Making Over Maybridge





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Making Over Maybridge



"What is it the song says?" the young man murmured. "'The old home ain't what it used to be.'"

He paused long enough to look up and down the main thoroughfare of the little town.

"The song's wrong," he said; then he quickly added, "more's the pity."

The young man had not reached his thirtieth year, was of a slender, wiry build, and his walk, the keenness of his expression, and each of his mannerisms, bespoke enthusiasm and vigor.

It was dusk when he had left the train, the only passenger to alight at the dingy little station.

"Back home?" the venerable station-master drawled.

"Yes, for the first time in ten years, Jim," the young man answered.

"Ain't nobody to meet you," said the official with a yawn.

"They don't know I've come," the traveler explained. "It's a surprise."

"Uh-huh," was the only acknowledgment the station-master gave as he picked up the mail-bag.

And now the young man was walking briskly up Main Street on his way toward the old home.

"The Perkins block is still standing," he said, as he looked up at a three-story, dilapidated brick building, "and I predicted ten years ago that the ramshackle old place would fall down before another Winter."

He looked across the road.

"Upon my word I don't believe they've painted old Calvary Church since I left home, and there was an agitation then to paint it."

At the next corner he stopped for several minutes to look into the windows of the hardware store. A smile of mingled pathos and humor crept over his face.

"I don't believe Father has changed the windows since I saw them last," he said. "There's the old farm implement picture on the side wall; there's the same old pyramid of paint cans, and I suppose that tray of jack-knives is the one he bought in 1900."

He turned the corner and walked up the side street, making comments as he went.

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paint. The *song is wrong*," he murmured again, "The old home's just what it used to be."

Then his gaze turned across the street in the direction of a pretty park.

"I've been a little harsh," he said. "There isn't a more attractive town anywhere than Maybridge would be if the few rusty spots could only be brightened up. There's Grace Park with its fine old trees and pretty flower gardens; there's the Spencer home with its magnificent grounds, and there's the row of fine old residences along Elm Street. Why, Maybridge has all the essentials of an ideal town, but it sure does need a little making over."

Then the young man's thoughts turned to the dear ones he was about to surprise, and a few moments later there was a fond greeting in the old homestead.

Ten years before George Hollister, then not out of his teens, had left Maybridge to make his way in a large Western city. Starting with a small position, the income of which barely kept him alive, he had risen rapidly. Each year he wrote home that at the first opportunity he would return for a visit. But new and greater responsibilities forced him to defer the home-going until a decade had slipped by. His last advancement had made George's time his own, and without warning he had quietly returned to surprise and delight his parents and younger sister.

Renewing acquaintances occupied the larger part of the next day, and in the evening his proud father took him to the monthly meeting of the Men's Club of Calvary Church.

After a long drawn out and uninteresting talk on foreign missions by a visiting minister, the president of the club, Josiah Stubbs, arose and said:

"It's been a pleasure for many of us tonight to meet again Sam Hollister's boy, George. George has been workin' in a big city for some time, and I'm goin' to ask him to tell us how it seems to get back to good old Maybridge. Mr. Hollister, will you 'blige us?"

The young man went forward and stood on the little platform. In a few minutes he gave a brief description of his experience in the business world and told how glad he was to meet again his old friends.

And then he abruptly changed the subject.

"I've always felt," he said, "that I would like to do something for Maybridge. I haven't prospered to the extent of being able to endow any of your, or rather our, institutions, but, during the month I am to spend at home, if you so desire, I will make my donation in the form of service."

He paused, and the forty-two members of the Men's Club looked puzzled.

"May I ask," enquired the president, "of what this service would consist?"

"Certainly," replied George. "It would be an effort to brighten up Maybridge."

He paused again, and the puzzled look of the assembly was changing into an expression of resentment.

"I don't understand," interposed Abner Wethersbee; "in fact, I didn't know that Maybridge was in need of brightenin' up."

