

WPA Alabama Writers Project
Short Stories/Sketches by:
Adelaide Rogers, Montgomery

Allen Turpin (colored)
Montgomery, Alabama

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Montgomery, Alabama

NEVER NO MORE

An ex-farmer who loves the Bible... an ex-preacher who loves the farm is Allen Turpin, the Negro janitor at the Agudath Israel Synagogue in Montgomery.

Seventy-one years old, Allen has been married five times. He maintains however that he has never had but one wife and that one was Matilda, the mother of his eight children.

Allen's first and "only real wife" died forty years ago, the nineteenth of last December. But he can see Matilda as plainly now, he says wistfully, as though they parted only yesterday. He and Matilda had been married thirteen years when she died of child-birth pneumonia, in Russell County near Hurtsboro, Alabama. Something went out of him when she died, Allen remarked simply, and he has never felt the same since about anything. "But you can't give up," the old man opined, "as long as others weaker than yourself is looking to you for help. Hearts break ...but they keep on beating. And we can't quit until they does. Of course I had my children. After Matilda died I lived for them and my farm. I had never done anything else then but farm. I love a farm.

"The happiest and best life a man is ever to know in this world waits on a farm. From the time the birds begin twittering at the break of dawn, until the first shadows of night fall in the evening, there is something to do-on a farm. That's why lazy people never likes to farm. It's not the place for them that wants to set and

Henry Baymore (Colored)
39 Suda Street.
Montgomery, Ala.

By Adelaide Rogers
511 South Hill St.
Montgomery, Alabama.

"GAB'UL, CHUNE DAT HAMP!"

Uncle Henry Baymore, who lives at 39 Suda Street, Montgomery, Alabama, says he has been fo'casting so long he can't exactly remember when he began telling fortunes as a business. 9

A tall dark Negro, with gray woolly hair and bushy white eyebrows that drape themselves above his large, direct, and singularly honest eyes, Uncle Henry admits rather sheepishly that he is going on seventy five years old. He says he almost worked himself to death in his early life, trying to farm on shares, and trying to please white folks.

Now, instead of white folks working him, he works white folks.

"Yessum," Uncle Henry insisted respectfully, but with twinkling eyes.

"I got more white customers what wants to see into de futture, den cullud ones.

"Most of my cullud customers wants to conjure somebody. Dey comes to me on account I'se de man fur dat. But de white folks patronizin' Uncle Henry, is anxious to know about money ...how kin dey keep what dey got ... or git a holt to somebody else's. Or if t'ain't money dey's inquirin' about its property...

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Is dey gwiner inherit dat house dey craves, or is ole Aunt Lucy gwiner up an' leave it to somebody else - after all?

"Look Uncle Henry, ' dey 'low, 'peer in yo' glass an' see kin you spy out what she's intendin' fur to do wid all dat money. It's a shame fur hit to go to somebody else after my visits an' 'tentions to de ole lady. T'ain't right, Uncle. Dere ought to be some way I kin fence off de others. An' if dey is sich a way - an' you p'int it out to me, - I might give you five dollars."

Uncle Henry paused to emit a chuckle. "Five dollars?" I says. "Why, Chile, it ain't a goin' to cost a cent under ten dollars fur me to see who yo' Aunt Lucy is gwiner leave her money, an' diamonds an' houses to. No'm, not a cent under ten dollars. My eyes is gittin' ole lak de res' of me. It ain't he'p 'em none, neiver, strainin' to see dem dim shapes in my crystal goblet, or my sperit glass. So if you can't 'fode ten dollars, fur a lil supernat'chal info'mation, dey property, jus' hafta go to somebody else. Dat usually gets 'em, " he added craftily, "an' dey'll more 'en likely come back to hand over de cash."

"One lady useter come to see me all de time, tryin' to find out when her husband ain fur to die. 'Don't you worry yo' se'f, Chile', I says finally, 'Dat man ain't studin' 'bout dyin'. He'll live a long time yit. A long time. I kin see him hyah twenty yers fum now.'

"Well sir, she bust out cryin! 'Oh Uncle Henry, ' she sob. 'I needs

de insu'ance. I needs it bad. Can't you do no better'n dat? I thought she since I been givin him dem heart draps you could see him failin'. Look ergin Uncle. Hebbe you kin notice him weakenin'.' I look ergin, a long steady gaze. Den I says.' No'm, I still sees him goin' strong twenty yers fua now. Only you ain't wid him. He's ma'ied to somebody else. Young an' frisky as a colt. But you must'n feel bad over dat. He thinks a lot of you. I sees him goin' to de cemetery mos' ev'y week.

'Deed I do.'

"Wid dat she screams an' says I'se er imp'tant ole debbil, an' dat she 'blige to repo'te me fur sassin' her. 'No'm, you ain't', I 'low. 'You'se goin' home dis ebenin', an' you ain't goin' to feel good. You is goin' to stay in bed a few days. You ain't well now. An' by tomorow you can't keep nuffin on yo' stummick. You'll stay in bed a spell an' you won't never be up no more'. An' she wahnt. No'm, she went to bed wid a nervous sickness, I heard, an' was down three munts. Den she tuc' de flu an' pass right out. I read dat in de papers. I wuzn't sorry neiver. Repo'te me indeed! Huh! Heart draps fur to git dat insu'ance! He's a good man too. I meets him on de street sometims. He's a heap better off wid de second wife. Only he don't go to de cemetery regular at all. I jus' tole dat to make her feel good. But Law! 'Stead of cheerin' her up hit went an' kilt her. Wimmen is cu'is dat way. Mighty cu'is. Dey ain't got no common sense in dey feelin's. Not a speck.

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"Ole maids what never had a beau - an' never will - comes an' ax me can't I see a man in dey life. Dey say, 'Uncle Henry, I's mighty lonesome. I want you to see fur me. I wants you to do de bes' you kin fur me'. Yessum dey does. Dey she does. So I looks in mah glass, but nuffin shows up 'cept a misty cloud effect perduced by dey troubled thoughts. Inso much as dat ain't what dey wants, dey's pow'ful disappointed. But I's heplless Miss. I's heplless. 'Cause you know if dey can't see no man settin' in dey parlor or on dey front po'ch. how is I gwiner find one in a glass er water? But wimmens don't think about lil things lak dat. Dey wants Uncle Henry, to see all de things fur dem - in a crystal goblet what dey carries in dey minds. An' cose dat ain't possible. No'm, it sho ain't. I kin see heaps er things in mah glasses, but I can't glimpse no beaux fur dem sisters whats pushin' on to fifty. Dey ain't much lef' fur dem 'cept to learn how to read. Dat's a good peaceful diversion. I tole some of 'em dat. But dey say, dey kin already, read anyhow. An' ax me how come I talks sich imp'itent² ole nigger foolishness to white ladies.

"I 'low I don't know no better way, to talk. So dey hafta s'cuse it. Den dey laff an' goes home an' sends some friends fur to git dey fortunes tele. Dey comes in droves at times, an' den again I hardly has a one. As a rule, dou', I averages about a hund'ed dollars a munt fum soofsayin' alone. Dat's not countin' what I makes on mah powders. Yessum, I sells conjures, an' good luck powders too.

Mos' of my powder business is wid cullud people. Dey is great on powders. Especially, dat Get-Away Powder what comes fum Memphis. Dey 'low dey can't do widout dat. Some lak de Charm-You Powder too. An' de Young Blush Powder what I gits in New Orleans is mighty pop'lar. De widows buys me out er dat fas' as I steck up on hit. Widows is wile about Young Blush. But dey loves sumpin else better. Dey's only one thing a widow will go widout her sumpin-teet to buy, an' dat's Adam an' Eve Root. Yessum, er widow is gviner have dat Adam an' Eve root if she hafta go to jail fur hit. Water runs down hill ... grass grows up'ards ... an' widows is gviner be widows.

