

supper table, that gastronomy, instead of meaning the art of extracting gas from coal, has now come to denote the science of cookery or good living, and that the old meaning is now quite out of date. I thought you would like to know of the change, which, I imagine, has hardly found its way into the country yet."

"Certainly, sir, I am much obliged to you for setting me right so kindly. Doubtless the change has come about through the use of gas stoves for cooking, which I have seen advertised in our Toronto religious paper."

"I never thought of that," said the perfidious lawyer. "The very uncommon word *deipnosophist*, hardly an English word at all, when employed at the present day, always means a supper philosopher, one who talks learnedly at supper, either about cookery or about other things."

"I see it very clearly now. In town, of course, supper is taken by gas-light, so that the talker at supper is a talker by gas-light?"

"Yes, but the word gas, even the idea of it, has gone out of fashion, through its figurative use to designate empty, vapouring talk; therefore, when *deipnosophist* and *gastronomer* are spoken, the former is employed to denote learned talkers at supper, such as we were half an hour ago, and the latter, to signify one who enjoys the culinary pleasures of the table."

"I am sure I am very much indebted to you, sir, for taking the trouble to correct an old woman far behind the age, and to save her the mortification of making mistakes in conversation with those who might know better."

"Do not mention it, I beg. Should I, do you think, say anything of this to Mr. Hill?"

"Oh, no," replied the old lady, laughingly; "he has forgotten all about these new words already; and, even if he had not, he would never dare to make use of them, unless they were in Shakespeare or the Bible or the School Readers."

By this time the milking was over, and the lawyer, relieved in part, yet with not unclouded conscience, carried pail and stool to the milkhouse.

The old man and Coristine sat down on a bench outside the house and smoked their pipes. Mrs. Hill occupied a rocking-chair just inside the doorway, and the dominie sat on the doorsill at her feet.

"Mother," called Mr. Hill to his spouse, "whatever has become of Rufus?"

"You know very well, Henry Cooke, that Rufus is helping Andrew Hislop with his bee, and will not be back before morning. The young people are to have a dance after the bee, and then a late supper, at which the *deipnosophists* will do justice to Abigail's gastronomy." This was said with an approving side glance at the lawyer. When Wilkinson looked up, his friend perceived at once that his offence was forgiven. The husband, without removing the pipe from between his teeth, mumbled, "Just so, to be sure."

"Is your son's name William Rufus, Mrs. Hill?" enquired the dominie.

"No; it is simply Rufus. William, you know, is not a Scripture name. We thought of baptizing him Narcissus, which comes just before Tryphena, but my husband said, as he was the youngest, he should come lower down in the chapter, and after Persis, which is my name."

"I was teaching school, and a bachelor," put in the said husband, "when there was a county meeting—they call them conventions now—that Persis was at. They called her Miss Persis Prophayt, but it was spelled like the English Prophet. She was that pretty and nice-spoken then I couldn't kape my eyes off her. She's gone off her nice looks and ways a dale since that time. Then I went back to the childer and the Scripture readings, with a big dictionary at my elbow for the long names. 'The beloved Persis' was forever coming up, till the gyrls would giggle and make my face as red as a turkey cock. So I had this farrum and some money saved, and I sent to ask the beloved Persis to put me out of my misery and confusion of countenance."

"Indeed he did," said the old lady, with a merry laugh, "and what do you think was his way of popping the question?"

"Oh, let us hear, Mrs. Hill," cried Coristine.

"Mother, if you do," interposed the old man, "I'll put my foot down on your convention of retired taychers at Owen Sound." But mother paid no attention to the threat.

"He asked if I knew the story of Mahomet and the mountain, and how Mahomet said, if the mountain will not come to the prophet, the prophet must go to the mountain. So, said he, you are the prophet and must come to my house under the mountain, and be a Hill yourself. It was so funny and clever that I came; besides I was glad to change the name Prophet. People were never tired making the most ridiculous plays upon it. The old Scotch schoolmistress, who taught me partly, was named Miss Lawson, so they called us Profit and Loss; and they pronounced my Christian name as if it was Purses, and nicknamed me Property, and took terrible liberties with my nomenclature." At this the whole company laughed heartily, after which the dominie said: "I see your pipe is out, Corry; you might favour our kind friends with a song." The lawyer did not know what to sing, but took his inspiration, finally, from Wilkinson's last question, and sang the ballad of William Rufus, as far as:—

Men called him William Rufus because of his red beard,  
A proud and haughty king he was, and greatly to be feared;  
But an arrow from a cross-bow, sirs, hit him in the middell,  
And, instead of a royal stag that day, a king of England fell.

