

MARRIAGE

NEWS REACHED California in mid-April of 1861 that the United States flag had been fired upon at Fort Sumter.

Back in Philadelphia, Mrs. George wrote to her son expressing her grief at this "horrible, calamitous and most sorrowful of all wars. . . . When and what will be the end?" she asked.¹

But the impact of this event was slow in reaching California with all the force which it had exerted in the East. It was in September that Henry George wrote, in the midst of a long letter to his sister Jennie, "If I were home I would go. Not that I like the idea of fighting my countrymen, but in this life or death struggle I should like to have a hand. . . . I have felt a great deal like enlisting. I should like to place my willingness on record. . . . It may be my duty yet."²

The youth of twenty-one was now passing through a period of hard times. With one hundred dollars he had managed to save he had bought, along with five other young printers, a small paper which they renamed the *Evening Journal*. However, the project proved a failure. Henry George seemed to despair, but there was hope mingled with desperation when he wrote again to Jennie, "Sometimes I feel sick of the fierce struggle of our high civilized life, and I think I would like to get away from cities and business, with their jostlings and strainings and cares altogether, and find some place on one of the hillsides, which look so blue and dim in the distance, where I could gather those I love and live content with what Nature and our own resources would furnish; but alas, money, money, money, is wanted even for that. It is our fate—we must struggle, and so here's for the strife!"³

The six *Evening Journal* partners some weeks made as much as six dollars each—but not always. Henry got behind with his room rent, and, running into debt thirty dollars, had to sleep

in the office. His clothes became shabbier and the toes of his shoes wore out. Try as he would, he could not hide his poverty. At length he sold his share of the paper, receiving in payment some mining stock which later proved to be worthless.

He saw Annie Fox frequently at the Flintoff home. One night, when her Uncle Matt McCloskey called and found the impetuous young George there, he intimated to the youth that he might better appear less frequently. Matthew McCloskey was a hot-headed Irishman. Henry was young and deeply in love. An angry and demonstrative quarrel began. It was the terrified little Annie who kept the two from coming to blows.

The uncle ordered the young man from the house. The greater part of that night Annie spent in prayer. When Henry ignored Matthew McCloskey and came to see her the next morning, she told him that she could not live any longer with either of her uncles and that she was determined to go back to Los Angeles, where she could take a position as teacher in her old school with the Sisters of Charity.

Henry George was out of work at the time. He had no intention of suggesting matrimony. But he could not bear to part with Annie Fox. He drew a fifty-cent piece from his pocket and said solemnly, "Annie, this is all the money I have in the world. Will you marry me?"

The girl thought a moment, and then answered with great feeling, "If you are willing to undertake the responsibilities of marriage, I will marry you."

They made their arrangements quickly. At nightfall, Isaac Trump, one of Henry's friends from the *Shubrick* days, came to the door of the Flintoff home and inquired for "Mrs. Brown." This was the prearranged signal for which Annie, sitting nervously in the parlor, had been waiting. She hastily put on a bonnet and shawl, and, giving Isaac Trump a small but heavy cloth-covered package, followed him out through the garden to a waiting carriage. The package contained the books, mostly poetry, Henry had given Annie, and not jewels as Trump had suspected.⁴ Scarcely another thing did the girl take to equip herself for her new life, for she had disdained everything provided by her uncles save the clothes on her back, a fine Spanish shawl, a Bohemian glass bottle, and a recipe for black fruitcake.

Isaac Trump's own fiancée was waiting in the carriage. After they had driven a short distance, Henry George, in his neatly brushed (and borrowed) clothes, joined them. The two couples

went to a restaurant and had dinner (a really good dinner could be had for twenty-five cents) and then walked through the moonlit streets. The young man carefully carried his bride-to-be over places left wet by the December rain.

Other friends awaited them at Bethel Methodist Church. There, the Reverend Mr. Simonds performed the wedding ceremony, using the Episcopal service and a ring which had belonged to Annie's grandmother. Later a priest gave the Catholic sanction.

Lacking funds for a honeymoon trip, the young couple went quietly to the house of a friend. The bridegroom had not only borrowed the clothes in which he had been married but also the money to pay for the expense of the wedding.

On the morning after the ceremony Henry George arose at five o'clock to hunt for a job. He found work as a substitute typesetter remaining on the job all that day and most of the night. By continuing to "sub" this way for several weeks he managed to pay their board bills until a position on *The Union* drew them to Sacramento.

He had written Jennie George of his love for Annie Fox long before the other members of the family knew of her existence. His sister had replied, "I felt a sudden choking, a sudden loneliness and jealousy, when I first read your letter. I have got over that now. Come home and bring her with you. I will love her; so will they all, I know. In the meantime do not forget me; do not cease to love me as much as ever, will you? There can be two places in your heart—one for Annie and one for me."⁵

As soon as news of the marriage reached Philadelphia, Annie was mentioned with Henry in the daily family prayers. A succession of welcoming letters went back to the little bride in California. Jennie wrote, "Henry always had one particular place at the foot of the table (ask him if he remembers it) and I used to sit beside him, but I will let you sit there when you come."⁶ Although the bride's family forgave the runaways, the young couple's pride prevented them from going even to Annie's guardians for help in time of need.

Yet no one could live in peace of heart while the Civil War raged. Henry wrote again to Jennie:

Every day the telegraph is in working order brings us news of the success of the Republic. I cannot help feeling regret that the contest will be over and the victories won without my having taken the

slightest part in it. If I am East after the war is ended I will feel abashed among its heroes. If I had been home, I would have gone if I possibly could, but here there was no chance unless one could pay his passage to New York, for those [regiments] which were raised here were merely to garrison posts and fight Indians.⁷

Work on *The Union*, sporadic as it was, still kept Henry George and his bride in Sacramento. They lived close to the State Capitol in a part of the city that abounded in beautiful trees and flowers. They had the loan of a small boat which they frequently sailed, and Henry kept himself physically fit by rowing and swimming. He spent much of his spare time, of which there seems to have been an unwelcome abundance, in reading. Six months after his marriage he wrote to Jennie:

The Overland Mail stage has not yet commenced running. This is disheartening, for to its regular intervals we are looking for the revival of our business, which just now is unprecedentedly dull. The proprietors of *The Union* state their determination to run two double sheets a week as soon as the Overland Mail resumes, which will give me all the work I care to do. I am not one of those who love work for its own sake, but feeling what it brings, I am happiest when hard at it. It is no wonder that wealth is sought by all means, good or bad. . . . It is but the want of a few dollars that keeps us separate, that forces us to struggle on so painfully, that crushes down all the noblest yearnings of the heart and mind. I do not complain that no special miracle is worked in my behalf, that by none of those lucky windfalls which sometimes come to fools I am enriched; but it really seems that strive as hard in whatever direction I may, the current still turns against me. At any rate I will do the best I can, make the most of my opportunities, and for the rest trust in God.⁸