An Antidote

It Was Based on the Principle That Like Cures Like.

By WILLIAM CHANDLER

One morning my wife received a letter that seemed to paralyze her.

"Oh, my goodness gracious!" she exclaimed with a gasp.

"Bottom dropped out of the universe, dear?" I asked.

"Worse. Aunt Abigail will have to live with us. She's written that her friend with whom she has had a home is to give up her house the 1st of May, and that throws her out. I am her only relative, and, of course, she expects me to take her in."

"She's a bit cranky, isn't she?"

"Cranky is no name for it."

"Well, we'll have to make the best of it."

Aunt Abigail arrived. We had previously considered our home entirely our own. With the coming of our relative we saw at once that all this was changed. She settled herself down with an appearance of permanency that made my blood run cold.

"Well," she exclaimed, looking about her, "how did you ever come to build this house down in a hollow—it must have been a swamp once—when you could as well have put it up on that hill, where you could see something?"

"We live here winter and summer, Aunt Abigail. Up there we would freeze in cold weather."

"Freeze! Nonsense! Some people are always afraid they'll breathe a little fresh air. I'm not. I sleep with my window open, and I like to have a gale blowing in right on me. You should have fronted your house to the south."

"I can't stand this. We must get rid of her," I said to my wife.

"To turn her out would be awful."

"We needn't do that. We can fix it so that she will go of her own accord."

"For heaven's sake explain."

"You know the homeopathic principle—like cures like. Well, my Uncle Robert is more disagreeable, if that is possible, than your Aunt Abigail. He is a dictatorial old curmudgeon, with no respect for any one's opinion but his own. He is as poor as a church mouse, living in a miserable room in a rookery by himself. He amuses himself abusing his neighbors from his window and shying anything he can get his hands on at the cats. Now, it has occurred to me to bring him here as a foil for your aunt. She can't possibly endure to stay in the house with such a man, and when she's gone I'll find a way to get rid of Uncle Robert. Perhaps they may both go to get rid of each other."

"Your plan seems rather impracticable to me, Billy, but I have a good deal of confidence in those roundabout ways of yours. Suppose we try it?"

So I wrote Uncle Robert offering a home temporarily and, if he liked it, as long as he lived. He accepted eagerly, and it was not long before he was down upon us bag and baggage.

"My dear boy," he exclaimed, patting me on the back, "how you do remind me of your father! He and I were inseparable as boys, and I've carried you on my shoulder often. And to think that I'm to have a home with you! Put me anywhere. A garret is good enough for a broken down old codger like me. Phew! Somebody's been smoking here. Do you smoke? How I hate tobacco! It makes me sick."

"I won't smoke any more in the house since you've come, uncle," I said.

"Oh, don't mind me. I can stand anything; got to stand it. I've made a dead failure of life and don't deserve anything else. You don't mind my opening the window, do you—just to let the odor out?"

"Fanny has a bad cold, you know."

"Just the thing to cure her. Let her breathe the cool air of heaven."

Up went the window, and out of the room went Fanny. Half an hour after my uncle arrived dinner was announced. I was watching our guests when they entered the dining room. It was like a dog and a cat at first catching sight of each other. Both seemed to crouch for an encounter. Neither spoke to the other for some time after taking seats at table. Then a remark of Uncle Robert's ruffled Aunt Abigail.

"This women's voting craze"— he was beginning.

"Voting what, sir?"

"Craze, madam," raising his voice.

"I'm not deaf. I heard you well enough. I object to your calling woman's suffrage a craze."

"Are you an advocate of woman's suffrage, madam?"

"I most assuredly am."

"I believe in any one who advocates a principle standing by that principle and not attempting to straddle"—

"Sir!"

"That is, to equivocate or knuckle down, defending the cause with all his or her strength. Per contra, I reserve the same privilege for myself. Woman's suffrage I consider the most abominable, diabolical, illogical rot that was ever sprung on a Christian people."

"And I consider it one of the holiest causes"—

"Aunt Abigail," interposed my wife "do let me help you to this little bit of wing. You're not eating enough to feed a sparrow."

"I'm inclined to think," remarked Uncle Robert, "that there's a good deal in this new idea of diet. This man what's-his-name who is proving that the less we eat the more work we can do is going to create a revolution."

"Have you adopted his idea?" asked Aunt Abigail spitefully.

Considering that I had just filled Uncle Robert's plate for a second time this was unkind.

"I have not, madam, for the reason that I am not yet satisfied that his views are correct. I'm nothing if not scientific. I must see a thing proved before I adopt it."

"Would you prove woman's suffrage before adopting it?"

This was quite bright of Aunt Abigail.

"I admit," replied Uncle Robert, "that to prove it before adopting it would be impossible. It isn't necessary to prove it. Any fool can see that the idea is ridiculous."

