

WHO IS HARRIET? ALL LONDON ASKING

Woman Has Been Writing to Various Persons Offering to Buy Scandal About Notabilities.

SAYS IT'S FOR AMERICA

And Offers to Pay Liberally—English Indignation Expressed in a Flood of Letters to Papers.

By Marconi Transatlantic Wireless Telegraph to The New York Times.

LONDON, Jan. 28, (by telegraph to Clifton, Ireland; thence by wireles).—"Who's Harriet?" has this week been a gag heard almost as frequently as was once the popular question, "Who's your hatter?"

"Harriet" is the woman whose efforts to obtain news of society scandals by purchase from domestic servants were exposed by an indignant "Householder" in The London Times.

The week has seen the growth of a huge crop of new letters relative to the activities of "Harriet," fac similes of some of whose correspondence have been published daily. There is a good deal of mystery about "Harriet," for the surname with which she signs her letters, "Churchill," is fictitious and the address she uses is a provincial boarding house, where she makes only rare visits.

Scores of reporters have been on her track the whole week, but their inquiries have elicited no information further than that she is at present staying, under her real name, at a country house somewhere in the Midlands.

Spread Her Nets, Wide.

There was a strong inclination to regard the "Harriet" letter as a hoax and "Harriet" as a myth until the discovery of other letters of hers. These show that she spread her nets wide. Some were written to a well-known firm of private inquiry agents. One ran as follows:

Dear Sir: Shall be glad if you will quote me the price at which you could send me regularly—one or two each week—telegraphed particulars of a scandalous kind. (my readers insist upon each record being about 1,000 words in length—not to contain any particulars which are usual in a book of reference; nor yet the innocuous matter which appears in the English society papers) of leading men in English society.

What I want is the kind of thing that is easily obtained by any man-about-town in the go-ahead sets. If you can do what I want at a reasonable figure for a trial of three months, we could then meet and discuss terms for you to do this same kind of thing for me in Paris, Berlin, Rome, and Vienna, as I have very good connections among transatlantic editors and know that market well thoroughly.

My difficulty is in obtaining sufficient of this kind of stuff. I want it regularly without overlapping.

With my present system, some weeks I am very much overdone; while others, owing to several of my scouts all being in the same part of the world, I get a lot of stale news and am put to it to make out my matter. Yours faithfully,

HARRIET CHURCHILL.

Another letter was:

Please let me know what you would charge to arrange for your agents in a certain embassy set to supply me with a regular weekly letter of about 1,500 words containing the latest current scandal and gossip about matrimonial, financial, (including gambling and betting clubs), and social quarrels and coolnesses, and affairs generally of the embassy set in London. Also what would you charge me for a regular weekly letter of current gossip as collected by your agents in the English racing set, and ditto at Court, and ditto on the Riviera, at the present time, and then at Etonburg, Marlborough, Carlisle, and as I explained in the other letter to you, I am not satisfied with the results of paying numerous girls and young married women in society to act as my scouts in different places; and I am anxious to find out as quickly as possible if I could do better by avoiding the overlapping of news, and thus avoiding having to pay for, as sometimes happens, several letters from the same country house or Winter, &c., resort, all containing the same pieces of scandal and gossip.

Again "Harriet" writes:

If you have this kind of information tabulated about the leading people in English society, what I want you to do is to quote me a price at which you would supply me with chronicle scandaleuse of the people I ask about.

Letter to West End Doctor.

There is a delightful ingenuousness about "Harriet's" correspondence. One West End physician, writing to The Times, said:

"About two months ago I received a disgusting letter from an American woman journalist. To quote from it, it ran:

As a West End physician, you are doubtless au courant with all the latest on-dits and society scandals. I represent several leading American papers, and am anxious to purchase any amount of this

scandal, for which I pay most liberally. I am anxious to purchase in advance rumors of any cause célèbre, divorces, &c. And also to know of financial shifts and difficulties of all well-known people. At present am particularly anxious to obtain racy stories about Lady —, of any trouble in the Duke of —'s ménage, the reasons why Prince — never married and who are his "chères amies," the love affairs of the Earl of —, &c. Also of any friction between any members of the royal family.

The class of public for whom I cater are particularly interested in any scandal affecting royal families. There has been little disposition on the part of the London press generally to follow The Times in taking "Harriet" very seriously, and editorial comments have been mainly sarcastic or jokey.

"Paterfamilias" and others of that ilk, with whose lucubrations the readers of the British press are necessarily familiar, have, however, supplied all the requisite indignation. Some of them lamented the degeneracy of the age and the gradual disappearance of that "domestic privacy which was once the proud prerogative of the British home."

On the one hand the craving of the public for sensational stories about high life is blamed for the development of "Harriet," and, on the other, society itself is held responsible.

