

# Her New Year's Caller

He Brought Her an Acceptable Gift

By CLARISSA MACKIE

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The old fashioned custom of paying calls on New Year's day still existed in Lanolen. The housekeepers of that prim and lovely village were always plentifully supplied with loaves of frosted plum cake, pitchers of sweet cider and pots of fragrant, steaming coffee and, after an early and copiously bountiful prepared dinner, were dressed and ready to receive callers of both sexes, for such was the Lanolen custom. The ladies of the village took much thought in planning their reception hours so that all might have time to pay calls as well as to receive them. These calling hours were usually announced in the columns of the Lanolen Weekly Times.

"I wonder if Estelle Freeman will receive calls tomorrow?" remarked Mrs. Eddy Skinner to a neighbor on the last day of the old year.

"I don't know why she shouldn't," protested Mrs. Skinner. "She always has done it and has had real cream in her coffee instead of condensed milk—like some folks."

They were passing the old Freeman place, and there had been a brief glimpse of Estelle's pink shawl in the leafless garden.

Once the handsomest house in Lanolen—the Freeman place—still bore indications of its past grandeur.

It was a huge old house, much too large for Estelle's slender form in summer, when the coolness of its large rooms was welcome. It was the most comfortable house in the village in winter. Its rooms were of arctic temperature, except on New Year's day, when somehow Estelle managed to have great fires in the fireplaces in the double parlors and dining room. The rest of the winter Estelle spent in four rooms of the west wing, and the library became her sitting room.

"Do you see any signs of New Year's calls?" pursued Mrs. Eddy Skinner as they passed beyond the porch of the Freeman place.

Mrs. Smith cast a backward troubled glance at the old house. "No, I don't," she admitted. "Of course Estelle always airs the parlor curtains the day before."

"And opens all the windows and draws up the shades," added Mrs. Skinner. "Did you see all the shades were pulled tight, same as every day?"

"Yes, but maybe she hasn't got at it yet. Folks can't do everything like clockwork." Mrs. Skinner's good blue checked face wore a resentful look now.

"Freemans always do things by clockwork; you know that."

"That's so, but folks change some times."

"Freemans never change their minds on their ways, but I guess Estelle will have to do both now." Mrs. Eddy Skinner pursed her mouth mysteriously.

"Don't be so secretive, Hannah," said Mrs. Smith angrily. "If you've got anything to say about Estelle Freeman, for the land's sake say it and get it over with."

"Well, Estelle's going to lose the place tomorrow," said Mrs. Skinner triumphantly. She was not a hard-hearted woman but merely one who placed a high value upon her ability to be the first one to impart matters of gossip, whether good or bad.

"No," ejaculated Mrs. Smith sharply. "Yes, it seems she was possessed, such a drug in her youthful market, died, and contrary to Lawyer Allen's advice, she has paid the interest on the mortgage out of her little principal in the bank until it's all gone. She has delicate fabric of bills that is worth not paid any interest for two years. Into every one's life Evan Mason had left Lanolen and returned only a year ago gray haired and with legal honors thrust upon him. She had avoided a what to do, said Mrs. Smith quietly meeting with him, and so they had not and for awhile the other woman was met.

"Knowing about the foreclosure, of course I was sure Estelle wouldn't feel dug around the Freeman place tomorrow."

"Just as dusk fell there came a rattle to leave her name out of the paper. Estelle and to tell Tom Dick and Harry that she had been sitting in the twilight they needn't call on Estelle Freeman and lighted the red shaded lamp in the tomorrow because she can't afford to call. As she opened the door for a man entertain Humphrey. I guess Evan came in as though driven before the mana can hold their own with any storm body in Lanolen," averred Mrs. Smith loyally.

"Well, I declare," cried Mrs. Skinner angrily, and without further delay she whisked around a corner and went toward her own neat, white painted, glaringly furnished, un-mortgaged home.

Mrs. Smith stared after her for an instant and then appeared to forget the existence of Mrs. Eddy Skinner. Her kindly eyes were turned backward over the way they had come, where the line of neatly painted picket fences was broken by a length of overgrown, unkempt privet hedge that surrounded the Freeman place.

Suddenly she wheeled about, and retrace her steps until she came to the jagged hedge, where she pushed her bulky form through the narrow gateway. Instead of going around to the side door that Estelle always used in winter, Estelle Smith marched up the broad front steps and rang a peal through the empty rooms.

Estelle opened the door, her fair, sweet face betraying surprise at the sight of Estelle Smith at her front door. Estelle Smith was an old friend who was privileged to enter the Freeman house at any intimate door without knocking.

"Well, Estelle, can I come in?" Estelle was inside the great, cold hall as she asked the question.

"Come into the library. I've got a nice fire there," said Estelle, leading the way down the hall to a door in the south wing.

Mrs. Smith sank heavily into the rocker and loosened the veil tied over her head. She cast a quick glance around the room and noted that Estelle was mending a linen pillowcase.

There was a lack of evidence of the usual preparations for the first day of the new year.

"Of course you're going to open the house tomorrow as usual," said Mrs. Smith abruptly.

Estelle flushed and bent closer over the pillowcase she was darning. "No," was her reply. "The house doesn't belong to me any longer."

"Who owns it?" demanded Estelle sternly.

"The man who owns the mortgage, Haskins Bros. are his agents."

"And a pretty pair of rascals they are," cried Estelle, suddenly bursting into tears over Estelle's troubles. "I'm not going to ask you how it happened. I dare say you couldn't keep it not with Haskins Bros. in the deal—only you know I shall expect you to come and keep me company until you decide what to do."

