



The Handsome Man

By Margaret Turnbull
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W. N. U. SERVICE

THE STORY

Returning to London, practically penniless, after an unsuccessful business trip, Sir George Sandison takes dinner with his widowed stepmother, his old nurse, Aggy. He did not approve of her marriage to his father, but her explanation satisfies him.

CHAPTER I—Continued

"Oh, not that from you, Sir George," she cried, and then stretched out a timid, pudgy, capable hand toward him. "Could we not be friends, we two? There's a heap I would like to speak to you about, and indeed there's nothing I wouldn't do for you. You were my own wee laddie when I took care of you."

Sir George looked at her with an embarrassed air. "You make it hard for me, Lady—"

"Aggy to you," declared Lady Sandison promptly. "You called me that when I was your nurse girl, and I'm still wanting to look after you."

"Aggy," he began, after a moment's hesitation. "The maid came in with the cloth and began to set the table, and Sir George watched somberly. What was it in life that caught one and drew one toward the very people one hoped to avoid? He had come, only because of the duty he owed his father's widow, to see her once and be done with her forever—and he found he had forgotten how much he liked Aggy. It was preposterous, but it was true. This was the woman he had cursed many a day, many a night and he was dining with her!

Lady Sandison hesitated a moment when the maid left the room, and then went resolutely to where she had caused the extra blankets and sheets to be stored, and came back with a bottle of wine.

He stopped her as she was about to pour out a glass for him.

"No, Aggy, none for me, I'm too hungry, and the old man's horrible example is still before my mind's eye. I've been leaving that stuff alone."

"The Lord be praised!" said Aggy, and poured herself a generous glass. "There's no need of wasting His mercies, however. I can take it or leave it, and it has no effect. But to see you so discriminating is like an answer to prayer."

Sir George smiled and began his soup, he hoped not too ravenously. He had not dared take wine on so empty a stomach.

"This good sense you are showing will fit in well with a plan I have," continued Aggy as she took her soup spoon in hand. "How are you off?"

"Do you mean as to money?"

Lady Sandison nodded. "I do so."

"I'm broke," Sir George told her, without emotion. "The Yucatan oil scheme was a failure. I came out alive and without debt, but that's all I have," he hesitated, then laughed, and continued, "I have exactly seven-and-six between me and the cold world."

"Mighty!" exclaimed Lady Sandison. The maid brought in the fish and served it, during a profound silence.

When she had taken her way to the elevator with the soup plates, Lady Sandison spoke:

"The estate is in an awful bad way," Sir George nodded. "I suppose so."

"What he did with his money's past finding out." Then she looked at the young man thoughtfully. "I've had a long talk with that lawyer body, Mr. Gillespie, and he approves of what I have done. I've let the house."

Sir George stared.

"Subject to your approval, of course, or it's yours, but I wasn't going to let a chance like this slip by. Some American folk that had more money than I could count in a month of Sabbaths. They wanted Sandisbrae and wanted it that bad that they came up to my price. They are highly recommended. I could pay the servants off with the first month's rent, and get them jobs with the new folk, and the rent for the rest of the season put in bank would settle up the debts, if you agree."

"It sounds quite reasonable," said Sir George, and there was silence again as the maid took the fish plates and brought in the meat course.

It was roast beef with potatoes and cabbage but it was the food of the gods to hungry Sir George, who fell upon it.

Lady Sandison, not having his appetite, ate a little more slowly and between bites studied her stepson.

"Seven and six is all you have?"

Sir George, his mouth full, nodded.

"Where'll you sleep?" asked the practical Aggy.

"I haven't decided yet," Sir George looked at her with a smile. "You but that I'm not 'daunted' as you used to say, Aggy. I'll walk to Havilant's shop and ask—"

"He's off and away!" interrupted

Lady Sandison. "His mother told me that, over the telephone, this very day. He was out at Mont Denys for the week-end. I doubt she sent him there when she heard you were coming back."

Sir George looked somewhat discomposed.

"Why did you—?"

"I didn't," said Lady Sandison, flushing a little. She called me. It seems she'd heard that I was here and you were expected, and she telephoned me and asked when you were coming."

"She has heard of the collapse of the oil business, I suppose?"

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"Yes," agreed Sir George, but he set his handsome jaw. Aggy was quite all right and a splendid manager. She had always been that, but she was not going to manage him into going to America.