"I ain't never got along so good wid widows. Dat's how come I ain't a preacher. I started out fur to be a preacher once. An' while I was ^{not} to preach I read de Bible. I see in de Bible whar hit say fur Ministers to keep deyse'f unspotted fum de worl'. Den hit say to visit de widows. Yessum, hit say bofe er dem things. But if you is ever been acquainted wid any widows you knows a preacher can't visit 'em an' keep his-se'f unspotted. Hit can't be did. So I give up de preachin', an' went back to farmin' on shares an' to singin' all day while I hoed out de cotton rows in de fields.

"Mistis, is you ever heard darkies singin' while dey picks cotton, or chops out de Johnson grass, or drives pilin' along a wharf, or a railroad track? Ain't it de mournfulness sound you ever is heard? Yessum, hit's de echo of all

sorrow livin' er dead dat walks de earf. White folks fall over each other goin' to hear de Jubilee Singers Swing Low in day, Sweet Chariots. But I never listens no no' to darbies sing. I'se done wade over Jordan an' I's had enough.

"De bes' one er dem spiritual hymns is Nobody Knows de Trouble I's Seen. Dat's mah favorite I reckon. Hit's mah good luck song too. You know ev'ybody has a good luck song an' a bad luck song. If you sings yo' bad luck song, you gwiner sink lower an' lower. While de swing of yo' good luck song will sorter insinerate itse'f into all you does, an' gradually promote you into prospere'ty.

"Yessum, I was singin' Nobody Knows one day, an' pilin' cross ties on a flat car, when a passel er Gipsies pass in one er dem ole fashion vans. Dey stop to watch us work, an' after a while de Chief he say to me. 'Come over here Black Man. I got some talk fur you.' Cose I wanted to hear what kind of talk hit was dat could make a white man call a nigger away, fum his work. So I tole de boys to kneck off fur a hour. Bein' de fo'man I could do dat you know. Den I went up to de Gipay van. Hit was plumb full er chillun, dawgs, an' half starved, thievish lookin' mens an' wimmens dat lef' de van an' spill out on de grass when dey see me draw near.

"All right Boss man, I say to de Chief, 'what kind er talk you got fur me? 'Pears lak you are sellin' sumpin or you wouldn't be so friendly wid cullud folks. Lemme see some samples of what you got.

"Sho nuff dey was sellin' all kinds er lil trinkets, an' medicines to heal ev'rything fum ole age to te malaria-fluensa. Dey was tellin' fortunes too. An' dat's what kotch me. Yessum, dey tole mine. Hit come pretty straight too. An' dey only charge me fo'bits. Dey charge de others six bits dou^{gh} on account of dey wasn't so important as me.

"De gipay Chief an' I talk as one head to another, an' while us dispose de topics of de times. I notice dat his lef' foot was swole, an' mighty red. He say hit ^{it} was de remains of a ole lockjaw attack, an' dat he didn't hope fur to git no better. Well, I tole him how to heal up dat 'fected foot. Yessum, I give him directions how to mix an' brew Jimson root, Pennyroyal leaves, sage, an' foxglove, an' to seak his foot in dat till hits well ergin. I tole him hit couldn't fail, 'cause hit never had. An' he was sho thankful. No'm, he didn't pay me nothin' - sactly, but he taught me how to tell fortunes. An' I's been independent ever since.

"I quit leadin' cross-ties, an' move to Montgomery, whar I open a lil shop as Herbdctor., Fortune-teller, an' Cunjure-man. I soon stop feelin' wid herbs ^{gh} dou'. Dey wahn't nuff money in dat fur me. Niggers won't pay, but half dollar fur no herb medicine. But dey'll open' five or ten dollars fur to git somebody cunjured. Dey'll go on payin' too, munt after munt, yer after yer fur to keep dat spell fasten on some po'pussen what dey hates. I has cunjure cases dat's been runnin' fifteen yers er mo', an' dey ain't out yit. In fac' a good cunjure case never is

out as long as de engager an got de money to pay. I has a nice lil income out of de palsy, rheumatic pains, chills an' fever, coughin' fits, an' sudden misery what I sends on folks to pacify dey enemies. Besides all dat, I charge fifty cents a week to keep de sickness on 'em after hit's once ketch hold.

"No'm, I don't look at hit dat way. Dis is mah perffession. Hit ain't no no wrong den a lawyer acceptin' money to keep a crook, or a murderer fum bein' 'lectecuted; or a doctor curin' some mean ole debbil dat ought to die anyhow. I's done some hawn I reckon. But I'se done some good too. I'se done a heap er good in fac' er dey wouldn't be gittin' ready fur me up in Heaben.

"Dey's makin' a place fur me on Golden Row in Heaben. Yessum, I's done got de word, An' I'se fixin mah affairs so's I kin slip right out an' not trouble nobody but de angles. I's been a widderer twenty yers. But I'se got two daughters in de country. I done lef one er dem mah fo' pos' bed, an' de pink silk cover you sees on it now, an' mah quilts over dar in de clawset. She gits de rockin' chers too. An' mah picture dat I had enlarge las' Ap'ul. I gwiner leave her some ins'urance too. An' a nice carpet, an' all mah cookin' pots an' pans, an' all de money I got in de bank. Hit 'pears so Christian lak fur a man to leave property to his daughter instead er willin' it to some fas' piece - er a wuffless widow. So I am leavin what I got to mah oldest an' bes' daughter.

"To mah other daughter I's willin' de hat-rack you sees out yonder

in de hall, as a reminder she ain't never hang her hat in mah house since she went outer hit wid dat no-count gamblin' nigger fum Wilcox county. I'se had a fancy motto painted to leave her too; 'bout de serpent's toof an' de thankless chile. Dat's sho gwiner rile her temper. Sorter wish I could be aroun' fur to watch her rah an' pitch. Mebbe I'll see hit anyhow. Dey might has front seats in Heaben fur dem what wants to gase down on dey relatives while de wille dey lef' is read out to 'em.

"But I 'spec when all dat is takin' place I'll be flyin' 'roun, testin' mah bran' new wings to make sho dey didn't fit me out a size dats way too small fur me. I's a big man an' I needs a big pair er wings. I wants ev'yt'ing big aroun' me in Heaben. Dis lil fo' room stucco house seem big to me when I fust come into hit. Now hits too small. I wants a big house in Heaben. I'm sho to have it too, or dey wouldn' be workin' droves er angles day, an' night buildin' mah house. Dey's gittin' mah harp ready, too. Jus' t'other day, I hear ole Mr. Peter de boss man say, 'Gab'ul, chune dat harp fur Uncle Henry. S'posen he comes sudden lak, an' his harp ain't ready? Lawd hep us! Y'all triflin' critters wish den you had step mo' lively. Y'all will 'tend to yo' business mo' prompt I'se thinkin', when Henry's byah to keep his eye on de back alleys er Heaben. I can't watch ev'ybody, all de time, an' y'all jus' natchelly, takes advantage.

