of an empty-headed, yellow-haired girl.

Of course, Bill was proud. Too sensitive, sometimes, with feelings easily hurt.

But it was too much for any girl—even for a girl who loved him—to be told that she must give up her business to prove that he could make enough money to

support them both. Her pride was hurt.

Of course Bill was proud. That was.

what had attracted her to him at first.

The fine, erect poise of his head. The keen, intelligent glance of his dark eyes. But wasn't there such a thing as being too proud? she asked herself.

Only the beating of the rain on her car and the rhythmical movement of the windshield wiper before her eyes answered her question.

Of course, he was too sensitive, Lois told herself, just as she had been telling herself all the wakeful hours of last

Why should any man, even proud Bill Williams, tell a girl she must give up her business, a business she liked and enjoyed, just so he could support her? Just to prove that he could support them both —her pride was hurt. Surely she had as

Le board told Lois where to turn again as the side road started to climb the hill-R ISING SUN RANCH on a rustic sign-board told Lois where to turn again

much right to be proud as he had!

She followed the ascending road—but her thoughts ran on the same tiresome trail as before... nothing left now, after that last bitter, stinging quarrel, but to make the antique shop justify a career.

Nothing left but to devote herself wholeheartedly to the Pioneer Studio and to forget sensitive, proud Bill Williams. She'd put him out of her thoughts com-

The climbing road came to a sudden end, now, and Lois brought her dripping continued to think of nothing else.

pletely, the girl assured herself.

car to a standstill.

Rising Sun Ranch on a rustic sign-board told Lois where to turn again, as the side road climbed sharply to the top overlook. Perched upon its very crest, of the hill.

touch of sunshine, to burst through the green of the stalks. in the embrace of lilac bushes, the purple of the swelling buds awaiting one more A white collie came splashing through the rain at the sound of Lois' machine,

door. "He's really glad to see you. That's just his way. My, my, what a rainy ride you've had. Come right in." yelping eagerly to announce her arrival. "Don't be afraid of Bobbie Burns!" a brisk, bright voice called from the open

tended welcome. "You're from the antique shop, I presume. I thought Pioneer Studio would be a man. And such a young lady, too. I expect you're chilled to the bone. Come to the fire."

"I'm Pioneer Studio," Lois smiled as you've had. Come right in."
Kindly blue eyes shone behind their spectacles. A plump, cordial hand ex-

"You see, for about a year—maybe more—he's been keeping company with a girl in the city. A rich girl she is.

haired old gentleman.

"Father, this is the young lady about the furniture. You'll have to raise your voice a little, my dear. He's a teeny bit hard of hearing."

With a courtly gesture, Father offered Lois a chair and she slipped into its depths.

"Now you sit right here and visit with Father," Mrs. Ashley bustled hospitably about, pulling up a rosewood table—it was delicately inlaid with mother-ofpearl, Lois noticed—"and we'll have a bite to eat before we talk business. Nothing good is done on an empty stomach,' as my dear mother used to say."
Father looked Lois over quizzically

His keen old eyes twinkled.

"So you're looking for furniture? Going to housekeeping?" The girl shook her head. "Furniture

is my business."
"What do you want with old furniture?
Mother's things must be pretty much out of date."

"Some people like old things best. Lols lifted her voice!

"So they do. So they do."

nodded approvingly. "A few of 'em.

When Mother got this bee in her bonnet
about selling off all the old things and buying all new ones, I said to her, 'All right, Mother, anything you say. Just as long as you don't go turning in an old husband for a new one.' He chuckled and Lois joined in.

Lunch arrived—and it was a good one. Father gazed admiringly at Mother as she chattered or and on. Before the meal was over Lois knew much about the furniture—but more about its gentle, unworldly owners.

them all my life. My father built this house for my mother when she came here a bride. These things came round the Horn. Some folks' things get battered and scarred moving hither and yon. But not one of these pieces has ever been moved out of this house from the day they were hauled up the hill." things." Mrs. Ashley poured tea from the old Spode teapot. "I've lived with "It isn't that I don't like the

"Better tell the young lady how it comes you want to sell," suggested Mr "She might think we were hard up and had to." Ashley, poking the fire.

ing the orchards of the green California valley, now drenched and dripping, stood the ranch house, spotless white except for its shutters of bright green, held fast-

"I'm getting around to that, Father. You see," turning again to the visitor, "we're comfortable here, Father and I. we're old-fashioned folk. It suits us. I don't know how much the things are worth in money, but lately we've been I know our things are old-fashioned, for worried about our boy," she paused a modon't

"Not that he's not a good boy," Father put in, catching Mother's words.

college. Lives in the city. Has a good start in business, too. Did it all himself. We're mighty proud of our boy." "Proud as punch!" from Father. "Oh, no! He's a good boy. Been to

and I, and we decided that no girl would refuse our boy. Nobody would! We figured out a reason—he must be ashamed to bring her home. Of course, he's fond of us. Always was. But you know how some girls are. Society and all."

