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A Gourmand.

Miss Gushah—My lord, during your American tour, which of the belles has proven the most irresistible?

His lordship—The—aw—dinner bell, I assure you.

Explained.

Wife—What do you mean by coming home in this condition? You promised that you would only drink two fingers of rye this whole day.

Hubby—Right you (hic) are. I drank it out of a hic-baking pan.

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COMIN' THRO' THE RYE.

BY HELEN B. MATHERS.

(CONTINUED.)

"Good by," I say. In faintest, dreadest whisper; but he does not move or answer, and I accordingly step past him; but when I have gone a score or so of steps, I pause shuddering, for over the cold desolate fields sweeps the wild and bitter cry of a strong man in his pain: "O God! O God!"

CHAPTER V.

Spring! The dainty, lovely guest has stolen upon us early this year, sweeping away the clinging frosts and frosts of the dying winter with her warm, fragrant skirts; touching the silver-brown hedges with her fairy wand until, lo! they have burst into forest tapestry of pearly green and downy delicate spikes of yellow; starring the banks with faint pale primroses and purple-breasted violets, carpeting the woodlands with golden wind flowers and azure bluebells, that sway in their dainty blossoms with every soft wind that steals past them. She has set all the young leaves waving, the birds singing, and her south wind blowing, and over the pulsing, throbbing, blossoming earth she has diffused a languid, lovely beauty, and a subtle sweetness everywhere. The old, the ailing, the lonely, the rich and the happy, she has for her equally, and welcomes with eager, smiling faces and outstretched loving arms.

Spring brings a holy, soothing influence with her, and lays the memory of many women asleep to better things and harder hopes. And she brings to me no more and no less than green leaves, blue skies, and gay flowers. No delight seems to me as I see the first early blossom peep from the brown earth; no thrill stirs me as the year comes by one, each after other dropping a veiled lovely. I think I shall never be the man of whom it was written that

"A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

Often I shut my eyes, that I may not see the flowers growing so bravely on the slope. They were here last summer, they will be here next; they are but pale, pretty little things, and yet they come back to us every year, unlike those human blossoms that we bury away from our sight with bitter, passionate tears and cries.

What mean or woman mourns his dead in the bitter, lead-bound winter as they do in the tender, warm, passionate spring, when every flower, and bud, and leaf, and bird is quick and living, rioting in life, and is being God-speeded after his kind! All things are to remember.

The bird cries: "We are calling him, we are calling him!" The leaves rustle and whisper: "Where is he, where?" The flowers murmur as they shake their bells, "He used to pass this way." Every tiny blade of grass, every trill of the blackbird brings the past quivering before us—the days when we had our beloved, and could look in his face, and put out our hands to touch him, that we seek to bridge and cannot with memory, yearning with that is the impotence and cry of its impotence.

I wonder why I am thinking so regretfully of these poor, yokel-like fellows, dead to us all? They are my dead, it is true, but they are not lying under the cross, but deep down in my heart. God has not yet come for the names of any of my people or the strangers that I love.

There is one of whom I always think as dead, though I know that he is many thousands among the living. Only by thinking of him thus can I keep the high wall of separation between us from falling, and my head from turning to my hard task, by which I could not bear my fellow-creature, but, sound and well would be hoping toward him; and, as I cannot forget I will not think. I will stand and gaze as in a garden, and, fitting myself behind him—far away, indeed, but still like unto him—suppose as I am to feel sun, and rain, and snow and hail rushing down upon my feet on a barren shore where no living thing can come; while I can look forth, south, east, and west, and see not the speck of sail to tell of the dull, grey monotony. I did not dare thus to think of usual thoughts, though. The world knew, even before this hour, like a great sun, clothed and crowned about with sparkling precious stones. The

