

AFTER MANY DAYS

By FRANK H. SWEET

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"Here I be again, Miss Wilbur," a blithe voice called, "beggin' for flowers this time. The cows have eaten ours off clean, an' we must have a good spread for our company."

A cluster of freshly opened roses called her attention, and she ran forward to smell of them. At length she came back with flushed face and sparkling eyes. "Oh, I forgot to tell you, Miss Wilbur!" she cried roguishly. "He's come—Alfred Gray, the man I'm to marry, you know."

Miss Wilbur's hand closed a little more closely upon her pruning shears, but her face was calm, even smiling. Yes, she had heard the rumor.

"I thought he was not expected until next week," she observed. "At least that is what the paper said."

"Oh, I don't know," doubtfully. "We don't have a paper. But I think Charlie was expectin' him before next week. Mr. Gray's goin' to stay with him. They used to know each other. But there! I'd better get the flowers an' be goin'." They're all comin' up this evenin', an' ma said for me to hurry back an' get through with my fixin' an' fussin'. An', say, Miss Wilbur, if you don't mind, I'd like to bring him up to see you 'fore he goes," looking up with a shy, pleading expression on her baby face.

"Of course," the strained lips forced themselves to say, "you must bring him by all means."

But after the girl's departure Miss Wilbur left the flowers and hurried away to the seclusion of her own room. Being him to her, this young girl who had been but a baby when they two had been so much to each other! What



"ALFRED!" SHE SAID AS SHE WENT FORWARD WITH EXTENDED HANDS. "did it mean? And he had not even written to her or in any way announced his coming."

A week later she sat on the porch with her eyes fixed on the last visible point of the street before it was shut out by the althea hedge. A firm, eager step came up the sidewalk from the opposite direction, but she did not notice until her gate latch clicked; then she turned inquiringly.

She knew him in an instant, for the years had brought but a stronger and nobler carriage, with perhaps a too liberal sprinkling of gray hair. She was conscious of a curious thrill of awe and tenderness as she rose from her chair, for even in that brief instant she remembered that there was not a single gray intruder among her own soft hair, and his she associated with the work which had conquered obstacles and adversity.

"Alfred!" she said as she went forward with extended hands.

"Elizabeth!"

"Come up on the veranda, Alfred," she said, with her eyes full of frank welcome. "I want to hear all about it. Of course I know in a fragmentary way, but it will seem new and more real from your lips."

And he told her, sitting in his old place behind the honeysuckle, with the swaying sprays sending alternate lines of sunshine and shade across his face in the same old way. And she listened with eyes full, lips half parted and with her head nodding commendation or sympathy from time to time. It was a story of heroism and triumph, told in a straightforward, matter of fact way, without egotism or self depreciation, knowing it was her right to have it entire even as he had lived it.

"But it is good to be home again, Elizabeth," he concluded, with a satisfied sigh, as he leaned back in his chair and surveyed the veranda and the flower garden beyond. "The memory of those flowers and their owner has been with me through all the twenty years I have been away. Many times have I been on the point of giving up and returning to them, and, indeed, a trace of reserve coming into his voice, 'I might have done so but for what you said and the look you

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gave me when we last stood together among your honeysuckles. I knew I could only return to the sentence of a deserter who had forsaken his colors."

She was looking at him in a wondering, startled way, with the color coming softly into her face.

"But—you never wrote, Alfred."

"Yes, twice. One of the letters was lost, however, for I heard later of the ship's going down in midocean."

"I never received it." Then, "But you have been in the place a week, Alfred, and only just called."

He looked puzzled. "I came in on the train an hour ago, Elizabeth, and would have been here before but for a complication over a telegram. It seems there is another man of the same name in town."

"But Susie?"

"Never mind Susie, whoever she may be. I have gone through my probation and have done my work with all the strength that God gave me. Now I have come 10,000 miles for my reward—for you. If there is more work, bid me do it; but for charity's sake do not refuse your companionship in the labor."

She was not looking at him now. Her heart was too full for speech, almost for thought. The dog rubbed against her, and an oriole lifted up his voice in a sudden ecstasy of song. She stroked the one tremulously and looked at the other with the tenderness of the great joy that had come to her.

Then the gate clicked, and she roused herself with an effort. A young man whom she did not know stood before her, and with him was Susie.

"I've brought him at last, Miss Wilbur," the girl cried merrily. "But I just had to drag him, he's so bashful. Mr. Gray, this is my Sunday school teacher I told you about." Then, disregarding further formality, and with bubbling gladness in her voice, "An', oh, say, Miss Wilbur, we've coaxed him to stay with us for good an' all. He's goin' to open a grocery next the post office." Here she caught sight of the gray haired, soldierly figure in the background and stopped in sudden confusion.

