

difficult road to happiness. I saw two young creatures, who seemed very well suited to each other, in need of my friendly countenance, and I determined to give it. Was I altogether wrong? Well, Mrs. MacGill thought so at any rate, and told me so with wearisome iteration. I shrugged my shoulders, and took the scolding as a necessary corrective to a very happy afternoon.

V

Virginia Pomeroy

GREY TOR INN
AT THE WORLD'S END
Monday, May, —

MRS. MACGILL, inspired by the zeal with which the rest are re-reading Hardy, Blackmore, Baring-Gould, and Phillpotts, has finished a book of each of these novelists who play the "pipes of the misty moorlands." She dislikes them all, but her liveliest disapproval is reserved for the first and last named. She finds them most immoral, and says that if she could have believed that such ill-conducted persons resided in Dartmoor or anywhere in Devonshire, she would not have encouraged the Grey Tor Inn by her presence. As to the language spoken by some of the characters, she is inclined to think no one could ever have heard it.

"There would be no sense in their using such words," she explains triumphantly, "for no one would understand them;" continuing the argument by stating that she once heard the Duke of Devonshire open a public meeting, and he spoke in exceptionally good English.

All this makes me rather wicked, so when I went down to breakfast to-day I said cheerfully, "Gude-marnin' to you! Marnin', Mrs. MacGill! How do 'e like my new gown, Cecilia? — it's flam-new! Marnin', Sir Archibald! I did n't know 'e in the dimpsey light; bide wheer you be, I'll take this seat. . . . Will I have bacon and eggs? Ess fay; there'll be nought else, us all knows that. Theer's many matters I want to put afore 'e to-day. . . . Do 'e see thicky li'l piece o' bread 'pon the plate, Cecilia? Pass it to me, will 'e? I know I be chitterin' like a guinea-fowl, but I be a sort o' public merryman bringin' folks the blessing o' honest laughter. . . .

Can us have blind up if 't is all the same to you, Mrs. MacGill? I doan't like eatin' in the dark."

Then when mamma said, "*Jinny!*" in italics, and looked at me beseechingly, I exclaimed, "Gaw your ways, mother! I ban't feared o' you, an' I doan't mind tellin' 'e 't is so." When Sir Archibald, bursting with laughter, remarked it was a fine day, I replied, "You 'm right theer; did 'e ever see ought like un? Theer's been a wonnerful change in the weather; us be called 'pon to go downlong to Widdington-in-the-Wolds to-day to see the roundy-poundies.

"Along by the river we'll ram'le about
A-drowin' th' line and a-ketchin' o' trout;
An' when we've got plenty we'll start ver our huomes
An' tull all our doings while pickin' ther buones."

By this time Mrs. MacGill, thoroughly incensed, remarked that there was no accounting for taste in jokes, whereupon I responded genially, "You 'm right theer; it's a wonnerful coorious rackety world; in

fact, in the language of Eden, 'I'll be gormed if it ban't a 'mazin' world!'

Mamma at this juncture said, with some heat, that if this were the language of Eden she judged it was after the advent of the serpent; at which Sir Archibald and Miss Evesham and I screamed with laughter and explained that I meant Eden Phillpotts, not the Garden of Eden.

The day was heavenly, as I said, and seemed intended by Providence for our long deferred picnic to Widdington-in-the-Wolds. Mamma and Mrs. MacGill wanted to see the church, Cecilia and I wanted any sort of an outing. Sir Archibald had not viewed the plan with any warmth from the first, but I was determined that he should go, for I thought he needed chastening. Goodness knows he got it, and for that matter so did I, which was not in the bargain.

I refuse to dwell on the minor incidents of that interminable day. Mrs. MacGill, for general troublesomeness, outdid her proudest

previous record; no picnic polluted by her presence could be an enjoyable occasion, but this one was frowned upon by all the Fates. There is a Dartmoor saying that God looks arter his own chosen fules, which proves only that we were fules, but not chosen ones. The luncheon was eaten in a sort of grassy gutter, the only place the party could agree upon. It was begun in attempted jocularly and finished in unconcealed gloom. Mrs. MacGill, on perceiving that we were eating American tongue, declined it, saying she had no confidence in American foods. I buried my face in my napkin and wept ostentatiously. She became frightened and apologized, whereupon I said I would willingly concede that we were not always poetic and were sometimes too rich, but that when it came to tinning meats it was cruel to deny our superiority. This delightful repast over and its remains packed in our baskets, we sought the inn.

Mrs. MacGill sank upon a feather bed in

one of the upstairs rooms, and my mother extended herself on two chairs in the same apartment, adding to my depression by the remark she reserves for her most melancholy moments: "If your poor father had lived, he would never have allowed me to undertake this."

