

CHAPTER V.

DOMESTIC LIFE.

1873-1876.

AGE, 34-37.

WE break in on the narrative at this point for a glimpse of the home life.

In the fall of 1873 the wife and children had returned from the East and the family settled down in a cozy two-story house at the Mission—on Valencia Street. There was a small garden, and a climbing rose covered the front of the house with a mass of white blossoms in the early summer. It was there that the editor had what was described as a “tan-coloured mustang,” riding down to the “Evening Post” office in the morning and back in the afternoon, and at night putting him up at a near-by stable. The horse was one of the small, wiry, native animals, its shaggy hair at most times looking frowsy and “a lick and a promise” generally doing for grooming. The saddle was of the Mexican pattern commonly used in California at the time, covered with embossed leather, and having big horn pommel and ponderous, leather-enveloped stirrups. Horse and rider had a careless, though not ungraceful appearance, Mr. George with his trim figure, square shoulders, and easy posture moving with a swing as the animal quickened into its natural lope. Sometimes he took up behind him one or the other of his two

boys, now getting to be ten and twelve; sometimes he rode in company with friends; but for the most part he took solitary "thinking" rides, the free motion of the body in the open air seeming to exhilarate the action of the mind.

It was on a Sunday afternoon in the spring of 1874 while on one of these solitary rides on the ocean road that his horse shied, threw him from the saddle and dragged him by one stirrup. Fortunately the animal at once slowed down from a gallop or his master must have been dragged to death. But Mr. George disengaged his foot, when the horse ran away and was not recovered until several days afterwards. This was the second accident of the kind. Besides having his right hand badly lacerated, Mr. George's wrist was broken. Holding his injured arm against his body, he made the long walk of five or six miles at nightfall back over the lonely roads to the city. Even when he found a doctor his chief thought was of his wife, and before anything was done he sent a message to her not to hold supper as he had been detained. When he got home he said to her, "That mustang has hurt my wrist, and now you must be doubly my right hand to me."

His great energy and restlessness made him the most impatient of patients. Because he could not go to the office, he insisted on having a stenographer to whom to dictate editorials. But by April he had recovered the full use of his injured member and in May the family moved to a house on Rincon Hill, more convenient to the office.

Domestic life was very dear to the energetic public man. Perhaps the necessities of his exacting vocation made him delight the more to be with his family. While the wife sat beside with her work-basket, he would lie on a lounge in the library and read poetry to the two boys and the girl, or have them in turn read or recite before him or such

strangers as he chanced to bring home. Or perhaps, he went swimming with the boys in a bath-house off Long Bridge, or took the family for a row or for a sail in a "plunger." It frequently happened in these trips that they found lying at anchor the little *Shubrick* in which the father had come to California and he would tell of his early seaman's adventures. Frequently there were Sunday cruises about the bay on sloop or schooner, the party made up of friends with their families.

Henry George was not a member of any church, nor did his family attend any regularly, though in his broadness of mind he left his wife entire freedom in this for herself and the children. He attached himself to no sect, yet his nature was strongly reverent. He wished to have his children say night and morning prayers, and often at twilight or before they went to bed he would lie on his lounge in his library and have them and their mother mingle their voices in the old hymns that he had heard as a child in Philadelphia, and again "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" seemed to swell and echo through old St. Paul's. Out of the inquiry, why want goes with plenty, religion had come to have a new meaning. In the conviction that he had discovered that it was not by God's will, but because of violation of God's ordinance that men suffered involuntary poverty in the heart of civilisation, "a faith that was dead revived." He had turned from a religion that taught either of a Special Providence on the one hand or of a merciless fate on the other. Now all the fervour of his spirit went forth in the belief that social progress is governed by unchanging and beneficent law.