Then the correct ear and literary sense of the dominie were offended, and he opened out on his friend.

"I think, Corry, that you might at least have saved our generous hosts the infliction of your wretched travesties. The third line, Mrs. Hill, is really:—

But an arrow from a cross-bow, sirs, the fiercest pride can quell.

There is nothing so vulgar as hitting in the verse, and your ear for poetry must tell you that *middle* cannot rhyme with *fell*, even if it were not a piece of the most Gothic barbarity. Thus a fine English song, such as I love to hear, is murdered."

"My opinion," said the host, "my opinion is that you couldn't quell a man's pride better than by hitting him fair in the middle. It might be against the laws of war, but it would double him up, and take all the consayt out of him sudden. I mind when Rufus was out seeing his sisters, there was a parson got him to play cricket, and aggravated the boy by bowling him out, and catching his ball, and sneering at him for a good misser and a butter fingers; so, when he went to the bat again, he looked carefully at the ball and got it on the tip of his bat, and, the next thing he knowed, the parson was doubled up like a jack-knife. He had been hit fair in the middle, where the bad boy meant to do it. There was no sarvice next Sunday, no, nor for two weeks."

"That was very wrong of Rufus," said the old lady with a sigh, "however, he did offer to remunerate Mr. Perrowne for his medical expenses, but the gentleman refused to accept any equivalent, and said it was the fortune of war, which made Rufus feel humiliated and sorry."

Night had fallen, and the coal oil lamp was lit. The old lady deposited a large Bible on the table, to which her husband drew in a chair, after asking each of his guests unsuccessfully to conduct family worship. He read with emphasis and feeling the 91st Psalm, and thereafter, falling on his knees, offered a short but comprehensive prayer, in which the absent children were included, and the two wayfarers were not forgotten. While the good wife went out to the dairy to see that the milk was covered up from an invisible cat, the men undressed, and the pedestrians turned into a double bed, the property of the missing Rufus. The head of the household also turned in upon his couch, and coughed, the latter being a signal to his wife. She came in, blew out the lamp, and retired in the darkness. Then four voices said "good-night"; and rest succeeded the labours of the day. "No nightmares or fits to-night, Corry, an' you love me," whispered the dominie; but the lawyer was asleep soon after his head touched the pillow. They knew nothing till morning, when they were awakened by the old man's suppressed laughter. When they opened their eyes, the wife was already up and away to her outdoor tasks; and a well-built, good-looking young fellow of the farmer type was staring in astonishment at the two strangers in his bed. The more he stared, the more the father laughed. "There's not a home nor a place for you, Rufus, with you kapin' such onsaysonable hours. It's a sesayder you'll be becoming yourself, running after Annerew Hislop's pretty daughter, and dancing the toes out of your stockings till broad daylight. So, if you're going to sesayde, your mother and me, we're going to take in lodgers."

"What are they selling?" asked the Baby.

"Whisht! Rufus, whisht! come here now; it's not that they are at all, but gentlemen from the city on a pedestrian tower," the father replied in an audible whisper.

"What do they want testering the beds for! Is that some new crank got into the guvment?"

"Rufus, Rufus, you'll be the death of your poor old father yet with your ignorance. Who said anything about testing the beds? It's a pedestrian tower, a holiday walking journey for the good of their healths, the gentlemen are taking. Whisht, now, they're waking up. Good morning to you, sirs; did I wake you up laughing at the Baby?"

The roused sleepers returned the salutation, and greeted the new comer, apologizing for depriving him of his comfortable bed. Rufus replied civilly, with a frank, open manner that won their respect, and, when they had hastily dressed, led them to the pump, where he placed a tin basin, soap and towels, at their disposal. After ablutions, they questioned him as to the events of last evening, and were soon in nominal acquaintance with all the country side. He was indignant at the free and easy conduct of a self-invited guest called Rodden, who wanted to dance with all the prettiest girls and to play cards. "But when he said cards, Annerew, that's a sesayder, told him to clare, although it was only four in the morning, and he had to clare, and is on his way to Flanders now."

"I suppose you did not hear him make any enquiries regarding us?" asked the dominie.

"But I did, and it was only when he heard that you hadn't been past the meetin'-house, that he stopped and said 'ee'd 'ave a lark. Do you know him?"

"Yes," said Coristine, "he is the Grinstun man," whereat they all laughed; and the old lady, coming in with her milking, expressed her pleasure at seeing them such good friends.

After prayers and breakfast, the pedestrians prepared to leave, much to the regret of the household.