Estelle laughed and cried all at once as she took Estelle's toll worn hands in her own. "Keep you company, indeed! As if you could be tedious with two children! But I understand, and I will come, Estelle. I am to settle the matter day after tomorrow, and after that they will give me three months to vacate. The place really does not belong to me after tonight."

"You will have to sell off some of the furniture, I expect," muttered Estelle diffidently.

"Yes," admitted Estelle sadly. "You know when father died, Estelle, he begged me to hold on to the place at any cost. He thought I might marry some day, but, of course, that is all nonsense." Estelle blushed and turned her head away, then, with a proud shake of her shoulders, she resumed.

"There was a tiny sum left in the bank, so I mortgaged the house and have been living on that. I know it is thrifless, but there was no work for me in Lanolen, and I promised father to stay and always keep the house open, but it will have to go now."

"And, of course, Henry Haskins will let you have the money and was nice about waiting for the interest because this is the finest property in Lanolen and worth waiting for!" cried Estelle bitterly. "If I had only known before I might have helped you."

With an ill framed excuse she hastened away, first exacting a promise from Estelle to come to her house and help receive. Although it was drawing near mealtime and her hungry brood would be watching for her momentary arrival, Estelle Smith made her way toward the courthouse, where she was fortunate enough to find Judge Mason still in his office.

Her interview with the rather stern-faced judge lasted for an hour, and when she left the office her countenance beamed with delight at a satisfactorily accomplished duty. "I always knew there was somebody Estelle might have married, and from his face when I mentioned her name I know."

New Year's day dawned cold and cloudy. There was not much inclination to leave warm stoves and go a-calling, but still there was an incentive in the form of alluring refreshments as well as alluring daughters in many households.

Estelle shed bitter tears as she wandered through the lonely rooms repeating old days when happiness had been to keep the house after her father's death, and contrary to Lawyer Allen's advice, she has paid the interest on the mortgage out of her little principal in the bank until it's all gone. She has delicate fabric of bills that is worth not paid any interest for two years. Into every one's life Evan Mason had left Lanolen and returned only a year ago gray haired and with legal honors thrust upon him. She had avoided a what to do, said Mrs. Smith quietly meeting with him, and so they had not and for awhile the other woman was met.

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**Wu Ting Fang's Good Cheer.** Among the most fortunate of the Chinese friends of the late Sir Robert Hart was a big official, Wu Ting Fang, who prided himself on his alert manner, which made him appear much younger than he was, and boasted that he intended to live 200 years. He once explained how this feat was to be accomplished. "The first thing, naturally, is diet," said he. "The man who would cheat Time should live on nuts like the squirrels. Under no condition should he touch salt, and he should begin and end each meal with a teaspoonful of olive oil. I have hung scrolls in my bedroom" Wu Ting went on to explain, "with these sentences written upon them in English and Chinese. I am young, I am healthy, I am cheerful. Immediately I enter the room my eye falls upon these precepts. I say to myself, 'Why of course I am, and therefore I am.'" London (through tele

**One View of the "Terrible Turk."** Speaking of the Turk, an English resident in Turkey writes: "The man I like best is the pure, uncontaminated Turk who has never seen Europe. He is wonderfully hospitable, amazingly kind, essentially a man of peace and a fervent religionist. He is a Moslem, has been reared in Mohammedanism and believes in his religion. He is honest and straightforward in his business dealings, and his word is his bond. I do not suggest that every Turk possesses all these qualities which I have attributed to the race, nor am I painting him in too rosy a color. I have made many voyages into the interior of Macedonia and Asia Minor; I have entered Turkish villages high up on the snow, stockaded against the bears, where the inhabitants had never seen a European before, and my trust in the kindness and hospitality of these men has never failed me."—London Graph.

**Suspended Animation.** As we descend in the scale of animal life we find that what kills the higher animals does not injure the lower. Cut a polyp in two and you have two living polyps instead of one dead polyp. Break off a lobster's claw and another will grow. You may, it has been said, freeze a fly but you cannot freeze it to death. There are infusoria called wheel animals. These rotifers have many curious qualities, among which is that of suspended animation for an indefinite period without ceasing to live. Clusters of rotifers may be desiccated and reduced apparently to dust, and in this condition they may be kept for months and years and possibly centuries. A single drop of water will restore them to life, and the wheel bearings will instantly resume their "rotational" activity precisely at the point where it was broken off.

**Bank Checks in Austria.** Banks of Austria are exempt from liability for payment of checks and bills of exchange to parties who may have acquired unlawful possession of the same and forged the endorsements thereon. The banks are not compelled to identify the bearer, and instances occur of such commercial papers being stolen and cashed with forged endorsements, leaving the owner without redress. A check or bill of exchange, though payable to order and not cashed is a dangerous form for the remittance of money. Liability for payment on a forged endorsement is incurred by a bank only when it is presumed to have knowledge of the parties signature as in the case of well known agents.

**Real Estate Enterprises.** Here is a way to a piece of land may be made profitable. Find a hole and make bricks out of the dirt.

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**The Drone.** Son: What kind of a man is a drone, papa? Father: One who stands in a revolving door and waits for some one else to push it around so he can get in. My son.—Judge.

**Mean Thing.** Maybelle—See the beautiful engagement ring Jack gave me last night. Estelle—Gracious! Has that just got around to you?—Toledo Blade.

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