A FAMILY AFFAIR.

BY HUGH CONWAY.

[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER XIII.

GASTRONOMIC AND EROTIC.

There were delicious rides together.

The long vacation was running down to the lees. August had passed into September, and September had softly stolen away. The scarlet geraniums, calceolarias, and other bedding-out plants which had all the summer brightened the gardens of Hazlewood House, were beginning to show signs of senile decay. The under gardener found it no light work to keep the paths free from fallen leaves. Yet Frank Carruthers still lingered at Oakbury enjoying his cousins' hospitality. Having assumed the post of mental physician to Miss Clauson, he was no doubt reluctant to resign it until he had effected a radical cure.

Besides, the days slipped by happily enough. There were drives through the green elm-shaded Westshire lanes, which lead to hills from the summits of which fine views of the country and the distant sea are obtainable. As Horace drove, and as Herbert invariably occupied the box seat, Frank and Beatrice had the body of the large waggonette to themselves, an arrangement which one of the two found far from unpleasant.

There were the delicious rides together. Young Purton lost the place in disgust, and joined an eleven of old Cragtonians who were wandering about England playing matches—a far better and more healthy occupation for a boy than hopeless lovemaking. The bay horse turned out such a beauty that Frank broke his word to Mr. Barker and did not re-sell it.

Then there was company. Pleasant people who visited Hazlewood House, and pleasant people whom Hazlewood House visited. Everyone was a success with these that Horace and Herbert were quite proud of their cousin.

And there were walks with Miss Clauson; and above all those delightful dreamy hours when they sat under the sycamore, and in the cool shade talked of everything in the world, the heavens above, or the waters under it. Or it may be Miss Clauson was silent, and Frank, watching every line of her beautiful face, knew that the disease which he himself had taken was becoming chronic and incurable.

Altogether, it will be understood that if Mr. Carruthers failed in curing Miss Clauson's complaint it would be from no want of opportunity, or from being debarred making an exhaustive study of the patient.

In plain English, Frank had fallen in love with Beatrice, in that good old-fashioned way, almost at first sight. He had gone down before her gray eyes as surely as had the susceptible Sylvanus. Would he fare any better?

About this date he often asked himself the above question; for he had by now made the curate's acquaintance, and learned that he was a rejected man.

He did not learn it from Beatrice, who, like every true woman, wished to hide, and, if possible, forget the story of a man's discomfiture. He did not learn it from Horace or Herbert. Although they were as fond of gossip as men always are, wild horses would not have rent such a confidence from their kindly hearts. Sylvanus himself was Frank's informant.

The energetic, bustling curate had returned to Oakbury. During his absence the Talberts had requested Beatrice to decide as to the terms of intimacy which should for the future exist between Hazlewood House and Mr. Mordle. Beatrice quietly told her uncles that it was her particular wish that the Rev. Sylvanus should be received on exactly the same footing as heretofore. This decision gave the Talberts great satisfaction. They were unable to see how parochial affairs could go on unless they worked hand in hand with the curate. So when Sylvanus returned he was informed that he might tricycle himself up to Hazlewood House as often as he chose. Which, as he was resolved to case-harden his heart by accustoming himself to seeing Miss Clauson in the light of nothing more than a friend, was very often.

So Mr. Carruthers and the curate met frequently. They recognized each other's good points, and were soon on terms of friendship such as fiction, at least, seldom allows to exist between rivals. Rivals is perhaps the wrong word, for, if any stray fragment of hope clung to Mr. Mordle's portmanteau and went with him to England, it was swept away for ever and ever as soon as its owner saw Frank and Beatrice together. He recognized destiny, and bowed to it as a well-bred man should.

It was no doubt the desire to prove incontestably to himself that he was cured, that made him, in a moment of lavish confidence, tell Frank how he had fared. The manner in which the communication was made showed Frank that his own secret was no secret from Mordle. If he did not meet confidence by confidence he made no attempt at deception. He looked at Mordle with a curious smile.

"You scarcely expect me to say I am sorry?" he asked.

"No. Want no sympathy. Only want you to be sure that when the time comes to congratulate you I can do so with all my heart."

"Ah!" said Frank, smiling. "Noble—very noble. When the time comes," he added, softly. Thereupon he fell into a train of thought—a train which ran upon a single line and always took him to one particular station.