Aggy saw the set jaw and began calmly: "You'll have mind when you were a wee bit biddie, I was used to tell you stories of my brother, Robert, in America?"

Sir George, absorbed in lighting his cigarette, nodded.

"He's still there, and he's a big man in his way."

"What is his way?"

"Some kind of contracting business. Putting up weirs and grand public buildings, bridges and their awful skyscrapers that crowd streets over there."

Sir George nodded to signify his comprehension.

"He's by way of being something awful well off."

Sir George's eyes opened.

Aggy nodded solemnly. "Him and me's been at outs for many a long year on account of a real impudent letter he sent me some time before I married your father. He doesn't know I'm married. I refused to go out to America and he pampered the way he said he would pamper me. Rob let fly some awful words about 'd—n obstinate females,' so I just didn't answer his letter. When he sent some lawyer bodies after me I just told them to take his money and his messages back to him, I would go my own gait. You see," she added, as Sir George looked at her curiously, "I was badly needed at Sandisbrae then. It would need a man demoralized, but for me. Your father was rarely himself, and things were not as they had been in my lady's time. You were away in France."

Sir George nodded. He did not want to remember those times.

"I couldn't see my way to leaving the place, especially as your father was making up to look like, as I told you. And she with little sense said to me, 'Putty head! So I judged that it would be better for you if I stayed and let your father compromise himself with me. At least that's the way I let him think,' she said, with a nod at Sir George.

"I daresay there was a lot of gossip about us, but none of it was true. However, it was my chance to set things right and I took it. I just when Sir Steenie knew he couldn't be left, I said to him: 'This is no place for an unmarried respectable woman.' 'Then d—t, marry me, Aggy,' he said, 'as I have asked you more than once.' 'Thank you, Sir Steenie,' I says, 'We'll take the night train to Gles'ga and get the license, and I'll warrant you a peaceful life and no more extravagances.' 'Plenty of whisky and peace to drink it in, Aggy, my dear, is my notion of pleasure,' he said."

She paused and sighed, "I did better for him than most, and I saved something for you, Sir George."

Sir George's head was bowed on his hands. "Oh, Aggy, I'm ashamed that I thought of you as I did."

Aggy's firm lip trembled for a moment. "You might have remembered me better than that, Sir George, if she held it back and said: 'Bless me! What does a lad remember about his old nurse? And it looked bad. But that's by and gone, if only—' and here her composure was shaken for a moment—'if only you believe me now.'"

Sir George leaned forward and took her fat, pudgy hand, which still bore traces of hard work, and patted it. "Would I be here, Aggy, if I didn't believe you?"

She laid her other hand on top of his—a rare caress from this most reserved person.

"That's my laddie," she said. "Sir George, I have often thought if you'd come back that first year—but then, how could you? It was probably better as it was, and now we'll take stock of what's left us."

"Very little, I'm afraid. The lawyer told me that I had nothing but Sandisbrae left."

"Did he so? There was a little something left over, that your father didn't spend. I let Sir Steenie think he gambled it away one night he wasn't himself, while as a matter of fact I had it hid up the stair, in the tower."

"But that—" Sir George began.

"It's yours. It's no much, but it'll help."

