Guppy's Daughter.

[Charles Howard Shinn in Overland Monthly.]

"Thar goes old Guppy—Butcher Guppy. Camps over yan in the gulch with his family. Live like dogs, the hull caboodle. Ye won't set eyes on a slouchier crowd between Redding Bar and Klanath."

My host, who was one of the best known pioneers of the pretty mining village of northern California to which a trip for business and pleasure had called me, emptied his brier wood pipe on the flat stone that served as a door step to his cabin, and walked slowly down the path to the gate, which sagged quite to the ground on its leather hinges. I thrust a handful of letters and papers into my pocket, and hurried out from the pleasant shade of the grape-vine arbor extending from the house to the well. The loungers in front of the saloon opposite took their hands out of their pockets, hitched their tilted chairs back to a more scientific angle, and turned fishy eyes in the same direction. The blacksmith suspended his task of putting new steel points on a worn-out pick, and stood massively in the doorway, shading his face with a red and hairy hand. Even the boys picking apples in the treetops in the orchard by the gleaming mountain river saw the nearing cloud of dust, heard faint sounds from beneath it, knocked off work, and began to speculate as to who or what was approaching, for they could hardly see through the bushes massed along the road. Doubtless the children droning over their books in the brown schoolhouse standing on the bed-rock of an exhausted gravel mine looked furtively out of the windows, and reported to their companions by look and sign. Everybody at the Bar knew that "Old Guppy" was coming.

Down the sloping trail rode a man and a boy, driving a drove of twenty-five or thirty grunting and contrary-minded hogs. Their horses were the shabbiest of mustangs. The man with his high cheek bones, Indian expression of stolidity, long grizzled locks, cap of fox skin, an old shot gun laid across his knee, and the boy with his tow-colored hair and prematurely old expression, seemed to belong to the traditional backwoods of a 100 years ago. They kept their unruly charges well together, and rode through the town with averted faces, hardly casting a glance to left or right.

"Guppy, what's pork worth?" shouted a sandy-haired, bare-legged urchin, who sat by the roadside dabbling with hands and feet in the soft, brick-red dust.

The boy on horseback struck viciously at him with the long whip he carried, but the urchin rolled down the low bank and under a friendly bush, just in time to escape the stinging rawhide-tipped lash. Neither father nor son spoke a word, but they looked at the townspeople with undisguised animosity, and went on, soon disappearing with their attendant dust cloud over a pine covered ridge toward the west.

"Guppy's a queerosity," said the chatty pioneer. "Buys his hogs and cattle on the coast. Drives 'em here an' there, an' makes money every trip. That's all right. Nobody's down on him for not gamblin' nor settin' 'em up for the boys, but look how he lives." Here the usually good-natured pioneer grew excited. "You go a matter of fifteen miles right north of here, an' you'll come on a little canyon, heading out kinder circular. It's the breshiest place you ever set eyes on. Bresh all across the bottom an' up the mountain side, so you can walk on the top of the scrub oak an, hazel bushes an' manzanita, an' stuff of that sort. It's the all-fired wildest, forsaken section that lies outdoors. The only way up thar is along a trail by the crick, an' it's so high in winter that unless you know just how ter take the ford, whar to strike in an' how to bear, an' whar ter come out, down you go thirty miles into the Klamath, like a bowlder in a flume. An' that's whar Guppy keeps his family. Been thar five or six years. Packs in his grub, cuts wild hay on the flat, an' the crowd live in a tent—that boy an' two or three grown-up girls, an' several smaller children, an' their mother. None of them ever wear shoes, an' as little else as they can help, an' the women folks shoot deer an' other game. Once the dogs treed a California lion, an' one of the gals—Sal, they call her—tuk a rifle an' walked up clost ter the tree an' dropped him the first shot."

The old pioneer walked back to his cabin door, sat down, and began filling his pipe.

"Redding Bar and the Guppy family do not seem to be on very good terms," said I, remembering how different the scene of a few minutes before was from the usual free-hearted, genial good will of mining camps.

"No, I guess not," was the reply. "There's sarcumstances, sich as missing calves and hogs—not that we accuse nobody. But my wife's sorry for the girls. The biggest one, Dosy, come over to our town an' said she were goin' to school last summer, and had found a place to stop at. Trustee Ryan raised objections but Jack Mason and us voted them down. So the girl came. But land, there couldn't no one do a thing with her. She didn't know but just how to read them Webster spellin'-book stories, an' she swore like a trooper; an' at recess one day squared off with her fists to whip the girl that spelled her down. She staid two days, an' it couldn't be stood no, how. So I saw Mason, an' we both dropped in on Ryan, tellin him we were not strenoos as regarded the Guppy question. An' while we was a-talkin' it over in Billy's saloon cross the way school let out, an' down the street comes Dosy, with ten or a dozen boys hootin' after her. She ketches up a five-pound rock, flung it right in among them, grabs up another and scatters the crowd, and marches sassily out of sight. The next afternoon we went up to school an' told her not to come any more. All at once she stood up in her seat an' said very slow like:

"'I hate you all. I hate your infernal town. I'll come back some night and burn your old houses.' Then she caught up her books, making a big racket, and flung out of the door, kicking over three or four dinner-pails in the entry. An' she went along the hillside so as not to go through the town, an' took the straight trail for home, though it was 3 o'clock in the afternoon and fifteen hard miles to go. But my boy John he comes across the hill cattle-hunting an hour later, an' sees her settin' on a log cryin', an' pullin' out the leaves of her reader, an' throwin' them off in the bushes. When she see him, she stood up and dropped her books on the log, an' started on along the trail. John called after her ter get the books, but she whirled round an' yelled out, 'Think I want them things any more?' And nobody ever saw her over here again."

