

THE EVENING NEWS.

Tuesday, December 5, 1871.

THE GHOST OF RUSSIAN HILL.

[CONTINUED.]

They went with her to take possession of it. Mr. Evans and Mr. Harley, the latter carrying the baby, Witty. What with one busy preparation and another, the day had waned, and evening was drawing on when they started. It was a long, toiling path up Pacific street, and then, taking a winding path over the brow of the hill, and descending a little on the side that fronts the Golden Gate, they stood before the cottage. It was a little one-story place, with a garden in front full of rank, overgrown geraniums and trailing Australian vines, straggling on either side the straight and woody path.

"This can all be done up nicely, you know," said Mr. Harley, cheerfully. "There was no time for it before you came in. It has been a long day, and I am tired."

Mrs. Addie covered in the same cheerful spirit, she was so grateful for them that she did not show any regret. But as she was crossing the porch to enter the door way, a shivering chill struck her that it was impossible to describe or account for. The house was not dark. Those kind friends had had it lighted; a lamp burned on the table; a fire blazed in the open grate; what could have given her that shivering chill? The children, however, made amends for her silence, for they were loud in their delighted comments on the new house, and their surprise at its old furniture.

The room was a small, square apartment, with an open grate and a front and back window. Its floor was covered with checked matting, and there were two or three curiously carved rug laid over it. Besides a scarlet sofa and two large chairs, much worn and faded, were some tiny Chinese tables, and a little cabinet placed on one of them. To the right a door opened into a smaller room, containing only a bed and an old walnut clothes-dress. Out of that was a larger room, built sideways and in the shape of the letter L. It had two French windows and a cheerful outlook cityward. A small kitchen completed the house.

"Being night, it looks a little dull," observed Mr. Evans, as they went through the rooms, "and smells earthy; but that's owing to its having been shut up so long. The very air seemed close and heavy; and Mrs. Addie thought it might be that which caused her strange oppression of spirit. Everything needed for their comfort was at hand, and the gentlemen departed leaving grateful hearts behind them.

The days went on, and the feeling of oppression, as Mrs. Addie expressed it, wore lighter by degrees, but she always had a sense of it more or less. Only when she was at work she did not so much feel it. Her kind friends had exerted themselves to get her plenty of work; it was hard to find, but she had help, and got reconciled to it. The little room leading off the parlor was made a play-room for her children; it was lined with carved chairs; the large, curiously shaped room was made the bed-chamber.

So she worked, and prospered; and began to put by a nice little sum every month toward repaying Mr. Evans and the other gentlemen what they had advanced to her. Her expenses were not large. The rent of the house was remarkably low, and she sometimes wondered at it, hoping that Mr. Evans was not paying part of it himself in secret. He said he was not, but she could not help fearing it. They had no near neighbors; but further down toward the Laguna was a settlement of Spanish people, whose children would come up and peep curiously through the garden rails. That their home had been inhabited by Spaniards, who must have quitted it in a hurry, was evident, for the furniture was all Spanish.

When it first was Mrs. Addie could never distinctly trace or recollect that she heard her children alone to some one they called "the lady." She grew accustomed to hear them talk of her; but when she at length asked an explanation of who the lady was, there seemed to be some mystery in their answers. The children only saw the lady at "moments," they said; they would look up from their play and see her by them, and when they looked again she'd be gone, they said. She was a very old girl, a most intelligent child.

"Does she come into the garden, Nancy?" asked Mrs. Addie of her eldest girl, a most intelligent child. "She comes indoors as well, mamma."

"Comes in doors as well! What does she say?"

"She never speaks at all," was Nancy's answer. "Mamma, she just comes and goes like the shadows in the garden."

This was very strange. That it was some person from the Spanish settlement at the Laguna who came up to look after her children, she was sure of it. The next leisure hour she had she walked out that way, taking Nancy, and bidding her point out the lady if she saw her. Mrs. Addie did not altogether like the idea of a stranger's entering her home at will without asking her leave.

It was a bright, sunny afternoon, and all the Spanish people seemed to be outside their cluster of huts enjoying it. The women were sewing, the children playing. Mrs. Addie walked along, exchanging pleasant looks and nods with those who passed, as if in an unsophisticated place like San Francisco, and they nodded and smiled back again.

"Do you see the lady, Nancy?" she asked in a low tone, as they walked on.

"No, mamma, I can't see her anywhere."

All at once, as it were, Mrs. Addie became aware of a certain curiosity in the manner and looks of those people as they regarded her, far beyond the natural curiosity excited by strangers. It was as she afterwards expressed it, an over-struck curiosity; they gazed at her as though she were a rare wild animal.

"Muy Mala casa," she distinctly heard, and the speaker had her eyes fixed to her home on Russian Hill. Mrs. Addie had caught up enough of Californian Spanish to know that it meant "very bad house."

A small bright-eyed "senora" with two children at her side, leaned against her little gate, looking both curiously and excitedly. Mrs. Addie stopped and asked, in a mixture of tongue that might have made any one laugh to hear her, why they stared at her so, and what was amiss with her or her house.

To be continued.

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