"In case I'se busy doin' suspin else when Henry, buz de bell, lemme / 3

know at once, ' Mr Peter say, 'So's I can meet mah frien' at de gate. An' you
Notifias, 'he says to a super /angel-/flunky, 'see to hit dat you 'nounces Uncle
Henry correct when he enters de po'tals. You clap yo' han's fur 'tention, an'
you say, "W'lord ... Mr. Peter an' Paul ... ladies an' gent'man of de Heabenly,
hosts, I presents Uncle Henry, Bayamo' of Montgomery, Alabama. Receive him as nice
as you know how.. An' do what you kin to make him feel at home. He's a great an'
good man. Den you, Sanctifies, what's got to approve de motion, you say, "Amen to
dat!" An' de measure an carried, makin' Uncle Henry, a full fledge citizen of de
Celestial township known to ig'nant mortals as de Heabenly Home."

"He'n, I don't have no particular regret at leavin dis wicked ole sin-
soaked worl'." Uncle Henry's glance fell condescendingly on the three apparently
well to-do, well educated, well meaning white ladies whose future he had discerned
for them through the tall glass of clear water he kept on a table near a window
curtained in crisp, pink organdy drapes.

He knew they regarded him as a foolish, meandering old Negro, paid
to say, so much - and no more. He knew they would laugh at him when they went away.
He had no more doubt of that than ^{of} their return. For sooner or later, all of Uncle
Henry's clients come back, bringing a friend or two along for company. All are
there obviously, to find out something. One is concerned about her health. Another
fears financial losses. Others have enemies who are working against them.

Can Uncle Henry see a dark - or a light woman - stirring up mischief in any quarter? Uncle Henry can. He always sees something. And the information he produces is often uncannily correct. Occasionally a mild sensation is created by some announcement from the unaffectedly ^{naive} ~~naive~~ seer. But generally the ^{Seances} ~~seances~~ are uneventful in character. Sometimes those waiting in the meagerly furnished hall that serves as a reception room, will hear suppressed tittering ⁱⁿ ~~from~~ the sanctum beyond. When this happens, Uncle Henry is intensely pleased. There is no effort on his part to amuse. But he would rather his clients left in a good humor than in a mood of depression.

Invariably affable, and ever ready to reply to questions concerning other individuals, Henry is particularly adept at evading any query designed to reveal certain past activities of his own.

The first inquiry, he will feign to misunderstand. When the interrogations persist, he undergoes a complete loss of memory; cannot recall just where he came from, or what the exact circumstances were that attended his leaving. Some there are among his own race who say that years ago Henry was in trouble - big trouble - in Texas. They claim he ran away from Texas - for reasons wisely kept to himself; and that his name is not Henry Baymore, but Henry White. They say, too, that Henry's best and oldest daughter is a vagary of his imagination. (It is so Christian-like for a man to leave property to his daughter.)

Henry's friends and neighbors also maintain that his dislike of widows is due to his having married a young woman who had had two previous husbands. She left Henry, they assert, and is living with another man in Dallas county. It is she - they say - who will come in to Henry's money when he dies. Those have seen the widow-in-waiting, picture her as a fairly young, "small-built", neat, yellow woman, with a good disposition, and some book learning. They say she didn't get along with Henry, because she couldn't stand "dat mumbo-jumbo conjure stuff."

According to Henry's claim however, there is no truth in the story. He says his enemies wanted to fix up a "scandiculous" tale on him, so they "ma'ied him off to a widow. "Folks is 'bliged to have entertainmint," he avers. "An' fishin' in somebody's trouble-pond gives 'em no' recreation at less outlay, den anything else dey kin do. Tongue weggin' is de cheapest an' nos' usef^uless spo'te dey is. Hit lets off de excess steam dat mean folks totes aroun' inside."

With sound psychological reason Uncle Henry, believes every one should have something to be proud of - and something to look forward to, just as he is anticipating his residence in the big house of blue and white marble that is being prepared for him on Golden Row in Heaven.

"Whenever dey sees a good man on earf gittin' ready, to jine 'em above, ole Mr. Peter he say, 'Jacob, men' dat ladder. I wants hit done today. Elijah, you take

den bears back whar dey b'longs. Den't you lemme see 'em in hyah no no'. Moses
fetch yo' book. You ain't got no time to was'e hittin' dat rock, or readin'
commandints. Us got to pull a lil pep into dis reception committee. Solomon, spruce
up yo' wisecracks. David, whar dem gals you run across at de night club? 'Phone 'em
to git ready fur to meet Uncle Henry. Crowa-boy, step up dem alterations! Henry'll
be hyah mos' any minute now.... Ga'bul chune dat harp. 'Fears to me hit done bust
a string. Now Den'l, you look see if Henry ain't on de way.'

"Yas Lawd, I's comin'."

AG.

Mrs. Ellen B. Blanchard (White)
409 High Street
Montgomery, Alabama
(Housekeeper)

Adelaide Rogers
Montgomery County

MRS. BLANCHARD, PROFESSIONAL MOTHER

"Well... if you think you'll be contented here with me and the children and our pets, I'll be glad to rent you the room, at ten dollars a month. I believe - all things considered - that's a fair price. The room is nice and light and is convenient to the bath; it has a fireplace, as you saw, and a large closet. And as there is nobody here during the day but me, you won't be disturbed while you are writing. When I am not at my mother's, I usually sit in here and sew or read, until the children come in a little after five. My daughter, Frances works at the Capital, and my son is with an insurance company.

"No, I haven't a job now. My children say its my turn to stay at home and rest and enjoy myself, while they work and take care of me. I did have a job though, as assistant housekeeper at the Ashley Hotel. I was there fifteen years. Before that I was a stenographer in the Department of Public Welfare when Mrs. Bush was its Director.

"Girls didn't take business courses when I was young as they do now. So I didn't learn typing and stenography until after I had been married for some time. In fact I have never attempted much of anything until I got married. That marked a turning point in my life. Oh must you go? I thought maybe you would sit awhile and talk. People who live in the same house ought to know each other real well. And there's nothing like a good long talk for getting acquainted with somebody. Oh you will stay for awhile? That's fine! I get awfully lonesome sometimes, staying so much by myself. I'm the sort that likes company. I like to see folks happy too, and comfortable.

"You are not close enough to the fire. Try this slumber-chair with

the cushions. My son gave me that on my birthday. He is the sweetest boy in the world to his mother. I declare! I do believe I have the best children in the world. Sometimes I think the Lord blessed me that way particularly, to make up for other things. You know I am not with my husband. We separated when the children were quite small. I live entirely for them. And outside of my home I have little interest.

"I didn't go to college. My father was well-to-do, but after I graduated from High School, I decided I'd just stay at home and help my mother with the housekeeping. In that way I'd learn how to manage a home of my own, and be more certain of making a success of marriage.

"Somehow I never had any doubt that I would marry. I had too many beaux for one thing, to stay single. You can ask anybody who knew me in those days if Ellen Weaver wasn't the prettiest and most popular girl in her crowd. I was a nice girl, too, and to this day I haven't any patience with those who say a girl can't be popular and decent at the same time.

"Other popular girls sometimes wondered if they would ever marry, but I never had any doubts on that subject. I just felt within myself that I was cut out to be happily married. I felt too, that while a few 'happy marriages' might be made in Heaven, the majority were planned for and attained, just like any other successful achievement. So I made up my mind that when I did fall in love, I'd use my head as well as my heart. 'No rich, pampered, society idlers for me,' I said to myself. And my father encouraged me in the idea.

"We thought that money was synonymous with dissipation, and that rich men's sons were invariably worthless. And since my family repeatedly cautioned me against the folly of marrying an attractive ne'er-do-well, I never permitted myself to become deeply interested in any of the frivolously fashionable young gentlemen of my acquaintance.

"I realize now that when I met Mr. Fenton, I was already prepared to fall in love with him.