The pioneer drew a long breath, relapsed into silence, lit his pipe, carried a rawhide-bottomed chair from the kitchen to the shady end of the porch, and there resigned himself to unexpressed meditations on the varieties of human life and character.

It was a curious story he had told. The mountain world about us was forty miles from a railroad, and primitive enough in many of its ways; but fifteen miles deeper in the wilderness were the true mountaineers, relapsing into newspaperless barbarism. I looked down on the broad, dark river, flowing past red cliffs that crumbled fast under the attacks of hydraulic miners, rushing in gleaming foam over the bar where adventurous Major Redding and his Indians had washed out gold in 1852, and hewing for itself, year by year, a wide gateway to the sea, through the limestone barriers of the mountains toward the west.

Two or three days were passed in this breezy summerland; but one morning I was riding along a narrow mountain trail five miles or so north of the mountain village. The ascent was steep and long, and I took an illustrated magazine from my saddle-bags, and glanced over its contents, letting the reins lie on my horse's neck. Coming upon a wayside spring under a clump of junipers, I dismounted, laid the magazine down on a flat rock, flung the bridle-rein over a bough, and knelt in boyish haste for a drink. The tiny pool was a luxuriance of reflected leaves and bloom, giving one a joyous feeling merely to look into its depths, and the clear cold water seemed to taste of spicy roots and fragrant herbs.

A few minutes later I arose, and the scene had changed. A little gust of wind was lifting the leaves of the magazine, giving rapid glimpses of faces and landscapes. Only a few feet distant, leaning forward and peering through the evergreen boughs, sat a young girl, looking intently on the fluttering picture. She must have been sitting there in obscurity as I rode up. Only the upper portion of her body could be seen, as her weight massed the thick boughs darkly across. Her face was round, full and fair, not noticeably freckled; the light-colored hair was drawn back and fastened with a ribbon. She seemed about 15 or 16 years old, but large and strong for her age, and the dress she wore was of some coarse red material, plainly made, with little attempt at ornament.

She was, as I have said, looking at the magazine with an expression of intense curiosity, and slowly reached out a hand as if to take it, crouching forward and pressing back the boughs with her other hand. The gesture and movement were the perfection of unconscious grace and strength. The thought came to me that perhaps this mountain girl was one of "the Guppy family," and also the fear that she might seize the coveted treasure and escape without a word.

"Would you like to have it for your own?" I asked, as quietly as possible.

She started and looked at me with doubt and surprise, and settled back a little further behind the branches, gloomily knitting her brows, and evidently making up her mind on the subject.

"Mister, yes, I would. Them's purty pictures."

Rising, she stepped partly out from her concealment, setting one bare and soiled foot on the trail, and taking the magazine into a shapely hand disfigured by long and totally neglected finger nails.

"I don't see sech things," she remarked, with an explanatory air. "Pap says it's all truck. I told him once ter fotch me a book with pictures in. But he never did."

"Your father is Mr. Guppy?"

"They don't call him that. It's 'Ol' Gupp,' most like, an' 'Hog Driver Gupp.' They don't put handles on names round here."

"How far is it to where your parents live?"

"It's a good ten mile, stranger, an' a mighty rough trail."

"I should think your mother would feel uneasy about you sometimes if you go so far from camp."

She laughed, shrugged her shapely shoulders, set her arms akimbo, and stepped fairly out into the path.

"The ol' woman? She wouldn't mind ef she didn't see me for a week at a time, ef she had terbacca to smoke, an' coffee ter drink, and Bob to keep wood for her fire. Mam says I can whip my weight in wildcats, an' needn't be afraid of anything in the mountains."

As she turned in addressing me, I now noticed that she carried a well-worn army revolver hanging in a buckskin thong at her waist. A large ill-favored deerhound came sliding and creeping out of the underbrush that thickly clothed the hillside, and displayed some symptoms of early hostilities.

"You, Jake!" cried the girl, and catching up a fragment of rock speedily reduced him to abject submission, and he crouched at her feet. Evidently this young woman could take care of herself.

Faint but clear, floating down from far up the brush covered mountain, came a wild call, sweet, deep and strange beyond the power of language to describe. The girl started, listened, and replied in the same rich, wierd, and far reaching strain, her chest heaving, her throat swelling, her eyes flashing, her figure poised and trembling with a picturesque awakening.

