



GENTIAN.

BY MARY E. WILKINS.

It had been raining hard all night; when the morning dawned clear everything looked vivid and unnatural. The wet leaves on the trees and hedges seemed to emit a real green light of their own; the tree trunks were black and dark, and the spots of moss on them stood out distinctly. A tall old woman was coming quickly up the street. She had on a stiff starched calico gown, which sprang and rattled as she walked. She kept smoothing it anxiously. "Gittin' every mite of the stiff'nin' out," she muttered to herself.

She stopped at a long cottage house, whose unpainted walls, with white window-frames, and wide sweep of shingled roof, looked dark and startling through being sodden with rain.

There was a low stone wall by way of fence, with a gap in it for a gate.

She had just passed through this gap when the house door opened, and a woman put out her head.

"Is that you, Hannah?" said she.

"Yes, it's me," she laid a hard emphasis on the last word; then she sighed heavily.

"Hannah, you better hold your dress up comin' through that wet grass, Hannah! You'll git it all bedraggled."

"I know it. I'm a-gittin' every mite of the stiff'nin' out on't. I worked half the forenoon ironin' on't yesterday, too. Well, I thought I'd got to git over here an' fetch a few of these dried oakes. I thought maybe Alfred would relish 'em for his breakfast; an' he'd got to hav' 'em while they was hot; they ain't good fur nothin' cold; an' I didn't hev a soul to send—never do. How is Alfred this mornin', Lucy?"

"Don't the same, I guess."

"Ain't had the doctor yet?"

"No. She had a little, patient, pleasant smile on her face, looking up at her questioner."

The women were sisters. Hannah was Hannah Orton, unmarried. Lucy was Mrs. Tollet. Alfred was her sick husband.

Hannah's long, narrow face was deeply wrinkled. Her wide mouth twisted emphatically as she talked.

"Well, I know one thing; if he was my husband he'd hev a doctor."

Mrs. Tollet's voice was old, but there was a childish tone in it, a sweet, uncertain pipe.

"No; you couldn't make him, Hannah; you couldn't, no more 'n me. Alfred was allers jest so. He ain't never thought nothin' of doctors, nor doctors' stuff."

"Well, I'd make him take somethin'." In my opinion he needs somethin' bitter. She screwed her mouth as if the bitter morsel were on her own tongue.

"Lor! he wouldn't take it, you know, Hannah."

"He'd hev to. Gentian would be good fur him."

"He wouldn't tech it."

"I'd make him, if I put it in his tea unbeknownst to him."

"Oh, I wouldn't dare to."

"Land! I guess I'd dare to. Ef folks don't know enough to take what's good fur 'em, they'd orter be made by hook or crook. I don't believe in deceivin' generally, but I don't believe the Lord would hev let folks hed the faculty fur deceivin' in 'em ef it wa'n't to be used fur good sometimes. It's my opinion Alfred won't last long ef he don't hev somethin' put in to strengthen of him up an' give him a start. Well, it ain't no use talkin'. I've got to git home an' put this dress in the wash-tub again, I s'pose. I never see such a sight—jest look at that! You'd better give Alfred those oakes afore they git cold."

"I shouldn't wonder ef he relished 'em. You was real good to think of it, Hannah."

"Well, I'm a-goin'." Every mite of the stiff'nin' out. Sometimes it seems as ef that wa'n't no end to the work. I didn't know how to git out this mornin', anyway."

When Mrs. Tollet entered the house she found her husband in a wooden rocking-chair with a calico cushion, by the kitchen window. He was a short, large-framed old man, but he was very thin. There were great hollows in his yellow cheeks.

"What you got there, Lucy?"

"Some griddle-oakes Hannah brought."

"Griddle-oakes!"

"They're real nice-lookin' ones. Don't you think you'd relish one or two, Alfred?"

"Ef you an' Hannah want griddle-oakes, you kin hev griddle-oakes."

"Then you don't want to hev one, with some maple molasses on it? They've kept hot; she hed 'em kivered up."

"Take 'em away."

She set them meekly on the pantry shelf; then she came back and stood before her husband, gentle deprecation in her soft, old face, and in the whole pose of her little slender body.

"What will you hev fur breakfast, Alfred?"

"I don't know. Well, you might as well fry a little slice of bacon, an' git a cup of tea."

"No, I ain't. Ef anybody's sick, they kin tell what they want themselves 'bout as well as anybody kin tell 'em. They don't hev any hankerin' arter anythin' unless it's good fur 'em. When they need anythin', natur gives 'em a longin' arter it. I wish you'd hurry up an' cook that bacon, Lucy. I'm awful faint at my stomach."

