

# The Man with the Scythe



## A NEW YEAR'S STORY.

By S. B. McManus.

I want to tell you this New Year's night, what happened just a year ago in Hank Harmon's blacksmith shop. 'Tain't much to tell, nor over much for an outsider to harken to, but it means a mighty sight to me and the boys, an' I, for one, jist like to think of it an' talk it over and kind of hug and embrace the words, expressin' it as it were, and hold the sentences like a bitter sweet morsel under my tongue. My strength don't in any wise lay in relat' things and incidents, and it will be a good precaution, when I warn you not to break in into me and accordingly interrupt me, for it will take fine-haired and top sawyer work to make my story look as if it had any sense or meanin' at all, except to me and the boys as understand it complete.

Jist a year ago tonight we met in Hank Harmon's blacksmith shop to celebrate the day by gettin' so paralyzin drunk, that we could disremember the miserable homes we had sneaked away from and the heart-broken and down-lookin' wives an' children we had left in them. We lung a hoss blanket over the biggest cracks in the sides after Hank had fastened the door, and then we was in shapelful condition to guzzle and pour down our red-hot, thirsty throats, jist as much of Joe Howard's red-hot, pizen-hot whisky as we could manage to get with our tremblin' hands, to our weak, waterin', disgraced mouths. After this, we know what would most likely happen, judgin' of course by what had happened before—we would fall over amongst the cinders and hoss hoof粪 and old wagon tires and drag-teeth and scrap iron, where we would sleep like hogs—hogs as had lost their self-respect—until the cold and the uncomfortableness would wake and sober us enough to crawl home to our wretched houses, which we would make wretched and miserabler by our comin'.

We talked of this tonight, and we all



PUT THE HOSS BLANKET UP.

remembered everything that was done and said, as if it was written on the black walls of the shop with white heat runnin' iron from the forge, and we all agreed too, never to try to disremember that night—the night when God or some of his shinin', holy angels come down to us and shamed us into bein' decent, sober, Christ-lovin' men.

"There is recollections," Jim Cameron said, "that allers ought to be recollect-ed and kept like a blazin' torch in front of us. Some of them for safety sake and some for shame sake," and Jim furthermore said we ought to

wear the memory of them disgraced and wicked days about us as an ancient sailor or some old salt, wore a dead goose about his neck as a keepsake that he had been low down and sinful.

But drunkards as we all certainly was, and what is more, vergin' clost onto bein' bar-fer-keeps, old drunkards as was no likely salvation for, we wa'n't any of us so very happy and comfortable and easy into our minds, at the beginnin' of that night a year ago in Hank Harmon's blacksmith shop in the alley, jist off the Rudy—something, bullygurd in the city of Sardinapolis, where we boys lived. We put the hoss blanket over the gapest cracks to keep the wind from farin' out the smutty lamp that stood smokin' and wobbly on an old table where Hank writ his accounts, amongst a lot of nails and bolts and rivets and small gearin', with a jug of Joe Howard's cheapest, hellisheat whisky in the middle as a kind of devil center piece. O, can't I, and can't all of us cronies jist remember exactly, how that jiggy, trembly, dirty old table looked and I am bound that it had the delirium tremens, if anything in the world barrin' a man can have them. I can smell the oil that Hank spilled when he filled the lamp with his nervous, shaky hands and it run along amongst the old iron and under Hank's day book and dropped over the edge onto the floor and went down a crack. And there was the white jug with the blue letterin': "1 gal." with a sheaf of blue wheat below to make it look tasty and sell.

And this was our New Year's table! Four men—made in the image of God! And men for their folks and neighbors to be proud of—except they was drunkards. There was Jim Cameron, one; me, two; Jim Green, three,—whose father had been a preacher—and Hank Harmon, as owned the shop.