"I will try to make myself clear," George went on. "When I stepped from the train yesterday the dilapidated old station, the junk piles along the tracks, the broken walk to Main Street, and the mud on sidewalk and pavement, gave anything but a favorable impression. Even before I left the train a traveling salesman told me he had business here but that he was going on to Montclair to spend the night. In a joking way he said he was afraid to stay here because the few street lamps were so dirty he might get lost on the way from the station to the hotel."

The look of resentment was giving way to an unfriendly frown on the part of most of his hearers George noticed this, and his tone became softer as he talked on

"Don't misunderstand me, please," he said. "I'm not here to criticise the old town just because I've been living in a big city. I'm here to put myself at your service in an effort to improve conditions. My business has taken me into a number of small towns where there was no more wealth, nor industry, nor good citizens than we have here in Maybridge. But these towns realized that appearance is a practical asset for a city or village, as well as for an individual. They knew that favorably impressing visitors meant business. But more than all this they recognized the fact that brightening up their towns stimulated public spirit; and public spirit is the force that determines the progress and prosperity of any place."



"Maybridge will be Brightened Up this month."

George hoped that his last statement would arouse some enthusiasm, but in this he was disappointed So he merely added, "I've had experience, gentlemen, in a clean-up campaign in a large city, and I offer you my services in a campaign to brighten up Maybridge."

He bowed and sat down.

There was no applause, and the silence was finally broken when President Stubbs drily asked, "How would you propose to begin?"

"First of all, there should be an organization," promptly came the answer. "We should have a big committee including yourself and the mayor and the editor of the newspaper and the superintendent of the schools and the representatives of all the town's interests."

"Then what would you do?" asked Ezra Galpin.

"I'd formulate a set of rules," replied George, "and I'd ask every resident to co-operate in seeing these rules enforced."

James Dunkle, the town's oldest lawyer, arose.

"I move, Mr. President," he said, "that a committee be appointed to look into this matter and report at the next monthly meeting."

"Pardon me for interrupting," put in George, "but I will only be here a month, and in order to make my service effective, the campaign should be commenced at once."

The conservative Dunkle shook his forefinger as he vigorously retorted, "Young man, don't think that you can come back here to your old home and force city ways on us just to show your smartness. Maybridge has done without you for ten years and got along pretty well, too, and now if we propose to go along in the even tenor of our way, that's what we'll do. Young man, you're a disturber, and, Mr. President, I desire to withdraw my motion and put another one. I move we adjourn."

"Second the motion," called Ezra Galpin.

The chairman arose.

"You've heard the motion, gentlemen. Have you any remarks?"

George was on his feet in an instant.

"I very keenly regret," he began, "that my purpose is so grossly misunderstood. I sincerely trust that you will defeat this motion and organize here and now a committee to brighten up Maybridge. I have told you I want to do something for the old town. I have explained my willingness

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to serve you in the campaign I have outlined. But, gentlemen, if you reject this service, I propose to go about the work just the same without you. Maybridge will be brightened up this month."

He sat down.

"Any further remarks?" asked the chairman.

Herbert Newberry, one of the youngest members of the club, arose.

"I am heartily in favor of Mr. Hollister's suggestions," he said. "They are in keeping with progress. Of course they may be found objectionable by the owners of some ramshackle old buildings that ought to be torn down or fixed up." He looked unflinchingly at the chairman. "And the agent of some vacant property that resembles a rubbish heap naturally would be disgruntled at the thought of having to clear it off." His gaze turned toward Lawyer Dunkle. "But just the same there are enough good citizens in Maybridge who love and respect their town to see this movement put through."

As he sat down, the chairman cleared his throat and announced nervously, "We mustn't adjourn, gentlemen, with any feelin' of bitterness toward each other. We're all members of the same club, the same church and, for that matter, the same town. If some people in Maybridge want to improve the appearance of their property, that's their business. If others don't want to, I don't believe anyone can make 'em. And so, unless there's further remarks," he looked around the room, "the meetin' stands adjourned."

The next morning there was a brisk conference in the office of the editor of *The Daily Chronicle*.

George Hollister did most of the talking, the editor showing his interest and approval with an occasional, "I see," "Of course," "Undoubtedly," and "Just so."



There was a brisk conference in the office of the editor.

