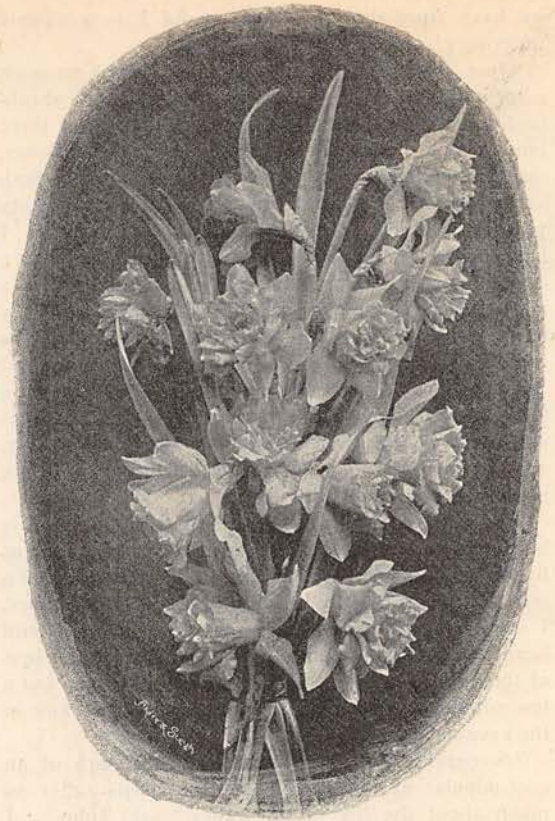


blooming another favourite class—the *N. poeticus* and the *N. poeticus plenus*.

“Then, again, there is our old friend the *pseudonarcissus*, or daffodil; while we might also name the *N. biflorus*, a most fragrant specimen, white, with a yellow crown; and another, fragrant necessarily from its very name—the *N. odoratus*—a sweet-scented May flower also. Where are we to begin and where stop in the enumeration of these early spring and summer delights? The narcissus planted in the open flower garden, and merely left to itself, will bloom in its own proper time; it should be planted in patches of some half-dozen or more in one spot. Plants that, like this, are often left the whole year in the ground, should be noticed once for all, and not ruthlessly disturbed and cut about.”

“One practical question, Charles, you have not touched upon,” said John, “and that concerns the average price of some of these flowers we have been discussing. What can you tell us on that head?”

“Well,” said Charles, “some strong imported clumps of the lily of the valley can be had for from about 12s. to 15s. per dozen—if for early forcing the best should be had; but of course there are varieties to be had at a very much cheaper rate. Then, again, the price of the narcissus of course varies: the *N. biflorus* and *N. poeticus* can readily be had at 6d. a dozen. The *N. bulbocodium* is perhaps three times that price. Varieties of the double yellow daffodil are the *Telamonius plenus*, the *Incomparabilis*, and the *Lobularis plenus*, the first named being a very cheap one. The *Totus Albus*, an early flowering one, can be had at a shilling a dozen.”



DOUBLE YELLOW DAFFODILS.

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### OMELETTE NIGHT: A BATTLE WITH THE PANS.

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“DO come, it’s Omelette Night. You are sure to be amused, and you may be enlightened.”

“What do you mean by Omelette Night?” and the speaker’s face wore a puzzled expression.

“How stupid I am; I forgot that you have been away for six long months; of course we had not started our ‘Recreative Evenings’ when you went away. Our ‘Home Technical School,’ Charlie calls it. I meant to tell you of it by letter. In the winter, you must know, we all had a course of lessons in various branches of science, domestic and otherwise. You remember the Technical Institute, two miles off. Now, we are employing our evenings by putting into practice all the subjects there taught: one night, dress-making; another, wood-carving; next, a delightful mixture of hygiene, a few simple chemical experiments, and a little ambulance work; then comes what is, I think, our pet subject—cookery. Our old nursery is quite transformed—you would not know it. It is fitted up with a dear little range, father’s Christ-

mas gift; and the big cupboards contain something of almost everything.”

“What a splendid notion; but who is your teacher?”

“We have no teacher now; we are putting mother’s theory to the test so far as our cookery goes. She contends that no one ever solves the mysteries of the *cuisine* who does not make experiments. Therefore we originate all we can, or alter any recipes to suit our taste, and according to the materials at our command.”

“And have you succeeded? But I suppose your mother assists you?”

“No; mother brings her work and looks on; and unless we are in any difficulty we follow our own devices. I can’t say that it has been all plain sailing, but, so far, everything has been eatable, though not always quite presentable; and I am sure we have learnt a good deal by the interchange of ideas. Clara and Rachel, our neighbours, join us generally; only Rachel is coming to-night. Ah! We have been

some weeks working up to omelettes, and I am quite yearning to follow the dictates of my savoury tooth, as Grace is, her sweet one."

