MEMOIRS
of
"MAMMY"
PLEASANT

THE
PANDEX
OF THE PRESS

Best Things from all the Papers

Published at 211 Examiner Building
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

This is to certify that Samuel P. Davis of Carson City Nevada, is the only person authorized to publish a history of my life after my death. I have intrusted him with papers and documents bearing upon the matter and any other history of my life except the one published by him is spurious.

FOSSELLI READS THE HAND

This is a very high type of hand, showing a keen and unusual order of intelligence. It is a curious combination of strength and weakness. The mastering mind dominating and directing everything with which it comes in contact only rules to that point where sympathy of heart obliterates every other feeling.

There is a most profound sense of justice in the mental make-up and a desire, ever present, to avenge wrong whether done to herself or others. Were two wrongs to be avenged, the wrongs of some one else would come up for first consideration.

Self has always been a secondary consideration with her.

Her courage has been always that of a lioness and she never retreats from anything. Her aggressiveness, however, is of a negative quality, and she does not seek the combat, but once engaged only retires when victory is hers, but there is never an instant during the progress of the fray that a cry for quarter from her adversary is unheeded. She would never send up the cry herself. She might die in action, but never ask for quarter or any concession whatever.

Her great pride is responsible for this characteristic, and no matter what accusation might be made against her her abnormal pride would prevent her from explaining or denying.

Her life has been full of good acts. She would perform a good act with as much secrecy as most people would commit crimes.

Despite her marvelous ability to read motives and penetrate the most secret thoughts of others almost at a glance with a power that borders on the occult, she has been overreached all through life by people whom she has most befriended. She was not deceived, however, but allowed her sympathies to warp her judgment, because the mere pleasure of befriending others is so great that it is almost a mania; for, philanthropy is the dominant note in her character.

The hand shows absolutely no education. With education she would have been unquestionably one
of the famous women of the century, and it is to be
declared that a mental organization so rare and a
brain with such great natural capacity should have
been denied the advantages of educational training.
Through a sad failure of some one to allow her
ordinary schooling, the diamond has remained uncut.
Her powers of penetration and analysis, however,
were not impaired by this unfortunate neglect, and
her faculty of "seeing through a stone wall" or "in-
to the middle of next week," as the sayings go, is
unsurpassed.

Her tact and generalship are very great; even as
a woman she might have commanded an army suc-
cessfully.

In spite of her tact she has been unable to repress
a frankness of speech that would often verge on
the brutal. This extraordinary frankness has often
repelled people, to her detriment.

Her memory is like a photographic plate, retain-
ing every minute detail; and the stretch of years does
not dim the impression once made.

Her will is like cast iron when occasion requires,
yet a tear would melt it. She seems of large frame
and physically strong, but her strength has been
more of will power and nervous energy than
muscular.

THE MEMOIRS

THERE is a Russian proverb which declares, in
substance, that but few men can die with the
knowledge that they have met three wholly original
people in a lifetime.
The three persons I have encountered, of whom I
believe there never existed any human replica, are
George Francis Train, Sarah Bernhardt and Mary
Ellen Pleasant.

Each was endowed by nature with attributes and
mental qualities which made the personality some-
thing entirely apart from other human beings, and
constituted them solitary types.
The first two had their mental equipment sharp-
ed by education, and the last, of negro and Kanaka
parentage, never went to school a day in her life;
yet had the three, at a time when their intellects
were at their best, been thrown together in some
transaction where mental acuteness was at a premium.
I should not receive the information with surprise
that Mrs. Pleasant had scored an advantage over
the other two.

My first meeting with Mrs. Pleasant was at the
Lick House, after Judge Terry had married the
plaintiff in the famous case known on the law cal-
endars as Sharon vs. Sharon.

As a representative of the Examiner, I was inter-
viewing Mrs. Terry, when a young lady came to the
rooms and asked to see her. Mrs. Pleasant was
sitting on a sofa near the door when the stranger
entered. The latter was a young woman about
twenty years of age. faultlessly attired, strikingly
beautiful, and very ladylike in appearance and
manners.