"Uncle," I interrupted for the purpose of calling a truce and preventing Aunt Abigail from firing a return shot, "let me fill your glass."

"No, sir," putting his hand over it—"not at all, sir. I drink just one glass of wine with my dinner. And that's enough for any man."

"Quite enough," I replied and filled my own for the third time.

"One is too much for any man, especially an old man," snapped the aunt. "Nothing is so disgusting to me as an old toper."

The shot, while it applied partly to me, was fired at Uncle Robert.

"Not at all," he replied. "One glass is good for the system. You know what St. Paul says, 'Take a little wine fer the stomach's sake.'"

"Yes," retorted Aunt Abigail, "and I know that the devil can quote Scripture."

This was so well turned that I felt like patting the old lady on the back. But it did not squelch Uncle Robert for the simple reason that he was unsquelchable. The skirmishing went on, getting hotter and hotter, till at last, to prevent an open rupture, my wife arose from the table. She, poor woman, was dreading a fracas, and I was not anxious to have a break occur so early in the game.

As soon as Fanny and I were alone together we sat down and laughed.

"Did you ever see anything work more beautifully?" I said, slapping my leg.

"Never."

"Let them go their own gait. My opinion is that one or the other will get out within a week."

Every day my uncle came to me and said that he couldn't live in the same house with a cat and was going tomorrow. Every day Aunt Abigail went to Fanny and said she could not possibly endure that opinionated old heathen and she was casting about for another home, but it was dreadful that she should be alone in the world, with no one to love but Fanny, and Fanny must needs be encumbered by all her husband's relatives. I told my uncle that if I were deprived of the comfort of caring for my father's brother in his old age it would break my heart. Fanny made faint hearted attempts to quiet her aunt and agreed with her that my uncle was a trifle hard to get on with, regretting at the same time that he had the same claim on me that her aunt had on her. It is true that occasionally there would be a lull in the hostilities and we would find the two chatting quite amicably. But this was when they happened to strike some subject which was a pet with both. As soon as they drifted into topics on which they disagreed the roar of battle recommenced.

Several weeks passed in this way, and Fanny and I were getting impatient for the denouement, when one day uncle came to me and said that he would like to have a few words with me and Fanny alone. He looked very serious, and I felt quite sure he would announce his departure. He was a born gentleman, and nothing would be further from his nature than to hurt one's feelings, and to appear ungrateful would break his heart. I called Fanny into the library, shut the door and waited for the old man to speak.

"My dear boy," he began, taking my hand, "and my dear little girl," taking Fanny's hand, "I have something to announce which will surprise you. I am going to leave you!"

"Oh, uncle!" we both exclaimed, trying hard to appear much disappointed, even shocked.

"Yes, I am going away, and your aunt is also going."

This was indeed a surprise.

"Your kindness has brought about a great change in two lonely lives. For a time it seemed to both of us that we must thwart your plans for the happiness of both of us. It did not seem that we could live under the same roof together."

He paused, and I thought he was going to shed tears. Then he added abruptly:

"We are both going to leave you tomorrow."

"Both?"

"Yes, both. We are to be quietly married at 9 o'clock and leave on a short wedding trip on the 10 o'clock train."

"Goodness gracious!" from Fanny.

"Great Scott!" from me.

"But we shall be gone only a few days."

"And then?" exclaimed Fanny and I breathlessly.

"And then," resumed the old man, putting a hand on each of our heads, "we return to spend the rest of our lives with our dear niece and nephew."

Heaven helps those who help themselves. At any rate, heaven came to our relief. I inherited $20,000 from a maternal uncle. Of this I put $5,000 in a house for the old couple and invested the rest in an annuity for them. Strangely enough, they are quite contented together.

Hitting at the Ball.

Jim used to play in 85. His game was fairly good—could putt, approach and cut the ball, was steady with his wood. Then Jim read all the golfer's books, absorbed each written line and found his game was going bad. He played in 89. Kind friends essayed to help Jim out—instructed what to do. He followed all their kindly tips—and played in 92. And then he cut out theories—just practiced day and day, with different clubs a-hitting at the ball where'er it lay. So Jim now finds an 80 is no trick to play at all if he practices plain hitting—just plain "hitting at the ball." Think it over, golfers.—Golfers' Magazine.

If a man is really reliable he doesn't have to devote much of his time to exploiting that virtue. You are watched pretty closely, whether you know it or not.

The Last Hope Mine

How the Miners Were Civilized

By ALAN HINSDALE

"In the early days of the Colorado minin' camps," said the old prospector, "one of the best payin' holes in the group before it run out was the Last Hope mine. Its name was given it by the man who struck it, who was much down at the heels at the time and fully intended that if it didn't relieve his necessities he would hang himself to the limb of a tree that extended directly over it. He sold his claim for $100,000 to a company and retires first off from this here story.