"He wore overalls, and as he stood surveying an old brick wall, into which he meant to blast an opening for the building of his repair shop, I thought him the handsomest, most manly, and most fascinating person I had ever seen.

"Through inquiries, I learned that Topsy Fenton was not merely a mechanic, who wielded a pick. He was a wizard with machinery, and an inventor of sundry articles indispensable to the operating of numerous factories and plants throughout the country. In short he was a genius, who would go places, or 'amount to something' as we said in those days when every diamond in the rough was expected to 'make a mark in the world.'

"Well, Mr. Fenton was in the rough all right, but the diamond side turned out to be phoney. It was such a good imitation however, that I didn't discover its falseness for a long time. ~~Strange~~ to say, no one else did either. Everybody liked Mr. Fenton and believed in him. And since many of his friends were mine also, an introduction (which was then a necessary formality) was easily arranged, and almost before I realized what was taking place, a whirlwind courtship was in progress.

"For six months Mr. Fenton treated me like a queen.

"At home, nothing was too good for 'Cissie,' as I was called by my family, and Mr. Fenton made us all believe this consideration would continue. Only my father was a little suspicious; a little doubtful that Mr. Fenton's flamboyant plans would ever materialize.

"'Cissie,' he said to me a day or so before the wedding. 'I don't exactly dislike Mr. Fenton, but somehow he is just too good to be true.'

"'He is just a little too pleased with himself. Those inventions of his strike me as being a little too marvelous. And his plans for you are a shade too perfect. That fellow is entirely too, too too. I hate to

say it Cissie, but I distrust Mr. Fenton. Suppose you postpone the wedding, and I'll give you a nice little trip to New York, or Milwaukee, or maybe take you to visit your Aunt Millie in Dallas.'

"It was Sunday morning, and my father and I, after a late breakfast, were loitering at the table in our big, old fashioned dining-room, where a fire crackled and glowed on the hearth, and a canary-bird chirped so loud and incessantly that we could hardly hear ourselves speak.

"Though it happened so long ago, I remember perfectly the ~~expectant~~ hopeful look on his face as he waited for my reply.

"I told him I loved Mr. Fenton, because he was a man who did things. And that I would marry him at the time we had agreed upon, and go with him to the ends of the earth.

"For an instant my father seemed on the verge of weeping; but after a moment or two, he made some casual comment and then left the room.

"I stayed on, I remember, to finish a second waffle. And about eleven o'clock, Mr. Fenton and I went to a service at the old Court Street Methodist Church, where we heard a sermon on the rapidly increasing evil of divorce, which would eventually, if it remained unchecked, shatter the stability of the American home.

"When the sermon ended, we sang 'How Firm a Foundation', and as the strains of the inspiring old hymn died away, I felt certain of only one thing in all the universe, and that was the permanency of my happiness with Thomas Fenton. Other homes might be broken ... other couples estranged by the rising tide of too easy divorce. But Mr. Fenton was so different from the average man, that I had no fears on his account. I knew our union would be indissoluble.

"We were married the following Thursday at four o'clock in the afternoon. My dress was Alice-blue silk, and I carried a bouquet of pink rosebuds and lilies-of-the-valley.

"An improvised altar had been arranged in the group of bay windows in our living room, and here the double ring ceremony was performed. My sister was the only attendant. She wore a fawn colored - I mean beige - silk dress, and looked, better, I thought, than anyone else at the wedding. My mother wore black taffeta, and cried softly throughout the ceremony. None of Mr. Fenton's people were there.

"As soon as the minister concluded the benediction, the company surged forward to kiss the bride. And amid such banal queries as 'Well, Mrs. Fenton, how do you think you will like being married?' we drifted into the dining room. There, our old Negro servant and her nephew (who had been borrowed for the occasion) served us a supper of chicken salad and beaten biscuit, fruit compote, charlotte russe with lady-fingers, salted almonds, and wine.

"On the table, that was covered with a lace cloth, was the bride's cake, and my grandmother's silver candle-sticks with lighted pink tapers. Pink candles shed their light from the mantel too, and the large oak side-board, while every available space was banked with pink asters and maiden-hair ferns. But only white flowers, and white tapers formed the decorations in the living-room.

"Everybody said they had never seen a prettier home wedding. I know I have never been so happy since. No incident arose to mar any detail. It all moved smoothly - without a hitch. And I am glad it was so, because that was the last time I was ever to be singled out for adulation and attention.

"About an hour after the ceremony, some boys came to serenade us. While they were singing, I slipped upstairs to change into my going-away suit of Oxford gray.

"At a quarter to six, the cab came to take us to the Railway station where we were to board the train for Oklahoma City.

let my child die. You let my child die. I ought to kill you. I ought to strangle you to death, as he strangled. But no, you are alive, while he is dead.'

"I tried to tell him that life meant nothing to me. But he would not listen. It was impossible to make him understand. And I ceased to try. When he had a large placard printed in letters proclaiming, 'The Child of a Careful Mother Never Dies,' and hung the Lie in our bedroom, I never looked at it but once. And when he came home in the evenings and started walking the floor, moaning, 'Oh my boy, my boy! How I miss him!' I simply closed my ears to his reproaches.

"I thought when I told him I was expecting another child, it would make a difference, but he acted like a madman. 'What!' he cried. 'Another child! For God and its mother to strangle to death! Never! I'll kill it first. I'll not support the child if its born. And I'll not give you one cent to buy clothes for it in the meantime.'

"You will hardly believe it, but he was as good as his word. Not one cent would he give me - for any purpose at that time. Yet my baby when it was born - had clothes ... beautiful clothes.

"I went to the store where Mr. Fenton paid his bill every week. I explained the situation to the wife of the grocer, and he added a dollar a week to our bill. The washerwoman added twenty-five cents a week to her bill, and the combined sum was mine to buy clothes my baby needed. He had the prettiest layette too, I believe, of all my children.

"My father sent me the money to pay the doctor, and the nurse. And when little Herbert was born, the doctor said he was the prettiest baby he had ever seen. Mr. Fenton wouldn't look at him for a long time. Then one day he saw him on the street with the girl I employed to take the baby out in the afternoon. 'What a beautiful baby, nurse,' he said. 'Whose child is this?'

"When our goodbyes were said, my mother cried, and implored Mr. Fenton to be good to her little Cissie. My father embraced me in silence. But my brother, with the casual frankness of the seventeen year old boy, whispered, as he gave me a farewell kiss... 'Take care of yourself, Cissie. Papa says you've made a terrible mistake.'

"Perhaps I have! The thought stabbed me with a premonition of disaster as Mr. Fenton assisted me into the cab, and slammed the door upon a shower of rice, and a babel of goodbyes and good wishes.

"Learn to look out for yourself, Cissie,' my father called from where he was standing on the porch steps. 'and don't forget the old folks at home.'

"Though his words caused me to break - for an instant [^] into tears and to vow I would think of them every moment of the time we were apart, I am ashamed to say, that I literally forgot their existence during the ensuing days with Mr. Fenton in Oklahoma City.

"For in something old and something new, something borrowed and something blue, I had married the man who most completely represented the ideal of which all young girls foolishly dream, and hundreds of miles away from those I knew and loved, I was embarking upon the most stupendous adventure in a woman's life.

"Having entered whole-heartedly into the experience of home-making, our little apartment, with its green and yellow carpet; its golden-oak furniture and ruffled lace curtains at the windows, seemed to me, the most beautiful spot in the world. I know now that it wasn't such. But I thought that it was perfect; just as I thought Mr. Fenton was perfect.