His children's training began at this time to engage his earnest attention. They had never attended any but public schools, and travelling and moving had broken even

this schooling. His own method broke it more. He discouraged lesson-studying at home, saying that the regular school hours were long enough, and that the hours at home should be spent in recreation and other ways. But if his children, as a consequence, stood low at recitations, they stood high in general information and the independent use of their faculties, for he would talk or read to them on whatever topic arose which could be brought within their understanding; and at dinner table, when the family was alone, he would ask them in turn questions touching history, literature, public matters or elementary science—such things as may have come up in previous conversations. When they could not answer, he himself would do so. Reading was encouraged, and the boys, at least, were directed to such books as the father delighted in when of their age. A copy of "Robinson Crusoe" was the first book he gave to his eldest boy—a tale that all his life fascinated Henry George and is frequently referred to in his writings. Another book-present to his children was the "Arabian Nights," which he sent while they were in Philadelphia, and which, he wrote to his wife, he had, "like a goose, spent the night re-reading." Thus the children might constantly fail in the school lessons they were expected to study at home, but if asked, could recite from Tennyson, Browning or Macaulay, had heard of the buried cities of Egypt and Yucatan, and in their own way, could talk about the rotation of crops, the forms of water or the nebular hypothesis. From either parent a request was a command, with corporal punishment swiftly following delay or delinquency; yet affection blended with obedience.

Visitors added materially to the children's education; for at the table, where the children were brought when old enough and taught to be silent, the guests were drawn towards topics most congenial to themselves, good feeling

was let loose, and anecdotes, strange adventures, curious bits of information, flashes of wit and tales of humour poured forth. The host had the habit of politely withdrawing to the place of questioner. This was most agreeable to his personal modesty. It also gratified a never-ceasing desire for information—information, apparently, of any kind and every kind, which, like his miscellaneous reading, was to be drawn on when needed, many a dinner talk later serving him with happy illustrations in his writings. Men from various parts of the world came, and as it were, poured out their contributions to the varied and instructive symposium.

Mr. and Mrs. George had now grown closer than ever before. In the early days of their marriage, when they were struggling along in poverty, she had refrained from inquiring into the matters outside of domestic affairs that interested her husband. Believing her mission to be to look after his health, his rest and recreation, she avoided all matters of business and tried to draw his mind into other channels. But as he advanced as a writer and their manner of living improved, she entered the council of his general affairs and came to be his close adviser.

The Georges had a small number of intimate friends. They never desired to move in the fashionable circles. Formal social occasions always had their snares and pitfalls for the husband. On one occasion when he was led to attend a reception at the Ralston residence alone, his wife being ill, he returned disgusted. "Such people live in a frivolous atmosphere," he said. "There was Mrs. — for instance. She had nothing to talk about but the weather." "The weather!" exclaimed Mrs. George, somewhat doubtfully. "Why, yes," answered the husband; "she asked me what kind of a season we were likely to have, and I told her the indications were for a wet sea-

son!" Mrs. George broke into merriment. "Your social butterfly," said she, "wanted to know about the outlook for social events—receptions, concerts, balls, weddings, and the like!"

But if Mr. George disliked formal social gatherings, he deferred to his wife in other particulars. He took her to the theatre, even when he himself cared little or nothing for the performance; and to concerts, though he had no taste for any but the simplest music. On ladies' night, when his newspaper friend, Daniel O'Connell, or his actor friend, Henry Edwards, presided over the fun, he took her to "high jinks" at the Bohemian Club, of which he was one of the earliest members.

The dream of wealth, indeed, the desire for it, had long since departed. The dream of increasing the world's happiness and of raising the mass of men out of the slough of poverty had taken its place. But the wish to get beyond the anxieties of a hand-to-mouth way of living drew Mr. George into mining investments now and again, when the atmosphere became surcharged with the mining fever. When in 1872 silver bonanza discoveries occurred on the Comstock lode in the Washoe Mountains, Nevada—principally in the Crown Point and Belcher mines—he was drawn into investments during the general excitement, and came out with losses. His wife's letter to him from Philadelphia (May 17, 1872) touching the matter ran:

"I won't blame you. You feel it as much as I do. It was a risk at any rate, and I'm not surprised. You know I'm far off and can look at these matters coolly, while you have all the excitement. Don't gamble in anything else than newspapers. That is the only way you make anything."

