Between Cousins;

OR, A DECLARATION OF WAR.

CHAPTER IV.—(Cont'd.)

"That was beatuiful, John—beautiful!" she said to him at home, still in a flurry of agreeable excitement. "But you don't belong to them only, you know; you belong to me too!"

Whereupon John smiled tenderly but abstractedly, being in spirit still in the pulpit.

It was, after all, a great thing to belong to a man who understood his business, Ella reflected, having noted the emotion of the congregation; for those few final moments had completely covered the negative effect of the rest of the service.

This revived enthusiasm served very well for carrying her through the ordeals of that first trying week; for Adam in his Sunday coat and a collar which visibly hampered his breathing appealed to her scarcely more than in his duck trousers; while the round-eyed, shiny-faced Jean, whose gloves were evidently bursting, and who held her pocket-handkerchief in her hand during the entire duration of the visit, did not appeal at all. What could Ella have in common with a woman who thought she was making conversation when she was discussing the composition of oat-cakes?

The manners of John's sister, Polly, were even less sympathetic, for Jean was at least profoundly respectful, whereas the blowsy, carroty-haired Polly, in virtue of her elder-sistership, took it upon herself to be familiar, and even jocular, to a point which offended Ella's finer sensibilities.

"Many's the time I've skelpit him," she laughed robustly, right into Ella's face, and pointed a red finger at the minister. "Not that he much needed skelping," she presently admitted, "except for forgettin' the things he was sent for. John always was a bit moonstruck."

The return visits were a harder task still. The thought of entering a thatched hut as a visitor had cost Ella some sleepless hours, and would have cost her more had she not fortunately remembered in time that even great ladies have been seen in cottages—as benefactors, of course. It was from this point of view only that the thing became bearable. This was not a case of distributing bread; but other things could be dispensed, such a kind counsels and admonitory words, calculated to elevate the rustic mind. It was with this view that she began to cultivate an amiable condescension of manner, and that particular affabliity which she understood to be the characteristic of the Lady Bountiful.

In this way, she succeeded in weathering an experience which, after all, need not be too often repeated.

And there were compensations; for Mrs. Modley had returned, and the happy moment of crossing the episcopal threshold dawned for Ella, with consequences to her mental equilibrium which she herself was scarcely aware of at the time. So also came that other proud moment of returning Mrs. Gordon's visit—in a boat, perforce. There was a dark blot upon that delight, however, for John seemed to take for granted that Polly's visit should be returned at the same time, and could absolutely not be got to see that there was anything in the least indecorous in going from the big house to the gardener's cottage. At a later period of domestic felicity she would scarcely have yielded, and even as it was, she did so with a rather bad grace.

"Well, let it be so, in Heaven's name!" she acquiesced, with a sigh; "but I do think it looks odd."

It had not previously occurred to John that that large, mobile mouth held in it possibilities of peevishness, but it did occur to him now.

The impression produced by Ella upon the mistress of Balladrochit will best be given in a letter to a friend, posted on the day of that first visit. The passage in question ran as follows:

