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HER BRIEF HOUR OF TRIUMPH

A ROMANCE OF THE HOP-FIELDS.

BY MARGUERITE STABLER.

"SAY, Mollie," said Nolan, in an off-hand manner, "what's that fellow in the leggings doin' up here?"

The sun had passed the meridian, and the shadows were beginning to fall on Nolan's side. The hop-field code of courtesy demands that when a man is picking with a "lady" he give her always the shady side. But Nolan, in his perturbation of mind, forgot his manners.

"Nothin'," came indifferently from Mollie, feeling the rays pelting down upon her head, and remembering the thoughtfulness of the fellow in the leggings in pulling the fullest vines down on her side.

"Say, Mollie," asked Nolan, persuasively, after a half-hour's silence, during which time several couples had changed sides so that the girl might have the benefit of the shade, "what was he laughin' round you all mornin' for?"

"Nothin'!" The black eyes were stubbornly glued to their work, while beads of perspiration stood out on the round, tanned cheeks.

Thereafter, vine after vine was reached and stripped in oppressive silence. At length, after having decided to adopt a course of moody silence, which should break the haughty spirit of this girl, and make her hang upon his slightest word, Nolan heard himself say, before he knew it, in tender, coaxing tones: "Say, Mollie, what was he talkin' to you about, anyway?"

"Nothin'!" Mollie's chin went into the air and her lips snapped together like the blades of a jack-knife. The beads of perspiration had grown into rivulets that trickled from nose to chin, and splashed into the basket. The foreman of the field rode by several times, and noticed gratefully there was less talking and more work being done between the two than usual, and when at last the shadows grew so long it did not matter which side of the row she was on, and the sun began to redden behind a bank of smoke and dust, the joyful sound of the quitting bell pealed over the fields.

Arms just lifted to reach a vine, hands in the act of stripping a branch, fingers just crooked to pick a last hop, stopped and fell empty at the sound of that first tap. The unhappy Nolan could not stop his thoughts so quickly, nor resist a last appealing, "Say, Mollie, what's the matter with you, anyway?"

But the maid only threw a defiant "Nothin'!" over her shoulder as she was joined at the end of the row by a tall fellow in leggings. The black eyes lost their defiance, the lips rippled into smiles as she pushed her sun-bonnet back and looked up into the laughing face under the sombrero.

"Great place, isn't it?" the tall fellow said, half to himself, as he watched the pickers filing by—Chinamen, Indians, Japs, and whites of every brand, and all sorts of conditions. There was the objectionable element of "hobos," of course, in plenty, but the majority of the pickers were the men who, after harvesting their own meagre little hay crops, packed their wagons, loaded in their families, whistled to their dogs, and started off for a three or four weeks' camp in the hop-fields. With these families it is a regular institution, and the one interesting occasion of the year. Here new acquaintances are made, foot-hill gossip exchanged for tale district scandals, flirtations and romances spring up, flourish, and die, with the hops, and most of the back country belles date their social debut from the Saturday night dances.

Mollie stole a one-sided glance at the fellow in the leggings, and took in every detail as his eyes followed the crowd. She held her head just a trifle higher than usual when familiar faces looked up and saw her chatting with this stylish looking fellow in the corduroy knickers. In fact, when some of her Coon Creek friends came along, she found it inconvenient to look their way, for she felt that in refined society their "Hello Mol!" would not be considered good form.

"How long have you worked here?" the tall fellow asked her, shortening his

stride to fall in with her little trip.

Mollie, delighted to be called upon for information, gurgled out everything she knew about the hop-fields; the advantage of being paid by the piece instead of the day, the amount the average picker could make a day, the weighing in the baskets, the processing in the kiln, the pressing and balling, and the joys of the dance given every Saturday night. Adding, for she could scarcely believe this distinguished-looking personage could be a common picker, like Mike Nolan and Punny Smith, and the rest of them: "Are you visitin' at Hoptown?"

"No," the fellow laughed, "I'm a citizen. If I can stand these beastly hours. For the next few weeks I'm a son of the soil in order to fill up my coffers for the next semester." This fellow relished the dilating power of the black eyes beside him, and Mollie, having studied Short Primer of Chemistry, felt herself on an intellectual level with this college senior.

As they neared the camp she was conscious of a double row of curious eyes peering at her from under tent flaps, but tucking her chin up into the air, she walked along as oblivious of them, apparently, as if she and this new friend were alone in a wilderness.