This, then, is how matters stood at the beginning of October. Mr. Carruthers having completed his diagnosis, not only to his entire satisfaction, felt that the moment was drawing near when he might make the supreme effort to expel forever that morbidness which he believed to have intrenched itself in Miss Clauson's system. Still he was bound to confess what many other practitioners ought to confess, that he was working a good deal in the dark. He was about to try a kill or cure remedy, the desperate nature of which would, strangely enough, act not upon the patient but upon him who administered it. No wonder, with so little to guide him, he hesitated and postponed.

At this juncture the Talberts gave a dinner-party—a man's dinner party. The following were the blessed recipients of invitations: Lord Kelston, who was staying for a few days at his place; Sir John Williams, of Almondthorpe; Colonel White, the officer commanding the regiment at the neighboring barracks; Mr. Fallon, the polished Royal Academician who was sojourning at the village inn, and making outdoor sketches of autumnal foliage, and Mr. Fletcher, of the Hollows, the largest landowner, save Lord Kelston, in the county. These, with Frank and the hosts, made a party of eight—the number which, according to an axiom of the Talberts, should never be exceeded.

From the above names and descriptions it will be readily guessed that the party was distinguished, well-selected and well-balanced. Selection and balance were matters upon which the brothers prided themselves as much if not more than they did upon the refinement of the dinner itself. In this particular party, small as it was, culture, learning, art, arms, landed interest and hereditary sway were properly personified. It was, indeed, a representative gathering after the Talberts' own hearts.

But two days before it took place an event happened which threatened it ill. Lord Kelston wrote Horace one of those pleasant, familiar letters which, coming from a lord, are always delightful. He said he should take the liberty of bringing his friend Mr. Simmons with him. As this would raise the number to nine it necessitated asking another man in order to equalize the sides of the table.

Then came consultation high and earnest. Whom could they ask upon so short a notice worthy of forming one of such a distinguished party? Each of the Talberts would have felt insulted had he been asked by a friend to stop a gap; so, following the golden rule they shrank from the task before them. Still, they could not have four on one side of the table and three on the other.

Frank listened to their solemn deliberations for some time, then tried to help them out of the difficulty. "Leave me out," he said. "Beatrice and I"—he spoke of her sometimes now as Beatrice—"will dine together in the nursery or the housekeeper's room. Whitaker can bring the dishes straight from your table. It will be delightful."

"My dear Frank!" This joint exclamation showed the utter futility of his suggestion.

"Why not ask the rector? I thought it was the duty of a country clergyman to meet emergencies like this."

"He talks about nothing but his fishing," said Horace mournfully.

"Fishing for what? For men?"

"No; salmon and trout," answered Horace, as usual taking the matter prosaically.

"Why not Mordle? He is capital company."

"Ha-hum," said Horace, glancing at Herbert. "This is scarcely a curate's party."

"No, scarcely," said Herbert, shaking his head.

At last they decided to ask a Mr. Turner, but the decision was arrived at with misgivings; for Mr. Turner was in trade. He was, however, a merchant prince—even a merchant emperor—and, as Horace expressed it, was a member of the aristocracy of wealth. They felt that Mr. Turner might be asked at short notice, and would not be offended when he heard it was to meet Lord Kelston. This is one of the many advantages of entertaining lords.

Nevertheless they were conscience stricken at having asked any one to stop a gap, so made amends by arranging their guests so that Mr. Turner should sit on Herbert's left hand; Horace's supporters being Lord Kelston and his friend, Mr. Simmons. The latter was a man of middle age, with dark eyes and exquisitely chiseled aquiline features, and wearing an air of refinement that at once commended him to Horace.

The dinner began propitiously, and progressed faultlessly. The table, over the decoration of which the brothers had spent much time and more thought, was a perfect picture. When their guests were only men the Talberts were extra particular. The lack of the refining element, the presence of woman, had to be compensated by an ultra fastidiousness of detail. Even Frank, who had been behind the scenes, marveled at the effect of his hosts' hospitable and artistic exertions. But, all the same, he pitied them as we should all pity a host who is certain to be rendered wretched by a tureen of burnt soup or a bottle of corked wine.

Horace talked gravely and pleasantly to the right and to the left. Herbert was compelled to attend almost entirely to Mr. Turner, who had a booming voice, which he insisted upon making heard. Frank, who was next to the artist, found the dinner not so dull as he had feared it would be.