As I said we wa'n't over happy and comfortable that night, considerin' we had such a reckless layout and an early start. I have frequent noticed, that you can't always kick conscience under the table or settee as you can an unruly dog that whines and barks when he has no call to. And somehow conscience has a habit of gettin' around and in the way on such doin' days as New Year's, Christmas and the like. And four consciences as hadn't had their jist deservin' nor inings for many a month, slipped their halters that night a year ago and managed to make things unpleasant for their owners. I suspect the troubled waters mentioned in the scriptures means somethin' like this. But any way we was troubled onaccountably.

Not so onaccountably either, for we wasn't so old and hardened and crusted in sin and drinkin', but what we all could think when we give ourselves a chance, which we made sure not to do over frequent, because it was not agreeable.

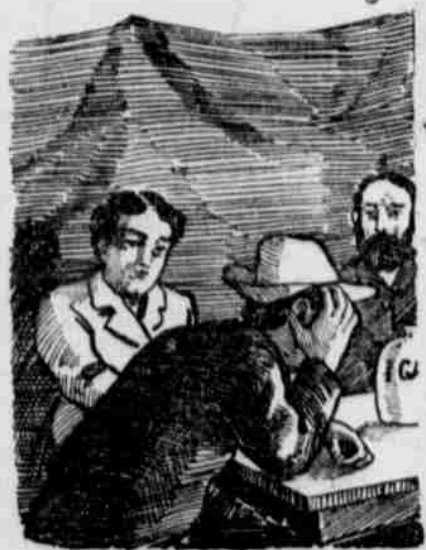
One thing that made us feel a trifle down and dismal was that the keeper of the Happy Home saloon, Joe Howard, had jist moved a day or so back, out of his old house down by the gas works and the tannery, into his hand-some new residence frontin' the park and the library buildin'. It was the prettiest, tastiest, imposin' house in the Circle and he had made every dollar of it out of such fellows as me and the rest of us.

And then Jim Cameron had moved that very day—New Year's eve—from the home his father had given him and every brick and board in it was

like a livin', lovin' thing to Jim—had moved into a little old untidy frowsy house with a bowed in roof and anglin' shutters, in a part of the town where self-respectin' folks didn't generally try to get. And Jim knew, and we all knew that he and the rest of us and a lot more had built Joe's house in the park, and that every nail in it if it was counted a dozen times, wouldn't count up as many ner a tenth as many as the tears shed for its puttin' up!

We callated that one of us had handed enough hard earned money over his counter to pay for the grand stairway, every inch of which was the premium work of an artist and a man as made grand stairways for a livin' and never botched, and I reckoned, jist makin' a rough, unfigurin' estimate, that I had traded enough with Joe one time and another to as much, or may be more, than pay for the plate glass windows, not mentionin' the stained ones, that looked like flower beds set into his walls, with wreaths and roses and young children and blue sky and grass and things. And there was my wife and youngsters at home—if such a place as we had finally got to could be called a home—with the windows filled with old quilts and cushions and not enough in the cupboard to eat to much more than prevent them from goin' to bed hungry. And this was New Year's night! It wasn't a cheerful, glowin' outlook, no odds how perseverin' one tried to be chirky gleeful over it.

Hank Harmon remarked as he took his place at the table, with his back agin the door to prevent anyone from droppin' in unexpected, that likewise, makin' a rough, uneducated callation, he had helped Joe Howard in the buildin' of his mansion, as the newspaper called Joe's house—quite a considerable, even to the pinchin' of his family for provisions and clothin'. Hank callated he had done as much toward the house, as the puttin' in of the plumbing—pipin'—chandeliers, with the furnace thrown in for fair measure and good feelin'. And speakin' of the furnace, Hank happened to recollect that there wasn't a stick of wood or a pound of coal in his house, and



JIM BEGAN TO CRY.

his wife was sick and his children not sweatin' with bein' overclothed or overfed. And reminescen' along this line, we naturally got dismal and down-hearted and some of us—it was me—for I needn't pretend to confuse or forget anything that happened that night—moved that we unanimously take a drink and I accordin' pulled the cork from the white stone jug, with the blue letterin' and wheat sheaf. But Jim Cameron nor Hank nor Jim Green held up their cups, but I filled mine in a manly, don't-care way and

set close to the edge of the table by me.