Mrs. Pleasant received her and motioned her to be
seated. A few moments later she rose from her
chair, and, remarking, "I am thirsty," walked over
to a small stand and, pouring out a glass of water, very
slowly lifted it to her lips.

The act of approaching the stand brought her
quite near Mrs. Terry, who was talking to the inter-
viewer in a low tone. Judge Terry was also pres-
ent, occasionally dropping an observation in the
conversation.

She has been accustomed all her life to the use
of plenty of money, and has scattered it as fast as
she acquired it. She places no value upon riches
whatever. She is fastidious, and loves the beautiful
in art and nature, but would deny herself luxury to
assist some one else.

She is very affectionate and given to the building
of ideals, but undemonstrative. She is endowed
with a wonderful sense of humor.

In childhood she had plenty for herself, but after
that the lines show that what she had went to
others, and the fate line shows that she was unfor-
tunate in her surroundings after the death of her
parents.

She has traveled a great deal by land and sea.
She once narrowly escaped death by drowning, and
was twice in danger of her life by horses. She has
had two affairs of the heart, and one child which
died early in life.

Her life has been full of extraordinary events,
struggles and battles, and all her affairs have been
involved and entangled. With all she has done for
others, her present friends could be counted on the
fingers of one hand, and fingers to spare. She will
pass away suddenly, her life going out like a candle.

—H. Jerome Fosselli.

The caller, after raising the glass to her lips, did
not drink, but paused to listen. The water remained
untasted possibly not over five seconds, but that was
quite enough to cause the colored woman to draw
herself up and strode toward the visitor, her voice ringing with
anger.

"Your ears are the thirsty part of you, not your
mouth. Why don't you drink that water? Why are
you listening to other people's conversation? Now
get out of here and get out right away."

She seized her arm and shoved her toward the
doors.

Mrs. Terry, rising, exclaimed: "Mammy, don't
insult the lady."

"Sit down and don't interfere with me. She's no
lady; she's an eavesdropper. Ladies don't do such
tricks. She may wear good clothes enough to fool
you people, but it don't fool me."

The young lady expostulated and tried to explain
that she had come there as a friend, but she was
unable to placate the negress, who suddenly asked
her name.

The woman gave the name of a well-known
family.

"And you live where?"
"No. — Sutter street."
"Oh, yes; those rooms over the drug store!"
"Yes," was the reply.
"You have told me two lies," instantly retorted
Mrs. Pleasant. "You have given a false name and a
false address. You have the most beautiful mouth I
ever saw on a woman, and the S — people have
large mouths; none of 'em small like yours. There is
no drug store at that number, and so that is lie
number two. You are here as a spy," and with that
she pitched her bodily through the door and closed
it. Then, turning to the three spectators of the
scene, she asked:

" Didn't you know what it meant when she didn't
drink that water?"

No one made any reply, and she closed the inci-
dent by remarking:

"You folks are all green enough for the cows to
eat. You shouldn't be allowed to run loose in a town of this size."

To satisfy myself of the correctness of the deductions drawn by Mrs. Pleasant, I hunted the number on Sutter street next day given by the young woman who had called at the hotel, and found that she had given a false address. I told Mrs. Pleasant of it afterwards and she seemed surprised that I had wasted any time demonstrating it.

This incident is recalled to illustrate a trait in her character, showing how rapidly she sizes up a situation and how directly she reaches conclusions. She is seldom deceived by outward appearances. They cut no figure with her.

About two years ago I realized that she was becoming involved in legal and financial complications, and wrote to ask her if I could be of any assistance to her. She replied that she was not in any trouble, and she wanted nothing to do with any transaction which she could not direct. She would never ask any lawyer's advice until she had the ready money to pay for it.

I knew how perfectly useless it would be to induce her to change her mind, and so the matter was dropped.

A few weeks prior to this writing I received a dispatch from her physician asking me to come down, as she felt that she was dying.

I arrived next day and found her sick in very plain quarters on Webster Street. In spite of her reduced circumstances and dire extremity, she declined financial assistance, saying that Mrs. Oliver Roberts, who lived a few blocks away, was sending her breakfast and dinner daily.