Before picking-time the next morning it was thoroughly understood by all the tenters on Mollie's side of the field that Nolan's race was run, and that Mollie had a new "steady" from "below," as the southern counties are termed by the inhabitants of the north.

Nolan, his wrath cooled by a night's repose, became aware of this fact when he waited at the usual trysting place by the first row of poles, and saw the tan sombrero looming up in the wake of the blue sun-bonnet. The rest of the day he was pursued by the cheerful jibes of his friends about being thrown down for a city "guy." Poor Mike, even his dauntless good humor went down under their clumsy efforts at consolation.

But Mike Nolan was not the only one suddenly effaced from the girl's flicker memory. There were Punny, and Spike and Big Terry, into whose young and susceptible hearts her black eyes had burned big holes, now not even seen when they passed her on the row.

The eyes under the sombrero lost nothing of the situation. This little girl was undoubtedly pretty after a sort of wild-rose type, she certainly was the only one in the field who could help to make the long hot days endurable to him. Her eyes had a way of widening when he talked to her, which was highly agreeable to him, and he spared no opportunity to produce that effect. Her cheeks, too, had a frank little way of going pink—sometimes red—when the allusion was direct enough—and altogether her open admiration put a fine gilt edge on his self-esteem.

"Is it possible you have never been to San Francisco?" he asked her, one day.

"No, I've never been there," she admitted, apologetically, "but," she hastened to add, in order to dispel any idea of rusticity that admission might have given, "I've been twice to Red Bluff, and we live only nine miles from Coon Creek."

"Have you ever thought you might like to live there?" he pursued, reaching up to pull down a cut vine from the pole. His glance was very direct this time, and his tones full of meaning. It was pretty to see her eyes and cheeks glow with a deeper hue, so intent was he on noting the effect he could produce with the slightest touch. He did not wait for an answer, but went on, "Wouldn't you like—"

But just then the Sacramento train thundered by on the trestle, drowning his words, but not the look in his eyes. And on the heels of that, the noon bell rang, at which everybody quit work, and they walked up to the settlement together in silence—little Mollie's feet touching the ground only in high places, her foolish little head "way up in the clouds, the man's thoughts miles away from the scene about him, and the hope of his heart centred on getting on the "varsity football team."

By the end of the season Miss Mollie's social circle had narrowed down to few more than her own family, and one tall man. She had discovered her tastes to be of the climbing variety, and had reached the fatal conclusion that not one of her old friends at Coon Creek possessed a particle of culture or style. And when, before dispersing for another year, the pickers prepared to give a grand ball in honor of the wind-up of the hop-season, Mollie determined to show them the size of the gulf that now yawned between herself and them.

These hop-pickers' dances are open to every one, so there are not many lines of social distinction drawn. The men exchange their bandanna neckkerchiefs for stiff celluloid collars, and the girls wash out a sprigged lawn frock, and are radiant and ready for the frolic. But Mollie, with a reckless slash into her summer's earnings, burst upon the scene, on the eventful evening, an animated billow of frills, and bouances, and furbelows.

As the frolic progressed, the tall fellow with his sombrero under his arm, watched the scene from the doorway with an amused, wondering smile. The big dining room that seated 500 hungry pickers three times a day had been transformed in less than an hour into a dancing hall. The tables had been hoisted to the ceiling by stout bale ropes, where they were secured to the rafters, while the shelf that ran the length of the room on both sides, was studded at regular intervals with empty bottles, into each of which was stuck a tallow candle.

After the good old-fashioned custom, Punny Smith, with a girl in a yellow frock, led off the grand march, after which there were polkas, quadrilles, schottisches, and dances his town-bred feet had forgotten, or never learned. When his eye caught Mollie's, he crossed the room to ask her for a dance. From the opposite doorway Spike had started toward her at the same time. She held her fan—a gauzy, flimsy thing that represented the price of several long days' picking, so she might not seem to notice Spike—and her breath in fear lest he should reach her first. The fellow in the leggings was so interested in his surroundings he walked slowly, and Spike, she saw, was gaining. In a second he would be within speaking range and all would be lost. The next instant she rose to her feet, turned her back on the crest-fallen Spike, and reached her hand toward the tall fellow, approaching in his leisurely, indifferent manner.