She cooked the bacon and made the tea with no more words. Indeed, it was seldom that she used as many as she had now. Alfred Tollet, ever since she had married him, had been the sole autocrat of all her little Russias; her very thoughts had followed after him, like sleep.

After breakfast she went about putting her house in order for the day. When that was done, and she was ready to sit down with her sewing, she found that her husband had fallen asleep in his chair. She stood over him a minute, looking at his pale old face with the sincerest love and reverence. Then she sat down by the window and sewed, but not long. She got her bonnet and shawl stealthily, and stole out of the house. She sped quickly down the village street. She was light-footed for an old woman. She slackened her pace when she reached the village store, and crept hesitatingly into the great lumbering, rank-smelling room, with its dark, newly-sprinkled floor. She bought a bar of soap; then she stood irresolute.

"Anythin' else this mornin', Mis' Tollet?" The proprietor himself, a narrow-shouldered, irritable man, was waiting on her. His tone was impatient. Mrs. Tollet was too absorbed to notice it. She stood hesitating.

"Is there anythin' else you want?"

"Well—I don't know; but—p'raps I'd better—hev—ten cents worth of gentian." Her very lips were white; she had an expression of frightened, guilty resolution. If she had asked for strychnine, with a view to her own bodily destruction, she would not have had a different look.

The man mistook it, and his conscience smote him. He thought his manner had frightened her, but she had never noticed it.

"Goin' to give your husband some bitters?" he asked affably, as he handed her the package.

She started and blushed. "No—I—thought some would be good fur—me."

"Well, gentian is a first-rate bitter. Good morning, Mis' Tollet."

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Mr. J. W. Westervelt, Principal of the Forest City Business College, London, Ont., has kindly consented to act as judge in deciding which lists of answers are neatest and best written. Lists will be submitted to him by us without the names attached.

ANSWERING THE PUZZLE.

Put letters in place of dashes: Thus, the first word is "Canada," which is made by supplying the dropped letters "C N D," the others are worked in the same way.

"Good morning, Mr. Gill."

She was trembling all over when she reached her house door. There is a subtle, easily raised wind which blows spirits about like leaves, and she had come into it with her little paper of gentian. She had hidden the parcel in her pocket before she entered the kitchen. Her husband was awake. He turned his wondering, half-resentful eyes towards her without moving his head.

"Where hev you been, Lucy?"

"I—jest went down to the store a minute, Alfred, while you was asleep."

"What fur?"

"A bar of soap."

Alfred Tollet had always been a very healthy man until this spring. Some people thought that his illness was alarmingly now, more from its unwontedness and consequent effect on his mind, than from anything serious in his nature. However that may have been, he had complained of great depression and languor all the spring, and had not attempted to do any work.

"Ef Alfred kin only git up May hill," Mrs. Tollet's sister had said to her, "he'll git along all right through the summer. It's a dreiful tryin' time."

So up May hill, under the white apple and plum boughs, over the dandelions and the young grass, Alfred Tollet climbed, pushed and led faithfully by his loving old wife. At last he stood triumphantly on the summit of that fair hill, with his sweet wearisome ascent. When the first of June came people said, "Alfred Tollet's a good deal better."

He began to plant a little and bestir himself.

"Alfred's out workin' in the garden," Mrs. Tollet told her sister one afternoon. She had strolled over to her house with her knitting after dinner.

"You don't say so! Well, I thought when I see him Sunday that he was lookin' better. He's got through May, an' I guess he'll pull through. I did feel kinder worried 'bout him one spell—Why, Lucy, what's the matter?"

"Nothin'. Why?"

"You looked at me dreadful kind of queer an' distressed, I thought."

"I guess you must hev imagined it, Hannah. That ain't nothin' the matter." She tried to look unconcerned at her sister, but her lips were trembling.

"Well, I don't know 'bout it. You look kinder queer now. I guess you walked too fast comin' over here. You allers did race."

"Mebbe I did."

"For the land sake, jest see that dust you tracked in! I've got to git the dustpan an' brush now an' sweep it up."

"I'll do it."

"No; set still. I'd rather see to it myself."

As the summer went on Alfred Tollet continued to improve. He was as hearty as ever by September. But his wife seemed to lose as he gained. She grew thin, and her small face had a solemn, anxious look. She went out very little. She did not go to church at all, and she had been a devout church-goer. Occasionally she went over to her sister's, that was all. Hannah watched her shrewdly. She was a woman who arrived at conclusions slowly; but she never turned aside from the road to them.

