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THE STORY OF JUANA

A QUIANT TALE OF THE GREAT
SOUTHWEST.

BY TRUMAN ROBERTS ANDREWS.
John Ederly Osborne came to Pasadena from Boston. The Girl from Texas came from some spot scarce named in the plains of Texas.

John's first experience of The Girl was on the incline coming down Mount Lowe. He hoped at the time it might be his last. "Of all the Barbarians!" thought John to himself. "Jabber, jabber, jabber," said The Girl to anybody and everybody.

There was an elderly man with her. Six foot, chin whiskers, broad felt hat; branded Texan, presumably her father. The elderly man remarked, jocularly: "Ain't yoh scalded yoh'll fall off an' git broke?"

"I suah am," replied The Girl; "an' I'd smash bad. I'm brittle as a chancy doll."

"And about as much sense," thought John.

Still he watched her. There was something about the dark eyes and the dark curls which interested him.

As they left the car at the foot of the incline a comb, shaken from its moorings by the restless, tossing head, fell almost at his feet. He picked it up and handed it to her.

"Oh, thanks awfully!" said The Girl. "Theah pizen foh gittin' loose." "Ouch!" thought John; but she made so pretty a picture, with head thrown back and upraised arms, as she replaced the comb, that he hesitated a moment ere he should turn away.

"Yohah steppin' at the same place as weah, ain't yoh?" queried The Girl, eyeing him frankly and openly. "Ain't yoh at Th' Green? Weah at Th' Green."

"Yes, I am at The Green," he replied.

"I was suah I'd seen yoh theah. Weah soht o' neighbors, ain't we?" she observed, laughing so infectiously that John had at least smiled before he realized it.

John himself never understood the rest of it. When they parted it was upon the piazza of The Green, and then he smoked a cigar with her father.

That evening, when he came down to dinner, he was surprised to find The Girl at his elbow.

"Kind o' s'prised, I reck'n, ain't yoh?" she laughed. "I remembered 't theah was an empty seat by yoh, an' I ah dem change me to it, seein' as we'd got to know each othah."

John was so astounded that for an instant he was at his wits' end for a reply, but finally managed to murmur something about "very pleased," etc., while he calculated the chances of getting away on the morning train.

"I s'pose I really ought to stay ovah theah and ride herd on dad," she confessed. "He says he gits all mixed up in this new-fangled way of eatin'; an' fact is, he don't like it at all. Yoh see," continued The Girl, confidentially, "we nevah bin away from th' ranch much since I can remember, an' we've got to git broke into th' way yoh folks do things. Weah soht o' bronco yet, sabb?"

"Ranch life must be rather dull for a woman," commented John, "and it must be rather tough, too, is it not?" "Dull ain't th' word for it," exclaimed The Girl; "an' yes, it's rough—not bad, yoh know; theah ain't any fine manahs, but those boys 'll git down o' theyah knees foh a woman. A cow punchah ain't much on bowlin' an' scrapin', but he's got a mighty big heat, an' a woman's a woman in his eyes."

As they talked through the long meal—or rather, she talked and he listened—John learned a great deal of The Girl's dreary life on the ranch, and of her great yearning for the finer culture which she felt existed in the wonderful outside world; and when they left the table he had, temporarily at least, laid aside his time-table calculations and plans for a precipitate departure.

Moreover, as the days came and went, and the dinner table conversations had been many, they seemed to have placed The Girl in a new light. He became accustomed to the crude speech and odd ways, inasmuch that they ceased to detract his interest from the personality of The Girl herself. He had discovered that she was not ignorant; where she had obtained education he could not guess, but beneath the superficial defects of speech and mannerism he found the workings of a mind not only naturally acute, but, to a certain degree, trained. Also the true womanliness of her character was forced in upon him, and he felt more fully the charm which had at first been somewhat neutralized by his dislike of "barbarianism."

"It's unusually warm this evening," he observed one night after dinner; "let us sit outside for a while upon the piazza."

"Sta bueno," agreed The Girl. "Reck'n I'd bettah git a cape oah jacket, though."

Enconced in the deep wicker porch chair, which the wily John had so placed that the light from one of the windows shone softly upon her. The Girl seemed far more beautiful than ever before, and he was content to sit for a moment in silence watching her.

"Seems like weah gettin' to be pretty good friends," remarked The Girl, naively, as he manifested no desire to break the silence.

