

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallage Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntatz
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The Gentle Art of Cooking Wives

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*"If a wife is allowed to boil at
all she will always boil over."*



"CONSTANCE"

I [9]

"Girls, come to order!" shouted Hilda Bretherton in a somewhat disorderly tone.

"How can we come to order without a president?" queried a rosy-cheeked, roly-poly damsel answering to the name of Puddy Kennett.

"I elect Prue Shaftsbury!" screamed Hilda above the merry din of voices.

"You can't elect—you simply nominate," said Prue.

"I second the motion," said Nannie Branscome, and her remark was instantly followed by a storm of "ayes" before they were called for, and the president was declared elected and proceeded to take her seat.

"Young ladies," said she, "we are met to consider a scandalous—"

"Scurrilous," suggested Hilda. [10]

"— — alarming article," continued the president, "entitled 'How to Cook Wives.'"

"Here! here!" interrupted Hilda again, "we can't do anything until we've elected officers and appointed committees."

"Out of a club of four members?" queried Prudence.

"Certainly. Mother said that yesterday at her club, out of eight women they elected twelve officers and appointed seven committees of three each. Why, you know two men can't meet on a street corner without immediately forming a secret society, electing president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, and appointing a committee of five to get up a banquet."

"But to return to the subject," persisted the president—a long-faced girl with a solemn countenance, but a suspicious gleam in her eye. "'How to Cook Wives'—that is the question before the house."

"'How to Cook Wives!' Well, if that isn't rich! It makes me think of the old [11] English nursery song—'Come, ducky, come and be

killed.' Now it will be, 'Come, ducky, come and be cooked.' I move that Congress be urged to enact a law adopting that phrase as the only legal form of proposal. Then if any little goose accepts she knows what to expect, and is not caught up and fried without foreknowledge."

"Young ladies," said the president.

"Don't mow me down in my prime," urged Hilda in an injured tone. "I'm making my maiden speech in the house."

"Oh, girls, look, quick!" cried Puddy. "See Miss Leigh. Isn't that a fetching gown she has on?"

The entire club rushed to the window.

"Who's she with?" asked Hilda. "He's rather fetching, too."

"I believe his name is Chance," said Puddy Kennett. "He's not a society fellow."

"Oh, he's the chum of that lovely man," said Hilda.

"Which lovely man?" asked Prue. "There are so many of them. [12]"

"Why—oh, you know his name. I can't think of it—Loveland—Steve Loveland. We met him at Constance Leigh's one evening."

Here Nannie Branscome colored, but no one noticed her.

"Young ladies, come to order," said the president.

"Or order will come to you," said Hilda. "Prue has raised her parasol—gavel, I mean."

"There goes Amy Frisbe," remarked Puddy from her post by the window. "Do you know her engagement's off?"

"Well, I'll be jig——" Hilda began.

"Sh-h!" said the president.

"The president objects to slang, but I'll still be jiggered, as Lord Fauntleroy's friend remarked."

"Sh-h!" said the president.

"Girls, that reminds me," said Puddy. "I met a publisher from New York at the opera last night who objected to the slightest slang."

"Oh, me!" exclaimed Hilda. "Why, where has Mother Nature been keeping the dear man all these years? [13]"

"On Mr. Sheldon's editorial staff," suggested Nannie Branscome.

"Oh, that's too bad, Nannie," exclaimed Prudence. "My father—and he's not a religious man—said the Topeka *Capital* was a wonderful paper Sheldon's week."

"I'm not denying that," said Nannie. "I believe it was wonderful. I believe and tremble."

"With other little — —"

"Sh-h!" said the president, and Hilda subsided.

"Was Amy Frisbe at the opera last night?" asked Puddy rather irrelevantly.

"No," said Hilda, "but Arthur Driscoll was. He sat in a box with the Gorman party and was devoted to Mamie Moore all the evening. If I'd been Mrs. Gorman I'd dropped him over the railing."

"You don't mean that Amy Frisbe has been jilted?" exclaimed the president.

"I do, and it's her third serious heart wound. Really, that girl is entitled to draw a pension."

