

THE HERALD

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1908

THE DOCTOR'S WIDOW.

From New York Weekly. After the doctor's death, they offered Lizzie a home, and they did it too, with such genuine truth and sincerity, so much in the spirit of real friendship, that in accepting it she did not feel as one placing herself in a state of pecuniary dependence. They never suffered her to feel that there could be any such consideration, and the young Master Purdy and the young Misses Purdy only knew her as their "dear Aunt Lizzie," and either of them would have missed her almost as much as their own mother.

A few months after Lizzie had become identified with the Purdys, one of the partners withdrew from the firm, for the avowed purpose of establishing business in San Francisco. Mr. Parker was regarded as a shrewd operator in mercantile affairs and when he extended to Algeron a pressing invitation to join him as an equal partner, volunteering himself to furnish more than an equal share of the capital, integrity and the business qualifications of her husband, offered to assist him, like a sensible Christian woman, with her legacy.

The result was a speedy removal, and the establishing of a new and enterprising firm in San Francisco. Not a member of the family would listen for a moment to the idea of Lizzie remaining behind, and so on the departure for the Golden City, she was induced to accompany them.

It was at that auspicious time when colossal fortunes were sometimes made in a year, and in eight months from the date of their arrival we find the Purdys occupying one of the most palatial residences in the city, and on the eve of a grand reception, or "house warming" as they choose to term it.

The family were assembled together, one evening, a few days preceding the important event, awaiting the return of Algeron, who was to bring with him on this particular occasion, the printed cards of invitation. He came in presently, and as a part of the conference that followed may prove interesting to the reader we repeat it.

Lizzie was writing out the addresses of the invited on the envelope before her, in a neat feminine hand, as fast as they were called, till they came to the end of the married list.

"And now," said Algeron, ruing his hands, and glancing shyly at Lizzie, "suppose we begin with our most eligible bachelor acquaintances. For instance our architect, the man who designed our present abode, the Hon. Colonel George Ashton."

Lizzie gave a visible start on hearing that well-remembered name spoken.

"He is, at present, one of our local lions," continued Algeron. "He came to California about seven years ago, and to-day he is one of the wealthiest men in San Francisco. He commenced with a hand saw and plane, they say, and worked himself up. He has just been elected to the State Senate, has been a member of the city council, and is one of the finest stump orators I ever listened to. But, if report is to be credited, he is said to be an incorrigible woman-hater."

What was there in a name after a lapse of seven years, that should cause Lizzie to tremble so? Was it with emotion of pleasure, or of pain that she now recalled that last interview with George Ashton, prior to her marriage with the late Dr. Perks? Whatever was the nature of the emotion, she strove to conceal them by lowering her head lower upon the envelope on which, with a trembling hand, she was inscribing the name.

She would like to have asked some questions, but she felt her position to be embarrassing to do so, and so she wisely refrained. She was satisfied she would learn all in good time.

The evening at length arrived for the "house warming" of the new house, and with it came the blushing Lizzie, who, with her widowed weeds, sat at the head of the table, and observed the various arrivals. She was curious only as to one person, and that was the Colonel Ashton,

alluded to by Algeron on the night of addressing the invitations. At length the magical name was mentioned, and her eyes wandered eagerly in the direction of the new arrival.

She beheld a handsome florid faced man of thirty, of a portly and dignified figure, richly but not showily dressed. The mere mention of his name created an immediate sensation, and Algeron hurried to introduce him to the ladies and gentlemen present. It was evident that he was esteemed as an individual of more than ordinary importance; but was he really the George Ashton she had formerly known? She thought at one moment she could detect a resemblance, and then she decided she could not. If it were he, he had certainly altered in eight years more than any person she had ever known.

At length they approached the spot where she was standing, and Algeron introduced him.

"Mrs. Perks—Col. Ashton." At the mention of her name, the Colonel started back, and pressed both hands to his forehead, as one who had received a sudden blow. For an instant his florid face was the color of marble. Then the blood came rushing back from the heart, and one instant he grasped the arm of Algeron for support. The shock of recognition was but momentary, and he rallied himself almost immediately.

"Lizzie—Lizzie Leigh! Can it be possible?"

And he extended both his hands to welcome her.

Algeron looked surprised, but discreetly withdrew and left them. Lizzie gave her hands tremblingly. She could not control her voice to speak, and George Ashton, for it was indeed he, drew her to a spot where a convenient window screen obscured them from general observation.

"Lizzie, how is this that I have heard of you thus unexpectedly?—and if my do not greatly deceive me, you have met with some recent bereavement? Who is it? Tell me all that has happened. I have not heard a word from Grassdale since I left it."

"We quitted the town a few months after you, George," answered Lizzie, in a subdued voice and I have never visited the place since. My mother and husband are both dead, and eighteen months ago I came to California with Mr. Purdy's family, where I have remained ever since."

"Can it be possible we have been living for eighteen months so near together and we do not know it?—no, feel the mesmeric influence of your presence? Oh, Lizzie! and to think of the void that has been my heart through all these years. You remember our last interview in Grassdale, when with almost a cry of agony you bade me go from you? I was stronger than you to will, and I went—went forth into the bleak and cheerless world with out one ray of hope, one rainbow gleam of promise. I have toiled, thought and struggled. I have made the accumulation of wealth an especial study, and gold has poured in upon me, bringing with it social and political influence. Till recently I have persistently avoided the opposite sex, not because I disbelieved in the virtue and goodness of woman, but because there was no room in my heart to set up another idol. I loved you, and have never ceased to love you from that hour. Ah, oh, Lizzie! all of these unsatisfied years of existence have imparted to me one important lesson—never put off till to-morrow what you would wish done to-day. I have not altered in my sentiments, Lizzie. I want you to be my wife! Will you refuse me?"

He held her hands, but Lizzie did not attempt to withdraw them. Their marriage was not delayed and George Ashton often says of his sweet wife in pleasantry: "She followed me to California!"

Texts stilling: Jones—So poor Brown is dead. What a worthy man he was. McCusick—I should say he was worthy. Left \$70,000, didn't he?

He eats restaurant hash.

Pallette (to artist)—Quill, what do you mean by that word "line" which you apply to so many of your drawings? Quill—Well, old fellow, to be candid with you, it doesn't mean anything. It's merely a fancy name I put on to a picture very highly and wish to avoid hurting the painter's feelings.

Later Pallette (dislaying his latest creation of his pen)—How's that? Quill (forgetting himself)—O, my dear fellow, that's really fine!

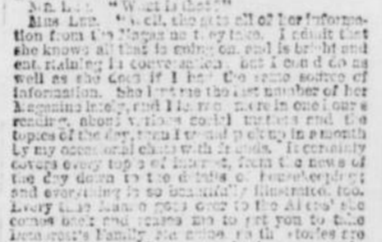


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