One correspondent suggested that many noble families keep on their staff a professional photographer. "Let any reader," he wrote, "look at an illustrated weekly paper and he will find the

proof of what I say. Last season genuine sportsmen were ashamed of the series of pictures showing Dukes, Earls, and their various guests, and even their small boys, on the moors posing in shooting attitudes with bland smiles, but possibly empty bags."

"If society behaved itself as it ought to do," said another Solon, "there would be no work for 'Harriet.'"

Defends American Press.

One correspondent in The Times took somewhat unnecessary pains to point out that the American press, as a whole, is not given to publishing the sort of thing "Harriet" desires to supply, and suggesting that such a conclusion might be drawn from The Times's editorial article.

It is only fair to The London Times to state that its reference was distinctly to "the lower sort of American papers."

Another correspondent of the same paper wrote:

"I travel a great deal in America, and I have never found gossip concerning the upper classes in this country of interest to anybody there. They have always on hand a large supply of local material."

To this statement an evening paper took exception, citing "two scandalous, highly colored stories of the 'Harriet' type about well-known members of the British aristocracy," and adding:

"Such stories are a regular feature of the American yellow press."

Yesterday, in summing up the whole affair editorially, The Daily Mail said:

"The methods of 'Harriet' betray a remarkable capacity for organized espionage, as well as for business. A more appalling picture of depravity in the pursuit of pence has seldom been unfolded in this or any other country."

"Being convinced that certain American newspapers take delight in feeding their readers on garbage, 'Harriet' applied her ingenuity to supplying that market. She wrote to the editors of American newspapers, informing them that she had for disposal all the 'spicy stories' and scandals that society in these islands is so determined to keep from the American reader. Few of these American editors, we are sure, showed any eagerness to secure the services of this perverted journalist."

Butler Speaks for Servants.

Perhaps the most delightful feature of the whole entertaining affair is a letter from "Twenty Years a Butler," published yesterday. This old servant writes:

"Allow me to say, Sir, that in no shape or form would English family servants so far forget themselves as to stoop to such practices as giving information about what goes on at the dinner table or in the family for any money that there is in America or anywhere, and it is a base assertion for people to make, as appears to be the case, from what is said in the papers, that ladies and gentlemen are debarred from talking in freedom about the affairs of themselves or their friends for fear that the butler or footman behind their chairs may be eavesdropping, putting it down to sell it to 'Harriet.'"

"They must have a very wrong idea of English family servants. Permit me to say that anything unfortunate happening in our families, or in the circles belonging to them, is just as sacred and confidential to us as it is to the ladies and gentlemen themselves. As a matter of fact, such things do not often crop up in English families; but if any confidential matters come to our notice it is always our first thought to keep them from going further."

"I can assure you, Sir, that any gossiping, tattling servant is very much looked down upon by the rest of us, and quickly has to look for another place."

The Original Letter.

The original letter to The London Times regarding "Harriet" was printed eight days ago and was as follows:

Sir: My butler, who is leaving my service, recently advertised for a situation, and in reply received a letter of which I send you a copy. It is difficult to believe that any one with the slightest pretension of being a lady or possessed of any notion of self-respect should descend to methods mean and contemptible. Such methods throw an enormous temptation in the way of servants, besides exposing them

to actions for slander should they fall into the trap laid by this scandal-monger. One likes to imagine that conversations that take place at one's own dinner table are private; now it appears that one's servants are to be bribed to repeat all the tittle-tattle they hear, when no doubt it will be worked up into something "spicy" by this spurious journalist.

The letter is as follows: Dear Sir: Noting your advertisement in The Morning Post I shall be pleased to hear from you if you have half an hour to spare once or twice a week and would care to turn it into cash by writing me a long gossiping letter about the well-known people in English society who stay in the houses where you are employed. I pay liberally and settle each month for the letters received the previous one. I write for some of the American papers, which insist on having current gossip, amusing stories, &c. about well-known people over here, and I buy large quantities of such letters regularly. If you think that you would care to double or treble your salary in this way write me a good specimen letter for me to see what you can do, and I will then write more fully as to terms. To give an idea of what I buy, I may say that just now anything about Lady Gerard and the De Forests is "good copy" on account of the slander case between them now coming on; also about the Dillon jockey on account of the Marie Lloyd divorce suit, in which he is co-respondent; also about Lord Howard de Walden's suit for libel against Mr. Lewis. If you write I wish you if you have any friends with whom you can put me into communication among the staff at Lord Howard de Walden's, Lady Gerard's, Baron de Forest's, Sir Thomas Lipton's, Sir Ernest Cassel's, Mrs. George Keppell's, or her brother, Sir Archibald Edmonstone's, or at Mrs. Leeds's, who has taken Mrs. George Keppell's new house in Grosvenor Street. Yours faithfully, HARRIET —.

P. S.—Have you any friends among the staff of any of the leading London clubs, as The Turf, White's, Marlborough, or Bachelors, or leading restaurants such as Claridge's, the Savoy, Gaiety, or Waldorf?