"Look-a-here, Lucy," she said one day. "I know what's the matter with you; that's somethin' on your mind, an' I think you'd better out with it."

The words seemed propelled like bullets by her vehemence. Lucy shrank down and away from her, her pitiful eyes turned up towards her sister.

"O Hannah, you scare me; I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do. Do you s'pose I'm blind? You're worryin' yourself to death, an' I want to know the reason why. Is it anythin' 'bout Alfred?"

"Yes—don't, Hannah."

"Well, I'll go over an' give him a piece of my mind! I'll see."

"O Hannah, don't! It ain't him. It's me—it's me."

"What on airth hev you done?"

Mrs. Tollet began to sob. She was afraid he wouldn't get enough. So I put little sprinklin' on't in the bread an' pies an' everythin' I cooked. An' when he'd say nothin' tasted right now-days, an' somehow everything was kinder bitterish, I'd tell him it must be his mouth."

"Look here, Lucy, you didn't eat everythin' with gentian in it yourself?"

"Course I did."

"Fur the land sake!"

"It's p'se the stuff must hev done him good; he's picked right up ever since he begun takin' it. But I can't get over my deceivin' of him so. I've 'bout made up my mind to tell him."

"Well, all I've got to say is you're a big fool if you do. I declare, Lucy Ann Tollet, I never saw s'ech a woman! The idee of your worryin' over such a thing as that when it's done Alfred good, too! P'rhaps you'd rather he'd died?"

"Sometimes I think I hed 'most ruther."

"Well!"

In the course of a few days Mrs. Tollet did tell her husband. He received her disclosure in precisely the way she had known that he would. Her nerves received just the shock which they were braced to meet.

They had come home from meeting on a Sunday night. Mrs. Tollet stood before him; she had not even taken off her shawl and little black bonnet.

"Alfred," said she, "I've got somethin' to tell you; it's been on my mind a long time. I meant it all fur the best; but I've been doin' somethin' wrong. I've been deceivin' of you. I give you gentian last spring when you was so poorly. I put little sprinklin' on't into everythin' you ate. An' I didn't tell the truth when I said 'twas your mouth an' it didn't taste bitter to me."

The old man half closed his eyes and looked at her intently. His mouth widened out rigidly. "You put a little gentian into everythin' I ate unbeknownst to me, did you?" said he. "H'm!"

"O Alfred, don't look at me so! I meant it all fur the best. I was afraid you wouldn't get well without you hed it, Alfred. I was dreiful worried about you; you didn't know nothin' 'bout it, but I was. I laid awake nights a-worryin' an' prayin'. I know I did wrong; it wa'n't right to deceive you, but it was all along of my worryin' an' my thinkin' so much of you, Alfred. I was afraid you'd die an' leave me all alone; an'—it 'most killed me to think on't."

Mr. Tollet pulled off his boots, then pattered heavily about the house, locking the doors and making preparations for retiring. He would not speak another word to his wife about the matter, though she kept on with her piteous little protestations.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Travel

Mrs. Rorer all starches baked in large not sufficient starch. Who than white b leaves. The v a recipe in growing chick flour contain three times as of white flour Cereals impr the stomach. The wheat pr foods, and lik fire the night slowly from without stirri

Half pint of teaspoonful of (dissolved in flour enough not stick to the do not mix pound and pu it light and the pan, let it then mold into in a warm pl then bake for

WHOLE Half pint water; add same as in sufficient wh graham) to thoroughly, s place (about 6 a half hour whole wheat dough; knead at once; let st then bake in minutes.

SAUCE FOR Four teaspoon radish; the y thoroughly, spoonfuls cre froth.

Two eggs, cup of milk flour in a bo milk gradually a wire gravy light; have r oiled and hot ture, which v overs; thus t fast, well bro quite so muc with sauce f altogether eg have pastry oven or they recipe makes ding.

BAKING One pint butter rubbed one teaspoon spoonful of thoroughly, thirds cup of biscuit cutte milk, and bal

FRENCH Rub the pu to make it it one table separate four and the whit and dead; li air get in the white pepper, tablespoonful ful butter; s the pan, and that which is foundation fo chopped ham omelette just wanted, spre taking out of

Separate yolks of thr sugar, the gr tablespoonful can hold betv gether in the the yolks slip lastly, the wh ing may be orange, etc.; of the mixtur into a pointed tube in the