At the end of the meeting the two shook hands, and the editor sat down to look over the papers the young man had left.

For several days Lawyer Dunkle proudly boasted of how he had "laid out cold that fresh young Hollister and his fool ideas." Reports of this boasting talk reached George, but he only smiled grimly and said, "We'll see."

It was a week after the memorable meeting when *The Daily Chronicle* came out with a first page news story and a long editorial headed, "Brighten Up Maybridge." The news story stated that a campaign to improve the general appearance of the town would be waged for one week and commence the following Monday, and the editorial called upon all loyal citizens to co-operate in the movement. The editor asked for suggestions as to the furtherance of the campaign and promised to print worthy communications. He recommended that all residents of the town become members of a Brighten Up Club, in which there would be no dues, nor fees nor meetings.

The rules of the proposed organization and its purposes were printed in a frame and read as follows:

Brighten Up Maybridge

RULES

1. Do not allow rubbish to accumulate.
2. Do not throw anything on sidewalks or streets.
3. Do not let piles of ashes or trash remain in back yards.
4. Do not mark or deface sidewalks, fences, buildings or public property.
5. Plant grass and flower seeds.
6. Apply paint to fences, sheds and buildings.
7. And when Maybridge is brightened up, keep it so!

The general purposes of this crusade against rubbish and for beauty are: to help the whole village life, to protect against fire, to improve the general health, to exert an educational influence upon the school children, to advance business conditions and to impress favorably all visitors to Maybridge.

The same afternoon that *The Chronicle* made its announcement, every pupil in Maybridge went home from school with a neat folder containing the rules of the Brighten Up Campaign together with the endorsement of the superintendent of schools.

On Sunday three ministers announced the plans of the Brighten Up Crusade from their pulpits and urged their congregations to participate.

The coming campaign was well advertised, at any rate.

Josiah Stubbs and James Dunkle walked home from church together.

"It's easy enough to start somethin'," said the former, "but it's a different matter to complete it."

"Yes," agreed the lawyer. "This fresh young Hollister I suppose is chortlin' about the splurge he's made. But I reckon he'll feel purty sick next Saturday night, when his campaign's over and Maybridge hasn't changed a whit."

But George wasn't chortling; he was busy.

Monday morning the campaign was inaugurated. There was no ceremony and but little sign of activity. A large wagon passed through Main Street carrying a placard on either side. On each was printed the following notice:

Brighten Up Maybridge

Have your rubbish in boxes or barrels near the street. This wagon will haul it away without charge.

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And then in the sunlight came the sparkle of gold from the upper section of the cross.

Two hours later, when the wagon returned on Main Street it was full to overflowing. The little crowd in front of the Post-office watched it go by.

"Looks as though some of the folks were gettin' into the Campaign," said Joshua Newton.

"There's always plenty of people to take advantage of gettin' things done free," sneered Lawyer Dunkle.

"You don't think much will come of the campaign then?" asked young Joe Wilcox.

"No," came the vigorous answer. "Nuthin' 'll come of it."

"And what's more," put in Josiah Stubbs, "young Hollister will be so ashamed that you won't see him again."

There was a brief silence.

"What's that?" spoke up Joe Wilcox suddenly.

The others looked in the direction he was pointing. There, three blocks away, was a man rapidly climbing up the steeple of Calvary Church.

"Who is it?" asked James Dunkle.

"It's George Hollister," answered one of the younger members of the group.

"What's he up there for?" asked Josiah Stubbs.

"We'll know in a minute," said Ezra Galpin.

The little group saw the young man reach the top of the steeple and pause at the base of the faded wooden cross. Then they saw him produce a pail which he hung on his belt. A few moments later he stood erect and moved his arm rapidly up and down. And then in the sunlight came the sparkle of gold from the upper section of the cross.

While the little group watched, a boy came running up the street from the direction of the church.

"Papa!" he called to Josiah Stubbs. "There's a lot of women with Jim Terris and Ed Parker painting the old church."

"They haven't any right to," growled Josiah Stubbs. "I'm the chairman of the finance committee and the President of the Men's Club, too."