"There are all the signs of it," replied John, amused.

"Yohah gettin' kind o' demoralized," she said. "Yoh usto think like the Boston guh does, that I was shockin'!" she gurgled. "Don't try to crawfish,"

she commanded, shaking a finger at him as he would have replied; "yoh know yoh did."

"Well, I didn't understand yoh," he explained in partial confession. "Tain't ezactly yohah fault; it's th' way yoh was brought up. An' all th' time't yoh was a-thinkin' 't I belonged to a dime musee, I was bein' amused by yohah queeah ways."

"I ain't a-defendin' myself," she continued with pride, after a moment of silence. "Theah ain't any reason foh that. An' I wouldn't have talked to yoh like this ef I thought yoh felt th' way yoh did at fust."

The scent of cigar smoke floated down the piazza to where they sat. "Now let's change th' subject," suggested The Girl, to John's great relief. "Don't yoh want to smoke? I saw yoh rollin' cigarettas th' othah day. Give me yohah papahs an' tobacco, an' I'll show yoh how th' Mexicans make 'em."

The slim brown fingers manipulated the paper dexterously for a minute, and then The Girl extended a flattened roll to him.

"They don't make big fat ones," she said; "these is moah delicate. Yoh must like it," she commanded, as he lighted the roll.

"How could I do otherwise?" he asked, leaning forward and bowing with a great show of gallantry.

"That's it," she said. "Yoh'd make a good Mexican; so p'lte an' so lazy. Yoh ought to say, 'Voy caeh a sus pies'; that's 'tumble at my feet,' an' v'ehy p'lte in Mexican."

"Is that what they say when the señoritas roll their cigarettas for them?"

"Oh, no, that's foh any time. It's jes' talk. An' th' señoritas don't much roll the men's cigarettas—less it's his dulce."

"His what?" interjected John. "Yoh don't know dulce?" she laughed. "That's dulce corazon; dulce 's sweet, an' corazon's heart; sabb?"

"Ah, I see! Now, if we were in Mexico—" he commenced.

"Oh! oh! I'm scaht of yoh!" cried The Girl, jumping up and throwing the dark curls from before her eyes. "I'm a-goin' to find pa. Sides," she observed, "it's time to go to bed. I always go early; I'm usto doin' that way. It's ten o'clock—looking at a tiny watch. 'Shockin'! mos' shockin'!"—in Boston.

Then she vanished, leaving John alone with his thoughts. There came a night when she was not down to dinner. He wondered why he missed her so; and, dinner done, he removed to a corner of the piazza.

He heard a cab come up the drive; then a rustle of skirts, and he recognized her quick, dancing step along the veranda.

She was just turning in the door when, in the dim twilight, she caught sight of him.

"D' yoh think I was lost?" she inquired, going over to where he sat and leaning against one of the pillars of the piazza with her hands clasped behind her.

"I missed yoh," he confessed, very readily.

"Kind o' quiet, not so noisy, I s'pose," she remarked.

"Well, pa an' I went to Los Angeles this evenin'; an' we stayed theah to dinnah; an' pa met some men 't he knew, an' they all went off foh a time, so that we weh late home."

"What did yoh do?" he asked, curiously.

"While they was gone? Oh, I waited at th' hotel. What yoh ben a-doin'?" she asked.

"Nothing, as usual. I've been sitting here thinkin', since dinner."

"Thinkin'!" she cried, comically. "My, but yoh suah need help, yoh have so much thinkin' to do. Ain't it bad foh yoh?"

He laughed; she laughed gaily, and turned to go away.

"Yoh going to leave me?" he inquired mournfully.

"I reck'n. But I'll come back in a minute, ef yoh say so."

"Do," he urged. "It's a lovely night."

What a woman she was! What a woman she would be after a year or two in the world.

Again the rustle of skirts, and with a little sigh she sank into the low chair which he had pulled up by his own.

"Tired?" he said, as he heard the sigh.

"No; jest contented, foh th' fust time to-day," she replied.

He felt that for some reason this ingenuous reply pleased him greatly. He tossed his cigar over the rail.

It now, yohah suah 'live foh a minute. But I don't guess it 'll last," she added, teasing; "yohah suah lazy. I s'pect thinkin' so much makes yoh thahed, oh need somebody to roll yohah cigarettas an' help do yohah thinkin', an' yoh'd feel livelish, I reck'n—huh?"

