

GUESTS OF HONOR

"When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

"But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Andrew McPherson, manager of the Union coal-mines in Blackstone Valley, was old-fashioned enough to have family worship. His father and his grandfather had always had family prayers, and Andrew had never thought of discontinuing them. He was Scotch, and clung to old ways. He read the Bible as his father and grandfather had always read it, a chapter at a time, until the last chapter of the Revelation was finished. Then the next morning he would calmly turn back to Genesis and begin again.

His family accepted the custom as they accepted the day's work; that is, with cheerfulness and equanimity. Loved and respected and sometimes feared, Andrew was lord of the household.

The family was seated for family worship in their usual circle in the sitting-room—Mrs. McPherson on Andrew's right, then Mildred, Jean, Robert, and the youngest, Scott, four years old, close at his father's left. The Bible reading had reached the

"As Andrew McPherson finished reading that remarkable injunction of Jesus about inviting guests to dinner, his eyes rested a moment on his wife's face. Mildred and Jean noticed that their mother flushed. At the end of the chapter Andrew laid the Bible on a table, and with the rest of the household, including the two servants, knelt to offer the morning prayer.

He prayed with more than his usualunction: "O Lord, make us to feel summat exercised o'er the needs of a common humanity. Grant that we may ken the needs and woes o' the mitherless bairns an' hameless bodies; the feckless creatures that ha' ne'er been invited out to dine wi' onybody except their ain sels; and make us apprehensive o' all the gracious hospitalities. Thou hast visited upon us at the beneficent hands o' our mony friends, mony of whom ha' ne'er missed what we took fra' them, because they had mair than they needed. Help us to do honest work today, whether we get fu' wages for it or not, and may we na be so tired or so weary when the day's toil is o'er that we canna find the way hame to our Father's house. All through Christ our Lord. Amen."

When Andrew McPherson prayed, he always expressed his thought in the vernacular of his mother country. At other times he spoke with hardly a trace of Scottish accent.

He rose from his knees and sat down. And beginning with Mildred, each one of the children, not excepting Robert, who was just out of high school, came up and kissed his ruddy cheek. This was another family custom as ancient as family prayers, and accepted in the same unquestioning spirit.

Andrew took down his big coat, for the day was sharp; Christ was only two weeks away. At the door he stopped and said to his wife:

"Elsie, of course I don't want to insist, for it's your party and Mildred's more than it is mine, but I do wish you would write to Jim. For auld lang syne, you know, Jim's had hard luck, what with all the sickness and that fire. He and Maggie would appreciate it."

Mrs. McPherson looked vexed. "But, Andrew, they would not

feel—they—it would not be—" "I know Jim isn't much on frills, but he's full as good as any of the other guests. And besides, he can't invite us to anything, now that he's lost his home."

Mrs. McPherson said: "I'll ask him and Maggie." "That's a good lass," said Andrew, his face brightening up. "I've got a fine eighteen-pound turkey promised by Bailey from the Hill Farm. Don't look for me until tonight."

He kissed his wife and went out. At the turn of the driveway he waved his hand. His wife, standing at the window, answered his farewell, and remained looking down into the smoky valley until Mildred spoke to her.

"Mother, why does father insist on having the Blaisdells for Christmas?"

"I don't think he insists. Jim and Maggie are very old acquaintances, or at least they used to be, and your father—"

"I wish he wouldn't ask you to invite them. It will spoil the whole dinner. They won't fit in with any one else. Do you have to ask them?"

"You heard me promise your father I would."

"It's a shame!" The girl pouted. "It will spoil everything if they come."

"Maybe they will refuse."

"It's to be hoped they will have sense enough to do so. Mother, send them the list, and tell them there are five guests."

There is some special reason for inviting them, but none that I know of, except father's sentiment, for asking the Blaisdells."

Mrs. McPherson went to a writing desk in the library and drew out a slip of paper. Mildred followed her, and looking over her mother's shoulder, read the names of the guests to be invited to the Christmas dinner.

"Doctor and Mrs. Clark Langham—they invited us to Red Cliff three times, and we have never had them here to dinner yet; Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham; Judge Henry and his daughter—I haven't seen Louise since we left Bryn Mawr last summer. But they were very kind to me out at Manitou. We owe them something; Mrs. Powell Richardson and her two sons—they are very influential people with the company. Father asked for them. Colonel and Mrs. Hannibal Swain and daughter. We must have them, mother. They entertained me so delightfully at Palm Beach."