"I suppose all brides who are very much in love at the time they are married, go through that stage when the King can do no wrong. It's all a part of life I believe, and except for this period of bedazzlement, a lot of marriages wouldn't last long enough for the ink to dry out on the marriage certificate.

"As it was, all manner of humiliating sacrifices were exacted of me, and I was ^{not} even aware that anything in our little ménage was amiss.

"Mr. Fenton had explained to me at the beginning, that I must practice the most rigid economy so that he might succeed with the ~~many~~ costly inventions into which he was sinking the major portion of his salary. So quite as a matter of course, I ate what he left on his plate in the morning. At supper I rarely ate at all. Only at the mid-day meal did I have adequate food. Consequently with no money to buy tidbits on which to nibble between meals, I was always more or less famished. Mr. Fenton paid all the bills himself. So there was no way I could eke out a few pennies from a household allowance. Yet I did not feel badly treated. And when I wrote my first letter home I said,.....!

"'Dearest folks: You simply cannot imagine my happiness. It is something that would have to be seen to be appreciated.' And it was. Fortunately however, they were too far away to grasp the actual conditions, or to realize how intangible my happiness really was.

"My two oldest children, Frances and little Jamie, were born in Oklahoma City. Mr. Fenton worshiped the children, and was never mean or niggardly to them as he was to me. By the time Frances was five, and Jamie four, their father was manager of a cotton-seed oil company, and we were financially able to have anything Mr. Fenton desired.

"Then the company transferred him to Atlanta, Georgia, and my real troubles began.

"A few months after we moved to Georgia, little Jamie died with membranous croup, and though I had been the most devoted of mothers, and never at any moment neglected either of the children, he blamed me for the loss of his son and my life was made unbearable.

"I loved my boy even more than he did. But after Jamie died, Mr. Fenton pretended to think I had never cared anything about his child.

"I would be awakened at night by him standing over me saying, 'You

"'Hit's Miz Tom Fenton's baby sub,' the nurse replied. 'An' you looks to me lak his pa.'

"From that moment he took charge of the baby. If anything he loved him more than he had loved Jamie. He resumed his old affectionate attitude toward Frances, who was then nine years old. And he tried to woo me back with the boastful, braggadocio promises I had once found so alluring. But somehow it all seemed ^{as} flat to me as an omelet without eggs. The curtain went up. But the show just didn't come off. Everything between Mr. Fenton and me was ended. I cared no longer if he made a hundred million dollars on the inventions he talked of incessantly; or if he starved to death in a garret. By this time I knew he cared nothing for anyone but himself, and the little gadgets he thought would bring him wealth and fame. I had discovered that not even his love for the children was sincere. He had become as heartless and mechanical as the bits of steel or iron with which he toyed incessantly. And I was not surprised one day when he suggested that the children and I ^{and} the summer with my family in Montgomery.

"'It will be cheaper and better - for me - in every way,' he said, as he eyed me furtively, 'to board you and the children for awhile with your people. I'll send you the money every month for your expenses, but it won't cost me as much as it does to keep up a house. Then what I save, can be used to push that new peanut roaster I have just patented. Johnston says it's a hundering and ought to clean up a million. What do you say to that, Cissie? Are you willing to help me out?'

"I had 'helped out' so many times and in so many ways, that one more try didn't make much difference. So I agreed to take the children and come home for the summer.

"I thought if all else failed, that home was one place where I would find welcome. My father had assured me that if I ever wanted to

come home again, they would always be glad to have me. But when I was finally forced to return to them, I was not received as rapturously as I had expected to be. The children complicated matters. They ate too much... they made too much noise. They wore out their clothes, particularly their shoes, too quickly. And too little money was provided for their maintenance.

"My father was old, and his business was not what it had been. My sister, a school teacher, was saving for her old age. My brother was a rising young lawyer with a long way to go. My mother was getting old, and the children made her nervous.

"In the Spring, before I came home, I had been glad to leave Mr. Fenton. But I was glad too when I returned to him at the end of the summer.

"During our absence he had made fifty thousand dollars on one of his many patented inventions. So with seven thousand dollars, he bought a nice home, and to my amazement, gave me the money to furnish it quite attractively. I began to hope he was taking an interest in something besides inventions. But the next Spring he told me I would have to take the children and go home again for the summer.

"This time he did not send me any money at all. I sold the diamond ring my father had given me years before for three hundred dollars, and gave part of that toward the household expenses which two children and another adult naturally increased, and used the rest of it to buy winter clothes for myself and the two children.

"That winter and for several years afterward, there was no task at home too menial for me to perform. I was so anxious to make myself wanted again by my parents, and my children welcomed, that I did all the housework, the washing and ironing, and even scrubbed the floors to save hiring a negro. But when school was out in May, my people sent us back to Mr. Fenton.

I knew he didn't want us, but I had nowhere else to go.

"He had sold the house and was living at an expensive hotel. The furniture he had allowed me to buy, was divided among his relatives. He had even sent the piano, that had been given to Frances by one of my uncles, to his niece in Athens, Georgia. So there was nothing for him to do but take us to a boarding house. The cheapest in Atlanta! We lived there until September. Then he told me it was not suitable for a man of his standing to remain in such squalid surroundings. I suggested that we rent a house, but he said he had a better plan, and that he would appreciate my cooperation.

"He said he saw nothing else, but for me to take the children and return permanently to my people. For if he became a success as an inventor, he would be obliged to put all of his money, and all of his time into that field. The children kept him from concentrating, he said. And he could not put up with the distractions of a family and get anywhere with his inventions.

"So I came home again with the children. My father was wonderful. I wanted to get a job and work outside, but he would not hear of it while the children were young enough to need my care. He made me promise I would not leave them until they were old enough to at least partially look out for themselves. And I never did.

"When my father died, he left me the bulk of his moderate insurance. It was not a great deal, but the children and I could not have got along without it.

"Frances had developed functional heart trouble; caused, so the doctors said, by the effect of constant unhappiness upon a sensitive temperament. They told me to keep her diverted, and to make her as contented as possible. So I rented a room in Capital Heights where in the High School she would have no stairs to climb, and my children and I began to actually live.

"Of course we were awfully crowded - the three of us in one room. But inconvenient as it undoubtedly was, those quarters were the only accommodations I could secure in a handsome home. And I wanted my children to have the best.

"I paid thirty dollars a month for the room. It would have been cheap at sixty. Mr. and Mrs. Moorefield who owned the house, were so lovely to me, and especially to my children, that I have always felt there wasn't enough money in the world to pay for what we received from them.

"If the children were sick, Mrs. Moorefield sat up at night to help me wait on them; and when Frances began going out to dances and parties, she assisted me in planning and making her evening dresses. She arranged ways too for her to meet the right people, and was always ready to sustain and encourage me through the trials that confront every woman in my position.

"Once however, something occurred that I never let her know anything about. Perhaps I ought not to tell you about it either. But if it were to do over again I'd go through it the same way. And what we are willing to do we should be willing to acknowledge. So I am going to tell you of something I did for my daughter.

"As I said before, the doctors had told me to keep her as happy as possible. But no girl can be entirely happy who hasn't pretty clothes. Frances was good about doing without things as a rule. But she needed a new evening dress, and an evening wrap, and some dance slippers and a bag, and a few other trifles that amounted to a hundred dollars.

"There wasn't a chance for me to get them. I wrote to her father and told him what the doctors said, and asked him to lend me the money. I knew he had it, and it never occurred to me he would refuse. But Mr. Fenton out-figured me on that as well as some other matters.