"That's my sister. She wants me. I'm goin'."

I hunted in my saddle-bags and found another illustrated magazine for her. She nodded with a "Thank ye, ruister," and slipped into the chaparral and undergrowth that lined the roadside. The hound followed, and I heard the rattle of the slaty pebbles under their feet as they climbed, but the bushes grew too closely to allow even a glimpse of her red dress. Occasionally a tremulous quiver in the boughs, as she caught hold of them to assist her ascent, showed her sinuous course as she threaded her way onward. Half-way up the mountain there must have been more open spaces, for, looking back as I rode on, I caught glimpses of her climbing over projecting masses of rock. "Old Guppy's daughter had returned to her wilderness."

I thought of the two girls sitting beneath the pines that clothed the summit of that mountain barrier which overlooked three counties, and revealed a wide region from the peaks of Shasta and Lassen to the Redwood belts of Humboldt—sitting on that vast and lonely height, and trying to understand the strange new world dimly revealed in the pictures and articles of the magazines I had given them. As I rode on for hours without encountering any human being, the sense of their isolation grew stronger and stronger. They seemed lost in the firs and pines, like children shipwrecked in mid-Atlantic.

Too Many Nightcaps.

[Cor. Boston Herald.]

Captain W. H. Parker, in his "Recollections of a Naval Officer," tells with some little detail the events of the first day on board a government ship, some of which are rather amusing. When he went to bed in the evening, a surprise awaited him for which he was totally unprepared. "Up to this time," he says, "I had suffered much with earache, and my mother had caused me to wear nightcaps. There was nothing strange to me in this, as other boys wore them in my boarding school, but it seems it was not a way they have in the navy. My caps were of many colors, blue, red, green, etc., for they were made of remnants of my sister's dresses. Now, as I made my final preparations for repose, I opened my trunk and put on a close-fitting nightcap. It was the signal for indescribable confusion. If I had put on a suit of mail, it could not have caused more astonishment among these light hearted reefers. They rushed at my trunk, seized the caps, put them on, and joined in a wild dance on the deck, in which were mingled blue caps and white caps and all colors of caps in pleasing variety. I had to take mine off before turning in, as it really did seem to be too much for their feelings, but I managed to smuggle it under my pillow, and when all was quiet, I put it on again. But, when the midshipman came down at night to call the relief, he spied it and we had another scene. This was the last I ever saw of my caps. I have never had one on since, and consequently never had the earache."

Madison Square, New York.

[Joe Howard in Boston Herald.]

Pause here for a moment and take in, be it day or night, a panorama of contemporaneous human interest, of physical beauty, of scientific development, of natural grandeur and of æsthetic beauty unequaled in this city.

Why, what is there? In the first place, as you stand, you see immediately fronting you a square of tremendous proportions, Madison square, lighted to-day by the sun's magnificence, breathing a gentle and exhilarating warmth, shaded so as to be entirely delightful. In this square are hundreds of trees, many of them old, stately and magnificent, and fountains playing and sparkling in the sunlight. Its gravel walks are tempting to the old and young alike, its grass is green and wholesome, even its grotesque statuary is symbolical of the wealth and liberality and æsthetic advance of the people of this city. Prettily-dressed children gambol here and romp there, and even the one degraded blot, the presence of innumerable tramps, is suggestive of what they might have been, rather than offensively obtrusive, as they are. Beautiful as this is by day, at night it jumps from the plane of material grandeur to the upper heights of fairyland. Hundreds of feet above the topmost tree, burning with magnificent brilliancy, a score of electric lights illuminate this square, throwing dark shadows on the ground, imparting to the leaves through which they shine a weird and ghostly semblance.

A Donkey's Suicide.

[Chicago Tribune.]

The Paris Paix gives particulars of the suicide of a donkey which was witnessed recently by a dozen persons, who are one and all convinced that the animal's death was premeditated and intentional. The unfortunate quadruped, which was reduced to a condition of skin and bones from eating too little and working too much, managed to escape from his stables in the Rue du Chardonneret, and made for the Seine, into which he entered near the Pont d'Austerlitz. A man who happened to be giving a Newfoundland dog a bath close by, perceiving that the donkey made no effort to swim and was on the point of drowning, dispatched the dog to his assistance. Seizing the drowning animal's ear in his mouth, the Newfoundland managed to bring him to land. But to no purpose. The donkey looked round with his large, sad eye, and quietly walked back into the water. The dog was again sent after him; but this time the donkey kicked out so vigorously that his preserver could not approach. The donkey, once beyond his depth, resigned himself to the action of the current, made no movement to sustain himself, and was speedily drowned.

Ants in Surgery.

[Bow Bells.]

A curious use is made of ants by the Indians in Brazil, who employ them to dress wounds, causing them to bite the edges together, and then cutting off the head; the jaws will not relax, but hold the wound together till healed. They were formerly used as a cruel instrument of torture by South African tribes, who tied their victim to a tree, smeared his body with grease, and placed an ants' nest at his feet.