She had some statements to make before she passed away, and so, at intervals between sinking spells and remarkable recuperations, she gave me the story of her eventful life, from her birth to the present time.

Some of the statements made were so startling that I demanded corroboration, on the ground that the public would not accept her narrative as true. She replied that the public could believe it or not. It was the truth, however incredible it might seem, and "they could take it or leave it."

The cloud of wrath which gathered on her face at the suggestion of a doubt caused a change in the channels of conversation. Later on she told me where I could obtain the information which corroborated her story. These facts are being gathered, slowly and laboriously; and when the record is complete it will amply demonstrate that Mary E. Pleasant did not confine herself to assisting to build up San Francisco, but that her money secretly backed a
transaction, one of the most tragic in the annals of the United States, which turned a page of history which was only completed when Abraham Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation.

Since she landed in San Francisco in 1850 she has made and checked out through the local banks over a million dollars. She has scattered to the right and to the left gold, diamonds and realty. From the roof of the house where she now lies with the candle of life flickering and sputtering in its socket, one can count a dozen luxurious homes which she has absolutely deeded away to people to whom she desired to show her friendship, and yet she has scorned aid from any of them, and, game to the last, is ready to go down to her grave without accepting a quarter of a dollar from any source.

In compiling the history of her life, I propose to show the difference between "the notorious Mammy Pleasure" and the real Mary E. Pleasant. In doing so I hope to cancel an obligation which she laid me under many years ago.

But why not let her tell her story in her own language? It is concise and to the point, and I could not tell it better.

From her sick bed she dictated the following:

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Some weeks ago I felt that I was apt to pass away at any moment. Being over eighty-seven years of age and a sufferer from many attacks of sickness, I felt that my hold upon life was short. My physician, Dr. Kearney, who has been more than kind to me, advised me that I had not long to live, and so I asked him to send a dispatch to Mr. Sam Davis, in Carson City, Nevada, asking him to come down.

Mr. Davis came next day, and I have asked him to allow me to tell him the story of my life.

I sent for him because he has always been a good friend of mine, with a friendship that has been thoroughly tested and that has never wavered, whether I was up in the world or down.

I have many friends when I had a great deal of money, but when I wanted some one to help me when I was down and without money I selected the one whom I considered would not fail me in the hour of trouble.

Mr. Davis very kindly consented to allow me to dictate to him a history of my life. The friends I have now are good friends, but under no obligations. I can recall people upon whom I have lavished gifts and money, but I don't know where they are now. I know they are not hunting me. I could name a host of them if I felt so disposed, but I do not care to call these matters up, or things in connection with them. Mr. Davis, who was under no obligations to me in his life, and who never received a dollar from me, is here.

I have frequently been asked to give the public a history of my life in order to vindicate myself and set at rest the many stories which have been published about me.

Now, I never cared a feather's weight for public opinion, for it is about the most ghostly thing I know of. No one but a rank coward fears it, for it don't know its own mind a minute or where it gets its ideas about anything. So I want it understood distinctly that I am not seeking any vindication which my own conscience does not call on me for.

My friends have asked me to do this for their sake, fearing possibly that my silence might be misconstrued.

I have been accused of many things, and under the load of accusation I have held my tongue. I have never been given to explaining away lies, and you can't explain away the truth.

I often think of what old Cornelius Vanderbilt said about the public.

I don't want to repeat his language, but I think something of his sentiments.

When certain newspapers tried to blacken my character, I thought to myself that they must have some money to pay their hands with, and if they could get a dollar a line abusing me, it helped maintain printers' wages and kept more people at work; and I always liked to see a lot of people employed, for that is what helps make good times.

It meant grub and more coal for somebody, and all that was agreeable to me.

If a write-up of me put an extra blanket on somebody's bed or gave a household meat and bread, I would let them lay my character down in the middle of the road and let the whole world jump on it, and then turn it over and let them go it again.

So long as my friends believed in me, I didn't bother a bit.

What should one care whose heart is good and whose acts have been right and who does not look back with regrets for the past?

I have observed all I had to others, and when I attached myself to any one as a friend, I have remained to the end.