"I got a letter by return mail, saying 'Yes,' he had the money, but I could never have a cent of it for clothes, or anything else.

"Well, I had helped to earn that money. It was just as much mine as it was his. So I sat down and wrote a check for one hundred dollars. I signed his name to it and cashed it the next morning.

"In a few days Mr. Hunter, who was President of the Planters' Bank and Trust Company requested me to come down to his office. He had just been notified that Mr. Fenton not only repudiated the check, but had written to the bank urging my arrest as a forger. He told me this as kindly as possible, and then asked, 'Why did you do such a thing, Mrs. Fenton?'

"I asked him if he had a daughter. He said 'yes'. I asked him if he wouldn't do anything in the world to save her life, if she were in danger, and he said 'yes'. Then I told him what the doctors (I gave their names), said about Frances. I told him too some of the circumstances that had led to that condition; and I let him read Mr. Fenton's letter refusing me the money that might be the means of saving his daughter's life.

"After he read the letter, Mr. Hunter looked at me for a moment in silence. Then he said 'Mrs. Fenton, I'm going to see that that old scoundrel takes up this check, or I'll have him run out of Atlanta. Hanging is too good for his sort. I'll bet he led you a dog's life. But he's going to pay for it now.'

"And he did! Thanks be to Mr. Hunter. It's funny now. I always have to laugh when I think of it. But it wasn't a laughing matter when I went down to explain to the president of a bank why I had signed my husband's name to that check. I get a shivery feeling yet, sometimes, when I pass a bank. It simply did not occur to me that Mr. Fenton would refuse to meet the check. But it was a good lesson for me I guess, after all.

"Mr. Hunter came with me to the door of his office. 'I hope that girl of yours will never forget what you did for her,' he said. 'Children ought to be told of such things. It makes them realize what they mean to a parent.'

"I didn't tell Frances however, for a long time. She was so happy at Mrs. Moorefield's I didn't want anything to shatter her pleasure, or her feeling of belonging there.

"We were six years at Mrs. Moorefield's. During that time - while Frances was a senior in High School - I got a job as a stenographer in the Welfare Department. I didn't have the money to go to business school, so I learned typing and shorthand by myself. It took me seven years to master it, but finally I did. I held the job too, until I got mad and quit. Then I went to the Ashley Hotel as assistant housekeeper. I made fifty dollars a month. And as Frances had taken a business course and secured a job, we had enough between us, to live on.

"Then like a bolt of lightning out of a clear sky, Mr. Fenton appeared. Richly dressed and in a handsome car, he had come, he said, to take us to California, where he would get Frances into the movies, and let Herbert finish his education at a fashionable military school.

"When he saw that I would not go, he determined to take the children. No one could have made me believe - had I been warned in advance - that my children would do such a thing. But they left me. And went with their father to California.

"That night after they had gone, I went to the drug store and bought some chloroform, and before I went to bed I saturated my pillow with the liquid, and placed the bottle so it would slowly drain out near my face, as I was sleeping. I did not know how to live without my children. But evidently I didn't know how to die either, for I am still here. The chloroform instead of putting me to sleep made me dreadfully nauseated, and for a day or two I was quite sick.

"Later I was glad I hadn't died; because letters came from the children asking why I had not followed them to California as their father had assured them I would do. They were expecting me any day, they wrote, and unless

I came out pretty soon, they were going to hurry straight back to me.

"Herbert did come back a few days later. I sent him the money to make the trip. But Frances married while she was out there, and remained for several years. She wasn't happy, so she got a divorce and came back to Montgomery. 'The West and the South just don't mix,' she said when we were discussing her return. 'Besides Mother, I was homesick all the time for you. I just couldn't stand it any longer.'

"Their father has never forgiven me for their refusal to stay in California. He doesn't like it either that they are providing for me so well. No indeed! He'd like to see me toiling in a factory for my daily bread.

"I do think sometimes I'd like to have a smart millinery store like the Elizabethan. But I've never done anything really well except keep house. I am doing that now for the children. And they say I'll never be on anybody's payroll but theirs.

"Yes they are lovely children. I believe you will all like each other. I am anxious for you to get moved in. We certainly had a nice visit together this morning.

"I always said there is nothing like a good long talk for getting people acquainted.))

1/31/39

S.J.

Ever gracious, she will receive strangers with a social-ethnic
study of Montgomery's Jewish citizens with a hospitality that is
normally accorded "Noblesse Oblige" and in the congenial atmo-

Though small in stature, Mrs Rosa Marcus - now in her eighty
third year - nevertheless conveys a distinct impression of state-
liness. Still handsome, witty and abounding in delightful reminis-
cences, she attributes the clarity with which she recalls distant,
as ^{well} as near events, to the memory training she received in the ex-
cellent schools of a Germany untroubled by the nightmare of fanatic-
ism.

"I can remember perfectly occurrences that happened when I was three
years old," she said. "And I have never forgotten a single precept
I learned from my dear mother, who taught me to be courteous to my
equals, kind to my inferiors, and considerate of every one - regard-
less of rank or possessions.

"If I attempted to shirk a disagreeable social duty, the phrase
'noblesse oblige,' reminded me that those so fortunate as to be well
born, well reared, and well to-do, have the obligations of courtesey,
honor, fidelity, and benevolence to discharge; and to fail in one
responsibility was to fail in all.

"There was never any one like my dear mother. I can never hope to
approach her in any way."

There are people in Montgomery, however, who will tell you that
Mrs Marcus, with her four hand-maidens of courtesey, honor, ben-
evolence, and fidelity to the best in the old - and the new - ideals,
is herself without a peer in the practice of the virtues.

Ever gracious, she will receive strangers making a social-ethnic study of Montgomery's Jewish citizens with a hospitality that is commonly accorded only to acquaintances, and in the congenial atmosphere of her home at 19 Mildred Street, an interview unfolds gradually in the course of a friendly conversation.

Intensely Semetic in her loyalties, Mrs Marcus responds readily to any topic relating to the Jewish people. But when asked for her own life history, she modestly disclaimed having any story to relate. The facts however, speak more effectively than words, and in the life of Rosa Ollendorf Marcus there is a motif that will bear recounting.

Seated before a cheerfully blazing fire, in an informal living-room, that is furnished in a modified Victorian manner, hostess and interviewer talked of the past, ~~the~~ the present, ~~and~~ and the future. Adorning the wall was a distinguished portrait of a predecessor On a nearby table lay the Sunday edition of the New York Times And in and out of the room, five attractive grandchildren came and went at intervals.

"As I said, before," Mrs. Marcus began, "there is nothing momentous in my own life. . . ."

Born April the 5th, 1856, in the Prussian Province of Silesia, the child Rosa began attending a non-sectarian school in the city of Breslau at the age of six. Endowed with a sparkling personality, a winsome appearance, and unusual brilliance of mind, she soon became the recipient of marked honors and attentions, and was accounted a worthy representative of a family outstanding in scholastic attainments. An uncle, Gustav Ollendorf, then a professor in a German university, had translated the Teutonic language into sixteen different

tongues. Her mother also possessed remarkable mental and social gifts, and "associated only with the best."

"My dear mother constantly went out to balls and parties with the upper-classes of Breslau," Mrs Marcus said in the straight-forward way of one relating a long accepted fact. "For in the ~~xxxxxxx~~^{days} before Hitler came to the surface, there was no racial distinction or barriers between Jews and Gentiles. Friendships were formed where ever there was liking. Jews and Christians attended the same institutions of learning, and life-long attachments often followed this early association.