"Well, I'll be jig — —" began Nannie. [14]

"Sh-h!" said the president, and then she added: "Young ladies, it is for you to decide how you'll be served up in future."

"Is it for us to decide?" asked Nannie Branscome.

She had a peculiar way of saying things of this sort. She would lower her head and look out from under her head frizzles in a non-committal fashion, but with a suggestion of something that made her piquant, bewitching face irresistible.

"Certainly," said the president. "The style of cooking depends on the cook."

"Well, let us first see what choice we have in the matter. What variety of dishes are named? Where's the article and where did it come from?" asked Hilda.

"George Daly had it last night and he read bits of it between the acts."

"So that's what I missed by declining Mrs. Warren's box party invitation!" exclaimed Hilda. "Well, let's have the article."

"I haven't got it," said Puddy. [15] "George wouldn't give it to me. He said it belonged to Mr. Porter, but I copied some of it."

"Oh, there's Evelyn Rogers. Let's call her in. Evelyn! Evelyn!"

Hilda was at the window gesticulating and calling.

"Young ladies," said the president, "I'm surprised. Come to order. Good-morning, Evelyn. We are met to consider an important matter — 'How to Cook Wives.'"

Evelyn laughed.

"Is that all you called me in for? I heard enough of that last night. It was George Daly's theme all the evening."

"Were you at the box party?" asked Hilda.

"Yes, I was so silly as to go. Oh, these society people just wear me out. I'm more tired this morning than I should be if I'd worked at a churn all day yesterday. They're so stupid. They talk all night about nothing."

"You ought to commend them for intellectual economy; they make a little go such a long way," said Prudence. [16]

"Seriously, though, are you met to consider that piece?" asked Evelyn.

"No," said Puddy. "We just happened to meet, and that came up for discussion."

"Well, as I don't care — —" began Evelyn, laughing.

"Sh-h!" said the president.

"The publisher from New York says slang is not used in the best circles," said Hilda.

She recited this in a loud, stereotyped tone, giving the last word a strong upward inflection, suggestive of a final call to the dining-room.

"Yes, I know," said Evelyn. "I met him at the box party last night, and he told me so."

"What did you say?" inquired Puddy.

"I said it must be awful to be deaf from birth."

"Did he hear that?" laughed Hilda.

"I presume he did, for he gave me one look and straightway became dumb as well as deaf."

"Girls, I must be going!" exclaimed [17] Hilda suddenly. "Really, if any poor galley slave works harder than I do, I commend him to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Adults. I've already been out to a luncheon to-day, at Mrs. Pierce's, and Pachmann's *matinée* this afternoon, and I must go to Joe Harding's dinner to-night --"

"Are you going to that swell affair?" interrupted Puddy. "I envy you."

"I don't," said Evelyn scornfully. "Joe Harding's little better than an idiot, and he's notorious in many ways."

"He can give swell dinners, though, and the best people are his guests."

"No, they're not," said Evelyn emphatically. "I'm not there and never will be."

"Young ladies, come to order," said Hilda in a severe tone, "and listen to my tale of woe. After the Harding dinner I go to the opera with the Harding party, and then, with my chaperone, that pink of propriety, Mrs. Warren, I attend the Pachmann reception at the Rutherfords. Now, if your scrubwoman can name a longer, harder, or— [18] —"

"More soul and brain enervating list," continued Evelyn.

"I should be pleased—I mean pained to hear it," concluded Hilda.

"And what does it all amount to?" asked Evelyn. "Will any one tell me what you are working for?"

"A settlement," said Nannie promptly. "I'm the only niece of poor but impecunious relatives, and they expect me to do my best and marry well."

"Goodness, child!" exclaimed Hilda, "I hope you don't tell the brutal, cold-blooded truth in society!"

"Why, no, that isn't it," said Puddy. "We are going out to have a good time."

"Oh, you slaves and bondwomen!" exclaimed Evelyn. "You don't know what a good time means. I must be off. Adieu, seneschals." And with a pitying smile she left them.

She was a handsome, spirited-looking girl, with a queenly carriage. As she went out of the house Constance Leigh came by, and the two walked off together. [19]

"There's a pair of them," Hilda remarked.

"Awfully nice girls," said Nannie.