Flowers purple, blue and white,
Like apple pearl and ruby glow,

and broidered the meadows and banks exquisitely in my footsteps, in their every shade of tender and vivid shades, green and yellow and white and fresh as the leaves on the trees, though a rough hand would bruise the flowers from their surface. The light quivers and plays like mischief with them, and shadows come on the grass as though they were tripping a measure to some unseen air; the bees and gnats mingle in a low symphony, keeping up the undying song of life, while the birds are hid, or because of their overjoy in particular to say, but I suppose they are hungry; their little throats are full to repletion, and it overflows in song. Down here in the woods, where the sun is kept out with a verdure of leaves and branches, there is a reflection of the sky in the water-pools, and they spring to the very edges, always full to the brim, and the reed stitchwort, one of the first to open her snow-white flowers to the air, the lords and ladies, cuckoo-pint, and all the little wood flowers, in a prodigal ring and profusion to which even the revels of the hedgerows cannot compare.

A cuckoo's note rings out across the fields, and I put my hands to my ears, to deaden violently. Since a certain Christmas morning, three years and more ago, the sound of those bells has been to me—though of course had on an understood, and I have to hear them sometimes through that desperate brain-fever, I had they jangled and peaked in their wedding-bells, that almost drove me mad—of this world and into the next.

Oh, my hands away from my ears, I have to listen to the sound of my life, and think of the wedding-bells they could not utter and yet no one is like-minded when I listen to bells. No man have caught my fancy, and written it, that is a great gift to only a cruel fiddler but to the right words. As I listen I looked in my glass beginning to grow over my head it has to me now, but it is as it used to be. When I began I made up a chain of all that had ever entered and a tear over my cheek, but I was always using it last. Pepper found it out and to it into bits, and there was an unlawful abhorrence. I wonder if it was that popular object of ridicule, a bridal being, as I sit under the oak tree in my smart print gown, with all the flowers peeping about my feet and the boughs waving over my head? I pull off my gloves and look at my arms; it is very fair, my hand is not long, and my fingers have dimples in them still—decided against insanity, either made a wreck of me. That is the beauty of everything being perfectly handsome; when there is so little to lose, the difference is not perceptible.

Dolly says that if I had more color I should be exactly as I did three years ago, and believe that she and mother both think that I am beginning to get over it.

Well, I live, it is true, and sleep, eat, drink, laugh, even, much as I used to do, but I am not a body of which one half is paralyzed, while the other retains its vigor; the mental is, every day, common side is sick and capable; the other, God and my own heart only know about that. I never go on anything when I was glad or sorry, always make a great noise over it, and had done with it; so in the fortnight that preceded my illness I think I exhausted all power of active exertion, and that for the rest of my life I can only endure passively.

I do not believe in any healthy man or woman dying for love, unless they set themselves deliberately to do so. They must be either vicious or weak to do so, for it is a little-minded nature that, possessing many good gifts, counts life as stale and worthless because the one thing he desires is withheld from him. Shame and disgrace may well kill, and do, but mere suffering never; the human heart must have something more than simple pain before it breaks.

It is considered a poetical thing enough to die for love; surely men must know by this thing how infinitely easier a thing it is than to live for love. The man who takes up his burden and bears it bravely has my honor, but he who lies down, and lets the waters of adversity swirl over his head, has my hearty contempt. I ask no pity, and, what is better still, no one ever offers me any. I make just as much hurry to be down in time for prayers as ever I did in my life; I still love that unlawful ten minutes in bed after being called, that best coat me so dear on many a terrible occasion: still, with a dexterity acquired by long practice, work at the rusty pump of daily conversation at the family table. I feel snubbed and miserable when the governess calls me by the time-honored title of a dummy, and suffer duly indignant when the aforesaid governess tells me I'm a peacock, when my tall does not even touch the ground, and, though I am growing as old as the hills, I have never yet relieved my feelings by making a good face at him to his face.

I can still see the absurd side of things as quickly as the sad, though for the matter of that the one frequently suggests the other. Now and then I feel a desperate distaste for my bright colored dresses and insouciant ways, and turn severely toward sackcloth and ashes, while as to lamentation I doubt not I could lift up my voice in a dolorous howl with the best. These luxuries being denied me, I am garbed like any other Christian, and my voice is seldom raised in anything more distracted than a hollow across country after one of the boys.