In the course of conversation Horace learnt that Lord Kelston's friend was Mr. Simmons, the noted barrister, who had so suddenly sprung into eminence. Mr. Simmons was a Jew of gentle birth and education, and Horace was very fond of high-class Jews. So the two men got on admirably. Frank also knew who Mr. Simmons was. Herbert did not.

All went on as well as the Talberts could have wished until the claret was placed on the table. Then an awful thing occurred—a *contretemps*, which to this day is a sore subject with Horace and Herbert. It all arose from inviting the stop-gap. Listen.

Mr. Turner, as leaders of commerce are very properly in the habit of doing, began talking about England's commercial condition. He spoke in his biggest voice. As he was treating upon a subject on which he was an authority, he felt he had a right to use it. Herbert listened with his gentle, polite smile, but felt sorry Mr. Turner had been invited.

"What is ruining England?" boomed out Mr. Turner. "I'll tell you, my dear sir. The Jews are ruining England."

As Mr. Turner must know best, Herbert simply bowed in acquiescence.

Horace in the meantime was saying to Mr. Simmons:

"It is an indisputable fact that the Jews are the most loyal, patriotic race under the sun. Their cleverness no one denies. In the finer, the emotional arts, such as music and poetry, it is generally admitted that a man must have a strain of Jewish blood in him to rise to eminence."

Here Mr. Simmons bowed and smiled.

"Read one of the trade gazettes," continued Turner, fiercely.

"I should not be able to understand it," urged Herbert.

"Read the list of bills of sale," shouted Turner. "See the Levis, the Abrahams, the Mosses who are battening on borrowers. The Jews are the curse of the country. They are sucking out its blood and marrow."

And Horace, who, although he shuddered at Mr. Turner's strident tones, avoided listening to his words, was saying to his neighbor:

"In the law and in statesmanship we have living proofs. And as to that of which I understand nothing, commerce, we have but to mark the decay of Spain after the persecution and expulsion of your gifted nation."

But Mr. Simmons did not hear this compliment. He was listening to loud-voiced Turner.

"Look at Austria! Ruined, sir, ruined by them! All the lands in their hands. I wish the time would come again when the Austrian students at Pesth—"

"Pesth is in Hungary," said Herbert, softly.

"Hungarian students, then. The time should come again when they used to go of a morning and poke over the ashes of burnt Jews to find the gold pieces they had swallowed."

Everybody heard this coarse and brutal wish. Mr. Simmons' dark face flushed. He half rose from his chair, and glanced at Horace. That glance was enough to make him resume his seat.

The look of horror, absolute horror at a guest's having been insulted at his table, which Horace's face wore, was more than wonderful—it was sublime. Never had such a thing occurred before. Such another shock would be all but a death blow. His knees trembled; his face grew white to the very lips. He met Simmons' glance with an entreating, appealing, apologetic look, that spoke volumes of abasement and mortification.

Mr. Simmons, with the quickness of his race, read what was passing in Horace's mind. His anger merged into pity for his courteous, kindly host. He reseated himself and said with a pleasant smile, "How curious such things sound to men of the world like us." Then he said something in praise of the Lafitte. Horace gave a sigh of relief, and to his dying day will love that gentle Jew.

But Herbert had seen his brother's face, and knew that a catastrophe had happened. He guessed that Mr. Turner's Jew baiting proclivities had brought it about. So he adroitly turned the conversation, and by an admirable exercise of self-abnegation set Turner booming away about the iniquities of the mayor, aldermen, and town council of Blacktown. It was an heroic act, and no one but Herbert knew what it cost him.

Taking it altogether, the Talberts do not count that dinner among their social successes.

Frank Carruthers had by now grown rather tired of Fallon on the principles of true art. He, seated midway between the hosts, had fully appreciated the Simmons-Turner episode, and was longing to give vent to the laughter which politeness compelled him to stifle. Moreover, he was thinking a great deal about Miss Clauson, and how lonely she must be feeling. A young man always flatters himself that the young woman he loves is lonely without him.