Jist then, Jim Green began to cry. And it wasn't a drunk, mandlin' swasby cry that makes one tired, but a great, man, heart-breakin'—heart full cry, not loud nor noisy, but low and heavy with bitterness and remorse and the useless wishin' that you hadn't done some things. And while Jim cried we all looked away and kinder above each others heads and I sneaked my cup of whisky from the table and emptied it without makin' any splashin' in the pail where Hank tempers his hoss shoes. After a spell, Jim got where he could speak, and we was all willin' he should have the floor. He said he didn't know how many houses he had helped to build, but expected he had done his share, but he did know, with a sad certainty of one heart he had broken by his wayward wicked ways, Jim didn't say whose heart it was, but we all knew it was his mother's. And she had died alone and neglected jist a year ago. So many things happen just a year ago! Then Jim begun again, (he could talk like his father I suspect) and said that while he knew he had killed the one who loved him best and the one that he loved best in the world, killed her with cruel shame and sorrow—with God's help he was resolved to make her glad in heaven tonight, that he would never touch another drop of liquor as long as he lived.

There was stillness for a time and the edges of the old blanket flapped like big, ragged evil wings and the uncorked jug sent out a smell that put one in mind of venomous snakes and close by danger, while the smutty, cracked lamp flared up and then almost went out as if even that little puny, crippled light was ashamed of its company. Pretty soon, Jim Cameron pulled his legs out from under the tremblin' table, and straightenin' himself up as best he could, bein' so tall and standin' as he did right under the eaves of Hank's shop—said, "Boys, I have a notion that amounts to dead certainty, that my wife and I will move back to our old home before long. We are both homesick for the grass and geraniums and big trees in the front yard, and the stone dog on the door step, and the little room where our babies died. I think we shall go back pretty soon, because you see with God's help and God for a witness and Hank Harmon and my neighbor, William Wren, for witnesses, I now solemnly promise—with my dead chil-



THERE WAS NEW YEAR'S DINNERS TODAY.

dren to hear, too—that I, like our friend who has jist left us, will never touch another drop of intoxicating liquor so long as I live." And he picked up his hat and went away.

And me and Hank was left alone. But Cameron hadn't much more than shut the door, when Hank, as owned the shop, kicked the box out from under him and come nigh to upsettin' the infirm old table and while he put on his ragged overcoat, kind of careless remarked—only anyone that knew Hank would have known that he was in solemn, awful earnest—that it didn't look neighborly nor civil to leave company like this, but he guessed—no, I'll be damned if I guess—(Hank wasn't a swearin' man, never) he said, I know I must do as Jim Green and Jim Cameron have done, and with God to help me and God and you, William Wren, to be my witnesses, I, Henry Harmon, will never drink another drop of intoxicating liquor so long as I live. And the rickety old door dragged back to its place and he was gone, and I alone.

There was but one decent, manly thing left for me to do, and by this time it was the only thing I wanted to do and standin' up with only God for witness—and He was enough—I promised as the other boys had promised, and then, with a thread of a prayer that would tangle itself with my other thoughts, I took the jug and smashed it upon the anvil.

While it come to us unexpected that we should begin a new and decent life—jist like a message from God, almost, it was put upon us to help ourselves, jist all that was possible. God stood clost by us, though, and was always in reach when we most needed Him. It was a hard won victory, but we won it.

"In conclusion," as they say in story books, it is only fair to mention that Jim Cameron and his wife have possession once more of their stone dog and geraniums, and Jim Green lives with them, and there is another baby in the house whose name is James G. Cameron. There are no blankets in the windows of my home today, and Hank Harmon is as happy and prosperous as a decent, hard-workin' God-fearin' man can well be, and in every one of our homes there was New Year's dinners today, that makes my mouth water to even think of now.

