

## The Cry on the Trail.

How It Wrought a Great Change at Lone Pine Ranch.

BY GERTRUDE DIX.

**I**n the high, bare, sitting room of a lonely ranch-house, with brown, unpainted walls, and doors and windows open to the pine-clad mountain side, a man sat at a small dished table reading over a pile of cherished letters. They were written by a woman; dated from a house on Beacon street, Boston, and they dealt with books, with music, and with art. To the reader, who was hard-pressed in the battle of life, they seemed to let him into a great treasure-house, while he longed for the more constricted walls of a home; the simpler beauties of a fireside. Ah, they were so intellectual, these letters, and try as he would, he could read nothing between their lines! As he turned over the pages, a tiny child of three years old, with a large rent in her pinafore, ran in from time to time from the open air. At sight of her, the cry in the heart of the man for the woman was stronger than ever. Both of them needed her—man and child, they needed her so much.

At length he took his pen and began to write to her. All her letters addressed him as "Dear Mr. Geraldson"; his letters to this date had been invariably superscribed to "Dear Miss Vining." But now he broke through the veil of reserve. He wrote to her as the dearest woman on earth, calling her his love. He threw aside all the topics which they had dallied so long, and wrote simply of himself—of his own hopes and fears. He told her how for years he had been wanting to ask her to come out to him; how his poverty had forbidden his doing so; and how, in spite of all his efforts, he had remained poor and struggling, without anything to give her. Two months ago he had believed that at last his chance had come. He had gone up into the Trinity Mountains to take up an offer of partnership in a promising "prospect" he had received from a friend. But on the long stage-journey from Redding through the heat and dust, he had fallen in with an unfortunate Englishman, very sick with typhoid, who had implored him to stand by him and see him on his legs again. Circumstances had been such that it had been impossible in common humanity not to stay with this man and his little mite of a motherless girl. So he had nursed and tended him, and had experienced the satisfaction of pulling him through the worst danger. But the poor fellow, who was terribly impatient, had attempted to get out of bed in spite of every warning, and had died suddenly one day from the passage of a clot of blood to the heart, when his nurse and little daughter had left him for a breath of fresh air.

"And so," went on the letter, "I found myself with the child on my hands. I haven't the heart to do anything but keep her. For though apparently she has no relatives or friends, she's a splendid little piece of stuff, and it would be a crime to send her to any institution. And the sequel of this is, my dear, dear friend, that the venture which was to bring me fortune, to give me the right to ask you for yourself, has come to naught. By the time I had fixed everything up, my friend, unable to wait for me, had taken in another partner on the deal. I went prospecting near Weaverville, but luck was against me. Then both the little girl and myself fell sick with malaria, and so I came home to my pine trees again."

Here Geraldson's pen fell from his hand, for the fever had him in its grip, and he was shaking miserably. Later on he managed to put the letter into an envelope addressed only with her name, for after all, he thought, he should never send it, and he left it on his table, thinking that when he had strength again, he would go on writing, just for the sake of the consolation it was merely to pretend that he could tell her everything. But the letter was never finished. He grew rapidly weaker, till one morning he found himself so sick that he could scarcely drag himself to the couch on the veranda to scan the landscape for the help that never came. For Lone Pine Ranch was isolated as only mountain ranches can be, and no one might set foot on it for weeks together. Now as he lay helpless, unable to move, lost sometimes in suffocating blackness, the child brought him water in the tiny cup—drops that tantalized rather than quenched his thirst—and he wondered what would become of her, and in his last coherent moments told her to run out along the trail and call with all her might. That was the last thing he could do. Soon after he ceased to move, and did not hear the desolate wail that resounded through the empty house.