I do not harbor a vindictive thought against the people who have betrayed my friendship or maltreated me, and, in going down to my grave, I forgive them all. I have always been at peace with God, and I wish to die at peace with all the world.

To my enemies I say nothing, and to my friends who are standing by me in my trouble I say: "God bless you all."

The declaration on the part of Mrs. Pleasant that she will pass away forgiving her enemies gives the reader a fair idea of what her memoirs will be. Since coming to this coast she has seen San Francisco grow up from a small trading post to its present metropolitan proportions, and she knows the history of its people better than any other living person.

Her remarkable memory is supplemented with a carefully kept diary of events covering a period of nearly fifty years. This she has placed at the disposal of her biographer.

The memoirs will be a reflex of a life busy almost from the cradle and a recital of incidents which make a history stranger than any fiction.

In her breast are locked the secrets of hundreds of leading families, and were she so disposed she might leave behind her memoirs which would shake the foundations of society.

A person of less strength of character or narrowness of disposition might do this. She looks at life from a different standpoint, and insists that the best she knows will be given to the public and the worst will be buried with her.

Revenge was never a part of her make-up. She has suffered much from the malevolence of her enemies, but she has never seen the time when she would deny a charge against her, however serious.

Her silence has placed her in a mistaken position with the public, for whose good opinion she would not give five cents.

The history of her life is given very nearly as it came from her lips. It is full of originality, quaint philosophy and a rare insight into human nature.
and human motives. Those who know her best will agree in saying that no human being ever read motive with more certainty or pierced the mask of hypocrisy more quickly than she.

Coupled with this was a kindness of disposition and genial humor which makes one of the most interesting character studies of the century.

* * * * * * * * *

Continuing her story, Mrs. Pleasant said:

I was born on the nineteenth day of August, 1814.

Some people have reported that I was born in slavery, but as a matter of fact I was born in Philadelphia, at number 9 Barley Street.

My parents, as nearly as I know, must have been a strange mixture.

My father was a native Kanaka and my mother a full-blooded Louisiana negress. Both were of large frame, but I think I must have got my physical strength from my father, who was, like most of his race, a giant in frame.

His name was Louis Alexander Williams. He was a man of great intelligence and had a fair education, judging from his letters.

He was a commercial man and imported silks from India. He imported other things, but his main business was silk.

My mother’s name was Mary, and I was named after her, but I recall very little about her. I don’t think she was as well educated as my father, for I don’t remember that she ever wrote me any letters.

When I was about six years of age, I was sent to Nantucket, Mass., to live with a Quaker woman named Hussey.

I never knew why I was sent there, and about all I know is that my first recollections of life dated from Nantucket.

We called Mrs. Hussey “Grandma Hussey,” be-
cause she was so old. She was no relation. She lived "Under the Hill," as they used to say of those who lived on Union Street in those days.

Mrs. William B. Carr of this city, the widow of Billy Carr, the politician and capitalist, used to live in Nantucket, and will recall the huckster shop kept by Mrs. Hussey. Mrs. Carr was one of the Macey sisters in those days.

When my father sent me to live with the Husseys, he also gave them, as I learned afterwards, plenty of money to have me educated, but they did not use it for that purpose, and that's how I came to have no education.

They found I was such a likely clerk in the huckster's shop that they kept me at the counter, and never sent me to school.

I often wonder what I would have been with an education. I envy, and always did, children who can write a good hand and spell correctly, and blame the Husseys for not giving me an education. I never blamed them to their faces, for I thought too much of them to hurt their feelings.

They are dead now, or I would not mention it. Sometimes, however, I think it was all for the best; for I have run across a good many highly educated people who knew a whole lot about books and nothing about the world or the people in it. I have let books alone, and studied men and women a good deal. You can't learn all the book knowledge and all the human nature studies in a lifetime. You must slight one or the other. I have seen lots of people who could talk as if they were talking out of a book, and they would talk all day and never talk sense a minute. If people talk sense and don't talk it with good grammar or use great words, they will be listened to. I have always noticed that when I have anything to say people listen. They never go to sleep on me.