"It's ridiculous," observed Lawyer Dunkle. "Speakin' legally, the women can't do it."

Willie Stubbs looked up at the two men. "But they are doing it," he observed.

"Come on, boys," called Joe Wilcox, as he started up the street.

"Where are you goin'?" asked the irritated Dunkle.

"We're going," said Joe, "to stop the women from painting the church."

"Good!" cried the lawyer.

"Good!" echoed the chairman of the finance committee.

"And then," Joe called, "we're going to finish the job ourselves."

The two older men started to protest, but the others, following Joe, were already on their way.

The Chronicle did justice on Tuesday morning to the first day of the campaign and announced that sixty-five dollars had been contributed to a fund for promoting the work.

The rubbish wagon was unable to cope with the demands, and a second wagon was pressed into service.

The sidewalks and streets were cleaned; pickets were adjusted on fences, and gates made to swing instead of lean. Vacant lots were cleared of debris; lawns were trimmed, flowers set out and seeds planted. Buildings, fences, sheds and walls, were painted, and, from the constantly increasing general fund, men were employed to improve the section near the station and to further carry on "the crusade against rubbish and for beauty."

The school children were active agents throughout the campaign, and when the conservative element was overcome and the movement became a popular one, practically all Maybridge joined in the crusade.

George Hollister counts the last night of his vacation a memorable one. He was once more the guest of the Men's Club of Calvary Church.

He smiled when the chairman in introducing him said, "This young man talked to us just a month ago tonight. He put up a scheme that some of us old fogeys called a fool idea, and when he said he wanted to do something for the town and offered his services, we sneered and turned him down. But he's done more for Maybridge than any other citizen, livin' or dead. You all know how he brightened it up and how paint has freshened weather-beaten boards. It's wonderful what a little paint will do! You all know how grass and flowers have taken the place of rubbish, and how business in general has improved. You all know how the spirit of the town has been sort of changed, how we're proud to live here, and how we've begun to plan bigger for the future. But there are some things you don't know. The editor of *The Chronicle* told me this morning that eight other towns in the state have heard about our brightenin' up and have written for the rules for brightenin' themselves up. Gentlemen, that's good advertisin', and it pays to advertise a town just as it pays to advertise a business.

"Here's another thing you don't know. This afternoon the representatives of a big manufacturin' plant, employing fourteen hundred men, came here to look us over. Maybridge is one of five towns they're considerin' for their new plant. The shippin' facilities and the location may have



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had a good deal to do with it, but I want to tell you that it was the signs of progress and prosperity in the business and residence districts that impressed them most. The papers ain't signed yet, but the president whispered to me that here's where they're comin'. There are more things you don't know, some we'll find out about from time to time that are due to our recent crusade, but there's only one more that I'm goin' to mention. Amos Parsons, the best known man that ever lived in Maybridge, came home yesterday to spend a few days with his old mother. I had the pleasure of ridin' 'round with him, and he told me that this is the neatest, cleanest and best little town that he knows. And he said he would like to add $50,000 to the Spencer School endowment."

There was vigorous applause after this announcement.

There was even more applause when George Hollister was introduced, and still more when he concluded expressing his appreciation of the united spirit that made the Brighten Up Campaign possible.

It was a proud family that saw George off the next day. There was a twinkle in his father's eye, as he said to him, "Incidental to the general good, my boy, you certainly have helped your father's business. I've sold more paint and nails and tools durin' the campaign week than in any six months since I've been in business."

When the train pulled out, the young man stood on the back platform to wave his good-byes, and then he took a sweeping glance about and noted the many evidences of his Brighten Up Campaign.

He smiled.

"The old home ain't what it used to be!"



The Brighten Up Creed

¶ To Brighten Up myself—to be optimistic, cheerful and good natured.

¶ To Brighten Up my home and spread the Brighten Up spirit among my neighbors.

¶ To Brighten Up my business and take pleasure as well as profit from it.

¶ To Brighten Up my town and promote its social, industrial and commercial progress.

¶ To promote the love of Nature, sunshine and fresh air.

¶ To adopt Brighten Up as my slogan.

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