"And—Jim Blaisdell and Maggie," said Mrs. McPherson, finishing the list.

Mildred bit her lip.

"Mother, you know they will spoil everything. They—they—can't talk grammatically, and they are not our kind at all. I can't see why they should be asked."

Mrs. McPherson sat silent, while in memory she went back twenty years, to the time when her husband and Jim Blaisdell were working in the same mine and were chums. Was it not more than a dim memory that she and Andrew cherished of Jim Blaisdell when he risked his life with his friend to rescue two hundred miners shut down in a pocket and cut off by a mountain of debris?

Jim Blaisdell was still a gang foreman. Andrew, company manager in the Blackstone holdings, had built a fine house on the slope of Ragged Run Mountain, and named it "Hill Crest." Andrew had clung to Jim all these years because he was loyal, and because he was Scotch. But Mrs. McPherson wished that he had not chosen this particular way to show his friendship.

In spite of the feeling on the part of both mother and daughter, it never occurred to them

to ask Andrew to change his mind. No one in the McPherson family had ever asked him to do such a thing.

So the letter of invitation was sent, with a list of the guests of honor enclosed. Two days later came a reply, evidently copied by the oldest girl in the Blaisdell family out of some form book, accepting the invitation with thanks, and signed by both Jim and Maggie.

Mrs. McPherson accepted the situation with a good deal of calmness. Preparations for the dinner went on during the week of Christmas; the arrival of the eighteen pound turkey was almost an event. A professional caterer from Blackstone came to the house on Christmas eve to aid the two servants. There were to be fourteen guests in all and seats at table for twenty, counting Scott.

Hill Crest was built on the extreme end of the long shoulder of Ragged Run Mountain. It was approached by a winding driveway. A magnificent elm stood directly in front of the house, and threw its branches out over the wide veranda.

Stretching on down by the river and far off through the soot and smoke and palpitating heat from great chimneys, lay the mining camps and the mine company's shafts. The camps formed a crescent round the shoulder on which Hill Crest was poised; hundreds of miners, going and coming, passed daily round the foot of the hill, and to save time took, not infrequently, a short cut by an old trail over the mountains that came close by the edge of Andrew's property and within a short stone's throw of Hill Crest itself.

On Christmas eve there was a foot of snow on the ground, but the air was clear and bright.

In the night, however, Andrew awoke suddenly with a feeling that some great and unusual thing either was happening or was going to happen. The air in the room had in it the chill that you feel on opening the door of a warm house and stepping suddenly out into zero weather. The house was rocking as if in the fist of a giant. The electric chandelier, which hung from the middle of the ceiling, was quivering.

Andrew sprang up, switched on a light, and called out. Soon the family had gathered in consternation. They realized that a terrific tempest was sweeping over the mountain and dashing the branches of the big elm against the windows. A great limb, torn from the tree, shattered the glass, flung the fragments across the room, and knocked Andrew off his feet.

He was up again in an instant, and set about preventing further damage. Blankets torn from the bed were stretched across the gaping hole, and held there, while Robert ran for a hammer and nails. Andrew drove the nails through the blankets into the window-casing, and then wheeled the end of a heavy dressing-table against them. As he finished, the electric light went out. Scott began to cry.

"Get the candles off the tree!" called out Andrew, calmly.

Robert crept down-stairs and got a dozen candles, and lighted half of them. The wind seemed to increase. The big clock down in the hall struck three.

"It's an awful storm," said Andrew, in a quiet but sober voice. "Pray God for any poor creatures caught out in it!"

He had just uttered the words when a thundering crash was heard above on the roof.

"There goes the big chimney," cried Robert.

They could hear the bricks rolling down over the eaves. Robert ran to the attic stairs. When he opened the door, a stream of cold air swept down on him. He ran up, and soon came back with a pale face to report that a hole had been broken through the roof by the great capstone of the chimney. A corner of the stone, however, had stuck in the ragged rent and stopped it partly.

(Continued to last page)

FINE CORN YIELD THIS YEAR.

Notwithstanding the Severe Drought Crops Are the Best Ever.

Raleigh, Dec. 14.

