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The Wrong House

A New Year's Story

By T. C. Harbaugh

Written for This Paper

THE well-to-do home of the Morleys was in a quiet street, and, as they were quiet people, they could not have been better suited. The house itself was not unlike its neighbors, and but for the number over the door, which was 333, one not acquainted with the street might have taken some other house for it if he were hunting the

Morleys. One winter day a tiny hand drew the heavy curtains aside and a face appeared at one of the front panes. Everybody knew Hester Morley, a prim little woman of pleasant ways, the busy president of a charitable circle, and withal a person to be admired. She looked at the snow which lay in the street and over the pavement, and for a moment watched one of her neighbors who swept the white covering into the gutter.

A boy who knew Hester's face hurried past and glanced at the window to receive a nod from her and to throw back as he passed "A happy New Year, Miss Hester."

The girl—she was scarcely a young woman yet—smiled at the boy and watched him out of sight.

In another moment the bell rang and she turned as the maid was heard to enter the hall.

"A stranger, ma'am," said the maid, looking into the parlor. "I am sure I don't quite like his looks, and—"

"What does he want, Ida?"

"I can't tell. He insists on seeing the lady of the house and I've said he wasn't in; but it does no good."

"Let him come in, then."

Hester walked over to an arm-chair and seating herself waited for her New Year's visitor. She was not kept waiting long, for Ida had admitted the caller, and she heard his step in the hall.

She looked him over from head to foot as he entered the parlor, a tall, somewhat uncouth man in the thirties, with strange, shuffling ways, and, to her, out of place in the cozy room.

"Miss Wemyss, I believe?" he said, bowing to Hester.

"Miss Morley," was the correction. "This is not the Wemyss residence, but—"

The man looked confused.

"It used to be, did it not?" he queried.

"Yes, sir. Father purchased it from Jacob Wemyss, the sugar merchant, three years ago, and changed it considerably."

"And the family?"

"I think they left the city soon afterward. The old gentleman died, he was a widower at the time, you may remember, and Miss Wemyss married."

"Married? That's not very queer. Women do that, I know. Married, you say? I can't quite grasp it."

Hester looked pityingly at the man. He seemed to have received a blow.

"I haven't seen her for five years," said he. "I went away on New Year's day, and I came back on the same anniversary. So you're Miss Morley?"

Hester bowed again and studied the face before her. It was strong and handsome, despite the uncouthness of it.

"I don't look like city people yet. It's because of my life in the mines," he said with a smile. "It's not just the life that tends to keep one up-to-date, you see. My name is Sydney. You may have heard the Wemysses mention me."

"Begging your pardon, I did not know them personally. You say you have been living in the mines? I once had a friend who went west, took to mining, too, I believe. But never mind, Mr. Sydney, I trust you will find your friend, the once Miss Wemyss, and permit me to wish you a happy New Year."

"After this, miss?" smiled the man.

"After coming back to the city after five years' absence and on New Year's day, too, getting into the wrong house and introducing myself to a strange young lady? It seems like a dream."

Hester was about to reply when the door bell rang sharply and Ida's voice was heard in the hall.

In another moment the servant was at the parlor door, her pretty face quite white and her voice in gasps.

"The police, Miss Hester!" cried the girl, and vanished.

The stranger started from the chair he had taken near the fire and threw a look of horror toward the door.

"I'm sorry, miss," he said. "This is

an otherwise nappy New Year's day for you. They may be looking for me," and then he fastened his eyes upon the door which opened to admit an officer.

"I beg pardon, Miss Morley," said the policeman, glancing first at Hester. "It's a queer New Year's call, but it's duty, you see. I am under the necessity of taking charge of your caller, the gentleman yonder."

The returned miner seemed to increase half an inch in stature as he

glared at the policeman, his equal in physical strength, and for a moment Hester heard the beating of her heart.

"Who's the warrant for, officer?" he asked.

"Hiram Rowan."

"But, Mr. Gentry, the gentleman's name is Sydney," put in Hester. "He has just assured me of that."

"You ladies will ever believe man," was the policeman's answer.

The miner stood rigid in the middle of the room. He had none of the criminal about him, and in a little while he had enlisted Hester Morley's sympathy.