## FOUND VAST WEALTH

BUT HAD SOME THRILLING ADVENTURES.

He Was Twice Taken Prisoner and Had Several Narrow Escapes for His Life—Explored the Island of Luzon and Mindanao.

Edward Rebstock of St. Louis will start for Manila in a few weeks. It will be his second visit to the Philippines. He says the islands are full of gold, and predicts that the time is not far distant when the rush thither will be greater than to the Klondike. All that is needed he says is mining laws. There are all kinds of minerals, the soil is equal, if not superior, to that of California, and the climate, outside of Manila and the swamps, is healthy. The mountains are covered with rich timber, good water is plentiful and living cheap. Mr. Rebstock's experiences in the Philippines were of the stirring and sensational kind. He was twice within four months taken prisoner by the Filipino insurgents, and had several narrow and thrilling escapes for his life. Returning to South Africa after Manila had come into possession of the United States forces, Mr. Rebstock decided to explore the Philippines, and left San Francisco on Oct. 20, 1898. A month later he presented himself to the American consul at Manila and stated his plans. He was simply advised to carry no weapons. With an English companion named Cochran, he journeyed by rail 120 miles to Calumpit, where a native Filipino was engaged as a guide, and the three started up the Grand river to Cabiao, where they met the Filipino general in command of that district. He was easy of persuasion and treated the party with the utmost courtesy, even to wining, dining and serenading them. An officer and two Filipino soldiers escorted them to the hills, where gold was found in nearly every stream. Mr. Rebstock staked off a placer claim of twenty acres, and expects some day to reap a harvest from it—provided he is protected by laws which may hereafter be enacted. His claim is recorded at Manila. Before returning to Manila they had the experience of meeting a half dozen Igorotos, against whom they had been warned by the Filipino soldiers, who said they were a savage tribe of aborigines and would kill on sight. After a dinner of roast fish and herbs, with the Igorotos, the prospectors returned to Manila, and later sought Aguineldo at Malolos, but the Filipino leader was not to be seen. His secretary, however, assured them that so long as they went unarmed they would have nothing to fear from either natives or soldiers. They ate their Christmas dinner near the town of Balewag, sweltering in alpaca coats in the glare of the noonday sun. They were jist finishing their meal when two Filipino officers and two privates rushed up. The privates carried rifles, one of the officers held a drawn sword in his hand, and the other pointed a six-shooter at them. About forty or fifty natives had been attracted by their camp fire, and they formed almost a solid wall around the men when the officers came up. All the time they were talking, one of the officers was shaking his revolver in the faces of the prospectors, whose protestations were of no avail. They were hustled off to a Spanish convent and locked up with thirty Spanish prisoners. After much persuasion they induced their keeper to telegraph to Aguineldo's secretary, but instead of receiving an order releasing them, he was instructed to send them back to Manila. The idea of doing further prospecting at that time on the island of Luzon was then abandoned, and the prospectors separated. Mr. Cochran securing employment in Manila. On March 9 last Mr. Rebstock embarked for Zamboanga on the island of Mindanao. Thinking it unsafe to acknowledge his American citizenship, he passed himself off for a German. But he was mistaken for a spy, and finally imprisoned by the Moros. The president of the Moros, however, was easily induced to release him when he agreed to give a half interest in all the claims he could peg off in Mindanao. With an escort of eight Filipino soldiers, Mr. Rebstock visited the hills, and found gold everywhere. But when he was ready to leave Mindanao he had considerable trouble, and finally put himself in the custody of two officers of the United States gunboat Petrel, which fortunately had touched at Zamboanga. At last he was able to reach the steamer Putnam and returned to Manila. Mr. Rebstock, having had enough adventure, decided to postpone further prospecting until the insurrection was put down.