"The president of the Last Hope lived in the east and sent out a manager from that region. Mr. Parkhurst, among other things, at home had been superintendent of a Sunday school. Naturally he didn't like the appearance of a Colorado minin' camp. The cussin' that was going on was just like fireworks. The saloons did a better business than the store. Whenever the wind riz the playin' cards filled the air like a snowstorm. As for Sunday, there was no work on that day, but instead of services there was gamblin'. There was a few women in the camp, but they was worse'n the men.

"Mr. Parkhurst looked the ground over and sized up the situation. What that camp needed was wives. He argued that men without the restrainin' influence of women would naturally turn into wild animals, and he resolved to send for some girls. He called the miners together and told 'em that if they would turn out the women there was in camp he would send for a carload of real good, true members of the female sex to be helpmeets for 'em. The miners agreed, and Mr. Parkhurst wrote Miss Amelia Bowers, who had succeeded him as head of his Sunday school, to come out with a dozen of the best behaved and best lookin' young women she could pick up. Her influence was far more needed in the west than where she was. Husbands would be provided.

"Miss Bowers, a middle aged, conscientious woman, concluded that it was her duty to accept the situation and proceeded to collect a dozen young women who would rather get married than work. She also shipped several hundred Bibles and hymn books. The company paid all expenses and give each gal a hundred dollars to set up housekeepin' with.

"The day Miss Bowers arrived with them twelve gals was a screamer. Not a man would work, and every one of 'em went to the tavern where the coach was to unload. While they was waitin' Ben Huggins, an old feller who was a leader among 'em, made 'em a speech, remindin' 'em that they mustn't be in too much of a hurry to wed and that gals liked to be courted. There wasn't enough gals to go round by any means, but any fightin' for 'em would spoil the whole business. If the men behaved right another lot would be provided; if they didn't those who had come would go back.

"When the coach drove up to the tavern door there was a yell. Some of the gals was on top, and they was mighty good lookin'. Them miners hadn't seen a nice woman in years—some of 'em—and they wasn't used to such beauty. It was like angels comin' down from heaven. The men was respectful, you bet. There's no place where a good woman is so reverenced as where she's a rarity. A way was opened from the coach to the tavern, and the gals went inside, but there was sich a howl for 'em that they come out on to a balcony and stood there, while the men at an order from Huggins, the old feller who had spoken to 'em a short time before, took off their hats. The gals looked kind of funny, as if not knowin' what to make of the reception.

"'If the manager had sent for enough gals to go round in the first place there wouldn't likely have been any trouble. As it was, several of the most desperate men each saw among the lot a gal he wanted, and some of 'em wanted the same gal. The gals hadn't more'n gone back into the tavern before there was half a dozen fights. Huggins he goes off to the manager, and he says:

"'Mr. Parkhurst, I'm afraid there's a-goin' to be a commotion in this yere camp. Why didn't you send for enough for a feed?'

"'What do you suggest, Huggins?'

"'The most natural way, the way the men would take to easiest, would be to raffle 'em.'

"Mr. Parkhurst looked glum. 'You forget, Huggins,' he said, 'that a woman has the right to marry whom she chooses. To raffle them would be to give them away without their consent. That wouldn't do at all.'

"'Well, Mr. Parkhurst, all I've got to say is that if somethin' isn't done, and that pretty quick, there won't be enough men left to furnish husbands for this lot of gals.'

"'I'm afraid we'll have to send the women back,' said Mr. Parkhurst.

"'I reckon,' said Huggins, scratchin' his head, 'we might git the men to draw lots for a chance to git some one o' 'em.'

"'That's a good idea; try it.'

"Huggins went away and called a mass meetin' of the suitors. He told them that a dozen men must be chosen by lot to offer themselves each to a girl. If a man failed to find any one of the girls he wanted and who wanted him that left a girl for a second drawin' of chances. Many of those present would rather have fought for their chance; but, recognizin' the delicacy of the situation and the plan bein' the nearest that could be suggested to a raffle, it was unanimously approved. Blanks and ten prize slips were placed in a hat and ten men were selected. Every one of the lucky ten was ordered to black his boots, take his trousers out of them, wear a coat if he had one and report at the tavern first event for introduction by Miss Bowers.

"The next mornin' Mr. Parkhurst called for Huggins.

"'Well, Huggins,' he said when the old man appeared, 'how did it turn out last night?'

"'At the courtin'? Tol'able, sir, tol'able. Three men proposed to gals as tuk 'em, four men was too or'nary to go down with any of the gals, two men wanted the same gal and was killed in a shootin' match afterward. One man got up on his ear with a gal who wouldn't have him and said he had a wife already in Frisco and didn't want no more of 'em. This leaves seven gals for the next drawin' and three men less to be provided for.'

