



Gay as a Grig: Memories of a North Texas Girlhood (Personal Narratives of the West)

Ellen Bowie Holland

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Ellen Bowie Holland grew up in a house at Weatherford, Texas, that had the "motherly look of a large and gallant hen hovering over too many chicks" and that was inhabited by a "lively, warm-hearted family." This book is her record of the "whole world of little things which enriched young lives" in her small town. Blessed with a discerning and sympathetic eye, she had much happiness to remember and record, and she employs a charming combination of nostalgia and comedy as she brings to life again these bygone days. Her childhood experiences are illuminated by the wisdom of maturity, and the whole is infused with a deft humor, developed through her skilled use of fantasy and through her ability to laugh at the pretensions of the Victorian life she saw. Holland's book also is memorable as a record of her unforgettable parents: "Mother was born on Columbus Day, and she and Columbus had a lot in common. She liked to discover things for herself and nothing pleased her more than to nicely finish off a job that she had been told could not be done" . . . "She wasn't geared for solitary musing. Like a salmon at spawning time she liked to swim upstream against rushing waters and bash into boulders" . . . "Mother's pattern of neatness reached out in all directions" . . . "Mother, sheathed like an armadillo" . . . "Father, silk-hatted, or swallow-tailed, distinguished almost beyond belief" . . . "I never heard him raise his voice or laugh aloud" . . . "Father was not witty but he had an absolutely delightful sense of nonsense. His humor came smoothly upon the scene" . . . Throughout the book the reader shares the author's consciousness of the vast distance between her own childhood and that of the grandchildren to whom the book is dedicated—a distance created by rapid technological change. "From my window I look over an air-conditioned city and I see jets streaking across the sky and occasionally I hear one of them breaking the sound barrier" . . . "When I really want to awe myself I think about the fact that only one generation ago Mother saw friendly or marauding Indians roaming these same acres" . . . "Those of my age have come into a span of years where living conditions of all kinds have changed so abruptly, where obsolescence sets in so rapidly, that there is little in common between our infancy and our present."

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