"He didn't say he was ashamed," the older woman continued. "But we knew there was some reason he didn't bring her here. So we made up our mind."
"You mean you made up our mind, Mother," was the gentle interruption.
"I figured it out that if the girl was rich maybe our boy was sort of ashamed to have her see our plain, old-fashioned things. Well, the fruit trees have been doing well, the last few years. So I turned the matter over and I decided. If our boy's ashamed of these old things we'll just sell them—no matter how much it costs, and get new ones. All new. Red leather and shining chairs. Then he can feel free to bring anybody home. Rich or poor."

"But nobody could help loving these old pieces," Lois began.

THEN checked herself, suddenly. After all, a dealer buying antiques must repress enthusiasms. Buy cheap. Sell dear. That was business.

"Now you come with me, my dear."
Mrs. Ashley rose. "I'll show you all the things and you can tell me what they're worth. First, Aunt Henrietta's bedroom set. It came to my mother from her great-aunt."

"But nothing in the upstairs sitting room," reminded Father, reaching for his pipe. "Recollect..."." She called from the hall door. "We won't even set foot in

the upstairs sitting room. "You see," starting to climb the stairs, "Father keeps his own desk and the grandfather clock and his pet chairs. Some things of my mother's too. We're going to keep that room just as it is. So even if the girl is high-toned she won't see them."

Marble-topped, carved in heavy clusters of grapes, Aunt Henrietta's bedroom set was massive and imposing. Perfect period pieces, Lois gloated as she gazed about the room.

"Are you sure you want to sell this furniture?" Lois paused, fountain pen in hand above her checkbook, the bill of sale completed before her on the old

eyes looked squarely into the girl's own.
"I don't. But if this old-fashioned house is standing in the way of our boy—then we'll have this whole house filled with that shiny metal furniture I've seen in the city—red leather and all."
"You might get more for it from some-"To tell you the truth—

-" Lois was determined to be fair.

and you came out and I'm not selling to make a profit, anyhow. Father and I have plenty to live on. I'm selling be-cause I think these things might make "Mebbe so. But I wrote to you first

THE rain was over. Across the valley the sun was breaking through, glinting pale yellow over the tops of the bare fruit trees etching their reddish trunks and branches against the dark chocolate color of the loam,

old house.

A good profit. A pleased client. What more could any business woman want? getting more and more wrong as the miles clicked by on her speedometer. But something was wrong. . It kept

In desperation, because she just couldn't help thinking of brown-eyed Bill Williams, the girl turned her thoughts toward Rising Sun Ranch

house.

Reversing her car, she turned around in the middle of the highway and retraced her road. Back to the turnoff at Rising Sun Road. Back up the hillside

Lois noticed.

buy it:"
"Yeu can't buy it?"

By all rules of business the girl should have felt elated as she turned from Rising Sun Road again onto the main highway and started for the city.

There would be new furnishings in the dear, quaint old house. Pieces chosen. and chosen badly, by Mrs. Ashley's unskilled, mistaken judgment.

"It's a shame! And I won't have any part in it!" Lois found herself talking to herself. The bill of sale burned in her

roadway.

"Well, bless your heart. Did you for-get something?" Mrs. Ashley spoke in amazement as she opened the door. Her voice was cheery, but her eyes were red,

"I won't buy it. Don't ever sell it," the girl's words came tumbling over one another in her vehemence. "They are beautiful things. They belong here. They're part of this darling old house. They're part of you!"
"But our boy's girl—"

"If your son has a girl who's ashamed of this lovely old house and the things in it," sputtered Lois, "the sooner he gets rid of her the better for everybody. If he's the right kind of a boy he wouldn't

Lois slipped a confiding arm around Mrs. Ashley's shoulders.
"Please, dear Mrs. Ashley, could I meet him for you?"
Mrs. Ashley looked surprised. "We

him-

wouldn't think of putting you to so much

trouble, my dear."
"I'd like to—please."

Ashley looked surprised.

"I'll show you what kind of a boy he is," Mrs. Ashley beamed, "step right upstairs, my dear, to Father's sitting room.

The picture is on the wall."