I did n't dare face Sir Archibald until he had digested his indigestible meal, so Miss Evesham and I went for a walk. Naturally it rained before we had been out a half hour, and unnaturally we met Mr. Willoughby, the artist, again. I ran back to the inn while they took shelter under a sycamore. I said I did n't want my dress spoiled, and I spoke the truth, but I did also want to give Miss Evesham the tonic of male society and conversation, of which she stands in abject need. By the time she is forty, if this sort of conventual life goes on, she will be as timorous as the lady in Captain Marryatt's novel who, whenever a gentleman shook hands with her, felt cold chills running up and down her back.

I took a wrong turning and arrived at the inn soaked as to outer garments. After a minute or two in the motor-shed with Sir Archibald, I had a fire kindled in the bedroom; but before I could fully dry myself they were clamouring for me to come down and add my cheerful note to the general cackle, for mamma and Mrs. MacGill had ordered early tea. There was a cosy time for a few minutes when Miss Evesham gaily toasted bread on a fork and Mr. Willoughby buttered it, and Sir Archibald opened a quaint instrument in a corner by the fire. I struck the yellow keys of the thing absently. It was a tiny Broadwood of a bygone century, fashioned like a writing-desk with a sort of bookcase top to it. I tried "Loch Lomond" for Mr. Willoughby, and then, as a surprise to Cecilia, sang my little setting of the verses she gave me the other day. The words brought tears to her eyes, and Sir Archibald came closer. "More, more!" he pleaded, but I said, "I don't feel a bit like

it, Sir Archibald ; if you 'll let me off now I'll sing nicely for you when they 've gone." He looked unmistakably pleased. "That's good of you," he whispered, "and I've ordered fresh tea made after the mob disperses."

"Don't forget that my mother is one of your so-called 'mob,' " I said severely.

"Oh, you know what I mean," he responded (he always blushes when he is chaffed). "I get on famously with your mother, but three or four women in a little low-ceiled room like this always look like such a bunch, you know!"

Then there was a dreadful interval of planning, in which Mrs. MacGill, who appeared to think it necessary that she should be returned to the Grey Tor Inn in safety whatever happened to anybody else, was finally despatched in the motor with mamma, Miss Evesham, and Johnson ; while Sir Archibald and I confronted with such courage as we might, the dismal prospect of a three hours' tussle with Greytoria.

Mrs. MacGill

THIS has been a terrible day of fatigue and discomfort. I was a woman of sixty in the morning, but I felt like a woman of eighty-six by night. Danger, especially when combined with want of proper food, ages one in a short time. My sister Isabella, who knew Baden Powell, declares that she would scarcely have recognized him to be the same man after as before the siege of Mafeking, particularly about the mouth.

My velvet mantle, after all it has suffered, will never be as good again, and I have reason to be thankful if I escape a severe illness on my own account after the mad rashness of this day's proceedings.

The young people (I include Cecilia, though considerably over thirty) had been talking a great deal about an expedition to a distant hamlet called Widdington-in-the-

Wolds. Miss Pomeroy had, of course, persuaded that misguided young man to take her in the motor, although there can be little conversation of a tender nature in a machine that makes such awful noises; still young people now can doubtless shout anything. Poor Mr. MacGill used always to say that he could scarcely catch *my* replies.

Cecilia assured me that it was a short drive, so I consented to allow her to take me in a pony chaise. Certainly I never saw a quieter-looking animal than that pony at first sight; she had, indeed, an air of extreme gentleness. People say that is frequently combined with great strength — at least in dogs, and I think in men too; in horses it does not seem to be the case, for this poor animal had a very dangerous habit of putting her hind feet together and sliding down a descent. Several times at small declivities she seemed to slide forwards, and the carriage slid after her, so that I thought we should both be thrown out. At last, having driven many

miles, meeting several droves of the wild ponies, which happily did us no harm, we came to the top of a quite precipitous hill, which Cecilia declared we must descend before we could arrive at Widdington.

I had already warned her that I felt no confidence in her driving, but she is sadly obstinate, and made some almost impertinent retort, so we began to descend the hill. We had gone only a short distance, however, when the pony, curiously enough, sat down.

“Is this a common action with horses, Cecilia?” I gasped.

Then came a cracking noise. “It’s the shafts breaking, I’m afraid,” she said quite coolly, and jumped out. I got out too, of course, as fast as I could, and Cecilia began to undo the straps of the animal’s harness. Again I felt I had had a narrow escape. I am not able now for these nervous shocks — they take too much out of me. I had been reading some of those alarming books about the neighbourhood, and felt I should be

quite afraid to ask for assistance from any passer-by. There were none, as we had seen nothing but ponies since we left Grey Tor, but in several books the violent passions of the natives had been described.