"Such a thing as persecution of any person, or sect, was unknown," she *declared* emphatically. "The kindness and sociability of the German people in those years could not be excelled. And the only cause of Jewish immigration to America was the enforced German military service that required four years in the army, ~~thus~~ interfering with, and in some cases, actually preventing any professional or business advancement.

"Opportunities of all kinds were greater in the United States," she continued in the even, cultured accents that bore no trace of her foreign birth. "And every vessel that arrived in a German port brought letters from relatives over here who wrote in such glowing terms of America, that not only Jews, but other ~~nationalities~~^J as well, were imbued with the longing to see the New World for themselves. Then as now, America was the land of hope. So in 1871, my brother Morris Franklin, and I, sailed - first cabin - from Hamburg.

"We had a lovely trip, being thirteen days at sea. On the steamer I met a very, very charming man. A doctor Edward von Everest who was most attentive to me. He was of the ancient Prussian nobility. But fifteen years

older than I....Yet it was a lovely trip. " ... her children ... while

Her dark eyes sparkled as she lived over again for a brief time some incident of a voyage so memorable that after sixty-seven years it remained a vivid, and imperishably ^{lovely} recollection. "Yes, it was a delightful trip," she repeated softly. "But one cannot sail forever on enchanted seas. And we reached New York fourteen days after leaving Hamburg. My brother and I remained three months in New York visiting relatives. Then we ^{came} to Montgomery. After we had been here some time I met the man I married. He was in the mercantile business and fairly well-to-do. Before I married, though, I specified one condition. My mother and sister must come from Germany and make their home with us. So he sent for them. We were married in 1878. My dear mother lived with us until her death. My sister Olga married Sol. Erlich of Bess~~e~~mer. of the Jewish people.

"I was married seven years before Joe, my first child, was born. Then came four others. Leo, now dead. Sidney, Sanford, and Ray, my only daughter. She died three weeks ago."

Suddenly the animation left her face, and her voice trailed into silence. The house was silent too. Even the street-sounds, usually so strident at that hour were miraculously hushed, and for a little, the still stillness in the room was like the three minute period of memorial silence before a cenotaph. The quiet was broken by a piece of coal dropping from the fire onto the grate. And from some where in the house came the resonant chimes of a clock.... by the infuriated mob that raged at

"I would so gladly have gone in her place," the words came huskily and more rapidly than she had formerly spoken. "I do not understand why such things happen. She had everything to live for ..., all that ^{was} necessary for

happiness. Yet she was taken from her husband ... her children ... while I am left. I shouldn't be rebellious. I ~~have~~ have other children, and grandchildren. And so much to be thankful for. Besides I know that God who is so good does not send us suffering without a purpose - some great purpose being accomplished. But some things I can't understand. Some times I wonder

Again the silence descended. But only to remain for an instant. Those who lived by the rectitude of "noblesse oblige" in their malleable years do not permit a personal sorrow to make others miserable, and themselves of little or no use in a world of harsh realities. There is always some one in need of succor. Or an issue to meet. Or a cause to champion that requires every atom of one's spiritual and emotional reserves. With Mrs. Marcus this *raison d'être* was the present plight of the Jewish people. Recalling their resilience to other tragic circumstances in the past, she referred now to the repeated afflictions which the Semitic people had survived throughout the ages.

"Yet somehow we are sustained through it all," she said simply.

"Torquemada, the first inquisitor-general of Spain, drove the Jews out of that country in the fifteenth century. Through his cruelty, more than fifty thousand were murdered in one year. The Crusaders slaughtered innumerable thousands of Jews on their treks to the Holy Land. Accused of poisoning wells, and bringing the scourge of the Black Plague to Europe, the Jews were all but annihilated by the infuriated mobs that raged at times through-out the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But Israel still lives. God said 'I have greatly seen the afflictions of my people.' He does not permit us to suffer greatly without a purpose."

"The persecutions that have lately occurred are awakening an interest in religion among the Jews, as well as drawing them together and cementing racial ties. Formally the German and Austrian Jews were inclined to look down upon and patronize the Russian and other Eastern groups because they had not had, were not permitted to have, the education that in Germany was compulsory for one and all. But such an attitude no longer exists. We are no longer German, Polish, or Austrian-Jews. We are just Jews; bound together by mutual fears and tribulations. We know that a menace to one is really a menace to all, and this knowledge has solidified and strengthened enormously the Jewish esprit de corps.

"As I have observed again and again, there is no catastrophe so great but that it manifests some measure of a divine Providential plan.

"Therefore I say that God will not be so cruel as to let me suffer, or even to live again in another life. I believe when we leave this world we sleep forever. And it is better so. I can truly say I do not fear to die. I am not like the old man who prayed God to send Father Death, and when Father Death came to him said: 'No, it was not I who sent for you, but my wife in the next room.' So I can truly say I do not fear to die. Though I would not have you think I have been unhappy.

"My life has been unusually devoid of sadness. I was very happy with my husband in the twenty years that he lived after our marriage. When he died he left me well provided for, and I have been extremely happy and fortunate in my children. My relations too with other elements of the community are delightful. I am a charter member of the Mother's Circle of Montgomery, and of the the Council of Jewish Women. I have devoted friends

among the Gentiles as well as among the Jews. Only in the death of my
dear ones have I suffered. That is inevitable of course.

"Yet there are times when I wonder why it must be so."

(From an interview with Mrs Rosa Marcus)
(19 Mildred St. Montgomery Alabama.)

SEVENTH DAUGHTER

Yessum, white folks say hit's all a fake;
Dat conjure what ole Nancy make
Fum broke up pins, an' de wings of a bat,
An' a little of dis, an' a little of dat,
Fotch by de cwis at de full of de moon
An' stirred wid de debbil's sippin' spoon
Fur to mix an' mingle graveyard dust
Wid a coffin nail's sharp red rust.

No'm, you're right; de daid don't walk.
Hit ain't nuffin 'cep nigger talk
'Bout how de sperits set, jus' - so
An' sways in a rocker to an' fro.
Us really is a plumb fool race,
Movin' off de Blanford place
'Cause a p'yna played at night
When no p'yna was in sight.

A seventh daughter of a seventh daughter,
I never stands by runnin' water
But I wish hard... an' I wish true;
You heard what happen to yaller Sue?
Yessum, she tuk my man away;
An' chile, dey buried Sue today.
I heard him cryin' an' prayin' too.
But I wish hard... an' I wish true.

No'm, I never tries nuffin' lak dat.
Fire burns fas' when a nigger's fat.
Y'll lynch me if you 'spec' dat I
Ever was mindful fur to try.
But don't never stay near runnin' water
An' a seventh daughter of a seventh daughter.

By Adelaide Rogers.

Adelaide Rogers,
Montgomery County, Ala.

YOU OGT TO B'LIEVE IN HANTS FUR TO SEE 'EM

(A Story of Haunted Houses)

Every locality that has been mellowed in the crucible of time has had some, either real or fancied, experience with the supernatural.

In Washington, the famous Octagon House, built by Col. John Tayloe shortly after the close of the Revolutionary War, was for years untenanted because of certain apparitions that were said to flit through the corridors. And in the lowlands of South Carolina, the "Hampton Ghost," which frequently appears at the ancestral home of Archibald Rutledge, is almost as well known as that distinguished gentleman himself.

It is not strange, therefore, that Montgomery, Alabama, owing as it does the traditions, beliefs and prejudices of the colonial States, should have its quota of haunted houses.