I wonder if I shall live to be an old woman? Perhaps, and take to flirting in the old age like Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, and the rest. Until the other day, I never knew that Anthony's goddess was thirty years old when she fell in love with him; that Helen of Troy was forty when she eloped with Paris; sixty when she returned to her long-suffering husband. Madame Récamier was reckoned the most beautiful woman in Europe from the age of thirty-eight to fifty-three; Aspasia ruled royally from the age of thirty-six to that of sixty; and over so many more of them; and to my thinking it is a miracle, with all these frisky matrons on record, that our mothers and grandmothers don't cast about their eyes among the old fogies' spinies for a Paris, an Anthony, or anything else with a presentable name.

What silly thoughts I have often when I look at my watch, it's o'clock; more than time for me to go home. I pick up my hat, almost as shadowy coming as the one I wore [illegible] That Cleopatra [illegible] in Paris [illegible] have stopped [illegible] fields for months [illegible] the house [illegible] that I shall [illegible] but I have [illegible] and weather [illegible] too sweet [illegible] thinking how [illegible] being Dolly [illegible] along the lane that [illegible] and coming to the [illegible] is visible with [illegible] tering impatience [illegible] bank and [illegible] and see, standing [illegible] the [illegible] out at the [illegible] beauty of [illegible]

CHAPTER VI.

"You know [illegible] she by [illegible] and [illegible] to my [illegible]

"Yes, I know [illegible] twilight [illegible] and white [illegible]

"When the bell [illegible] with a certain anxiety [illegible] body wondered, [illegible] church to ask the [illegible] Vasher return this [illegible] said; and ten minutes [illegible]

I looked for you every [illegible] Nell? do you mind [illegible]

"Mind"? I say, [illegible] fresh face of my [illegible]

"I don't think I mind [illegible] Dolly."

"What! And spoken [illegible]

"No. He did me [illegible]

"How long ago?"

"Perhaps an hour."

"Don't fret, darling [illegible] her arm round [illegible] won't stay long, and you [illegible] him."

No. I need not; but will he not [illegible] the same air that I breathe, see the same people that I see; is he not alive and quick, here, instead of [illegible] moving somewhere out of my sight, sooner or later, I have always known, to come to the house of his father? Thus—not without warning, but [illegible] at least have given me time to [illegible] myself away, and now he is here, the whole world was not wide enough to [illegible] us; and now there is a patch of grass, a few trees and flowers, and that is all. And the woman's wish wins who has my life in her hand, and trampled it under her foot; and her son is his son's and Paul's. Ay! she has triumphed over me in very truth, and she is not only Paul Vasher's wife, but the mother of his child. They must make a handsome family, the dark, strong-faced father, the exquisite mother, the pretty boy. I dare say I shall see it some day. No doubt he has grown to love her. Is she not bound to him by a closer, tenderer tie than he dreamed of, when he swore not to go back to her that Christmas morning; and may not time, and her constancy, and her own maddening loveliness, have closed the wounds that good-so widely three years and more ago? Three years ago! Little enough for a woman with her empire, and more than enough for a man who has a man's busy, eventful life to lead. He must have forgotten me, or he could never have borne to come back to a place which must remind him, at every turn, of the old days. And yet the night I saw looking out, over the sea of rye, two hours ago, looked like anything rather than a man with his heart [illegible] Hills would only go [illegible] peace—or [illegible] "Mother [illegible] sits beside me in the [illegible]

"You know he has [illegible] back, dear?" she says.

"I know it, mother."

"He might have starved [illegible] she says with a quick anxiety [illegible] to have known her [illegible] to come."

She does not love him. How [illegible] to her, he is the man through whom her daughter's life has been [illegible]

"He has begun [illegible] mother, [illegible] mother. He can't [illegible] forever. You forfeit the estate. No wonder he was forced to home."

"Well," says [illegible] sighing, "the misery of it all we know, the duplicate-nuisance of it have [illegible]

"Yes, they have [illegible] enough. What mortal can [illegible] mountain tops of misery always, and is not obliged to descend to the valleys of commonplace [illegible] now and then?