When the accordion began to wail out "The Blue and the Gray," the man found to his surprise this little backwoods beauty could dance. She didn't hop, nor "scrape matches," nor stiffen like a poker in his arms; she danced with that little free grace with which a bird flies, or a fish swims, because it was the natural expression of her bubbling, lightsome spirits.

But, all too soon the music was stopped, and there was a mad stampede for the counter, over which pink lemonade and cookies were sold. The legged fellow, however, led the radiant little girl out into the moonlight, which had transformed the denuded redwood hop-poles into endless colonnades. Regardless of her slippers and bouances, everything but the dominating presence of the man beside her, she strolled down the row on the rough bare ground. When they regained the ball room pro tem, the music had struck into the long, swinging strains of "Creole Belles." Again they circled 'round and 'round, never pausing for a breath until the music stopped.

Happy little Mollie! This was her brief hour of triumph, and she carried it off with a high hand. Her Coon Creek friends, who were not too dazzled by her airs and graces, came up as usual and asked her for a dance, but the next one was always engaged. Nolan looked a moment longingly in her direction when he caught the first bar of "The Honeysuckle and the Bee," but having heard of the treatment accorded the other fellows, he turned and consoled himself with the Hennessy girls.

When at last the dance was over, when the accordion had wheezed out the plaintive strains of "Home, Sweet Home," and the happy dancers paired off in twos for the best part of the evening's fun—the walk home in the moonlight—Mollie wondered, in her simple little soul, if heaven could be any better than this.

Her companion did not tell her that he was going away the next morning until they had reached her own tent door. He had fancied she might be sorry, but had not imagined she would care so much. He was sorry th moon

was not brighter, for he knew he was missing much of the tell-tale play of expression in her eyes and cheeks. And when, after repeated protestations of remembering her until his dying day, and promises of coming up to Coon Creek to visit Uncle Sy's dairy ranch the very first chance he got, he took her hand to say "good-by" and bent so low her cheeks flamed up as red as her lips. But she could not have been so angry as she pretended to be, because, after the lights were out all up and down the line, they were still saying "good-by."

It was not a long walk to Hoptown station, and next day the tall young fellow, again in tweeds and a Panama hat, tramped up and down the platform, impatient to be back into the stir and bustle of the life he had left, and recounting to himself for the hundredth time his chances of getting on the "varsity team as half-back."

"Hello, old man!" he shouted, as he jumped on the step, wondering at this gathering of the clans.

"Hello! Hello!" a volley of voices echoed as he entered the car. "Just coming down from Shasta," one of the fellows explained; "my sister and some friends of hers in the car. Come on!"

The train moved slowly when it crossed the trestle. Mollie had counted on that, and hurried to the end of the hop-field so she might get a last smiling adieu from the car window. Four, five, six windows slipped by, and her heart began to fall, but at the eighth, there he was, looking toward her, too. The black eyes widened as the window came abreast of her fence-post. Yes, his head was turned in her direction, but why, oh why, did he not see her handkerchief waving wildly at him? The next moment brought into view a fair-haired girl in the seat behind him, and the same look, the same smile she had lived upon all these weeks were bent upon the new face. It could not be possible that he had forgotten her already! Still, trusting little Mollie waved her handkerchief, and then her bonnet. His head was turned in her direction, but he had eyes for no one but this trim-looking girl with the dotted veil. A moment more and the train was gone, the rear end of the baggage car grew smaller and dimmer, till it was out of sight.

When the forlorn little figure turned back to the hop-field, a great, dry sob in her throat and an empty ache in her heart, the one or two Coon Creek people she met let her see they had learned they were not expected to speak to her. At a turn in the road she passed a hilarious group of pickers exchanging tin-types with hearty promises of meeting again next year. Punny was there, lavishing peanuts and gum on the crowd, and though he saw her, he did not look up. She drew her bonnet down over her eyes and told herself she didn't care. But as she walked up the long, hot avenue alone, she met Nolan, his high spirits restored, walking home with the red-haired Hennessy girl.—San Francisco Argonaut.

How He Saved Himself.

A prominent clergyman used to tell of one of his parishioners who had been very sick: A physician had given him some medicine and told him he could go out, but under no circumstances was he to get wet. The man went out on the farm and a shower of rain came up suddenly. There was no shelter near, and to save himself he crawled into a hollow log. The action of the rain caused the log to shrink so as to endanger his life.