Frank knew that when the party adjourned to the drawing-room he should see Beatrice. Her uncles wished her to be there, and it was not the rule of Hazlewood House for the men guests to go straight from the table to the smoking-room. So whilst Horace and Herbert were seeing that the curiously shaped Venetian flasks were going round with hospitable, but not with coarsely convivial speed, Mr. Carruthers was summoning up courage to desert his post and cheer Miss Clauson's loneliness. The thought that the attention of Horace's being engaged in deep conversation with Lord Kelston, he rose, slipped from the room, and passing across the hall, opened the drawing-room door.

The drawing-room door, like every other door in Hazlewood House, did its duty without noise. There are some people's doors which always scrape and bang, just as there are some people's shoes which always creak. The Talberts' shoes never creaked. The Talberts' doors never uttered a sound. So Frank stood on the thick, soft carpet and looked at Miss Clauson, who had no idea that her solitary exile was ended.

She was seated on the music bench. Her hands were on the keys of the piano, but making no music. She was gazing with grave eyes far, far away—looking right through the center of the satin-wood Sheraton cabinet which, full of choice porcelain, stood against the opposite wall. Her thoughts, sad or sweet, were in dreamland.

And Mr. Carruthers stood watching her.

Mr. Carruthers stood watching her.

He knew he was doing very wrong—knew he ought to make her aware of his presence—but the picture was to him so divinely beautiful that he could not help himself.

The girl was perfectly dressed; if fault could be found with her attire it was that it was a trifle too old for her age. Her arms and neck gleamed white and fair from the black satin of the dress, which fitted as a dress can only fit a form like hers. The rich brown hair was cunningly and becomingly coiled, and without jewel or even flower to distract from its own native glory. No wonder that Carruthers was content to watch her in admiring silence!

And as he watched he saw, or fancied he saw, tears rising to those gray eyes. This was more than human nature could bear.

Mr. Carruthers to this day assures himself that he entered that drawing-room with no intention of precipitating matters. We may believe him, because, as it was probable that in a few minutes nine respectable middle-aged gentlemen would troop in, the occasion was not a propitious one. So it is clear that he acted on the impulse of the moment.

He never knew how he dared to do it, but before she looked round he was at her side, his arm was round her—a music bench offers dangerous facilities, it has no back—and he was telling her with passionate eloquence that he loved her—he loved her! There was none of poor Mr. Mordle's hopelessness about this ardent young Carruthers.

But how did Beatrice take it? With a low cry as of fear, perhaps aversion, she sprang to her feet and stood for a moment looking at him with a face as pale as death. Then without a word she turned and went swiftly towards the door. Frank, with a face as pale as her own, followed and intercepted her. He grasped her hand.

"Beatrice, have you nothing to say to me! Nothing for me?"

She breathed quickly. She seemed to set her teeth. She answered not a word.

"Beatrice, have you nothing to tell me! Cannot you tell me you love me? Answer me. Answer me. Say you love me," he entreated.

There was no trace of raillery or lightness in Mr. Carruthers' manner. It was that of a man playing for a life or death stake. "Answer me."

"I cannot," said Beatrice, hoarsely. "Let me go."

Without a word he dropped her hand. He even held the door open and closed it when she had passed. Then he also stood in the middle of the room, gazing at the blank door and wondering if he was dreaming—if he had really, since he entered that room, played his great stake and lost it.

Could Frank Carruthers have followed Beatrice to her room he would have seen her throw herself on the bed and burst into a paroxysm of grief. He would have seen the sombre Mrs. Miller come to her, embrace her, soothe her, and entreat her. He would have seen a look of stern resolution settle on the servant's strongly-marked features, a look which contrasted strangely with the affectionate solicitude which she displayed towards her mistress in her trouble.

But Frank Carruthers could not see these things, and had he seen them would have been no wiser for the sight.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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The following letter, dated January 14, 1885, has just been received, and will be shown to any person who is interested in the subject. Names and dates are withheld for obvious reasons:

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"The mother took the little sufferer to the country, hoping that the pure fresh air might be beneficial, and Dr. ——, of Lumberton, was called to treat the case. He pronounced it Eczema, and did all he could for it, but to no purpose, any more than to check the fever to which the disease subjected the boy.

"At the first frost the victim was again removed to the city, and immediately Dr. —— was called and he pronounced the disease 'Pupura,' and prescribed accordingly, feeding up the disease on iron and other minerals until the babe's mouth became so sore that for two weeks it did not nurse. A friend suggested as a last hope and resort

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