It was a fine day's work. A substantial profit for the trip—for Miss Perkins had ordered exactly such pieces for her new-

when he was 10 years old—old enough, you see, my dear, to feel sensitive that he wasn't our own son. I've always wished that we could have had him from babyhood—then he'd have never known any parents except us. Not that we feel any different than we would if he was our own son. How do you like him, dearie?" Lois was staring a' the portrait, fas-

cinated.

"I think he's the grandest person I ever saw!" exclaimed Lois with perfect truth—and threw her arms around Mrs. Ashley again. "But his name?"
"Father and I felt 'twas right he should keep his own name, Williams. But he's very sensitive about not being born our son. Though we've made it up to him," wistfully.

"You're a pair of darlings."

"And le' me tell you," Mrs. Ashley's face lighted up, "he's coming. He telephoned just after you left. He'll be here pretty soon. I'm glad you changed your mind about the furniture. And we'd like to have you stay and meet our boy."

"I'd love to meet him——" Lois' face twinkled in a sudder smile. "When will Mrs. Ashley once more for luck, and added a kiss to the top of Father's surprised head.

"No. Mrs. Ashley, I remembered something." Lois threw her arms impulsively around the older woman's neck. "You must take back your furniture, I can't

he be here?"

"He's coming in on the 5 o'clock train."
"How does he come from the station to the ranch?" An idea was taking form in the girl's mind.
"We send the hired man in to meet

RELAXED in the grandfather's chair before the fire ir the dim upper room, comfortably dozing, Father looked up, startled at the sound of their entrance.

"It's our young lady come back. I forgot to show her our boy's picture." Mother switched on the light.

There was the photograph, a large one, barriers of pride and mystery were swept framed and hanging on the wall.

It looked like—it couldn't be—but it was.

The sun was dropping behind the green

In all the world there couldn't be two such proud, sensitive mouths. Such firm, strong chins. Such earnest, deep brown eyes. Such darkly waving hair rising from such thoughtful foreheads.

hills across the valley as Lois drew her car to a standstill beside the station plat-

The fragrant, freshened

form.

Lois looked at the picture in amazement, then roused herself enough to ask: "Did you say this was your son?"
"Just like our own son, dearie. We took him from an orphanage. It's a long, sad story. God never gave us any son but this. We took him into our home

Spring, blowing over the miles of or-chards, whipped the little golden curls around her beret as she let its fragrance caress her face and waited in the sunset The minutes dragged, leadenly, until she heard the whistle of the train around light.

the curve. His train.

Caught her heart beat faster and caught her breath as the wheels of the train came to a stop in front of her and she watched the passengers dis-Yes. There he was! She saw Bill cross mount.

the station platform with long, sure strides. How straight he held his head!

How direct and sure was his glance!
She pressed the horn of her car
at its imperative "Honk! Honk!"
looked up.

"Taxi, Mister!" She called as he reached the machine.
"Lois! What are you doing here?" She smiled into his grave, dark eyes.
"I came up on business. But I'm staying for pleasure."
"What business?"

"Business at Rising Sun Ranch, H dear . and why didn't you tell me fore?"

"Tell you what?"

"About your darling family."
"I didn't want you to know—

"Oh, my dear, my dear." Tears and laughter mingled in Lois' voice and she slipped her hand intr his. "You should be so proud, so very proud, to think you have such parents as yours. They chose you, remember. And they are so proud

"I'm not ashamed of them," Bill fired up, immediately. "It's myself—I didn't want to tell you that I spent the first ten years of my life in an orphanage."

"It makes no difference where you spent the first ten years," she was all laughter, now, the tears were quite vanquished. "It's the next ten years that I care about. Bill please take the wheel."

BOBBIE BURNS barked frantically with delight as the car drove into the yard at Rising Sun Ranch and threw himself upon Bill with unbridled caresses.

And, of course. Mrs. Ashley gave in.

It was good to have time, on the drive to the station, to think things over.

To realize, now, what she should have realized before. Te understand the

realized before. Te understand the flercely possessive pride of Bill Williams'

tive for him to show that he was not financially dependent upon the girl he

The pride that made it impera-

nature. The p

boyhood explained everything-that pas-

Ashley's simple recital

"Look, Bill, look—the flowers are more brilliant than they were this morning," Lois exclaimed as they walked up the path. "Such a lovely dooryard."

"By the way—" Bill suddenly remembered to ask and stopped at the door, "what was your business?"

"The last transaction of my studio, my dear," she smiled. "I'm giving up business life. I think you're much more important than any antique furniture."

And together they entered the warmth and welcome of the ranchhouse.