But Geraldson was not to lose himself forever in the dark water of unconsciousness. Once more he felt him-

self alive, and, on the verge of sleep, lay with leaden eyelids, unwilling to awake, till a memory of little Margery, whom he had last seen weeping in a corner of the room, forced him to open his eyes. To his surprise his bed clothing covered him very neatly. The sheet was folded under his chin in a strange, comforting, new way, so that a sense of peace and security fell on him, and he lay very still, sure for some unaccountable reason that Margery was all right. Waking was wonderfully pleasant. In the dim light of the darkened room a slender white hand glided over the smooth sheet to make it a trifle smoother. He held his breath and half closed his eyes that he might watch it. It went away. Too weak to turn his head, he waited till it fluttered down again with a cup of milk. There was no woman in the district with such a hand, and full of the wonder of it he fell asleep.

He dreamed of beautiful things—white flowers, white doves, white hands. Waking stronger for long rest, his first movement was one of curiosity. A woman, in a pale blue sun-bonnet that completely shaded her face, was pouring something into a glass at the washstand. Was it possible that ugly bonnet could go with those slender fingers? He asked for a drink of water. To his joy the same hand appeared again.

"Is it evening?" he asked, when she had taken away the cup.

"No, it is morning," returned a voice that was little more than a whisper.

"Then please will you be so kind as to let in some light?"

"Light is not good for you just yet," was the answer in subdued tones.

Geraldson was not strong enough to dispute this point, and he lay quiet, inwardly vexed at the bonnet. Ideas came to him slowly. At last he asked, brilliantly: "Will you please tell me who you are?"

"I am a nurse."

"A nurse!" He considered for some time.

"How did you come here?"

"That is very simple. Your little girl was crying on the trail, and I came in and found you."

"And you stayed and nursed me—how wonderfully good of you!"

"Not at all." The voice was cold. "You would have done the same yourself."

"Oh, but not in the way you are doing," he returned, modestly.

After that he pondered for a long time. She had "happened to be passing," as though a road that led to nowhere were a much-frequented thoroughfare. That in itself was a miracle, and her beautiful hands, her movements, so unlike those of a mountain woman, were something to brood upon.

"But why did you come here?" he asked, after a long silence. "No one ever comes here."

"I came to see my brother."

He dared not ask her any more. He could only suppose that which he had been away some stranger had come into the district. But any attempt at connected thought was too much for him, and again he fell asleep.

When he was breathing quietly, the woman with the beautiful hands threw off the bonnet as though she were tired of the troublesome disguise, and leaning her chin upon her hand, gazed intently at his pallid face. Still she kept the bonnet on her lap, ready to don it at the moment he should show signs of waking, for she was determined that he should not recognize her—should never know that it was she, Elsie Vining, who had saved him. She had taken the initiative, come out from the East, because mere letters were not enough, and she had felt at last that she must have something more tangible than these impersonal epistles. She had discovered him in his extremity, and had brought him back to life. But her joy in this was chastened. She knew now why his letters had been so cold. She had been no more than an abstraction, an intellectual page in his life. He had not even thought it necessary to tell her of the important events that were taking place with him. He had concealed—say, rather, ignored, as of no possible interest to her—that fact that he had married and had a little daughter. He had never even told her that his wife was dead, as she could only suppose she must be. It was plain that he had not cared as she had cared. He had not remembered—perhaps had never experienced—those moments when they had met in Boston five years ago, in which it had seemed to her so much had passed without words between them that even in the letters—for all their impersonality—it had appeared permissible to read between the lines meanings tender and magnetic. She had taken too much for granted. She blushed to the roots of her hair, and hid her face in the bon-

net as though it were a veil. Outside the open window she could hear the little child singing to herself. Had he loved the mother very much, she wondered? Love! What had she to do with love? It was high time she should take her departure. She went restlessly out of the room and into the kitchen, where the nurse, for whom she had sent to San Francisco, had already begun a feminine revolution in the bachelor order of things. As she worked, this young woman glanced out of the window at Margery at play beneath the trees, remarking that the child was the very image of her father. The other briefly assented, and immediately went out into the open air and looked at the little girl from a short way off. "I suppose there is a likeness," she said to herself, "but I can't see it." It was strange, she thought, that she should never have heard of Geraldson's marriage. How blind she had been not to suspect some affair of the heart, which would account for his sudden departure for the West. Of course, he had loved another woman. She wondered if the child were very like her. At that moment Margery came running up, and, forcing down the primal instinct that had prompted her to turn away, she held out her arms, drew the "other woman's" child to her breast, and kissed her.