"You couldn't wait till he explains, Mr. Gentry?" she said, addressing the officer.

"Why, no, Miss Hester. You see, he's but a common—"

The man took a hasty step toward the policeman and his hand shut, but he checked himself.

"You represent the law, however often it blunders," he said, stepping back.

Hester stood like a statue of marble in the luxuriantly appointed parlor. Her face was very white, and as the miner spoke their eyes met.

Guilty? No. She turned to the officer.

"Is the charge upon which you have arrested this gentleman a serious one?" she asked.

"Quite so, miss."

"Is it a crime that is ballable under the laws?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then send for Hester Morley when he needs bail. I am worth enough in my own right, I suppose."

"My stars, yes," cried the policeman. "They'd take you for \$50,000."

Hester smiled.

Without the wind was shaking the leafless trees along the gutter, and into the room came the sound of bells

and a gentleman in the high-backed chair said:

"Discharged! I congratulate you, Mr. Sydney, and wish you happy New Year."

A little color came to Hester Morley's cheeks and she left the room with Ida.

"The wrong house proved his salvation, after all, Miss Hester," said the maid.

There was no answer, but the little lady who heard pressed her cheek near the carriage window and looked half dreamily into the street.

Perhaps she heard the bells, perhaps she heard the word "discharged," as it had just fallen from the lips of the police judge; at any rate, at least she smiled.

It was a happy New Year's day for two persons. Jefferys Sydney saw one form vanish from his memory and another took its place, and Hester Morley just a year later heard bells that chimed many glad wishes on her wedding day.

LESSONS FROM THE CENSUS.

State lines do not coincide with natural divisions, and the census might be made to tell interesting stories that may lie concealed, if figures were massed according to other divisions. That the population of Iowa has declined by 7,000 in the past decade is remarkable enough; but a more striking result appears when a geographical, rather than a political, area is considered. Bounded by the Mississippi on the east, the Missouri on the south, the Missouri and the Big Sioux on the west, and the southern boundary of Minnesota on the north, is an area of 78,000 square miles, or nearly one-third larger than all New England. It comprises the entire state of Iowa and the northernmost 44 counties of Missouri. There is probably no other portion of the United States of equal extent which contains a larger proportion of good farming land. The last decade has been one of exceptional prosperity—yet in this entire region there now live 100,000 fewer people than resided there ten years ago, says the New York Evening Post. Outside the cities of more than 25,000 inhabitants, the decrease in population since 1900 has been upward of 140,000. This is a kind of story that the boldest prophet would not have ventured to predict as a possibility a quarter of a century ago, and is well worth the careful attention of political students today.

"Remove not the ancient landmark," is a Scriptural injunction to whose value the United States is only beginning to subscribe in earnest, says the Omaha Bee. Spasmodic efforts at preservation have been made here and there, the most notable being in the case of the Yellowstone, but the insensate greed of the utilitarian world has wrought heavy damage in many spots of beauty and wonder ere the people awoke to a realization of the wantonness. The Palisades of the Hudson have been saved in years of desultory fetters, during which com-

ing the noble features of the Hudson. Similar destruction of the famous Delaware Water Gap has been averted with the utmost difficulty. Only private enthusiasm and ability to pay saved and perpetuated the Garden of the Gods, which a wealthy patron has just presented as a Christmas gift to Colorado Springs.

The secretary of the state board of health of Kentucky has compiled the cost to the people of the state brought about last year by diseases that were preventable, says the Boston Transcript. Reports showed that there were 139,717 cases of sickness which proper care and regulation would have prevented. Of these cases 13,377 resulted fatally. The secretary estimates that each case cost \$94 for the care of the sick and loss of time, and the average value of the life sacrificed to a preventable disease is set at \$1,700.

Cape Town once lived under no severe a code of sumptuary laws that anything like display was restricted to the governor and his immediate circle. Thus runs Article VI. of the Dutch laws against luxury and ostentation: "No one less in rank than a junior merchant and those among the citizens of equal rank and their wives and daughters only of those who are or have been members of any council shall venture to use umbrellas."

