for it so long that it seems that it never would come. I am not one of those who love work for its own sake, but feeling what it brings, I love it and am happiest when hard at it. It is no wonder that wealth is sought by all means, good or bad, for it expresses almost everything. With it, it seems to me, I should be supremely happy (perhaps that is the reason I have it not). It is but the want of a few dollars that keeps us separate, that forces us to struggle on so painfully, that crushes down all the noblest yearnings of the heart and mind. I do not

complain that no special miracle is worked in my behalf, that by none of those lucky windfalls which sometimes come to fools, I am enriched; but it really seems that strive as hard in whatever direction I may, the current still turns against me. But I will not believe that it will be so always. At any rate I will do the best I can, make the most of my opportunities, and for the rest trust to God.

“Though I have a great deal of time on my hands, I do not think it is wholly lost. I employ it in the development of either body or mind, in rowing or swimming or in reading. Marriage has certainly benefitted me by giving a more contented and earnest frame of mind and will help me to do my best in ‘whatever station it pleases God to call me.’ This is the only difference I can perceive. Annie and I are so well matched in years and temperament that there was no violent change in either. I feel no older, and my dear sister, I love you as much as ever, and I believe, long to see you more. But I am afraid it will be some time before we can get home, and in the meantime we want to try and get one of you out here. The fare will be reduced in some way or other before long, and when I once get *on the train*, it will not take long to find the means. I wish you were all here, I think you would like the country, or that we were all home, which would be better still. However, we must hope on.

“Every day the telegraph is in working order it brings us the news of the success of the armies of the Republic. I cannot help feeling regret that the contest will be over and the victories won without my having taken the slightest part in it. If I am East after the war is ended I will feel abashed among its heroes. If I had been home I would have gone if I possibly could, but here there was no chance unless one could pay his passage to New York, for those who were raised here were merely to garrison posts and fight Indians, though now a column is being pushed across the deserts to Arizona, though it is very doubtful if they will see any fighting.

“What has become of Will Jones and Charley Wal-

ton? You have not told me of them, but I suppose they are in the army.

"Times must be improving now at home. The worst of the war will soon be over and then I think there will be a great revival. Considering the effects of the floods and the northern gold fevers, everything is becoming quite brisk here.

"In future direct to the 'Union' office at Sacramento, and if I am not here my letters will be forwarded immediately. I think, however, that I will stay here for some time, and if I get a situation within a short time, I will be sure to do so.

"For the present I must say good-bye. Give my love to all.

"Your affectionate brother,

"HENRY GEORGE."

"P. S. I have just received a call to go to work, so excuse my abruptness."

And so the current of affectionate communion passed between brother and sister, when one afternoon, returning from an outing for his early evening dinner, the young wife noticed that her husband was depressed and preoccupied, that he ate little, and that when he spoke it was as with an effort to be cheerful. He went off to his printer's work as usual, but when he came home in the early morning she asked his trouble. He said that letters from home bore heavy news which he had withheld as she was to be alone during the long night hours. Now he was ready to tell her—his Sister Jennie was dead! He handed her a letter from his mother, and unable longer to control himself, broke into a flood of passionate tears. The letter, which was unsigned, ran:

Philadelphia, August 7, 1862.

"MY DEAR SON: Uncle Thomas has imparted to you by this mail the dreadful, heart-crushing news. God, I hope, has given you strength to bear it. After my

first gush of agony, and I could think at all, my cry went up for my boy, Lord, sustain him in this great trouble. Oh, if he were here to witness the dying scene and weep with us it would not seem so hard. And then, dear Annie, your image came up with inexpressible comfort—a dear wife to sympathise with him, on whose breast he can pour out his agonising cry, tears to mingle with his tears. O I blessed God that he had a wife.

“It is nearly two weeks since we laid our darling Jennie in the grave, and we miss her more and feel more desolate than we did at first. O every article, and every spot, and everything in the house reminds us of her. O how we mourn our precious child. . . . My heart would burst without tears.

“I suppose Uncle Thomas gave you particulars of her death and the impression with her from the first that she would die. In her first conversation with me (she had been in bed several days and seemed to be easier and more quiet, her sickness at first being characterised by great restlessness and excessive debility by turns) she said: ‘Ma, I want to see Uncle Thomas, and Dr. Goddard and Dr. Reed.’¹ She had just been telling Pop before I came in the room the same thing, mourning over her coldness and hardness of heart, and saying that she had not lived as she ought and that she was afraid to die, that her Saviour would not receive her and that she would not go to heaven. All day when I thought her easy and quiet she had been struggling and praying. ‘O Ma,’ said she, ‘how everything earthly sinks into utter nothingness at the prospect of death!’ I tried to comfort her (Pop could not command his voice), told her neither we nor the doctor had a thought of her dying, she would get well; but I said, ‘Dear, Uncle Thomas cannot help your peace of mind; no earthly arm can give you peace.’ ‘I know it,’ she answered quickly, ‘but I would love to have him talk and pray with me.’ ‘Jesus alone,’ I again said, ‘is all you want. Simply look to Him; cast yourself upon Him, in all your sinfulness and weakness, as you did, my child, when you

¹ Drs. Goddard and Reed were clergymen.

first came to Him years ago. He is the same precious Saviour.' I repeated the hymn 'Rock of Ages,' slowly and with emphasis—

“In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.’

‘Yes, yes,’ she whispered. . . .

“O then the cruel, crushing blow came. I would not listen to any of them, not until dinner time would I believe my child was going to die. No, no, no; not my Jennie. Others might lose their children, but O no, this could not be. This rebellious spirit lasted some time after she breathed her last, though after the first outburst I was enabled to choke down the agony and appear calm until it all was over. She died peacefully and gently, as an infant just sleeping away. . . .

“Henry, how her mind developed! It was too much for her frail body. She read too much—nearly every day at the library, besides bringing home books.

“A piece of hair for Annie.”

After his wife had read the letter the young man, springing to his feet and pacing the floor, as was his habit when mentally roused, protested that he could not bring himself to believe that his dear sister was dead; and with the manner of sudden conviction, said that there *must* be, there *is*, another life—that the soul *is* immortal. But his words expressed his longing, rather than his conviction. Immortality he now earnestly wished to believe in. But the theology of his youth did not persuade him, and it was not until many years afterwards when pursuing the great inquiry that produced “Progress and Poverty” that he perceived the “grand simplicity and unspeakable harmony of universal law,” that beneficence and intelligence govern social laws, instead of blind, clashing forces; and then faith from reason came and immortality became a fixed belief.