I am, Sir, yours obediently, HOUSEHOLDER.

The Times's Editorial.

The same day The Times printed a long editorial article in which the methods of "Harriet" were denounced in the strongest terms. The Times described "Harriet's" letter as "abominable," and went on to say:

The letter is a complete revelation of a system the existence of which has often been suspected but never so fully exposed. It will shock and disgust every decent person, and especially those of the same sex with the same sex who the news she asks for to be put in the market for their worthless wares. The letter suggests the source of many of those stupid, nasty, or exaggerated stories of English society which fill the lower sort of American newspapers. "Harriet" gives us the clue. These tales, so far as they are not pure inventions, are bought from servants, not now and again but on an organized system.

Let there should be any doubt as to what is wanted, she sends the butler a list of persons who are just now specially "good copy"—a dozen bearers of well-known names about whom her readers particularly want to know. For some time we hesitated whether or not to print these names, but we decided to do so, in the interest of these ladies and gentlemen themselves. Henceforth they will know that, socially speaking, there is a price on their heads. A systematic attempt is being made, with apparently plenty of money behind it, to corrupt their servants and the servants of the friends whom they visit. Whenever Lady X, or Mrs. Y, may go, she will now have the pleasing consciousness that the man behind her chair may be one of "Harriet's" emissaries. She makes a joke or tells a personal anecdote; the emissary, his appetite whetted by fees already paid, makes a mental note, and in due time incloses it in the next "gossipy" report. The journalist, to judge from her terms, will pay for her trade, and may be trusted to improve the servants' notes to the proper degree of finish.

She fears no libel action, nor does her newspaper. It is printed in America, where the law of libel is no particular terror to the press. Besides, the people she writes about would probably not bring an action; and perhaps the stuff is not libelous. It is only a disguised invasion of the sanctities of private life. It is just enough to prevent any prominent person, especially any prominent woman, from feeling safe.

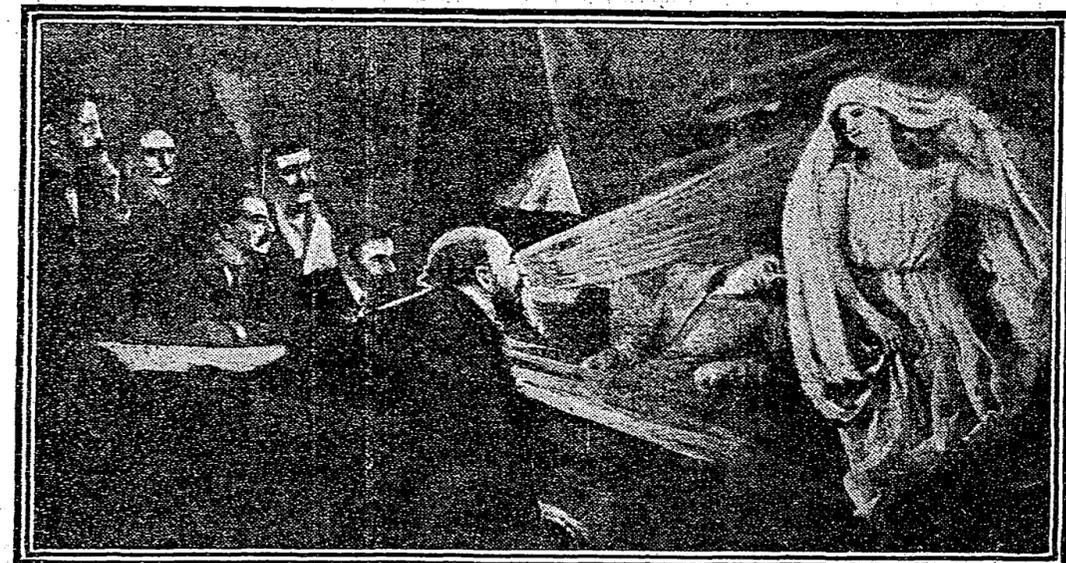
To this point has come, in the hands of the worst kind of American journalists, the art of "society" reporting. Some sixty years ago, as may be read in the memoirs of the time, a great outcry was made because an English newspaper writer with good credentials—one N. P. Willis—published some details of private parties to which he had been admitted. That was in the infancy of the world. We have long outgrown such conditions. The poor man had dined with the great, and the great henceforth turned their backs on him. It does not turn its back upon "Harriet." It is printed in America, where the law of libel is no particular terror to the press. Besides, the people she writes about would probably not bring an action; and perhaps the stuff is not libelous. It is only a disguised invasion of the sanctities of private life. It is just enough to prevent any prominent person, especially any prominent woman, from feeling safe.

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Art and Spiritualism.

A Painting That Is Attracting Crowds in London.



"There Is No Death," a picture by Italo Sabatini, has been attracting many visitors to the Mendoza Gallery in New Bond Street, London. The painting, which needs no explanation, aims at emphasizing "the reality of a continued personal existence."