

**COFFEE AND A LOVE  
AFFAIR; AN AMERICAN  
GIRL'S ROMANCE ON  
A COFFEE PLANTATION**

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Coffee and a love affair; an American girl's romance on a coffee plantation by Mary Boardman Sheldon

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*a* LOVE AFFAIR

AN AMERICAN GIRL'S ROMANCE ON  
A COFFEE PLANTATION

BY

MARY BOARDMAN SHELDON



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September, 1908

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To  
MY BROTHER

COFFEE AND A LOVE AFFAIR



## Coffee *and* a Love Affair

*El Cafetal, Sierra Nevada Mountains.*

*June 14th.*

I HAVE been here two weeks. I am alive. I am well, and I like it.

What an experiment it was, though, — my coming! If I had ever, for one moment, thought of myself as an angel, this action on my part would have opened my eyes to the fact that in reality I must be nothing else than a fool. There can be no doubt whatever that this is a case in which angels would have feared to tread; while I — I rushed in as fast as the mule could carry me.

I was in Santa Marta, waiting for the banana boat to come in, that I might take passage on it, and return to what the foreigners here call "God's country." For a year and a half I had been in Colombia,

up in Bogota. I had come down again to the coast with every intention of returning to civilization by the first steamer. I suppose any sane person would have done so, but on the subject of travel I always acknowledge, quite frankly, that I am not sane. I wonder if any other girl in the world ever refused to marry a man simply because she preferred to go to Europe. Two years ago, in New York, I told Kent Winthrop that I would rather go to Europe than marry any man in the world. He replied that he would rather have me go to Europe than marry any man in the world except him. But when I put the emphasis differently, and told him that I would rather go to Europe than marry *any* man, he said — rather crisply, I remember — that if I preferred Europe to him, to take Europe by all means. I took Europe. There I met the Caravillos; went with them to Bogota; returned to the coast expecting to go home; fell in love with Coffee, and came up here to the Sierra Nevadas. Well and truly does Kipling say that the "go fever" is more real than many doctors' diseases!

The day that I arrived in Santa Marta I

met one of the five American men of the town. The mere fact that I had arrived — that I was there — I, a lone woman, unmarried, and without grey hairs, — was in itself singular enough to make it perfectly reasonable, almost inevitable, that this one-fifth of the American male colony should put to me the question that he did. I forget how he phrased it; — in some words that placed it in the light of a fellow-countryman's friendly interest — but the gist of the interrogation was:

• “What in the world are *you* doing *here*?”

I answered him that I was doing nothing; that is, that I had no business reason for being there. I had come, I said, for pleasure.

“Pleasure?” he repeated, incredulously.  
“Good Lord! *Pleasure!*”

If I had been there for anything else, I think this blanket would have been a very damp one indeed; but as I really had come simply because it had pleased me to do so; and as I knew that if I so wished I could leave by the next Tuesday's banana boat; and as, moreover and above all, I was sincerely and honestly enjoying myself at that