The little creature looked up at her with her fearless eyes. "You're the lady, aren't you?" she said.

"The lady—what lady?"

"That lady daddy talks about that's coming to be my mummy."

Outwardly quiet, she kissed her again, but it was as though a door, not quite closed, had violently shut, never to open again. She went back into the house, into Geraldson's room; but when she saw him look toward her, pathetic in his helplessness, her heart beat so quickly she could not bring herself to say good-by at once, and sat down in the shadow, angry at her own weakness.

"Nurse," said Geraldson, "won't you draw up the blind? Mayn't I see your face?"

"The light would hurt your eyes," she murmured. "I put on my bonnet because I was going away."

"Going away!" Dismay was in his voice.

"Yes, I am obliged to go. There's another nurse here to look after you."

"But I don't want another nurse," he cried. "And you've done so much for me. I can't even thank you. I don't know what your name is. I've never seen you even!"

She said nothing, but slowly measured something into a glass. He could not see that she was trembling.

"May I have a drink?" he asked, as she put down the tumbler.

She had intended to go now immediately. She felt she had lingered too long, but she could not refuse his request. She held the cup to his lips, and he drank slowly, looking at her hands, which would flutter away so soon, like white birds of passage. He was very weak, and the tears came into his eyes. The hands were so beautiful—so like her hands.

She took the cup and rinsed it carefully and slowly. At the same moment little feet pattered along the passage and baby hands beat upon the door. She opened it and carried little Margery to the bedside, telling her to be very quiet. But Geraldson had turned his face to the wall, and took no notice. Having looked at him gravely, the child seated herself upon the floor, and began to examine the heap of treasures in her lap. Suddenly she held out a chubby hand with an envelope.

"A letter!" she said, emphatically, to the strange lady. "A letter!"

"Is it for me, dear?"

"Ess, for 'oo!" She ran across the room, and held it out, triumphantly. The eyes under the sunbonnet glanced at it with indifference. Then at the name on it—a name with no address—the beautiful hands clutched it eagerly. A moment after a touch on Geraldson's shoulder forced him to turn.

"Here is a letter," said the quiet voice, "to a Miss Vining. The address is not finished. Do you wish it mailed?"

At the thought of her so far away, so inaccessible, Geraldson's eyes filled again.

"No, no," he murmured, turning to the wall again. "It isn't to be posted. I haven't any right!" The next minute he begged her, half-courteously, to give it to him that he might put it under his pillow. But the room was empty. She had gone.

Outside, on the veranda, she paced up and down with the unopened envelope in her hand. He had wanted it back. She had known that even as she had closed the door, but it didn't belong to him. With her name upon it, it certainly belonged to her. But ought she read it? Ought she? Well, she didn't care—she must! It was hers, after all. Tearing it open, she saw the tender prescription, and all her scruples vanished like the wind. Then she read it to the end and kissed it many times, and walking up and down, longed, yet hesitated, to go back into the darkened chamber.

Geraldson lay awake without any desire to take up the thread of life again. All his difficulties pressed upon him, and he felt listless and dispirited in his gloomy room. But a soft sound,

the drawing of the blind, the flooding of the room with sunshine, caused him to turn with a faint revival of interest. The light was the light of sunset, just bright enough to make everything clear, and some one with shining hair was standing near the window. Surely he knew that voice of the head. Only one woman carried her head just like that! And yet he must be dreaming!

A clear voice came through the stillness. "I've brought an answer to your letter."

"Who are you?" he cried eagerly.

A clear voice came through the stillness. "I've brought an answer to your letter."

"My letter to her? But it wasn't addressed. It wasn't—"

"There wasn't any need to send it. You see, Elsie Vining isn't in Boston just now."

"Not in Boston! Then where is she? Where is she?"