The year 1911 as a crop year and the general progress and outlook of farming interests in North Carolina came in for illuminating and most encouraging treatment in the voluminous and able report of Commissioner of Agriculture Graham. While a drought of the longest continuance known to the people of the State prevailed over a large part of the State, seriously reducing upland yields, still harvest time showed the greatest production of wheat, corn and cotton in the history of the State.

In eastern Carolina, as far west as Raleigh, the yields were very fine for all crops and in the west from the mountains to the Tennessee line greater crop yields were never known, the drought handicap applying to the wide stretch of country from Raleigh westward to Morganton, uplands in this territory being greatly reduced in yield. However, increased yield in the bottom and lowlands made considerable amends for the upland shortage.

Generally speaking, the cotton yield was the best ever known, with an average of a bale to the acre and big fields and neighborhoods in many instances reaching two and two and a half bales to the acre. The wheat yield was exceptionally fine with the weight of the grain showing full 60 pounds to the bushel standard.

The extreme west suffered a serious shortage of hay yield but in most other sections where attention was given to the matter, the supply was abundant for the winter.

It appears that the farmers of the State have had to buy less corn and other supplies than ever before to make their crops. There was more hay required to be purchased this season than any other supply.

A gratifying increase in the growing of home supplies by the farmers is making it much easier for the farmers to hold their cotton for hoped-for higher prices. Commissioner Graham feels that one important thing that the department is steadily instilling into the farmers of the State is that if they will devote intelligent attention to growing the supplies for the farm the money crops will not have to be sacrificed to keep the farm going, but can be held without suffering, for the best market development.

The farmers' institute and demonstration work is proving most valuable in the improvement of the methods of farming and, together with the exhibits that the department is making each year at the State and many other county fairs is bringing about many of the marked improvements in farm conditions—increased crop yields as well as better farming methods generally. In ten years the corn yield has increased in average from 12 to 20 bushels to the acre; wheat from 9½ to 11½ bushels, cotton from 167 to 227 pounds per acre; the State holding, too, second place, with Kentucky first, in tobacco yield.

The agricultural authorities of the State insist that North Carolina can easily produce all the corn needed, not only for the farm supplies, but for the consumption of the North Carolina towns as well, and do it at a decided profit. Furthermore, that in hog raising there is an immense profit that the farmers are just beginning to realize.

Boys' corn clubs are developing the cultivation of corn wonderfully, the average corn club yield for 1911 having been 97 bushels. The highest was 231 bushels to the acre, by young Charles Parker, of Hertford county.

Commissioner Graham insists that corn is entitled to be king in North Carolina. He and the State Board of Agriculture are pledged to the greatest possible effort in furthering its most ex-

tensive and intensive culture. There was a yield this year of not less than 59,000,000 bushels, and, but for the drought that cut the yield in the central and middle western sections of the State the yield would have been close around 100,000,000 bushels.

This State produced only 104,000,000 pounds of tobacco this year compared with 129,000,000 pounds in 1910. The quality this year was 85 per cent of standard compared with 75 per cent last year. And the market prices that the planters are realizing this year are a decided advance over the prices last year in the opinion of Commissioner Graham.

Asks Pardon After 52 Years in Prison.

Hartford, Conn., Dec. 7.

Among the thirty-six convicts at the state prison, at Wethersfield, whose applications for parole or pardon will be considered by the State Board of Pardons when that board meets here next Tuesday, is John Warren, the oldest inmate of the prison, who has spent fifty-two years of his life in that penal institution. In the fall of 1859 John Warren was convicted of the murder of his wife and sentenced to prison for life. He entered the state prison at Wethersfield November 14, 1859, and has remained isolated from the outside world ever since. Several times he has appealed to the Board of Pardons for his release, but in every case he was denied. This year he has again petitioned for a pardon and his friends confidently expect that this time the Board of Pardons will be less obdurate.

The history of Warren's crime is rather unusual. In the early summer of 1859 John P. Warren, then only twenty-one years old, and his 18-year-old wife lived on a small farm in Wethersfield, a little town in Tolland county, in the northeastern part of Connecticut. On a warm morning in July of that year Warren and his wife took a walk in the woods. It was hot, and when they came to a brook not far from their farm, Warren proposed that they take off their shoes and stockings and bathe their feet in the cool waters of the brook. His wife consented and, having taken off her shoes and stockings, waded into the brook.

