

MAMMY PLEASANT DEAD AT NINETY

Grief Over Ingratitude of Her Debtors Said to Have Hastened Her Death

Career of the Famous Colored Woman Who Has Been a Noted and Mysterious Character in San Francisco for Over Half a Century

"Mammy Pleasant, the weird and mysterious colored woman who has been a noted character in San Francisco since 1849, and wielded a strange influence the career and destinies of some of its best known citizens almost down to the present hour, is dead. She passed away at 10:55 o'clock yesterday morning at the home of L. M. Sherwood, 2751 Filbert street, where she had been living since November 19 last, and her remains will be interred in the Sherwood burial lot at Napa on Wednesday.

Even in the final days and death of this remarkable woman is found the dramatic element which for more than half a century was so strongly a part of her life and surroundings. Born nearly ninety years ago, old age was obviously a leading cause of her death, but those who have been near her bedside in the last few weeks declare that grief over the ingratitude of those she felt were her chief debtors greatly hastened her end, and that the primary cause of her death was a broken heart. In her long career "Mammy" Pleasant has handled many fortunes; has held property in her name, and claimed others valued at hundreds of thousands, but her affairs became so involved a few years ago that she was declared a bankrupt. Yet she still held interests in certain suits involving not less than \$150,000, and in the final settlement of her estate a very considerable

amount promises to be left for her heirs.

Several wills have been made at one time and another, disposing of these interests to those who have been regarded as her friends, but three weeks ago a final will was made, revoking all former wills and making such disposition of her property as will unquestionably come as a big surprise to those who have for a long time regarded themselves as her chosen heirs. Neglect on the part of those she felt had a right to depend upon and failure to keep promises caused her to brood and grieve throughout the days of her last illness and the revocation of her former wills and the making of a new disposition was the final result. Those who had been named in other wills were even as late as last night interesting themselves in the disposal of her affairs, and this announcement will be the first intimation they will receive that old "Mammy's" plans were changed in the past few weeks.

Litigation Will Continue. The litigation which has been characteristic of her career for the past dozen or more years promises to continue over her estate. More than one will undoubtedly be filed for probate, and since those who are the beneficiaries under prior documents are closely involved in other litigation in which she has wielded a great influence, the fight over the latest document is likely to be bitter. It can be said that the will last signed makes a totally different disposition

of the property from that generally counted upon by those who have been associated with the dead woman.

In connection with "Mammy" Pleasant's death, there are also charges that much of her personal property, kept in trunks and boxes, had disappeared during her last illness, previous to her being taken to the Sherwood home. In 1899 Mrs. Pleasant had a falling out with Mrs. Teresa Bell, over whom she had had a mysterious influence for many years and she was evicted from the Bell homestead, at Octavia and Bush streets. The residence was long known as the "House of Mystery" in connection with "Mammy" Pleasant's affairs, and where she lived for a quarter of a century.

From the Bell house "Mammy" Pleasant went to a flat at 2107 1/2 Webster street, and remained there until she was removed to the Sherwood home. There was also living there at the time of her removal Reginald Bell, second son of Thomas and Teresa Bell. Mrs. Pleasant had been ill much of the time for two years, leaving the house only in case of great emergency and rarely leaving her bed. Mrs. Sherwood, who had been a visitor at the house at frequent intervals, states that she found her last November in a sad state of neglect, needing even the necessities of life, and on that account took her to her own home. It is stated that number of people had keys to the house, in order that they might enter when Mrs. Pleasant was unable to personally admit them, and it is also stated that many articles, including clothing, jewelry, etc., had disappeared during the past few months.

Aided John Brown. To those of the present day and generation "Mammy" Pleasant's name is more particularly known in connection with the Bell estate and with the claims of Sarah Althea Hill against Senator Sharon, but her claim to notability goes back a good deal further. It was claimed by "Mammy" Pleasant to some of her most intimate friends that she furnished John Brown, the abolitionist, with \$30,000, which constituted, in the main, the fund which aided in the organization of his famous raid. "Mammy" was born in Philadelphia August 19, 1814, her father being a Kanaka and her mother a Louisiana negress. Her maiden name was Mary

E. Williams and her father was an importer of silks.

At 6 years of age she was placed with a family by the name of Hussey at Nantucket, and later moved to Boston, where she married James W. Smith, a wealthy Cuban. Smith was a friend of Garrison, Phillips and other well-known abolitionists, and before his death in 1844 he made his wife promise to devote a portion of the money left her in freeing the slaves. The greater part of his fortune consisted of bonds to the amount of \$45,000. In 1848 "Mammy" married John J. Pleasant, who had been an overseer for her former husband and soon after came to California around the Horn.

On the day of her arrival in San Francisco many of the wealthy merchants and mine owners participated in an auction of her services as a cook, and as high as \$500 a month was bid. She finally declined to agree to the arrangement, however, and opened a boarding house on Washington street, which was for years the leading boarding house in the city. Among those who lived at the place were the best-known men of San Francisco of that day, including Sharon, Newton Booth, Broderick, Terry and others equally famous.