But in 1875 he went in again. There was at the time the wildest and most general excitement that San Fran-

cisco had ever seen. It grew out of the discovery in the up to that time practically unproductive Consolidated Virginia mine on the Comstock lode of a bonanza that it was said would yield fifteen hundred millions. The mine was managed, under the firm name of Flood & O'Brien, by four men—James C. Flood and William S. O'Brien, who had kept a drinking saloon on Washington Street, San Francisco, and themselves served customers; and John W. Mackay and James G. Fair, who were practical miners on the Comstock, and who, with some real or fancied knowledge of conditions, drew the other two men with them into the purchase of the Consolidated Virginia mine. They paid for it less than \$100,000. During the first half of 1875 the monthly output was more than a million and a half of silver, and the shares that had been purchased for less than one tenth of a million rose towards one hundred and fifty millions. Contagion of speculation "bulled" the whole market of mining stocks, during which, the managers unloaded their shares, reaction set in and the whole list fell with a rush. Mr. George's investments were in Ophir and Consolidated Virginia. He reaped a loss, which cramped his circumstances.

And as his wife was his counsellor in his mining losses, so was she when the break came on the "Evening Post" and he went out penniless. He quickly recovered his self-poise in the latter disaster, so that he could write from Sacramento shortly afterwards (March 14, 1876):

"Mills¹ tells me that they are willing to sell the 'Post,' lock, stock and barrel, for \$35,000 over its receipts. Jones, he says, is heartily disgusted, and the chances are that he will soon drop the thing. For my part I would not touch it, unless it was given to me outright."

¹ William H. Mills, of the Sacramento "Record-Union."

Mr. George received strength from his wife when he needed it, and in return supported her when occasion called, for instance writing to her (February 24) touching the condition of her uncle, Matthew McCloskey, who was on his death bed:

“I am sorry to hear about Matt. I do not think much of the new doctor that will talk that way—that is if he talks so to his patient, as the most potent thing in medicine is hope. But however it may be, you must not suffer it to make you blue. We must all die, and what, after all, signifies a few years more or less. It is not Christian or reasonable to grieve about what God has appointed, nor is it wise to borrow trouble. I wish when you feel so you would go out somewhere.”

They read much from general literature together and discussed what they read; and besides this, Mr. George now read some law, which he thought would be useful to him in understanding and discussing public affairs, even though he should never follow law as a profession. A letter dated Marysville, May 26, 1876, while he was on a meter inspecting trip with his brother Vallance touches on this:

“I have a good square day to loaf in, as Val is at work, and one can get ahead as well as two. Going to bed at nine o'clock, and right off to sleep, six in the morning at this season of the year seems late. After breakfast I went up-stairs and took a tussle with Kent. I was making fine progress till all of a sudden he threw me, and stretching out on the bed, I snoozed for an hour—very pleasant those sleeps are. . . . It is a nice day here—warm, but yet not oppressive. There is nothing particular though to see or to do and I shall put in my time this morning reading and writing. I feel encouraged by my progress in law, and really interested, though it does put me to sleep, and I think I can

in a year make as much progress as ordinary students do in three or four."

There were times when his over-wrought, highly strung nerves brought a flash of irritability; but this was all—a flash—so that there was never anything like a lasting disagreement. The current of devotion ran even stronger and freer now than when, entering manhood, he went courting the girl who had just come from the convent school. And what affection and the marriage tie were to him only his own words can adequately tell—letters written by him from Sacramento to his wife in San Francisco during a few days' separation in the fifteenth year of wedlock.

Sacramento, March 18, 1876.

"I have been sitting in the Senate listening to a debate on the divorce bill—Pierson's bill to limit cause for divorces to adultery. I think the bill is in the right direction. We have found out, as Pierson said, that it was dangerous to talk of divorces in mixed company. He also said that there was one divorce granted in San Francisco for every three marriages, and that divorces were often got in a single day.

"If I ever had any leaning to the modern doctrine in this matter I have entirely got over it. Marriage is not only the foundation of society; it is the divinely appointed state which confers the highest and purest happiness, and I have no doubt that if people knew that they could not separate from each other, the result would be to make them try harder to live comfortably with each other."