In practice this restricted the possession and use of umbrellas to about 50 persons in Cape Town.

A stenographer over in New York wants to know what she shall write instead of "Dear Madam" at the beginning of a letter if the letter is addressed to a firm composed of women. She says she wrote "My Dear Mesdames," and felt that it looked foolish. How would "Ladies" do?

A Frenchwoman has succeeded in remaining up in the air for 15 minutes on a monoplane. During all that time there was nobody to whom she could say a word.

A New York coachman has just received a gift of \$10,000. It came from the head of the house to reward the man who had not eloped with the former's daughter.

There is nothing to show, however, that the Denver woman who never owned a hat did not spend hours trying them on in the millinery shops.

"We still live in America," says the New York Evening Post. When did you move in, brother?

If you want to become popular have your name forged on a few checks.

"Awake, Awake, Salute the Happy Morn"



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AEROPLANES FOR BATTLESHIPS.

An aeroplane costs \$5,000. An armored cruiser costs \$5,000,000. The best of our armored cruisers, the Tennessees and the Montanas, have been rendered obsolete by the inflexible and the Von der Tann. Nor are we building new ones to succeed them. Therefore the aeroplane, as an adjunct to the battleship, becomes a matter of interest, both tactically and economically. The coming attempt of an aeroplane to fly from the deck of an ocean steamer back to New York harbor is a matter of prime moment. Though the federal government has rescinded the order detailing torpedo boats to assist in the experiment, the navy department will keep official watch on it. The result of this experiment may determine whether the naval authorities will equip the next new battleship with an aeroplane and the necessary facilities for making a flight from the ship's deck while at sea. The advent of the battleship-cruiser has made our best cruisers nothing but scouts, and not rapid ones, says the Chicago Record-Herald. Yet the cost of their maintenance is almost that of a dreadnought. If the aeroplane can perform scout duty at sea the cost of constructing and maintaining our navy will be immensely reduced. This new application of aeronautics to naval warfare seems, at present, a delicate and difficult matter. It will require expert aviators aboard ship and highly favorable conditions all around. Yet skilled and daring flyers are rapidly increasing in number and the ability to cope with varied atmospheric conditions is developing to match.

Showing American agricultural products alongside those of England and Scotland in those two countries may not strike many as promising valuable results to our people. But in other ways there seem to be opportunities. John N. McCunn, our consul at Glasgow, writes that he considers it a great mistake that American farm and dairy outfits are not on exhibition at the farmers' weekly markets in such Scotch towns as Kilmarnock, Kirkcudbright and other places of like character. It appears that the excellence of such devices is their own commendation. The inventive American mind has gone very far in contriving apparatus which economizes time and effort and increases efficiency, as the use of such appliances here has demonstrated. The old world has been slower, but the Scotch are quick to perceive advantages such as the American outfit assure, and Consul McCunn's hint might be taken with advantage to all concerned.

Carlyle once told a man who was financially interested in gold mining that all the gold ever produced by California was not worth one good mealy potato. And yet the potato in Scotland has a history of less than 200 years, says the Edinburgh Dispatch. When Macdonald of Clanranald, in 1748 brought seed potatoes for his tenants in South Uist they objected to planting them because the potato is not mentioned in the Bible! Somewhat later George Bachop, one of the Ochertyre tenants, when told by his wife that she had potatoes for supper, contemptuously replied: "Tatties! tatties! I never suppit on them a' my days, and winna the night. Gie them to the herd, gie me sowens."

A Berlin woman's club has organized a "league of politeness." One of the first rules of the league should provide that when young women who have been at the matinee enter the cars to journey homeward they should not attempt to stare weary old men out of their seats.

A new fish yarn has been sprung: A Boston man was bitten by a member of the funny tribe. If he had not died to prove his assertion, we might have doubted the veracity of his claim.

A former servant sues a Cincinnati millionaire for \$28,921 "back wages." Probably a little extra money promised her for working in the country during the summer months.

The war against the hookworm goes merrily on in Porto Rico, with excellent results. Over one-third of the population has received treatment.

It is a dull day when neither the Washington nor the Cleveland seismograph can pick up an earthquake.