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# Gloverdale Mercantile Co.

## A QUESTION OF VALUE

Continued from first page.

women are on the gallery by themselves.

Johnny Duval marches right up and apologizes for losin' his patience.

Daphne shrugs her shoulders and says nothin'. But Mary looks at him with sympathy.

"It's pretty hard work to have to do twice on account of somebody's ignorance," she says.

Johnny looks at Mary, grateful.

Then Daphne boils over.

"You western men can do just one thing," she says, scornful. "You can work cattle with all the ridin' and other things that appertain. But put one of you back in civilization and you'd have to drive a dray for a livin'."

"Poor people have poor ways, but ain't that a honest way to make a livin'?" says Johnny and turns on his heel, spurs jinglin', and goes in the house.

I could see Mary was pleased plumb through.

The rest of us boys says nothin', and directly Mary goes out to a mesquite bush a few feet from the house and picks off a leaf.

She comes back to the foot of the gallery steps and says: "Somebody name this. I'm goin' to tell Miss Daphne's fortune."

Just then Smithson saunters out, and I says, "I've named it."

"Big house, little house, pigpen, kitchen," says Mary, pluckin' off a prong and throwin' it away with each "house."

"Big house, little house, pigpen,

kitchen."

"Big house, little house"—

"Mr. Smithson," I says.

"You're goin' to marry Mr. Smithson and live in a little house," says Mary, lookin' at Daphne and laughin'.

"That leaf had one too many prongs, I'm afraid," says Smithson. "How about it, Miss Donaldson?"

"Love," begins Daphne, toyin' with that chain of hers. "Love is like happiness and everything else—it has a relative value. It depends on who is in the 'little house.'" She gits up and goes to the door; then she stops.

"The 'little houses' where love exists," she says, lookin' straight at Smithson, "are more complete than the 'big houses' that are only for show and to keep pace with the bunch."

Then she walks in the house.

"I'd about as soon mine would come out 'pigpen' if it couldn't be 'big house.' I've lived in little houses and kitchens all my days," Mary says, with a sigh.

"You'll never know the relative value till you've tried both," says Smithson to Mary. When she has gone in the house, too, he turns to me.

"Women, my friend, are alike the world over," he says, sorter bitter. "But just the same we can't do without them."

"No, sir," I replies emphatic.

The next day that blamed little pitchin' "baby" horse of mine turns over with me and breaks my ankle, and breakin' that leg done for me what one of these here Japanese screens they set in the corner of the stage does for the show business.

They put me to bed in the east room, which has windows openin' on the front gallery, and because an invalid

is expected to go to sleep early I heard somethin' that night I never should have got on to otherwise.

The pain had got easy, and I was dozin' a little when voices waked me.

It was not light enough to see the faces, but a woman was speakin' when I commenced to listen.

"I suppose Elmer Stoner sent you out here, too?" she says.

"Yes," says the man, "but I'll swear to you I didn't know you were here until I was within five miles of the ranch."

"And then it was too late to turn back," she says.

"Not if I had known you were flirtin' with a cowpuncher who is far beneath you every way. And so soon!" he adds in a hard voice.

"The cowpuncher and that little Talbert person are wrapped up in each other, so your flirtation won't do you any good," she retorts.

"Oh, Harry," she goes on, "you only wanted to be rid of me!" And I hear her voice catch.

"Daphne, it's so like you, dear. You get a divorce from me, run away and hide, amuse yourself with another man and then lay the blame on me. Now I don't mind the blame," he says.

"God knows I've been lonely with out it, but I wonder if we could patch them up—our lives, you know. The little Talbert is a poor substitute for you."

I propped myself up on my elbow.


A big, round, red moon was just peepin' over the edge of the world, and a man was leavin' against a post of the gallery with his arms around a woman, whose head was down on his shoulder.

"Anyhow," she says, dabbin' at her eyes with a little white speck of a

handkerchief, "there never was any one else and there never will be."

"We'll go home tomorrow," he says, soothin'.

The curtain ought to come down as they kiss, but there wasn't none, and that moon was so bright I just compromised by pullin' the sheet up over my head.



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