But this is not a memoir, as you call it. I must get back to the huckster shop in Nantucket.

I was a girl full of smartness and quick at coming back at people when they tried to have a little fun talking with me. I was a good-looking girl, too, and people used to come in to hear what I had to say. I suppose I got in a habit of talking too much, for when young people find they can raise a laugh they are liable to talk too much.

I would even joke with the parson, and nobody in town would dare do that but me; and we became great friends.

All this brought custom to the shop, and I would call people in and get them to buy things of me. I was always on the watch, and few people ever got by that shop without buying something of me.

I was up to all sorts of pranks, and I remember that there was some relation of Mrs. Hussey's who had a watermelon and ground-pea patch. Ground-peas was the name peanuts went by in those days.

The children used to get in and steal the peas and melons, and I noticed that he always caught the children who were there by sizing up the prints of their feet in the soft ground.

I made up my mind that he would never catch me that way, and so I cut some bark in the shape of feet, and when I went after the melons I tied these on. I think I must have played too smart, for he went to Mrs. Hussey and charged me with it. He knew there was no girl in town who would think of such deviltry but me. Mrs. Hussey said I never did it, and if I did she would pay the damage. I did n't want to see the money go out of the family or have her caught in a lie, and so I said I never had been on the ground. I meant, of course, I had been on the bark; and that was the end of that.

(The to be continued)

The Shock of Honesty

BY THE EDITOR

"Governor Jenkins of Oklahoma is hereby removed because of his improper connection with a contract between the Territory and the Oklahoma Sanitarium Company. The decision is based purely upon his own written statements and his oral explanations of them at the final hearing.

"One of the duties of the Territorial Governor is to enter into a contract with some person or corporation for the keeping of the insane of the Territory. Governor Jenkins made such contract with the Oklahoma Sanitarium Company, a corporation, the promoters of which reserved $10,000 of its stock for the Governor and subject to his orders.

"In the Governor's explanation of the affair he says he told the promoters at the time they desired him to sanction the contract 'that it was an important contract, and that I had some friends whom I would like to have interested in the company, to whom I owed some political obligations which I would not be able to pay by an appointment or anything of that kind.'

"The stock was delivered to a banker subject to the Governor's order, and was turned over to these friends whose political services the Governor thus sought to reward.

"The extent of the favor to the Governor or his friends is suggested by the fact that the only known sale of the stock since the contract was given out was at double the price paid for it.

"As performance of the contract was to be the sole business of the corporation, it is obvious, either that the Territory was obligated to pay far more than the service was worth, or that its helpless wards were to have the enormous profits contemplated taken out of their keep.

"The Governor's confessed relations to the matter disclose such an entire lack of appreciation of the high fiduciary nature of the duties of his office as to unfit him for their further discharge.

"A sound rule of public policy and morals forbids a public servant from seeking or accepting any personal benefit in a transaction wherein he has a public duty to perform.

"A chancellor would not for one moment retain
a trustee who in dealings for the trust reserved an advantage to himself. The thought is not to be tolerated that the President can be less vigilant and exacting in the public's interest."

*Theodore Roosevelt.*

In the face of the accession to the Presidency of a man whose cardinal principle is frankness and honesty, the refusal of the Schley case to purify itself through the court of inquiry of its taint of hidden motives and sinister prejudices serves only to emphasize the ascendancy of the Rooseveltian school of plain speech and straightforward action. Public judgment leaps spontaneously to the short and concise verdict of Dewey, a man after Roosevelt's own kind, and only one distinct echo of the old school of equivocation and word-baiting is heard in high circles in connection with the incident. That echo proceeds from Senator Hanna, who is quoted as saying:—

"It is all over. The court which was specially convened to settle the matter has left it very much as it was. The public had made up its mind three years ago."

Mr. Hanna does not commit himself on what the public "has made up its mind to."

Such political fence-splitting is rapidly reverting, under the Presidential impulse, to the realm of written history, and men of the Dewey and the Low and the Odell type, who have few words and simple, broad, easily-understood principles whose other name is "common sense," are moving forward into the lead. Dewey's report will go the President ultimately and from there the public will anticipate the same swift, incisive, clear-cut judgment that has been given by the hero of Manila.