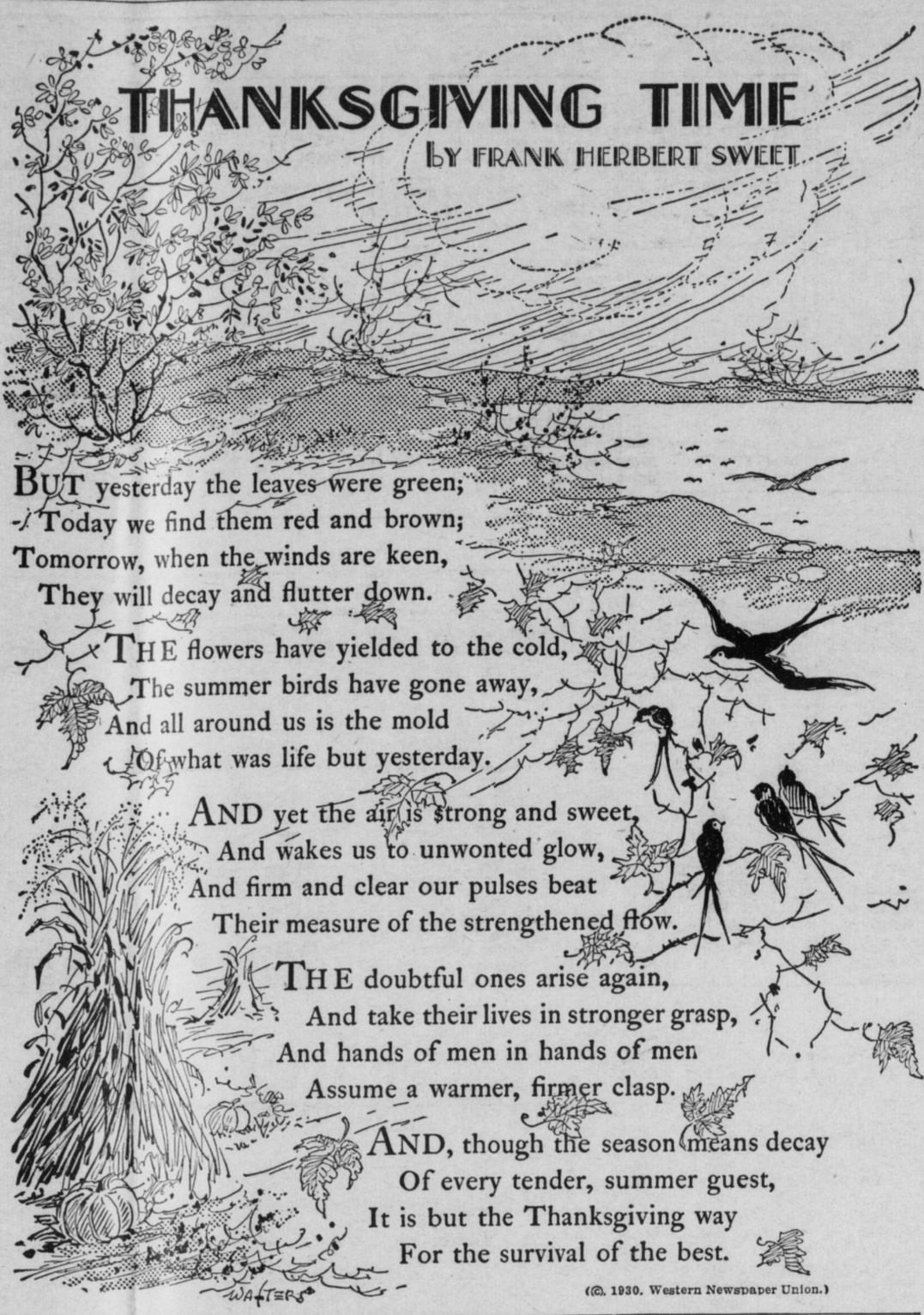
"It's yours," he declared hastily. "It's all the widow's portion you have, Aggy. I'll never touch a penny of it."

Two obstinate Scots stared at each other. It was Aggy, Lady Sandison, who spoke first.

"You were ever a set laddie. There's no change in you."

"There will be no change in me, Agnes, Lady Sandison, must take her lawful share."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



THANKSGIVING TIME

BY FRANK HERBERT SWEET

BUT yesterday the leaves were green;
Today we find them red and brown;
Tomorrow, when the winds are keen,
They will decay and flutter down.
THE flowers have yielded to the cold,
The summer birds have gone away,
And all around us is the mold
Of what was life but yesterday.
AND yet the air is strong and sweet,
And wakes us to unwonted glow,
And firm and clear our pulses beat
Their measure of the strengthened flow.
THE doubtful ones arise again,
And take their lives in stronger grasp,
And hands of men in hands of men
Assume a warmer, firmer clasp.
AND, though the season means decay
Of every tender, summer guest,
It is but the Thanksgiving way
For the survival of the best.

Maine First to Give Thanks for Mercy?

We are apt to think that Thanksgiving was originally a New England festival and belonged distinctively to the Puritans. This is a mistake. Neither Boston Puritans nor Plymouth Pilgrims had anything to do with it, for it was first practiced by the Popham colonists of Monhegan, Maine, and it was in a Church of England thanksgiving service—"A Giving of God Thanks for a Safe Voyage," says a writer in the Kansas City Times.

The practice of setting aside certain days for thanksgiving had become a custom long before the Reformation. Protestants followed the practice, especially in the established church, where it had become a fixed practice long before the Pilgrims began the observance. It seems a strange thing that the Pilgrims, who hated so heartily all the observances of the Church of England, should have been so willing to follow this practice so early in their history.