He could not move, and being brought face to face with death the whole of his past life came before him as in a panorama. He remembered the days of his childhood, his entrance upon life, his successes and his sins, then he remembered, last of all, that when he left home that morning he refused his wife, when she asked him for fifty cents for the church, and the thought made him feel so small that he had no difficulty in getting out of the log.—Grace Church Bells.

A Changed Man.

A Scotchman had reached the summit of his ambitions, says Everybody's Magazine, in attaining to the magisterial bench. The honor seemed to him a great one, and he tried to live up to it. With his head high in the air he swaggered along till he went bolt up against a cow which had not the manners to get out of the way, but continued to browse by the roadside in mild unconcern.

"Men," cried the indignant owner, "mind my cow!" "Woman," he replied, with fine dignity, "I'm no longer a man. I'm a half-lie."

THE DESK SLAVE'S SONG.

O this is the song of the man who's chained
All day to a roll top desk;
Who, sweltering over a type-machine,
Assumeth a shape grotesque.
The breeze and the sunshine are not for him,
The sky is a mere hearsay;
He sits and grinds 'mid the rustling sheets
Through all of the dull, dull day.

He thinks of the years when his hands were hard,
His arms like the best of steel;
He thinks of the day when his lithe limbs made
Good time on a racing wheel;
He thinks of the day when he held his own
In harvesting hay or grain—
Then smiles at the thought that a croquet game
Can give him a next-day pain.

He sighs to remember the mighty brawn
He showed on the college track;
He thinks of the days when he played base-ball,
And wishes those days were back;
He thinks of himself in a football suit
Well padded and picturesque,
Then weeps o'er recalling the flabby form
That's chained to the roll top desk.

O man in the field, with the hoe or plow,
O man with the ditching spade!
Yearn not for the "easy," white-handed job,
Instead of your sturdy trade.
There's money—sometimes—in the office grind—
There's life in the work you do!
You are fanned and warmed by the breeze and sun
And arched with a roof of blue.

Your food is the food of a hungry man,
You sleep like the dead at night;
Your muscles are firm, and your heart is good.
Your cause is the cause of right;
We slaves of the desk would renounce our hope
Of wealth or a "raise" in pay
If we could but feel as we used to feel
Back there in our "husky" day.
—S. W. Gillilan, in the Los Angeles Herald.



"There's only one trouble about that new author." "And what's that?" "Why, every time a book of his is successful he whirrs right in and writes another."—Atlanta Constitution.

The chap who says he loves a girl
Far more than tongue can tell
His purse might show, for he should know
That money talks as well.
—Philadelphia Record.

Judge—"Of course, I might let you off, Casey, if you had an alibi." Casey—"Shure, yer Honor. Oi haven't wan about me, but here's me last quarter, if that'll timpt ye."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

"You sell ladies' hats here?" began the sour looking man. "Certainly," replied the milliner, repressing a smile. "You want to buy one for your wife?" "No, I don't, but it looks as if I'd have to."—Philadelphia Press.

The Wife—"Really, my dear, you are awfully extravagant. Our neighbor, Mr. Flint, is just twice as self-denying as you are." The Husband—"But he has just twice as much money to be self-denying with."—Brooklyn Life.

"Our magazines," complains the dissatisfied person, "show a decided falling off in the inventiveness of our writers of fiction." "Why," responds the up-to-date reader, "you do not seem to keep up with the advertisements."—

Let us then be up and doing;
"All or nothing" out of date;
Those achieving and pursuing
Are the ones who arbitrate.
—Chicago Record-Herald.

Financier (tenant of our forest, after a week's unsuccessful staking)—"Now, look here, my man, I bought and paid for ten stags. If the brutes can't be shot you'll have to trap them! I've promised the venison, and I mean to have it!"—Punch.

Orpheus had just been boasting to his wife of his ability to move inanimate things by music. "So can our cat," replied Eurydice; "I saw your brush and bootjack going his way last night." Angered beyond measure by this suggestion he went forth and slew his rival.—Brooklyn Life.

China's Confession.

The action of the Chinese Government in sending a number of young Mongolians to different universities in America would seem to imply that some things may be learned in this country which have not been known in China 6000 years.—Kansas City Star.

Mushrooms generally consist of ninety per cent. water, but the remaining ten per cent. is more nutritious than bread.