Twenty years ago, before the gloomy, brown-timbered Victorian dwelling at the corner (left) of Wilson and Sayre Streets, had been transformed into cheerful, modern apartments, the house quite definitely had a ghost.

Tall and angular, and invariably wearing a gray skirt and a white shirtwaist, the spectre, with her short, slightly curling, iron-gray hair, was said to present a decidedly masculine appearance.

For a while, the phantom was unnoticed by all except Lizzie, the colored maid. Then a fox-terrier, belonging to Mrs. Dotson (who with her daughter, Alice, was occupying the house at that time), acquired the mannerisms of a medium. Glaring into space, the little dog would shudder and break into disconcerting howls when vacant chairs started rocking, and strange peals of laughter resounded from vacant rooms.

"Tain't nobody but ole Miz Rice," Lizzie sniffed contemptuously. "I sees her so of'en dat me an' her is done got use to each other, an' I don't think nothin' of it now.

"Why honey, hardly a mornin' passes but dat she don't come outer de downstaire bedroom into my kitchen, jus' lack she still own dis ole house.

"I sees her an' de dawg sees her. Always wearin' de same gray skirt an' white shirtwaist, open at de neck. She sho' is a mannish lookin' 'oman wid dat short gray hair, an' dem bossy ways, struttin' 'round lack she got de earf an' all kinds er money in her pocket. She oughter find out by dis time, you can't take nuffin, wid you fum dis sinful worl'. But she de kin' what can't stand to give up nothin' she ever had. She gwiner keep comin' back here, too, till somebody buys dis house an' changes it de diffunt fum how she remembers it.

"Yessum, sperits will sho' quit a house effen you alters it fum how it wuz durin' dey life time. Dey's dat sot in dey ways. Triffin' critters! Comin' back here fur to pester livin' folks 'cause dey mad, on account of us can eat chicken an' 'taters an' dey can't swallow nuffin' 'cept de cold air.

"Dey can't wear nuffin either," Lizzie continued knowingly, "but de clothes dey wore of'fent in life. Dat's why Miz Rice hafta wear dat gray skirt and mannish waist. She were stingy when she was livin' an' she got to stay lack dat till she work herse'f loose fum hit. But you ner Miss Alice can't see her," Lizzie said to Mrs. Dotson. "Only me an' de dawg kin spot a ghost. 'Cause you got to b'lieve in hants fur to see 'em."

In the Spring of 1917, however, Lizzie's opinion that a "b'lieve" in hants was necessary for their discernment, proved to be fallacious when Miss Letty Morgan, a prim, middle-aged spinster, avowedly skeptical of the supernatural, happened to be an overnight guest in the house.

As Miss Morgan arrived in the afternoon, and the cook did not return to prepare supper, there was no way by which the stranger could have learned of Mrs. Rice's rumored appearances. Nevertheless, she said to her hostess at the breakfast table.

"I didn't know a man lived in the house with you and Alice."

"No one lives in the house with us," Mrs. Dotson replied. "Whatever gave you such an idea?"

"Nothing at all, except what I saw with my own eyes," Miss Morgan replied with a tinge of acerbity. "I know I saw a man, or some one who looked exactly like a man, in that room yonder at the end of the hall. He had rather curly, gray hair, and wore a white shirt open at the neck. I saw him in the mirror over the mantel, as we sat in the living room last night. He pulled a shade down at a window, I thought. I see now that the upper part of the door is glass. But from where I was sitting last night, it looked just like a window. I know what I have seen," she added. "There is a man staying at night in this house."

Explanations were futile and arguments vain. Miss Morgan was never convinced that an outsider was not being harbored under the sacred precincts of a family roof. So after she had taken a frigid departure, Mrs. Dotson went into the bedroom that was said to have been Mrs. Rice's, and made her first careful inspection of the spot where the vision was seen.

As Miss Morgan observed, the door having an upper section of glass panes, appeared very similar indeed to a window. And attached to the topmost frame of the door were the partly demolished fixtures that had once held a shade.

Not long afterward, Mrs. Dotson and her daughter returned to their former home in Tennessee, and Mrs. Rice's heirs sold her property to a wealthy investor who made the residence into one of Montgomery's most attractive and up-to-date apartment houses. Apparently the renovations

were effective in laying the ghost, as the apparition in the gray skirt and white waist is no longer seen at 31 Wilson Street.

Elsewhere in Montgomery there are many old houses that still retain an atmosphere of the past. And if the personalities, and events which once animated these venerable places, possess any psychic influence, it is scarcely surprising that so many of them are said to be haunted.

On South Hill Street there is a mid-Victorian dwelling not unlike the original design of the house belonging to Mrs. Rice, except that the upper and lower floors are divided into separate apartments.

A family who once rented the lower apartment say that during the first weeks of their occupancy, the door leading from the hall into the combination living room and dining room, though securely fastened at night, was always open the next morning.

A carpenter called to examine the door stated positively that it could not have been opened by overhead or street vibration. "If I was you," he admonished grimly, "I'd put somebody to watching that door at night. Then you might find out something."

His suggestion was taken seriously, and the next night at eleven o'clock, the lady of the house was at a post of observation in the living room.

Sitting on a couch facing the hall entrance, she alternately read ... and watched the door. As the wheezy, antiquated clock was laboriously striking the hour of twelve, she saw the door knob turn. And the next instant the door swung fully and noiselessly open.

Fully expecting to see someone on the other side, she rushed into the hall and found it vacant. Then, too excited and disturbed for sleep, she went back into the living room to wait for her son's return from a dance. At ten minutes before two he came in. While he was scoffing at her for being so upset over something he would have to "see in order to believe", the door, as though to rebuke the boy for his skepticism, swung gently

open.

After that, some one remained on watch in the living room every night. And as the old clock announced the mystic hour of twelve, they would see first, the turning of the doorknob; then the door quietly swinging open. When the door was closed after opening at twelve, it would open again at two. But after two, the door did not open of itself, until twelve o'clock the next night.

Because of adhering slightly to its frame, the door at all other times was rather difficult to open. It squeaked loudly too, unless propelled by the unseen hand. Then it gave as quietly as a spirit-door opening in a dream.

As the occupants of the apartment were Catholics, they rejected every suggestion that the manifestations could be the result of a supernatural agency. But on the night when the door opened for the last time, a member of the family had started into the livingroom from the darkened hall, when the striking of the clock warned her that the dramatic moment was approaching.

Just as she had expected, the door swung open. An instant later she felt an icy breath blowing upon her from every direction. She imagined, too, that voluminous skirts were swishing around her in the darkness.

Terrified into speechlessness, she was afraid of succumbing to the waves of horror that were engulfing her when she remembered the rosary, which an hour or two before, she had placed in the pocket of her negligee. Taking out the beads, she made the sign of the cross. Instantly all fear left her. And almost mechanically she told the unseen Terror to remain - if it came from God; but if it had invaded the house to harm or frighten anyone, then in the Name of the Blessed Trinity, to leave for all time.

Not knowing whether she had encountered an evil spirit, or was merely a victim of fear, she went back to bed and slept more soundly than she had done for weeks. But the next morning when the incident was related to her

family, they were aghast at the near sacrilege she had committed. Even her explanations that she had invoked the Sacred Presence more as a means of self-protection than a hope of banishing the ghostly caller did not entirely assuage their resentment at an act they regarded as a spiritual faux pas.

The door however, no longer opens mysteriously ... either at midnight, or at two o'clock in the morning. And one is left wondering perforce if changing a house from the way it was remembered during the life term of a ghost, is really the most lasting method of quieting the restless shadow of a troubled soul.

1/25/39

S.J.