The first Thanksgiving day of New England was, however, never appointed nor intended for a day of religious worship. It had nothing in common with the Church of England day of prayer and praise for past blessings and future need. It was appointed as a day of recreation and freedom from work, which made the colonists' days one ceaseless grind of care.

Indians Helped Provide Meat. But those who are wont to think of the Pilgrims as a group of sober and morose men and women, with no idea in life beyond work and prayer, would do well to read an account of that week of Thanksgiving, the first real play time of the Pilgrims.

Edward Winslow wrote to a friend in England on December 11, 1621: "Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men out fowling, so that after a special manner we might rejoice together, after we had gained the fruit of our labors. That four killed as much fowl as, with little help beside, served the whole company about a week. At which time, among other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming among us, and among the rest, their great King Massasoit, with some ninety men, who for three days we entertained and feasted. They went out and killed five deer, which they brought and bestowed upon our governor, upon the captain and others."

Governor Bradford in his account speaks of the great number of water fowl and wild "turkie." The record goes on to tell that the Pilgrims, without doubt, fared decidedly better than did their English brothers that year, as "turkie" was scarce.

There were only 50 Englishmen to eat the Thanksgiving feast that first

year, but 90 Indians came as guests. They did not come empty-handed, but brought generous gifts. The kindly spirit of friendliness was worth even more at that time.

Only Five Women to Get Meals.

The games were tests in jumping, leaping and running, in which they all took part. But in spite of all this, it could not have been a week of unalloyed recreation and pleasure, for there were only four women to do the cooking, with the help of one maid servant, and a few milkmaids. There were 140 men to be served, and 90 of them Indians, whose hunger had to be appeased for three days. Even more noticeable and pathetic was the very small number of children in the stockade to participate in this first Thanksgiving celebration.

There is no record of any kind of religious service or prayer during the week. One writer says: "Lost in the wood—terrified by lions—terrified by grinning wolves—half frozen in the poorly built houses—sickened by poor food and half famished—almost half the company dead, after two years of suffering and hardship. In spite of these heavy hardships, and after the drought of 1633, a nine days of prayer for rain was answered, and the second Thanksgiving day was appointed and observed."

The first Thanksgiving day which was publicly appointed, was set for February 22, 1630, in gratitude for the "Friend-bringing and food-bearing ships," November 4, 1631, Winthrop wrote, "We keep Thanksgiving day today in Boston." Until 1684 the day was celebrated about every two years.

Thankful for Clean Teeth.

We have no certain record when it became a fixed annual observance in New England. But in 1742 there were two Thanksgivings days and Massachusetts and Connecticut celebrated with reference to each other. As time passed, it became more and more a day of prayer and thanksgiving. "For it becomes more hard," one Connecticut writer says, "to settle upon any special day."

It was not regularly observed until 1786, and then more as a day of worship than a day of feasting. One writer speaks of a service in which a long list of special blessings was specified. "For the healing of breaches, the abatement of disease, the arrival of plenty, the quality, gratitude for plentiful harvest, that God has sent us no want of bread, and for clean teeth."

These early Thanksgiving days were of many different days of the week, and of no certain month for many years. After the day began to be observed annually, it came to be the custom to hold the festival in the fall, and following harvest. The feast was usually prepared for by some days of fasting.

No Celebration Without Pie.

But among the early Thanksgiving celebrations of Colonial days is one which has no counterpart in history. The records say that the governor of Connecticut appointed a certain day to be observed throughout the state as a time of thanksgiving. But, for

reasons of their own, the residents of the town of Colchester ignored the governor's appointed day. They sent a committee to him stating that they were not able to accept the day he had selected, but "would gladly celebrate Thanksgiving one week later."

As this had never happened before, the governor was at a loss to know how to proceed. Fortunately, he was a patient man, and not easily affronted, and one who was blessed with a sense of humor.

Finding he was not going to make the matter disagreeable for them, he was again visited and the matter explained. A sloop expected from New York had been delayed a week. On board was a hoghead of molasses for making pies, without which no Thanksgiving celebration could proceed.

Being a man of good sense, and perhaps, too, having the New England appreciation for pie, the good people of Colchester were allowed to hold their Thanksgiving when the hoghead of molasses came in, a week later.

In 1677 the first regular Thanksgiving proclamation was printed, and it is said a copy still is