Sunday evening, March 27, 1876.

"I have wanted to write to you all day; but I have been moving around, and though I have thought volumes, I did not have a chance to write them.

"I got at noon to-day your letter of last night. Many thanks. I hardly expected it, but thought it would be

so nice if I should get a letter, and when I went down to the 'Record-Union' after the train got in, there it was.

"You are a dutiful little woman, my darling. By my own feelings, I know how hard it was for you to have me stay away; but it pleased me to think you approved of it, and it made the separation lighter. I have felt happy all the afternoon. In all the pauses of the talk the face of the woman I love rose up before me. A man is a bundle of inconsistencies. It delights me to think that you are wholly and absolutely *mine*. There is a pride and pleasure in feeling that I am really your 'lord and master'; and yet your approbation, it seems to me, outweighs that of all the world. What a blessed thing it is to be truly married, as we are married—in body and mind and soul. I often thank God for it, and when I hear, as I often do, how married men sin against their vows, I think what poor fools they are, not to realise how much more real pleasure there is in the love of one virtuous woman. If my darling is mine, I also am hers. If I have the right to her, she also has the right to me. All that I can achieve she must share; my full possession of her involves just as complete a possession on her part of me. The old ideas are right and are founded on the depths of human nature. The 'love, cherish and protect' on one side, and the 'love, honour and obey' on the other, are more than any other contract; and when the binding force of the obligation is felt, the touch of the chain, instead of galling, is a pleasure.

"How much fresh delight there is in our love. From the time I first saw you and was captivated by that something in face and voice and manner, which I never could explain in words, it has gone on increasing and increasing. Husband and father, I am still more lover than when I used to stop in my work to take out your picture and steal a glance at it. Satisfaction only crowns desire, and the love of the mature man is not only deeper, but more passionate than that of the boy. And this love is the great thing with me. All outside ups and downs are trivial compared with that."

March 30, 1876.

"Mills was saying the other night that if a man and woman kept up their love, they never grew old to each other, and I told him he was right. You are to me prettier, more loving and more tempting than when you were a little delicate slip of a girl. Do you know that it is a keen delight to me to think how you have improved. I always have felt towards you a good deal as Abelard must have felt towards Héloïse—as though you were my pupil as well as wife."

March 31, 1876.

"Did you ever notice one thing about the higher pleasures—they don't pall, as the grosser ones do. On the contrary, they become more exquisite. The very regularity of the letter gives it new delight. There is such a proud satisfaction in feeling you are not mistaken. I like even that boy¹ to know that 'my girl' thinks so much of me. And then they weave such links between us, and keep us together in spirit, even though we are separated in space. I once read a little story—I don't know where it was—of how a husband was beginning to wander in thought a little from his wife when he was away, and how her letters held him and brought him back to her, more her lover than before. And is there not something in this which goes even beyond the present life? Others may, but it is not for you and me, my darling, to doubt the goodness of God. The more I think of it, the more I feel that our present life will not bound our love."

Upon such a foundation of affection was reared a noble superstructure. One day as his wife sat close beside him in a low chair, the husband while lying on his sofa said: "What do you most admire in a man?"

"Courage," the wife answered.

¹ Reference to a hotel boy, who, bringing his letters, would say, "Another letter from your girl, Mr. George."

"Courage," he repeated, jumping up and walking the floor. "I thought you would say virtue."

"No, not virtue, because I have come to perceive that the world sets up separate standards for men and women, and that what would be a breach of virtue in the woman might not be considered as such in the man. I do not say that that is right, but I do recognise that the world so holds it."

"But why courage?" asked the husband.

"Because it is the manly quality."

"But courage might seem to go with physique—and I am a small man. How do you find this courage in me?"

"I do not mean physical courage," replied the wife, "but moral courage; the courage that impels a man who sees his duty to follow it, though it mean to make sacrifices—to stand up against the world."

The husband said that this strengthened as well as gratified him, and that some day he might have to ask her to support him when duty called him to stand up against the world.