"Seven names were next drawn and presented the same evenin'. This was Huggins' report of the second pair off:

"'Three paired off. One feller was drunk and wasn't let in to the courtin'. Three men wanted the same gal. They had a triangular fight, the survivor to win; little feller with red hair winner. Gal wouldn't have him. That leaves four gals for prizes.'

"In this way eleven of the gals was paired, leavin' one, the purtiest of the lot, to be disposed of. All the fellers wanted her from the first, and most of the men that got killed was fightin' for her. But she wouldn't have none of 'em. She's mighty particular, seein' she's had twenty men to pick from. She's got snappin' black eyes, kind of reddish hair and is purty and plump as a robin.

"Now, if you want to work out a scheme for furnishin' wives you don't want nary of the women to be a jim dandy. One purty woman with the old Nick in her will spoil any practical plan that was ever got up. This gal, Becky Riggs, bein' the only unmarried woman left in the camp—Miss Bowers had gone back for another load—and every man left wantin' her, set up a conflagration. Every day there was a fight about her, and some one was sure to be killed. The wives begged her to choose some one and stop the fightin'. But she wouldn't. She'd make b'lieve she was goin' to take one of 'em and then start in to encourage another. If anything was needed to keep up the list of casualties this filled the bill.

"Well, it got so bad at last, so many good men bein' killed, that Mr. Parkhurst sent Miss Riggs word that he'd be pleased to furnish her a ticket back where she came from. She sent word to him that she'd ruther be an old maid in Colorado than a bloomin' married woman in the east. Then Mr. Parkhurst went to see her to reason with her. She jist set there lis'nin' to him with her head on one side and her nose in the air and didn't answer never a word.

"Things kep' goin' from bad to worse. Some of the men Miss Riggs had refused tuk to drink, and most of 'em wouldn't work. It was impossible to git other hands, and the dirt taken out was gittin' less and less every day. It began to seem that if Miss Riggs wasn't married or didn't go away the mine would have to shet down. The president wrote to know what was up. Mr. Parkhurst wrote to send on a carload of women. The president wrote that Miss Bowers had come back and wouldn't advise no more gals to go to sich a benighted place. This looked purty black. Mr. Parkhurst called for old Ben Huggins and axed him what was best to be done.

"'When I was livin' with my ole woman, Mr. Parkhurst,' Huggins said knowin'ly, 'I found out that women must have their way.'

"'What do you mean by that?'

"'Well, sir, there's nothin' fur a purty gal here but to git married. Every man here has axed Miss Riggs but one.'

"'I thought they had all asked her.'

"'No, sir; there's one left, and the knowin' ones among the wives say that's the one she wants.'

"'Who is he?'

"'I think it's you, sir.'

"'I?'

"'Yes, sir—you.'

"'You must be mistaken.'

"'If I am the women ain't.'

"He didn't say no more about it, but I noticed that he was sprucin' up. He'd been wearin' a flannel shirt, and fust thing I knowed he had put on a boiled one. Then he went to the barber and got a shave. After supper I seen him lookin' at himself in a glass that hung beside the roller towel at the tavern. Next he headed for the cabin where Miss Riggs was stayin'.

"The young woman was perfectly aware that the manager understood the situation. Furthermore, she had brought with her some becomin' costumes and had put one of them on for his reception. When Mr. Parkhurst saw her to have her for a companion didn't seem to him such a hardship, after all. It had been more than a year since he had seen a refined woman. He passed the evenin' with her in general conversation and found her intelligent. He might spend years in a minin' country, and it occurred to him that Miss Riggs would take away from his loneliness. He thought the matter over that night and the next evenin' made another visit, durin' which he surrendered.

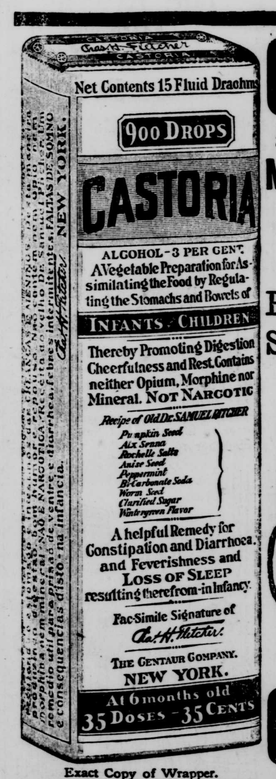
"The visit of the girls to the minin' camp was a lottery with one prize. Miss Riggs got it. But in her case there was more management than luck."

First American Peerage.

It is recorded in a history of the United States that an Indian chief named Mante after baptism was made a peer, receiving the rank of baron and assuming the title of Lord of Roanoke so far back as the year 1587. Somewhat later, in 1609, the title of Lord Delaware was granted by James I. to the new governor of Virginia. Later still, in 1633, Charles I., among his coronation honors, conferred the title of Viscount Canada upon Sir William Alexander.

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