Cecilia said that she would lead the animal, so we started to go down the long hill, which was so very steep I thought I should never reach the bottom. Cecilia seemed to think nothing of it. "You can do it quite well, Mrs. MacGill," she said. "Well," I replied, "if a creature with four feet, like that pony, can tumble so, how do you suppose that I, on two, can do it easily?" My velvet mantle, though warm, is very heavy, and my right knee was still extremely painful. It now began to rain a little, and the sky got very dark, which, I remember, the books say is always a prelude to one of those terrific storms which apparently sweep across Dartmoor in a moment. "If it rains," I said, "the river always rises. 'Dart is up,' as they say, and we shall never reach home

alive." Cecilia declared in her stupid way that we were nowhere near the Dart. "Why are we on Dartmoor, then?" I asked. "I have read everywhere that the river runs with appalling velocity, and sweeps on in an angry torrent, carrying away trees and houses like straw; there are no trees, but those small houses down there would be swept away in no time. If we can only get down to the village, and get something to eat, and a carriage to take us home in, I shall be thankful!"

Cecilia appeared uncertain as to whether we could get any means of conveyance at the inn, so I suggested that we should just walk on. "Nothing," I said, "shall make me try to go back with that animal. Our lives were in danger when she sat down. I am sure that they must have a quieter horse of some kind, in such a lonely place."

Somehow or other we did get down, and were standing by the wayside when Sir Archibald's motor drove towards us, seeming to have descended the hills in per-

fect safety. Miss Pomeroy, of course, was on the box. She *looked* rouged. I cannot be quite certain, as I am unaware of ever having seen any one whom I absolutely knew to be addicted to the habit, but Mr. MacGill had a cousin whom he used to speak of with considerable asperity, who used to be known as "the damask rose," and that was because she painted, I am sure. Miss Pomeroy's cheeks were startling. Her poor mother looked like leather, but was calm enough, in the back seat. She is a sensible woman, and when the young people (I include Cecilia for convenience) all began to exclaim in their silly way about Widdington, calling it "lovely" and "picturesque" (I must say that Sir Archibald had too much good sense to join in this), she remarked aside to me with a quiet smile, "You and I, Mrs. MacGill, are too old to care about the picturesque upon an empty stomach." To stand in a damp church with a stiff knee is even worse, as I told Cecilia, when she had insisted on dragging me into

the building, which smells of mildew. The sacred edifice should always, I hope, suggest thoughts of death to all of us, but Miss Pomeroy appeared more cheerful than usual, and stood talking with Cecilia about pillars till I was chilled through. The cold is more penetrating in these old churches than anywhere else—I suppose because so many people used to be buried there. It seems hideous to relate that on coming out, we sat down to lunch in a ditch.

Mrs. Pomeroy is so infatuated about her daughter that she would do anything to please her. I insisted at first that Cecilia was to accompany me into the inn, but Mrs. Pomeroy gave me such an account of the scene of carousal going on there that, rather than sit in the bar, I consented to eat out of doors.

The others called it a fine day, and even spoke of enjoyment. It showed good sense on the part of our cavalier that he, at least, never made any pretence of enjoying him-

self. He is thoroughly sick of that girl, but she will run after him. It makes me ashamed of my sex. When I was a girl I always affected not to see Mr. MacGill until he absolutely spoke to me; and even when he had made me a distinct offer — which girls like Virginia Pomeroy do not seem to consider necessary — I appeared to hesitate, and told him to ask papa. Of course if Mr. Pomeroy is dead (and her mother always wears black, though not the full costume — she may be only divorced, one hears such things about Americans), why then one can't expect her to do *that*, but I very much doubt if she will ever consult Mrs. Pomeroy for a moment — that is to say, if she can squeeze anything at all like a proposal from Sir Archibald.

I have tried in vain to put the young man upon his guard. Give them hair and complexion, and they are deaf adders all; yet what is that compared to principle, and some notion of cooking! Miss Pomeroy asks for

nothing if she has a box of sweets; yet only the other day I heard her confess to eating bread and cheese in an inn, along with that unfortunate young man, who probably considered it a proof of simplicity. He is sadly mistaken. Ten courses at dinner is the ordinary thing in New York, I believe, one of them canvas-back ducks upon ice!

By three o'clock, when this horrid meal was over, Mrs. Pomeroy and I were both so chilled and fatigued that I sent Cecilia to entreat that the woman of the inn would allow us to rest for an hour in a room where there were no drunkards. We were conducted to a small bedchamber, where I lay down on the bed, while Mrs. Pomeroy had a nap upon two chairs. Like myself, she is always troubled by a tendency to breathlessness after eating — and even lunch in a ditch is a meal, of course. She also talked a little about her daughter in perhaps a pardonable strain for a mother, who can scarcely be expected to realize what the girl really is.