In 1858 she returned East and met John Brown, with whom she had had considerable correspondence. She claimed that she had a meeting with Brown at Chatham, Canada, at which time she presented him with a Canadian draft for \$30,000. Brown was to organize the raid and "Mammy" was to work as an agitator among the slaves. She stated that the failure of the raid was due largely to the fact that Brown was premature, starting the attack before his forces were fully organized. On Brown's person at the time was found a note signed "W. E. P.," as it was supposed. Mrs. Pleasant claimed that the signature was "M. E. P.," the M signed by her giving the appearance of a W. After the failure of the raid Mrs. Pleasant returned to San Francisco.

The Bell and Sharon Case. "Mammy's" connection with the Bell and Sharon case is filled with mystery. There have been claims that she practiced voodoo rites in both cases. Stories were circulated of strange ceremonies in the Bell mansion, and in the Sharon case it was testified to that Sarah Althea, acting under "Mammy's" advice, went to a graveyard on a certain May day and planted in the ground a shirt and pair of socks belonging to the millionaire.

Mrs. Pleasant was the backer of Sarah Althea in her fight for the Sharon millions to the extent of many thousands of dollars, and after the death of Terry looked after the unfortunate woman during the early stages of her insanity, finally having her sent to Stockton. It has been claimed that the money paid out in the Sharon case came from the Bell estate. "Mammy" was housekeeper in the Bell home for many years and handled the money expended in running the household. After Bell's death she looked after his widow's business affairs.

When Bell died he was supposed to be worth \$10,000,000 at least. The appraisement reduced the amount to less than a quarter of that sum, and the litigation over the estate is still going on, with little show for even a few hundred thousands when final distribution is made. Bell died suddenly as the result of a fall over the banisters in his own house, and there was much talk at the time connecting "Mammy" with the affair, but nothing came of it. Later there was a mysterious assault on Fred Bell.

"Mammy" always seemed able to obtain an unlimited amount of money from the Bell estate. In the settling up of the Bell affairs deeds were found showing that the Bell homestead was actually in Mrs. Pleasant's name. She also made claim to diamonds and other jewelry in a safe-deposit box in the Donohoe-Kelly bank appraised at \$120,000, and the ownership is still a matter of litigation. "Mammy" claimed that she let the jewels out to those who desired to display them at functions.

"Mammy" Pleasant was supposed to be the guardian of more family skeletons than any person in San Francisco, but while it was believed she was connected with many questionable transactions, it was always asserted that she never betrayed a secret of even her worst enemy, either for gain or for revenge. After her breaking off with Mrs. Bell, it was supposed that the secret of her influence over the Bell homestead would be exposed, but all efforts to induce Mrs. Pleasant to talk failed. It is said that recently, when she was in great want, an offer was made to her of \$50,000 if she would subscribe to certain facts concerning a prominent San Francisco man over whom it was desired to hold a club to prevent threatened action on his part. She declined, with the remark that she had never needed money badly enough to betray a friend.

GAY AND FRISKY DANIEL

Lady Has Her Feelings Hurt by Him Trying to Kiss Her

If the Attempt Was Worth \$20,000, Says Daniel, What Is the Price of Kisses

A dispatch from Spokane, under date of Tuesday last, has the following story:

"R. T. Daniel, Cuban sugar planter and potentate of Spokane's burnt district, is painted in the light of a gay and frisky Lothario by charming Mrs. Louise Wright, his tenant, who is suing him for defamation of character. In an amended complaint filed in the superior court yesterday, Mrs. Wright charges that Mr. Daniel 'entered said lodging apartment and provoked and grossly insulted plaintiff, Louise Wright, by attempting to embrace and kiss her.'

"In this tale of woe, however, there is one gleam of sunshine. The complaint contains the comforting assurance that Daniel's attempt at love-making 'was instantly resented and rebuked' by Mrs. Wright. What she did to stave off Daniel's caresses dependent sayeth not. Like unto the serial story, the 'to be continued' sign is put in the most interesting place.

"In Mrs. Wright's first complaint she merely alleged defamation of character, and intimated that about \$10,000 would soothe her ruffled feelings, and restore her standing in the com-

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munity. Now, however, that she recalled Daniel's attempt to spoor with her, Mrs. Wright doubles her figures and demands \$20,000, which increase is likely to cause Daniel to raise his rents in the lava beds.

"The new complaint alleges that Daniel's amatory stunt was done before he wrote the letter which furnished the basis of the first action. In that letter Daniel accused Mrs. Wright of transforming her apartment into a veritable bedlam during unseasonable hours of the night greatly to the annoyance of the other lodgers. The new complaint makes it quite apparent that the plaintiff's case will be that Daniel, being instantly resented and rebuked' in his love-making, wrote the letter to get even."

The Excitement Not Over. The rush to the drug store still continues and daily scores of people call for a bottle of Kemp's Balsam for the Throat and Lungs for the cure of Coughs, Colds, Asthma, Bronchitis and Consumption. Kemp's Balsam, the standard family remedy, is sold on a guarantee and never fails to give entire satisfaction. Price 25c and 50c.

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