She came toward him. He saw her in the level sunlight as men see visions.

"Don't you understand, Gerald! Don't you understand?"

It was her voice. He raised himself on the pillows.

"Elsie! Elsie!" he cried.

She dropped on her knees beside him. She gave him her hands and her face. —San Francisco Argonaut.

**No Pension Yet.**

"Well, to be honest with you," said the tramp, "I can't exactly say that I'm a veteran and have witnessed the horrors of war, but I think I deserve a pension, though."

"For what?"

"Well, I was once locked in a freight car for a week, with the weather at zero, and nothing but a frozen turnip to eat, and nothing but blocks of building stones to keep me warm, and if I am not entitled to a pension nobody else ought to have one. The horrors of that old turnip beat the horrors of a battlefield all to pieces."—New York News.

## CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT.



**WHAT NED WOULD LIKE TO BE.**

I'd like to be a tadpole.  
A-swimming in the pool.  
For then I would go barefoot  
And never mind a rule.  
I wouldn't do a lesson,  
For there'd be none to do;  
I wish I was a tadpole.  
Now, honestly, don't you?  
—New York News.

**DUTCH ROOFS.**

Do you know why on all the old-fashioned roofs there are such funny little steps? These were not for ornament as you suppose, but were to enable the little sweeps to reach the chimneys. On the steep, slanting roofs this would have been impossible had it not been for these attractive little steps.

**NEW WAY TO PLAY BLINDMAN**

This is a simple little game, but it makes lots of fun. One advantage about it is that it requires no thinking, no knowledge of books, no preparation of any kind; it is just a jolly game, to make boys and girls of any age roar with laughter.

One of the players is to be blindfolded and the others stand about the room as they please. The blindfolded one then walks or gropes around until he touches a player, and the player touched must then stand still and make a noise in imitation of some animal; say a cat, a dog, a cow, a pig, or a horse.

If the blindfolded player chooses he can have the sound made three times, and if he then guesses the name of the person the person takes his place. If he does not guess correctly he releases the player and tries again.—Indianapolis News.

**WHY WE PLANT TREES.**

The pupils were discussing tree planting in a West Philadelphia school the other day.

"Why do we plant trees?" asked the teacher. Two scholars stood ready to put down answers. The replies came thick and fast, and here are some of them:

Because they are beautiful.  
Because they give us shade.  
They break the force of winds.  
They help to make us healthy by equalizing the temperature and moisture in the woods.  
Because they provide us with India rubber, gum, resin, spices, dyestuffs, medicines, seeds and nuts.  
They furnish us with timber for building houses, ships, railways cars, etc.  
Because without them we could not have spoons, matches, shoe pegs, tooth-picks and lots of other useful things.  
Because trees are the most valuable crop the ground can produce.  
The value of our trees is fifteen per cent, more each year than our production of all our wheat, corn, oats, rye, barley and buckwheat put together.

**AN ELEPHANT YARN.**

In the jungles of India there lived an elephant who showed a wonderful sagacity and mother love for its offspring.

One day, relates the Indianapolis News, the baby elephant wandered away from its mother, who showed her uneasiness at its absence. Reaching the top of a hill, she saw her darling quietly browsing at the foot, while stealing along, at no great distance, was an enormous lion. The mother was at her wit's end. She realized that the baby would not have a ghost of a chance against the hunger of the lion, who every moment was drawing nearer to its desired end. The lion halted a moment directly beneath the place where the helpless mother stood. More quickly than it can be told the elephant rolled herself into a huge ball and rolled down the hill. The lion never knew what struck him. His feelings were completely crushed, while the baby elephant was led home, where he no doubt got a severe scolding for going away from home without his mother's permission.

**A FRIEND OF ICE CREAM.**

Every boy and girl is familiar with the vanilla which comes in a bottle, and which mother used to flavor the puddings and ice cream of which they were so fond. Few of them would recognize their favorite if they met it in its own country. The vanilla plant is a climbing vine, thirty feet in height, and about the thickness of one's little finger. The vine is round, knotted and covered with dark green pear-shaped leaves.