"I've just been interrupted by a visit—such a visit, my dear! I wish you could have been here to enjoy it. I've told you about our 'stiudant,' haven't I?—John M'Donnell, who has recently got the Ardloch living. Well, he brought a wife with him from Glasgow, on whom I recently left a card; hence to-day's visitation. He is nothing new to me, of course; I've seen him in the garden often—such times as the quarries were resting—helping his brother-in-law. He's much the same in a black coat as in shirt-sleeves, and the metamorphosis doesn't really call for special notice. His elevation (the social one, I mean) embarrasses him frankly, nor does he dream of throwing any veils over the past. By way of filling up a pause in the conversation he inquired politely how the briar hedge was getting on he had helped Alick to plant. You should have seen the glance she threw him at that! But her first appearance was what nearly did for me. They usually come in their Sunday clothes, you know, but this young woman knows a thing or two beyond that—a new development of the spices altogether. For the flounced silk gown, the flower trimmed bonnet, and the pale kid gloves, substitute in your mind a tweed coat and skirt (the latter stopping short well above the ankles, if you please)—an exceedingly sporting-looking 'tammy' and dog-skin (or let us say would-be dog-skin) gauntlets—and there you have her bodily before your eyes. She took great care to keep her left hand in the pocket of her coat, and to give me her right one at the latest angle. I was a little bewildered at first, not being used to the type, but after she had inquired whether there were many country-house ladies 'in the neighborhood' I got my cue. It's the 'country-house' lady she's aiming at, and of whom she has evidently made an exhaustive study. The result is not bad really. It would be interesting to hear Redfern's remarks upon the set of the skirt; but considering that she probably cut it out herself, I think it's wonderfully creditable. So is her conversation, and the studiously cultivated nonchalance. She must have had some rather good models to go by. Now and then a vowel plays the traitor, as, for instance, when she complained of there being no 'hally' in the garden—she positively adores 'hally,' and is quite jealous of the Bishop's hedge. The Bishop is evidently a great joy in life. He has become the 'dear Bishop' already, for reasons not hard to imagaine. Dr. Modley is grand at letting people have their own way, you know, and seeing which way this young person's desires tend, I've no doubt he's been humoring her to the top of her bent. Mrs. Modley had been so kind as to lend her a seed catalogue, she told me, and was just embarking upon a rhapsody on gardening, when she stopped short, abruptly, I believe, because the recollection of Alick's existence had made her realise the delicacy of the subject. When I asked how she liked her house, she became more measured in her answers. It was not bad, on the whole, she informed me, though it had its faults, which she hoped to remedy. Evidently she has decided that it won't do to be too pleased with everything—might lead one to imagine; don't you see? that she had not been used to better things. Everything is rather nice; the rooms, the 'sitooation,' etc. But she likes the 'sitooation' of the Bishop's house ever so much better. The Bishop and everything pertaining to him has clearly been adopted as the standard of comparison. I suppose it does not suit her so well to institute comparisons with other people nearer at hand, though the village swarms with first and second cousins who also have houses and gardens—of a sort.

"I'm rather curious to know whether they'll have gone to Alick's cottage after leaving me. He began saying something about a second visit, but she promptly suppressed him. Poor girl, I fancy he must be a handful for her in some ways. I wonder how these two came to pair—and I wonder still more how they will pull together!"

(To be continued.)

Milk and Cheese Dishes.

Milk and cheese, at present prices, furnish nourishment at a much lower cost than meats. The housekeeper who knows their food value and how to prepare milk and cheese in a variety of appetizing dishes will use more of them. Secure the best milk at any price for the babies; their lives depend upon it. Whole milk, skimmed milk, butter-milk for the children, instead of so much meat, is both more wholesome and cheaper. If possible, buy skimmed milk for milk soups and puddings; it is a substitute for meat protein and costs about a quarter the money.

Milk Soups.

2 Tablespoons butter or dripping, 2 tablespoons flour, ½ teaspoon salt, 2 cups milk or 1 cup milk and 1 cup vegetable water, ¼ cup vegetable pulp or flaked fish.

The vegetable water is the water in which the vegetables have been cooked. (In the case of potatoes the water is not used.) The vegetable pulp is the cooked vegetable rubbed through a sieve. Since the vegetable is cooked before making into soup, any left-over vegetable from dinner can be used to make a hot soup for supper or lunch Onions, carrots, celery, potatoes, canned corn, peas, or tomatoes, are generally well liked. In the case of tomatoes, a pinch of soda must be added to neutralize the acid so the milk will not curdle. Remnants of cold boiled fish, or canned salmon, or dried beef may be used in the same way as the vegetables.

Macaroni and Cheese.

1 Cup macaroni, 2 cups milk, 3 tablespoons butter, 4 tablespoons flour, 1 cup grated cheese, ½ teaspoon salt, few grains pepper, ¼ cup dry bread crumbs, 1 tablespoon butter.

Add 2 teaspoons salt to 2 quarts boiling water. Drop in the macaroni, broken into inch pieces, and boil hard for 20 minutes. Drain and pour cold water through to prevent the pieces sticking together. Melt the 3 tablespoons butter in a saucepan; add the flour and stir until frothy; add the milk and stir until it thickens. Season with salt and pepper, add the cheese and pour over the cooked macaroni. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a baking dish, stir the crumbs in this, turn them out on a plate, put the macaroni in the baking-dish, and sprinkle the crumbs over the top. Bake until thoroughly heated and the crumbs brown. This may be served in a vegetable dish without the crumbs and baking, but the macaroni must then be re-heated in the sauce.

Cheese Fondue.