"Well, Marie, I will be with you. What is the time?"

"Seven sharp. And you may sit still or help with the work, just as you please."

With this the girls parted, and the time appointed found them ready for their task. A long narrow table bore a goodly show of eggs and other necessaries, and very business-like the three young cooks looked. Marie's first task was the chopping of some parsley for a savoury omelette, a teaspoonful of which she mixed with a pinch of something from a bottle that sent forth a most fragrant odour. The nature of the compound Marie promised to make known should the omelette turn out a success. At this all laughed, and Mrs. Slater remarked that Marie always had a mysterious bottle of some sort or other at hand. Then began the beating of the eggs, only two, for all were agreed that with such risky dishes as those in hand only small quantities should be dealt with.

"Better spoil two eggs than four," said Mrs. Slater practically, if not very encouragingly.

After a few seconds Marie paused, the fork in mid-air, and Charlie offered her a penny for her thoughts.

"No, Charlie, I will not ask assistance thus early in the proceedings," and on went the beating again until the eggs were very light and frothy.

A dainty little pan was then put on the fire, and soon a pleasant frizzling from the butter it contained betokened its readiness for its work.

"Now for the critical moment," said Marie, and almost in the same breath, "Oh, mother, it has all gone lumpy," and the little wooden spoon twirled more rapidly than before.

"Just as it should do, my dear. Go on, you are quite right, but don't stir too long; remember to stop before it gets quite set all over."

Straightway the stirring stopped, and the pan was raised further from the fire; and in a few seconds more the contents were worked into a semicircle by the aid of a palette knife, and the omelette emerged golden-brown on to the dish in readiness. The whole operation had taken but a minute or two.

"Saved by a hair," said Charlie, who was handing it round for inspection and consumption, all in turn taking a morsel with a fork. "I nearly dropped it; it *is* hot."

"I'm sorry I burnt you; I quite forgot the cloth. While bearing in mind that a dish for an omelette should be hot enough to complete the cooking, I forgot the tender fingers of my little waiter."

The verdict on the whole was favourable, though Mrs. Slater caused some fun by advising that the onion be chopped finely in future, as the crunch between the teeth was not pleasant.

"Trust mother for finding out things," laughed Marie. "Now I come to think of it, someone says that you should not only chop but pound it, and it is better still to use only the juice of the onion. And no doubt I used too much, as much onion as parsley; was that wrong?"

"I should have used about a fourth as much. What else did your bottle contain?"

"Only a morsel of grated lemon peel, chopped thyme, salt and pepper, cayenne and nutmeg."

"And a very good blend too, when suitably proportioned."

"Now, Rachel, your turn next; how you *are* beating; yours ought to be good."

Then up went the basin, as its owner passed her spoon with an air of satisfaction through its snowy contents. This was the economical member of the party, and nothing pleased her more than to make one egg do the work of two, so no one was surprised to hear that her concoction was a decided departure from the original, and that she would not guarantee that it should be an omelette proper. Indeed they were not to be surprised if it turned out a cross between a pancake and a griddle-cake. After this, naturally, all wanted to know exactly what the bowl contained.

"The pulp of three roasted potatoes, sieved mind, or it won't be light, and boiled ones won't do either, they would not be dry enough; to that I added a gill of milk and half an ounce of butter; nobody watched me boil it altogether, but I did, and it has got cold again; you were all busy in criticising Marie's production; now for the eggs, three; my recipe says six, and only half as much potato as I have used. We will try the effect of turning the tables. Who will lend a hand? It wants another beat; that is half the making of this particular omelette."

Help was soon forthcoming; then Rachel put it to the meeting whether her dish should be sweet or savoury, for it appeared that the plain potato base was capable of unheard-of possibilities. Opinions differed until Charlie shouted "cheese," and this was carried unanimously. So in went a tablespoonful from a bottle in the cupboard; a supply being grated ready to hand.

"Steady with the pepper, Rachel, you half-choked us last week."

This from Marie.

"Right, dear; and if my memory serves me this is the remainder of that very salt cheese that led us astray in seasoning those little patties that otherwise would have been so good. By the way, would not celery salt be nice in this?"

Without waiting for a reply the busy girl finished the operation, and in a second the compound was changing both shape and colour very rapidly in the pan.

"You have soon stopped stirring," came in a minute from Grace.