"Yes, that's a good idea," he said, quickly. "Who'll I get?"

"That's hard; ask me another," she said. "That guh from Boston—th' one with th' glasses, that talks about Woman's High Speah—she might help a lot with the thinkin'; but Jiminy! what 'd she say to rollin' cigarettas—even if she could do it?"

They both laughed merrily over the idea.

"Theah," she scolded, "yoh made me laugh an' spill all th' tobacco, an' I got to c'mence ovah."

"No, the Boston girl won't do," he said, decidedly. "But how about yoh—you roll cigarettas to perfection?"

"Yes," she said, eyeing critically the roll in her hand; "yes, cigarettas; but when it comes to thinkin', nixy, no bueno, I'm p'oco loco."

He drew his chair closer, and speaking rapidly, said: "Do you know, I've an idea that the thinkin' isn't of much importance, and that if I had you there wouldn't be nearly so much thinking to be done. Couldn't it be yoh, dear? Won't yoh be my dulce, my sweet-heart, always, dear?"

He bent over the low chair, and laid his hand tenderly upon her arm. He could feel her tremble beneath his touch.

"Juana dear, I've been an awful fool, I know; but yoh've forgiven it, and I want yoh forever, dear Juana."

She struggled up out of her chair. "I didn't think o' nothin' like this," she gasped. "Weah differ it—no graded differ't, bettah noh wohse—but differ't breed—weah differ't."

"Juana, I want yoh," he reiterated. He drew near her into the dark shade of a pillar, and standing beside her, put his arm gently about her. "Can't we go to Europe together in the spring, dear? Yoh and I together, dear?"

"Yoh ain't given me time to think. I ought to think it ovah," she said slowly. Then, as she leaned to his breast, and the dark head fell upon his shoulder, she murmured, "Pogah o' Dad! I'm 'fraid he's a-goin' to be lonesome."

(Copyright, 1906, by Joseph B. Bowles.)

WOMEN WORST USURERS.

It Is Said They Are More Merciless Than Men Toward Luckless Borrowers.

Astonishing revelations as to the methods of business pursued by women money lenders in London were forthcoming during an investigation by an Express representative.

It would naturally be supposed that these women Shylocks would be more susceptible to feelings of consideration towards their victims than the ordinary male usurer. As a matter of fact, instances were given in which they exacted their pound of flesh to the utmost from the poor wretches who had fallen into their clutches, and were hard as adamant in face of the most heartrending conditions.

Most of the women are of advanced age, and their trade is carried on under the guise of loan, discount or banking companies. In one or two cases the women keep in the background and their transactions are carried on by a male representative, but the majority do all their office work themselves.

A clerk who had a wife and two children, had the misfortune to borrow \$50 from a woman usurer. He only received \$45, the other five dollars being deducted as an "inquiry fee." In 12 months he had repaid \$120, and his creditor then claimed \$40 as a balance. He appealed against the extortion, but the woman went to his house and, using threats and vituperation, created such a scene that he was glad to get rid of her on undertaking that he would pay the balance in a month. This he did by pawning one or two articles of furniture.

Another married man who had borrowed \$100 from a woman money lender paid interest at \$2.50 a week for 18 months. Then he fell behind in his payments, and, although he had paid the loan nearly twice over, he was refused time in which to recover himself. The consequence was that his home was sold, and his wife and children are now in lodgings.

Several other instances of a similar character were forthcoming. The victims were men who shrank from facing the ordeal of a public court, and preferred to suffer any amount of persecution rather than appear before a county court judge.

The women use methods for collecting their money which the most rapacious male usurer would not think of employing. Some of them have been known to stop their "clients" in the streets and bully them publicly, while householders who have fallen behind in their payments have had stones thrown through their windows by the irate lenders.

One man was personally attacked in the street in which he lived by a woman who was the proprietor of a "loan company," and from whom he had borrowed a small amount. To avoid such scenes men have practically ruined themselves in the effort to meet the extortionate demands of their flinty-hearted persecutors.

A Dark Situation.

Mamma—Ethel, my dear, do you think that Mr. Spooner, who calls so regularly and sits with you in the parlor every night, has serious intentions?

Ethel—I really don't know, mamma; he keeps one so much in the dark.—Tit-Bits.

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