"I don't know what to do," says mother. "As to calling on, and receiving that woman, I will not. It must be a very bad fem-de indeed that goads mother into calling her 'that woman.'"

"And if I refuse to do so, your father will insist on knowing the reason, and you made me promise you that I would not tell him about you and Mr. Vasher."

"And you must not," I say, starting up, and sitting down again. "Tell the whole world, but never tell him!"

"Very well," says mother, sighing; "then you must put up with the chance of meeting her; and remember, Nell, that you lay a heavy burden upon me, not only of deceit toward your father, but great unpleasantness as regards myself. It is something, indeed, that I should have to take the hand of a woman who has done you such horrible injury!"

"She won't come here, mother, dear," I say, kneeling down by her side; "and you need only leave cards."

"It is such a pity," goes on mother, "that your father liked the Vashers always; if he were quarrelling with them, as he does with everybody else, there would be no trouble. I am afraid you will have to meet him," she says, stroking my hair gently; then she adds, wistfully: "Is it so very hard to you, dear? It should not be by now."

Mother does not understand quite. My story seems a very long while ago to her.

"Don't be afraid, mother, if we do meet face to face, I dare say I shall know how to behave."

"Supper is waiting," says Dolly, entering hurriedly; and we go down-stairs with much haste and more fear.

The governor's visit to New Zealand has not altered him in any way, neither have the added years made any perceptible change in his appearance. To-night he is in an amiable mood, and there are no desperate pauses and piteous beatings in the conversation. How easy it is to amuse a man when he puts with you, not against you!

"So Vasher has come back," he says to mother, when he has got his pipe, and is blowing outlong, comfortable clouds that make us all cough and wink again.

"Yes."

"High time he did, too; the estate's going to wrack and ruin. And he has brought his wife and son. There are queer stories abroad, I am told, about his relations with his wife."

Here a governor pauses, and gives an uneasy glance at Dolly and me, as father and mother have a knack of doing when they find the conversation turning more to mean than to milk."

"What are they?" asks mother, with a certain carelessness in her voice, as she is sure to [illegible] her to hear [illegible] Kenilworth [illegible]

"A pack of lies, no doubt; they always are wherever and some [illegible] concerned. I am told she is [illegible] They say he left her two days [illegible] married her, and never returned to her for a year. I don't believe a word [illegible] myself, for the Vashers were never [illegible] men, they always looked [illegible] to [illegible] and I never heard of one of [illegible] whispering beneath them—which is [illegible] and can be said of most good families [illegible] where at least one [illegible] or [illegible] moves in the [illegible] one of the [illegible]

Never [illegible] Love and [illegible] and [illegible] fields [illegible] I love [illegible] and [illegible] and [illegible] Dolly [illegible] along the lane [illegible] coming to the [illegible] is visible [illegible] tering impatience [illegible] bank and [illegible] and see, standing [illegible] the [illegible] out at the [illegible] beauty of [illegible]

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There are certain well-known landmarks in Paris that they steer clear of, for the rest is out of all consistency to suppose that the most industrious bodies, who support expenses and amens every Sunday of their lives, can be anything but safe for a comfortable place in the next world. Among these simple folk are some wolves in sheep's clothing; men who beat themselves, neglect their children and pawn their earrings in an extraordinary manner; in fact, veritable manual artists. But what is the difference. These men come home every Sunday morning; in fact they sit with their pomaded and haircut children, with a decent and clean face, and steady legs—[illegible] let them come at one time of the night [illegible] dishevelled and reeking of [illegible] and soap away from [illegible] and they are on [illegible]

[illegible] pulpit, in the square [illegible] the Vashers, sits Sibyl [illegible] wife. I know she is there; [illegible] glanced once in her direction, as Mr. Silsworth elbows me, and we all rise. I look across and we meet each other's eyes [illegible] face to face at last. The [illegible] of triumph was gone, and despair, steady scorn of mine. A [illegible] rival from a son stand the [illegible] and [illegible] your words have come true. [illegible] desire—a [illegible] Paris [illegible] me [illegible] his [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]