"Oh, yes, but they're rabid. Constance Leigh is as independent as a March hare, and Evelyn is perfectly fierce for reforms now."

"What, a socialist?" asked Prudence.

"No, not exactly, but she gathers the most awful class of people about her, and fairly bristles with indignation if one ventures to criticise them."

"What do you mean—criminals?" asked Prudence.

"You'd think so if you chanced to run into one of them. Why, last Sunday evening she had an inebriate up to tea with her; next Sunday she expects a wife-beater, or choker, or something of that sort, and the other day, when I was coming out from a call on her, I met a black-browed, desperately wicked-looking man—as big as a mountain. I know he was a murderer or something. I never was so frightened in my life. Why, I took to my heels and ran the length of the [20] street. I presume he was after me, but I didn't dare look behind."

"You needn't have worried, Hilda," said Prudence. "You know big men never run after you."

It was a notorious fact that most of Hilda's admirers were about half her size.

"Oh, yes. That holds good in society, but I don't know what might obtain in criminal circles."

"Hilda, did your villain carry a cane and wear glasses?"

"I was too frightened to notice, but I believe he flourished a stout stick of some sort, and I do remember a wicked gleam about his eyes—might have been spectacles."

The girls burst out laughing.

"Why, it's Professor Thing-a-my-Bob, or Dry-as-Dust, or somebody or other, from Washington. He's her *fiancé*."

"Well, I don't care if he is," persisted Hilda. "He's a wicked-looking villain."

"Oh!" screamed the girls, and then Prudence added, with mock solemnity:

"Any one who could talk slightingly of [21] a genuine college professor would speak disrespectfully of the equator or be sassy to the dictionary."

"I'd just enjoy telling the poor old proff what Hilda— —" began Nannie, but the persevering president interrupted her.

"Young ladies, you will now come to order and consider the subject in hand."

"Which hand? Or in other words, where's that article? I should like to see it," said Hilda.

"It appeared in the *Tribune*, but I didn't see it," said Puddy, "but I can give you some little bits, here and there, that I jotted down as George Daly read them. Now listen."

"Order," said the president.

"First catch your fish," Puddy read impressively, looking around for approval.

"First go a-fishing, I should say," said Hilda.

"Don't hang up your fish on a hook in the housekeeper's department and think your work is done.' [22] "

"That's Hugh Millett," murmured the president. "I don't think he's been home since he returned from his wedding trip."

"Start with a clear fire, not too hot. Don't pile on all the wood and coal at once, for if the fire burns down before your fish is done it will be quite spoiled."

"Well, Mrs. Munsey is a spoiled fish, then," said Hilda. "Don't you remember, Prue, how Will Munsey heaped on the loving at first? It was four inches deep—lovey this and dovey that till it fairly cloyed one. But the fire went out long ago. There's no spark or sparking on that hearth now."

"Don't think, after the cooking is well under way, that you can leave it to take care of itself.' I had something more," said Puddy, fumbling in her reticule for another bit of paper. "Oh, here it is: 'Don't stuff your fish with dried crusts composed of the way your mother used to do this.' And here's another: 'Some husbands, after making it so hot in private that their poor wives are nearly reduced to a cinder, serve them up in public [23] with a cold shoulder. Others toss them carelessly into a kettle to simmer from morning till night over the nursery fire.'"

"I'm going," said Nannie abruptly, and without further ceremony she departed, just as Evelyn Rogers came in again.

"Nannie Branscome is a perfect — —" Hilda began.

"Sh-h!" said the president.

"Well, I trust she'll settle in a heavily wooded country, for the cooking she'll require before she's palatable would break a millionaire if fuel was dear."

"Oh! she'll do well enough when she has her growth," said Prudence in her dry way.

Nannie's growth was a subject of jest among her mates. At sixteen she suddenly thrust her foot forward into womanhood with saucy bravado, as it seemed. At seventeen she snatched it back—pettishly,

some said, but there were those who looked deeper, and they discerned a certain vague terror in the movement—a dread of the unknown. Since [24] that time—almost a year now—Nannie had been hovering on the border line, something like a ghost that has ceased to be an inhabitant of this world and yet refuses to be well laid.