"This is Mr. Gray, too, Susie," Miss Wilbur said, with something in her voice which the girl could not understand, "and we, too, are—going to be married."

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Gone are all the daily meetings With the boys at German worries; Jim has barely time to change. To his home he nightly hurries. Eats his supper, gets his pipe out; Then with great content does pull 'er. All the woes of life will wipe out. Now he has a pipe to color.

See him feast his eyes upon the Rings of smoke all upward curling— Like ambition's dreams all gone the way that dreams go, zip o' flying. On the bowl his eyes are glowing— It has got the hue of color. Ever, little smile he's a-ding. Now he has a pipe to color.

Jim admits his life is brighter (At his fare no more a brier). For he's got it in the pipe that As the pipe is getting darker. Best of hobbies ever invented— As Jim as bowl grows duller, He is happy and contented. Now he has a pipe to color.

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Leaving Lyttelton, New Zealand, just before the close of 1901, the British expedition pushed steadily southward, heading for Cape Adair. The ice barrier which skirts the Antarctic continent extends almost continuously along the sixty-fifth or sixty-sixth parallel of south latitude. By far the most remarkable break in the coast line occurs to the south-eastward of Australia. There is an enormous recess, five hundred or six hundred miles deep, and fully as wide, called McMurdo Bay. Along its western shore lies Victoria Land. Its eastern boundary is poorly defined, and is represented only vaguely by ice. The southern side is almost straight, and extends eastward and westward fairly close to the seventy-eighth parallel of latitude.

Touching first at Cape Adair, at the northwestern corner of the bay, Captain Scott skirted Victoria Land and reached the southwestern corner, near the volcano Erebus and Terror. Turning eastward on Jan. 22, 1902, he worked his way slowly along the ice barrier, which for more than five hundred miles has a height of from 50 to 280 feet. Apparently the ice had receded somewhat from the limits noted by Sir James Ross, who explored the region in 1845. During the next few days Captain Scott saw land off to the eastward of him which has never before been charted and also observed that the ice barrier itself practically disappeared, and was replaced by sloping ice, which doubtless covered land. The barrier proper is a frozen pack, is generally level in spite of its roughness, and is thought to overlie sea.

It was just after turning back after these observations toward Mount Erebus that the balloon ascent was made. The ship was still under control the season corresponding to the summer. An ink blot through the ice, which reached further southward than any other to which the Discovery could penetrate, was now utilized to study the land. Hydrogen, compressed in cylinders and brought from home, was used to inflate the gas bag. Owing to the low temperature of this region, a much greater quantity was required than would have been needed in temperate climates. The cable which held this floating observatory captive was 750 feet long. No satisfactory landing place was discovered, but an admirable view of the region was had. This occurred Feb. 4, 1902. Then the Discovery pushed on westward, found a satisfactory anchorage in McMurdo Strait, close to Mount Erebus, and on March 24 (just after the autumnal equinox) she was frozen in. Subsequently Captain Scott organized sledge parties which explored the vicinity.

The most important results of the expedition up to the time the relief ship, Morning, left it last winter, were as follows:

First—Discovery of new land east of McMurdo Bay.

Second—Discovery that Mount Erebus and Terror are on a small island not the mainland.

Third—Finding good water quarters for a ship in south latitude 77-50, east longitude 166.42, with land close by for a magnetic observatory.

Fourth—A record of 92 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.

Fifth—A sledge journey to 82.17 south latitude, and observations of land as far off as 83.30, including peaks and mountain ranges 14,000 feet high.

Sixth—Evidence that the vast ice-covered plateau which reaches westward from McMurdo Bay is in some places nine thousand feet high.

Seventh—A large amount of magnetic and biological observations and deep sea sounding.

The World's Creeds

Herr Zeller, head of the Bureau of International statistics at Stuttgart, has just published an interesting table of the religions of the world. He places the aggregate number of human beings on the earth's surface at 1,544,516,000, of whom only about one-third, or 534,940,000 profess any form of Christianity. The adherents of Confucius number 300,000,000, of Brahma 173,290,000, and of Buddha 121,000,000.



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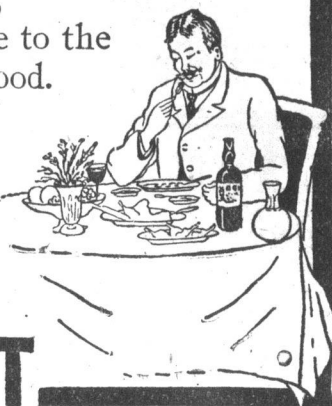
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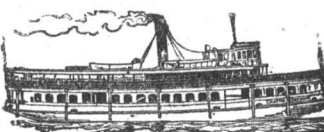
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