## GOOD FITS FOLLOW REFORM.

Decadence of Trousers Pockets as a Sign That Men Are Growing Better.

Correspondence: A tailor who has made trousers for many statesmen and public men of the country for more than thirty years has a curious reason for his belief that the country is getting better. "When I was first in business," he said, "I never could put enough pockets in a pair of trousers. I was one of the first tailors in this locality at least to suggest two hip pockets instead of one, and I remember I was called a benefactor, particularly by my southern patrons. You know why, of course. There was a time when every gentleman carried a flask wherever he went. That is what led to the second hip pocket. The gentleman also carried a weapon of attack and defense. Slowly, by degrees, the extra hip was dropped. I think it was the weapon pocket that was dropped first, and of late years some of my patrons have asked me to leave out both hip pockets, and now I have a few customers who want no pockets whatever in their trousers. As a matter of good fit there is no question but they are right, and I have always said that pockets are the cause of most of the baggy, flabby trousers you see in the street. But aside from the sartorial side of the case, the absence, or rather the tendency toward decadence of pockets in trousers is an indication to my mind that the world is getting better. It means that men are not so much addicted to the bottle, or to beligerency. Reform and good fits go hand in hand."—New York Sun.

## A Friend of the Rich.

The character of Cornelius Vanderbilt's private generosity is well illustrated by a single incident described in the Philadelphia Press. The late Samuel Barton had been a lifelong friend of his. They had been playmates and schoolmates, and at school Barton, who was somewhat the elder, had been made the custodian of his friend's pocket-money. When both the boys grew to manhood Mr. Barton became a successful broker, but in late years fortune was unkind. He lost his money, and his health gradually gave way. Mr. Vanderbilt heard that Mr. Barton was in some distress of mind, as well as of body, and called upon him. The meeting was like that of men who have been playmates. They spoke of their sports and of their experiences at the boarding-school, and at last Mr. Vanderbilt very delicately inquired if there was anything that was causing Mr. Barton anxiety, and his old playmate replied that he was fearful that his estate would not leave his family comfortably provided for. Thereupon Mr. Vanderbilt said, speaking the familiar name of childhood days: "Sam, don't let that worry you." That was all he said, but the next day he deposited in Mr. Barton's name a large sum of money. When Mr. Barton heard that, it seemed to give him peace, and he called his family to him, said that he was content to die, bade them good-by, and then, saying, "I am very tired," turned his face to the wall, and in a moment was gone.

## Spanish Industry Helped by the War.

One of the results of the Spanish-American war has been a remarkable stimulus to certain departments of Spanish industry. Although many merchants have suffered by the loss of Cuba, and have had their operations severely hampered thereby, other houses have taken to manufacturing on the spot products which used to be got from that colony. Sugar is one of the chief articles imported, but there were formerly few refineries in Spain. During the last few months, however, a number of refineries have been established. So far it seems to have been the Germans who have profited most by the situation. The German houses have their agents on the spot, and so succeed in booking a big share of the orders. In other departments, too, it is very much the same. Barcelona, Madrid and other large towns have recently adopted the electric light, but although the field is open to everybody, most of the tenders were Germans.—London News.

## ITS FOE IS WOMAN, NOT MAN.

Universal Suffrage Movement Not Menaced by Male Sex.

Man is not the chief enemy to the promulgation of the woman's suffrage movement, as a delegate to a convention in the east recently affirmed to the meeting of her sister association. In the course of her talk she related her experiences with a clipping bureau and how a great light broke in on her comprehension, upsetting some theories she had nursed for years. Failing in her reading of newspapers to discover any attacks on the right of her sex to enjoy the privilege of the ballot she contracted with a press bureau to furnish her the class of matter she was unable to find for herself. Several weeks passed and not a single clipping of the kind she wanted reached her. A number favorable to the conferring of the ballot on women was, however, forwarded. She protested and received an answer that among the hundreds of newspapers that reached their office daily none opposed the idea of women voting. Assuming that favorable notices would be acceptable the bureau had made the extracts they forwarded. They were sorry, but it was the best they could do, and no charge would be made for the work performed. It was then, according to this delegate's confession, that a light dawned on her. Instead of finding the sterner and more privileged sex opposing her in her fight for the use of the ballot she found, as she confessed, to her chagrin, the monster man, if not openly favorable to her ambitions, at least passively indifferent. Disarmed, she knew not in what direction to turn, and, as she admitted, she has since not been quite so active in urging equal rights in suffrage.