Warren sprang at her, threw her down and held her head under water until his wife was dead. Just what fury or passion animated Warren and prompted him to commit the coldblooded and apparently unprovoked crime has never been ascertained. Warren himself, although he confessed the crime, has never given any explanation of his action or the motive of the deed. He secreted the body of his wife in the woods, where it was soon found. Warren was arrested and put through the "third degree." He confessed his crime, but refused to make any explanatory statement.

H. Q. ALEXANDER IS ELECTED PRESIDENT.

N. C. Farmers' Union Elects Officers and Hears Warehouse System Explained.

Wilson, Dec. 14.—The North Carolina Farmers' union, in session here, today elected the following officers: President, H. Q. Alexander, of Matthews; vice-president, J. M. Templeton, of Cary; secretary and treasurer, E. C. Farris, of Charlotte; state organizer, J. Z. Green, of Marshville; business agent, J. R. Rives, of Sanford. Most of the morning session of the convention was consumed in the election of the executive committee. The following were elected: W. G. Crowder, of Wake; W. B. Gibson, of Iredell; C. C. Wright, of Wilkes; I. P. Coggins, of Chatham; and W. H. Moore, of Pitt.

A Terrible Blunder.

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JUDGE O. H. ALLEN ON THE EVILS OF COCAINE.

Words of Wisdom Go With Sentence of John W. McGhee.

Greensboro News, 16th.

In sentencing John McGhee, a High Point negro, convicted of peddling cocaine, to six months on the county roads, Judge Oliver H. Allen yesterday declared that cocaine and whiskey, while doing great harm to the white race, was particularly playing havoc with the negro. He cited many instances in which the very worst crimes were traced to negro cocaine users, especially killing officers and assaulting women. He referred to efforts being made by friends of the negro, especially in the north to educate them, spending millions of dollars in erecting fine college buildings, etc., for them, while the more practical and necessary expenditure of funds to conduct classes of the race to show them the evils of selling, using and distributing whiskey and cocaine among them was ignored. "Far better," he said, "it seems to me would be if some of these many thousands were devoted towards teaching all the negroes the need of cleanliness of body, mind and heart, clean sanitary surroundings, the economy of the kitchen, and the evil effects of whiskey and cocaine."

In Guilford county Judge Allen's idea is already being carried out to a certain extent, for here the county physician gives illustrated lectures to the blacks as well as whites in all parts of the county on sanitation and the evil effects of stimulants and narcotics. In every appointment this official has had in the county he has been greeted by large and well instructed audiences.

Aside from his moral lectures Judge Allen is continuously showing his kindness at heart, sense of patriotism and droll wit. Yesterday an old red-headed man named Judge Rittenbury, plead guilty under an indictment for a nuisance. His prosecutors were also red-headed neighbors, husband and wife, and they testified that the defendant in a loud, boisterous and defiant manner, would get out on the big road and give them awful cuffings because of a dispute over a boundary line on their farms.

Judge Allen, with the three old people before him, referring to their red heads, suggested that hasty temper might have been temperamental. But he said, while he had no power to make him do it, he would be very glad if the old judge would apologize to the two neighbors for having done so much cuffing. The prisoner, after a moment's cogitation, looked up and said, "Well, Judge, I'm sorry for it, if that's what you want."

"That's all right," said Judge Oliver. "How old are you?" he asked.

"Am 76 years old. I fought three years under Joe Johnson and killed 60 Yankees," the defendant judge replied.

"You did," exclaimed Judge Oliver, and continued, "Mr. Clerk the old soldier has apologized, and, while not apparently having been able to correct the habit of cuffing possibly acquired during the war, he has reformed from his habit of killing Yankees or anybody else, so please just mark the docket, 'Judgment suspended on payment of the costs.'"

Wife Beater at Whipping Post in Maryland.

Westminster, Md., Dec. 13.—The first legal whipping of a wife-beater in this county took place at the jail here. The distinction was accorded to Burrier Spriggs, colored, and the whipping was administered by Sheriff Elias M. Davis. Spriggs was sentenced ten days ago, but the whipping was delayed until after the trial of a case in which the wife beater's testimony was presented. No witnesses were present except William Shearer, deputy sheriff, and Dr. Thomas Coonan, jail physician, who saw the 20 lashes well laid on.