“Now listen to this, girls,” said Puddy, who was intent on reading her excerpts to the bitter end. “If a wife is allowed to boil at all, *she always boils over.*”

“It would require a high temperature to boil you, Hilda,” said Prudence with a laugh, for Hilda's good-nature had passed into proverb.

The girl looked down from her five feet nine inches of height with her easy, comfortable smile.

“Why? Because of my altitude?” she asked.

“And you will be sure to scald your fingers and get the worst of it,” Puddy went on relentlessly.

This struck Evelyn's fancy and she exclaimed:

“Girls, I can just see Nannie's husband sitting in the doorway of their cabin blowing his fingers and wincing. [25]”

“Can you?” said a voice, and the girls started as they saw Nannie standing between the curtains of the folding doors.

Sometimes she resembled an elf in her weird beauty; just now she looked more like an imp.

Something disagreeable might have ensued, for Nannie's temper was uncertain and undisciplined, but Prudence said in a presidential tone:

“Young ladies, it is for you to decide how you will be served up in future. Will some one please make a motion?”

“Oh, let's decide how each other will be served,” said Hilda. “You know at church nobody applies any of the sermon to himself, but fits it all on to his neighbors.”

“Evelyn will be raked over the coals,” said Nannie in a low, intense voice.

Evelyn's handsome face flushed and her lips parted for a retort, but Hilda exclaimed:

"Puddy will be made into delicious round croquets," and she smacked her lips with anticipatory relish. [26]

"Hilda'll be kept in a nice continual stew," retorted Puddy.

"Nannie'll be parboiled, fried, fricasseed — —" began Hilda, but Nannie exclaimed:

"No, I'll be roasted — you see if I'm not!"

"Prue will be baked in a genteel, modern way," said Evelyn.

"Yes!" shouted Hilda, to get above the noise. "Girls, mark my words. Some day Mr. Smith, Brown, or Jones, whoever he is, will invite us all to a clambake, and when we arrive we'll find it's just dear old Prue served up."

This hit at Prudence's usual silence struck the company forcibly, and after a little more from the recipe they broke up with noisy mirth.

On the doorstep Nannie paused and looked about her. Puddy's last extract from the article under discussion was wandering through her brain, something as a cat wanders through a strange house.

"Order a dressing as rich and as plentiful as you can afford. [27]"

Nannie understood this well enough. She was wearing such a dressing at that very moment, but the next sentence puzzled her.

"If you can't afford the best, heap your fish with crumbs of comfort. Press some of these into pretty shapes, such as hearts, and roses, and true lovers' knots. If you have neither the patience nor the skill to follow these directions, take my advice and don't go a-fishing."

Nannie had never received a caress at home in her life and very few abroad, for she was not one to form close friendships among the girls. Her parents had died before she could become acquainted with them, and the aunt who had reared her was a worldly woman who looked upon her merely as a valuable piece of social property. Nannie's lack of popularity was disappointing, but the aunt still

hoped that her unusual beauty would atone for her brusqueness, crudity, and lack of tact, and she would form a rich alliance. Between her aunt and uncle there had never been, to Nannie's knowledge, the slightest [28] expression of affection, and so when one spoke of "hearts and roses" and "true lovers' knots" in a domestic connection, the words fell strangely upon the girl's ears.

The sun was streaming through the trees that lined the broad, handsome avenue as the merry group broke up. Happy children, their dear little bodies tastefully clothed and their dear little faces wreathed in smiles, flitted about here and there at play, like pretty elves. Now and then some one or more of them would run, with shouts of glee, to welcome a home-coming father.

In the heart of a more womanly, more happily trained girl, all this would have awakened tender yearnings. It awakened a feeling in Nannie's heart—just what it meant she could not have told—but this vague, unused something was soon swept one side by a more comical image. As she looked at the handsome dwellings she seemed to hear a voice calling:

"Wives for dinner! wives for dinner! [29]"

And from the household altars there rose the smoke of unique dishes—domestic fries, feminine roasts, conjugal stews, in highly colored family jars.

"Come, ducky, come and be cooked!" sounded in her ears.

"No, I thank you," said Nannie audibly.

And she hurried down the avenue.