## GOOD FITS FOLLOW REFORM.

Decadence of Trousers Pockets as a Sign That Men Are Growing Better.

Correspondence: A tailor who has made trousers for many statesmen and public men of the country for more than thirty years has a curious reason for his belief that the country is getting better. "When I was first in business," he said, "I never could put enough pockets in a pair of trousers. I was one of the first tailors in this locality at least to suggest two hip pockets instead of one, and I remember I was called a benefactor, particularly by my southern patrons. You know why, of course. There was a time when every gentleman carried a flask wherever he went. That is what led to the second hip pocket. The gentleman also carried a weapon of attack and defense. Slowly, by degrees, the extra hip was dropped. I think it was the weapon pocket that was dropped first, and of late years some of my patrons have asked me to leave out both hip pockets, and now I have a few customers who want no pockets whatever in their trousers. As a matter of good fit there is no question but they are right, and I have always said that pockets are the cause of most of the baggy, flabby trousers you see in the street. But aside from the sartorial side of the case, the absence, or rather the tendency toward decadence of pockets in trousers is an indication to my mind that the world is getting better. It means that men are not so much addicted to the bottle, or to beligerency. Reform and good fits go hand in hand."—New York Sun.

## A Friend of the Rich.

The character of Cornelius Vanderbilt's private generosity is well illustrated by a single incident described in the Philadelphia Press. The late Samuel Barton had been a lifelong friend of his. They had been playmates and schoolmates, and at school Barton, who was somewhat the elder, had been made the custodian of his friend's pocket-money. When both the boys grew to manhood Mr. Barton became a successful broker, but in late years fortune was unkind. He lost his money, and his health gradually gave way. Mr. Vanderbilt heard that Mr. Barton was in some distress of mind, as well as of body, and called upon him. The meeting was like that of men who have been playmates. They spoke of their sports and of their experiences at the boarding-school, and at last Mr. Vanderbilt very delicately inquired if there was anything that was causing Mr. Barton anxiety, and his old playmate replied that he was fearful that his estate would not leave his family comfortably provided for. Thereupon Mr. Vanderbilt said, speaking the familiar name of childhood days: "Sam, don't let that worry you." That was all he said, but the next day he deposited in Mr. Barton's name a large sum of money. When Mr. Barton heard that, it seemed to give him peace, and he called his family to him, said that he was content to die, bade them good-by, and then, saying, "I am very tired," turned his face to the wall, and in a moment was gone.

## Spanish Industry Helped by the War.

One of the results of the Spanish-American war has been a remarkable stimulus to certain departments of Spanish industry. Although many merchants have suffered by the loss of Cuba, and have had their operations severely hampered thereby, other houses have taken to manufacturing on the spot products which used to be got from that colony. Sugar is one of the chief articles imported, but there were formerly few refineries in Spain. During the last few months, however, a number of refineries have been established. So far it seems to have been the Germans who have profited most by the situation. The German houses have their agents on the spot, and so succeed in booking a big share of the orders. In other departments, too, it is very much the same. Barcelona, Madrid and other large towns have recently adopted the electric light, but although the field is open to everybody, most of the tenders were Germans.—London News.

## Saving Space.

Miss Slimdlet—"Here's an advertisement of 'a literary man' who wants board. Does he say he's a literary man to show he's a person of refinement and culture?" Mrs. Slimdlet—"No; it's to show that he can't pay much."—New York Weekly.