"Where are you bound for now?" asked Mr. Hill, to which Wilkinson replied, with the air of a guide-book, "for the Beaver River." The Baby, nothing the worse of last night's wakefulness, volunteered to show them the way by a shorter and pleasanter route than the main road, and they gladly availed themselves of his services.

As the party walked on, the guide said to Coristine, "I hard fayther say that you were a lawyer, is that true?" Coristine answered that he was.

"Then, sir, you ought to know something about that man Rodden; he's a bad lot."

"What makes you think so?"

"He knows all the doubtfullest and shadiest settlers about, and has long whispers with them, and gets a lot of money from them. His pocketbook is just bulging out with bank bills."

"Perhaps it is the payment of his grindstones, Rufus."

"You don't tell me that a lawyer, a clever man like you, believe in his grindstones?"

"Why not? Doesn't he make and sell them?"

"Yes; he makes them and sells them in bundles of half-a-dozen, but the buyer of a bundle only has two to show, and they're no good, haven't grit enough to sharpen a wooden spoon."

"How do you know all this?"

"Mostly out of big Ben Toner. He used to be a good sort of fellow, but is going all to ruination with the drink. I saw his grindstones and what came between 'em. It's more like a barl than anything else, but Ben kept me off looking at it close."

"Where does Toner live?"

"Down at the river where you're going. There's a nice, quiet tavern there, where you'll likely put up, and he'll be round it, likely, and pretty well on by noon. He don't drink there, though, nor the tavern-keeper don't buy no grindstones like he does. Well, here you are on the track, and I must get back to help dad. Keep right on till you come to the first clearing, and then ask your way. Good-bye, wishing you a good time, and don't forget that man Rodden." They shook the Baby warmly by the hand, and reciprocated his good wishes, Coristine promising to keep his eyes and ears open for news of the Grinstun man.

"Did you overhear our talk, Wilks, my boy?" he asked his friend.

"No; I thought it was private, and kept in the background. I do not consider it honourable to listen to a conversation to which one is not invited, and doubtless it was of no interest to me."

"But it is, Wilks; listen to this now," and volubly the lawyer poured forth the information and his suspicions concerning Mr. Rawdon. That gentleman's ears would have tingled could he have heard the pleasant and complimentary things that Coristine said about him.

The first clearing the pedestrians reached, after an hour's walk since parting with Rufus, was a desolate looking spot. Some fallow fields were covered with thistles, docks, fire-weed and stately mulleins, with, here and there, an evening primrose, one or two of which the lawyer inserted in his flower-press. There was hardly any ground under cultivation, and the orchard bore signs of neglect. They saw a man in a barn painfully rolling along a heavy cylindrical bundle which had just come off a waggon. As they advanced to ask him the way, he left his work and came to meet them, a being as unkempt as his farm, and with an unpleasant light in his bloodshot eye.

"What are you two spyin' around fer at this time o' day, stead o' tendin' to your work like the rest o' folks? Ef you want anything, speak out, 'cause I've no time to be foolin' round."

"We were directed to ask you, sir, the way to the Beaver River," said the dominie, politely. The man sulkily led them away out of view of the barn, and then pointed out a footpath through his farm, which he said would lead them to the highroad. As they were separating, Wilkinson thanked the man, and Coristine asked him casually:—

"Do you happen to know if a Mr. Rawdon, who makes and sells grindstones, has passed this way lately?"

"No," cried the sluggard farmer; "who says he has?" Then, in a quieter tone, he continued: "I heern tell as he passed along the meetin'-house way yeday. What do you want of Rawdon?"

"My friend, here, is a geologist, and so is that gentleman."

"Rawdon a geologist!" he cried again, with a coarse laugh. "Of course he is; allers arter trap rock, galeny, quartz and beryl. O yes, he's a geologist! Go right along that track there. Good day." Then he rapidly retraced his steps towards the barn, as if fearful lest some new visitor should interrupt him before his task was completed.

"It may be smuggling," said the lawyer, "but it's liquid of some kind, for that dilapidated granger has given his friend away. What do hayseeds know about galena, quartz and beryl? These are Grinstun's little mineralogical jokes for gallon, quart and barrel, and trap rock is another little mystery of his. What do you think of the farmer that doesn't follow the plough, Wilks?"

"I think he drinks," sententiously responded the schoolmaster.

"Then he and Ben Toner are in the same box, and both are friends or customers of the workin' geologist. I believe it's whiskey goes between the grindstones, and that it's smuggled in from the States, somewhere up on the Georgian Bay between Collingwood and Owen Sound. The plot is thickening."

When the pedestrians emerged from the path on a very pretty country road the first objects that met their view were three stout waggons, drawn by strong horses and driven by bleary-eyed men, noisy and profane of speech.