Within the past month, ending with this writing, December 20th, something of the spirit of quick coordination of knowledge and action has passed from the White House to Congress and the nation has been treated to the rather novel sight of an international agreement of such importance as the Hay-Pauncefote treaty being confirmed by the Senate with less than ten days of discussion, and, with the same promptitude, bills introduced into each House of Congress foreshadowing immediate appropriation for the building of the Nicaraguan canal and providing the requisite tariff regulations for the trade with the Philippines.

Candor and directness seem to have passed along the line and to have spread their influence in a thousand and one directions within the short space of time within which Theodore Roosevelt has occupied the Presidency.

Germany, whether taking the cue from America or acting upon her own initiative, has been talking with unusual lack of reserve as to her proposed action in Venezuela; and Great Britain seems to be in a ferment of passionate longing for some one to be a savior such as Roosevelt has been to the United States.

Rosebery was looked to, but he spoke and set no new mark for national activity. Perhaps the new star will be the Prince of Wales, whose Guildhall speech, urging the empire to unity and energy, may prove to be one of the greater incidents of the early portion of the new century. England, when she went to war with the Boers, put herself under the sway of a man who was not of the frank order, who was more or less of an opportunist, and now she is looking for an honest man to pull her out of the mess honorably and cleanly.

These are strenuous, strange days in England. With American competition, with South Africa drawing mightily upon the financial reserves, with anti-British feeling intensifying in Germany, with German manufacturers making a systematic and successful campaign in the very midst of England's home manufacturing territory—no wonder that the old Tory paper, the Saturday Review, which never was too good a friend of Ambrose Bierce, is in a ferment and suggests that England, instead of making such bosom-friendship with the overweening Uncle Sam, should turn her conciliatory powers across the North Sea and establish her peace with Germany.

These are equally strenuous days in Germany, where the people are staggering under the depression which followed the collapse of industrial speculation, and where they are more or less terrified with the vast and swift reach of America into the fields of trade and enterprise which, until two or three years ago, were regarded as the exclusive prerogative of the nations of the Old World. Alternately the orators and the editors are throwing firebrands at America and England, at one time denouncing an unfortunate and harmless speech by Chamberlain as an insult to the entire German empire and at another time exclaiming that the problem of the tariff relations with the United States is the "greatest question of the decade." In the endeavor to arrive at a schedule of foreign imports that will do for Germany what the high protective tariff has done for the United States, the Teutons have encountered warnings of disapproval from the Dual Alliance and protests have been presented from the Ambassador of Great Britain.

On top of all this has come a domestic scandal which requires all of an emperor's authority and a diplomat's patience to allay—the scandal of the army duel, the institution which recently led to the pitiable death of a promising young lieutenant upon the eve of his wedding, and which disclosed the fact that too often the German men of arms love duels and seek to promote them with something of the same zeal that Spaniards patronize the bull-fight.

France, with all her genius and all her charm, is confronted with the practically insurmountable problem of preventing a decrease of population through a decline in the birth rate. Her hospitable doors remain open to the American, without protest and with welcome. The American countess of Castel­lane has penetrated into the inmost sanctuaries of Parisian society; and the number of American students in the salons of art and music constantly increases. But the Republic recognizes that the industrial center has left Europe; and, going at once, as England does, to the practical pith of the matter, she is preparing for the establishment in the United States of schools and scholarships in industry and commerce.

As if all nations were in the strife and the awaken­ing, even Italy, which has the most inducement to continue the enjoyment of the fair and lovely rose of comfort, is proposing comprehensive plans for the construction of aqueducts, the building of railroads, and the creation at Naples of a "great manufacturing center." And beyond Italy the Czar is expected to be re-galvanized with the return of Said Pasha to a place of counsel beside the Sultan.

Simultaneously with this great enrichment of the commercial aspect of Europe is the elevation of commerce in the United States to the plane of scientific and trained education. New York City has dedicated the first High School of Commerce in the country, several of the Universities are maintaining com-