"Yes, but it is quite correct; you notice mine is a round omelette; no shaping into half moons or other puzzling devices; I just melted the butter, only two ounces for all this lot. Think of it, and then don't be over-critical. Then, as soon as the edges turn colour the pan is to rest, and it is to work out its own solidification: the omelette, not the pan."

A smell of burning came as an interruption, and the pan was hastily moved to a cooler part of the range. The omelette was soon ready for dishing, and if only

its bottom surface had been as delicate looking as the top, all would have been well. But alas! when too late Rachel had remembered that as soon as the stirring ceased the heat was to be slackened, and the palette knife employed to prevent the omelette sticking. This was followed by expressions of regret.

And now Grace's turn had come, and great things were expected of her; for had she not had the benefit of the failures of the others? She commenced by explaining that her omelette would be a sweet one; laughter followed this, for it was the family belief that Grace would live on sweets if she followed her own inclination. But Grace meant business this time, and promised them a real treat; declaring that she might safely use four eggs, and then there would not be enough to satisfy the demand made upon her dish.

"But I claim no credit for it beyond trying to carry out instructions; I am not inventive, I don't pretend to be. This is one of Pauline's, and is sure to be good."

Pauline was an old schoolfellow, now resident in Brittany.

"Look, I have a bran new pan," holding out one of fireproof china; "I scraped it out of my pocket money."

In a second the butter was melting in the pan, and Grace gave her eggs a few turns with a whisk, adding sugar in a very gingerly fashion, about a tablespoonful; then she mixed in some ratafias which Charlie had crushed to powder with the rolling pin and shaken through a sieve. She was about to pour her mixture into the pan when the others warned her that she had not beaten half long enough, and failure was inevitable.

"No arguments now; wait a bit, please."

So while the girls were wondering what would be the outcome of this venture, the cooking went on, and there was no lack of energy now. First a stirring

altogether, with much scraping from the bottom; then a dexterous use of the palette knife, and a shaking of the pan; in a second more the omelette, that so far had been kept round, was lying on the dish, with a pile of apricots on half of it; these were hidden by the other half, and after dusting with sugar and glazing by holding in front of the fire for a second, everybody was asked to taste and pronounce judgment. And while they tasted Grace reminded them that the apricots must be cooked and sieved, and re-heated when required, as if put on whole or in halves the result would be heaviness; also that the ratafias, just half a dozen or so, made the omelette a good flavour, though a drop of almond essence could be used as a substitute; likewise that the syrup of the fruit might be boiled and poured round at the last, but as they *all* objected to sweets—this with a merry twinkle in her eye—she had given them the plainer form for a trial. Finally, she told them for a very superior dish, the sugar should be boiled with a spoonful of orange flower water and mixed with the rest; but as Pauline had not told her whether it should be cool before mixing with the eggs, she had not ventured on that. In reply to further questions, for this was such a dainty snack that everybody wanted to know all about it, Grace told them that her scant beating of the eggs was design, not accident, her recipe having stated that it was a method often adopted for sweet omelettes; less butter would then be required as they would cook quickly, and be very light and delicate. For rich savoury omelettes, when a larger quantity of butter was mixed in with the rest, the beating to a froth was considered the better way, at least in that part of the country from which Pauline wrote.

On the whole all were satisfied with the night's work, and decided to try their hands at *souffles* on the next occasion.

DEBORAH PLATTER.

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## THE HURSTS OF HAZELWOOD.

BY H. ELRINGTON.

### CHAPTER THE FIRST.

#### THE MAKING OF THE PROMISE.

"LET Baby Eric go," said Lady Mary, with a saucy laugh.



Squire Hurst, who was sitting in a huge arm-chair, with one leg arranged on a footstool, and both face and figure expressive of nothing but a severe attack of gout, was well over sixty; his two maiden sisters might have been any age from that to seventy, and there was no one young in the room but Mary herself and a tall youth, who was leaning moodily against the mantelpiece, and now gave his cousin a glance that was a curious mixture of fury and affection.

It was about seven o'clock on a March evening,

A.D. 1740, and the room, with its dark hangings and heavy furniture, wore a somewhat gloomy look, though the light from four great branching silver candlesticks aided the remains of daylight.

Mary, with her bright dark face and her long robe of cherry-coloured silk, the sleeves of which were just short enough to show her rounded arms, was the brightest object in the room. Her hair was dressed very high, in the latest fashion, and the powder on it and cherry-coloured bows enhanced the brilliancy of her eyes and complexion.

"Baby Eric!" Squire Hurst laughed; but it was a bitter laugh.

"Eric!" cried the old ladies together, in varying tones of horror: "he is too delicate. Besides, Mary, you, a Londoner, have no idea of the dangers of the