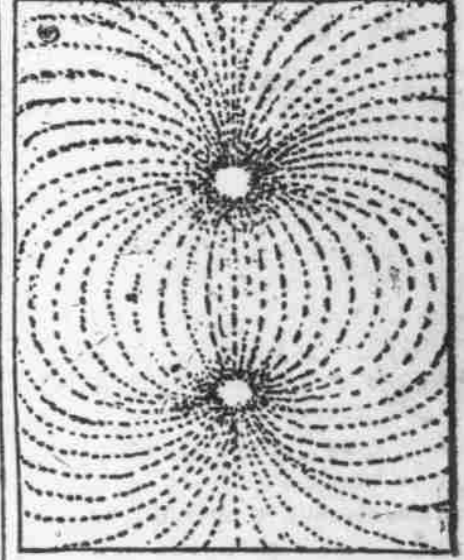
The vines blossom profusely in the spring; the strange delicate flowers, with their pale yellow petals springing from the angles where the leaves branch off. After a few days' existence, the flowers wither and fall, leaving but few of the blossoms to be followed by fruit. This takes the form

of a large pod, and, strange to say, although the pods attain their full growth within the fifty days from the fall of the petals, they take seven months more to ripen.

The pods vary from five to twelve inches in length and are about one inch across. In shape they are something like a banana. They are better described as resembling a knife sheath, hence the name vanilla, which is a corruption of the Spanish word vainilla—a small scabbard. Each pod contains a quantity of small black granules, surrounded by a pulp, whose peculiar combination of oil and acid imparts to the pods that delicious flavor and powerful aroma, which is esteemed by both young and old.—Indianapolis News.

**A SIMPLE EXPERIMENT.**

If you possess a magnet there are more ways of amusement and instruction open to you than you have any idea of. For instance, the follow-



**HOW THE FILINGS WILL GATHER.**

ing experiment with iron filings will prove most interesting, and will impart a bit of useful knowledge.

Iron filings are procurable for the asking in any machine shop or place where there is an ironworker's lathe. They are the minute particles of iron that fall when the iron is being cut or ground into shape, and possess the same relation to iron as sawdust does to wood.

A bar magnet is necessary for what you are to show. Lay it on a table or any flat surface and then cover it over with a piece of stiff cardboard. Now sprinkle the iron filings over the surface of the cardboard, and then a very curious thing will happen.

The filings arrange themselves as shown in the accompanying illustration, each particle forming a part of the various curves which radiate from the two magnetic centres, which indicate where the ends of the bar magnet are.

These lines have a scientific application, for you have made a very learned demonstration with the iron filings and the magnet—you have shown most clearly what is generally called in science "the lines of magnetic force."—New York Mail.

**THE TURTLE AND THE STAIRS.**

Two small boys brought a turtle home one day and put it in their nursery closet, hoping to frighten their nurse when she opened the door to hang up their clothes.

They went out for a romp on the lawn, and when they came in the nursery closet door stood ajar, but Mr. Turtle was nowhere to be seen. They asked the nurse if she had "seen anything," but she "looked them in the eye" and said "no," so they knew she was telling the truth. They searched the hall and every room on that floor, without finding a trace of the missing creature.

Just as they were about to give up a search from the region of the kitchen sent them helter skelter in that direction. There stood the indignant cook, who had just come in from tete-a-tete with the next door waitress. The butcher boy had set the market basket on the kitchen floor. In the corner of the basket a small hole exposed an inviting bit of steak, and there stood the turtle nibbling like a toothless old man.

No one in the house could tell how the turtle got into the kitchen, so in search of an explanation, the boys carried it up and set it at the top of the stairs. The turtle walked to the edge of the step, crept part way over the brink, then, quickly drawing in its head, feet and tail, tumbled down to the step below. Here it walked to the edge, as before, then bumped down to the next.

The boys shrieked in delight, and when the turtle reached the bottom it crawled off toward the kitchen, none the worse for wear.—Philadelphia Record.