1 Cup scalded milk, 1 cup soft stale bread crumbs, 1 cup grated cheese, 1 tablespoon butter, ½ teaspoon salt, 2 eggs.

Mix first five ingredients. Add yolks of eggs well beaten, and fold in the stiffly beaten whites. Pour into a buttered baking-dish and bake twenty minutes in a moderate oven.

Cheese Souffle.

3 Tablespoons butter, 4 tablespoons flour, 2-3 cup milk, 1 egg, 1 cup grated cheese, salt and pepper, few grains of cayenne, dry crumbs.

Melt the butter, add the cornstarch, and when well blended gradually stir in the cream and cook 2 minutes. Add the cheese and stir until cheese is melted. Season and serve on toasted crackers or on bread toasted on one side, the rarebit being poured over the untoasted side.

Standard Food is the Cheapest.

Important factors to life are air, water and food. We can live without air for only a short time, without water from one to four days and without food from thirty to fifty days. In composition the human body is three-quarters water, and of such a nature that a variety of foods is necessary, but not all are desirable.

The most important business of the housewife is to know and understand, with a working knowledge as a basis, this supremely interesting subject.

Good food is most necessary for good health, and even the best foods are often spoiled by incompetent housewives, who are not able or familiar with the necessary and important rules of cooking. These require intelligent and persevering work, sincere efforts and determination to have this important knowledge at their finger tips.

Many women fail in their undertakings because they have a wishbone in place of their backbone. Roll up your sleeves and determine that high prices will hold no terrors for you when you know that good standard brain food is the cheapest in the end. Do not permit any waste, but utilize every portion of food. Thrift is not stinginess, as so many people imagine, but it is carefulness in undertakings, that when used in the home, especially in the kitchen, nets to the persevering housewife wonderful result.

Housekeeping Helps.

Spinach is in a class by itself, because of its large amount of iron.

Cooked squash left over from a meal may be made a delicious soup.

Always have the board well floured before beginning to knead bread.

If you feel very tired and drowsy, dash very cold water in your face.

The empty baking powder can makes a good nut mincer.

Bacon dripping is excellent for frying hashed brown potatoes.

Prunes cooked without adding sugar are more wholesome and better flavored.

When the top of the kitchen range is red hot your fuel is being wasted.

Hot egg sandwiches make a good inexpensive dish for supper.

Tins for the baking of large round cakes may be partially lined with paper.

Fine linens and all pieces of handsome lingerie should be wrung out by hand and never through a wringer.

The young carrots pulled up when thinning the carrot bed can be scraped and cooked and served with cream sauce.

The sugar for jelly should always be heated in the oven before using. Stir frequently and do not allow it to brown.

Be careful of your own eyes, your own limbs and your own life, as well as for those of others.

ECONOMY TO PROTECT BIRDS.

Best Guard Against the Ravages of Insect Pests.

In an address on "Insect Life in Relation to Bird Life," a Toronto speaker, Dr. Cosens, recently told of the constant struggle going on in the world between plants and animals and insects for existence, and of the nice balance of nature. This has been destroyed by man, who is reaping the consequences of his destruction of the birds by suffering from the ravages of insect pests. Birds are the most important check on injurious insects. There are certain other checks, such as parasitic insects like the family of the Ichneumonidae. The Ichneumon fly lays its eggs either on the skin, under the skin, or near the larvae of the insect it preys upon. But the birds are our great helpers, and every stage of insect life, eggs, larvae, caterpillar and mature insect, furnishes food for some bird. Warblers and chickadees clean up the eggs, as do the creepers. A colony of warblers and chickadees will keep an orchard free from the dread San Jose scale. A number of orioles and yellow-billed and black-billed cuckoos will keep an orchard free from the tent caterpillar. Bank swallows feed on the adult mosquito, and should receive absolute protection. Dr. Cosens deplored the destruction of colonies of bank swallows every year by idle boys. This should be stopped. Every bank swallow is a public benefactor. The woodpeckers are the only check on boring beetles in the world, and are specially equipped with a beak and a tongue for digging under the bark and licking out the grubs. The bark beetle is the most destructive pest we have. The annual loss in forests in the United States alone is estimated at $100,000,000. Woodpeckers should be encouraged and protected. The sapsucker is more likely boring for a grub than for sap. The robins feed on the brown-tailed moth, which was imported to this continent from Holland in 1891 in nursery stock and became very destructive in the New England States. The gypsy moth has a caterpillar which weaves a silken sail and floats away on the wind to pastures new.

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