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**THE ROAD TO THE HEART OF A MAN**

A Breezy Comedy From the French.

Scene. A small but elegant diningroom in the modern artistic style, light woodwork, spotless linen and sparkling glass. The table is set for two, with an endless variety of forks and spoons at each place. In the centre a beautiful cluster of pink roses.

Madame, delicate, ethereal, blonde, is dressed in an exquisite tea gown. A widow, but ready to be persuaded to change her life of loneliness, particularly as her companion is a man of considerable wealth.

There is also a rival to be vanquished, a cousin of madame's but poor and instriking contrast to the former's delicate beauty. Monsieur expects to call up the cousin after dinner, but madame has decided otherwise.

Monsieur, a good-looking, healthy and hearty specimen of the genus man; a bachelor and in search of a wife. At present undecided between madame and her cousin.

They are seated at the table. Monsieur (politely preparing to pour from the decanter of white wine before him): Allow me.

Madame (pushing her glass away): No indeed! I never take anything but mineral water.

Monsieur (innocently): You are not sick, I trust!

Madame (loftily): It is in order that I may not become so—but help yourself, I beg of you. (To the butler): Give monsieur some Bordeaux.

Monsieur (looking with embarrassment at his two wine glasses, one filled with red, the other with white wine): Won't you even take a little Bordeaux?

Madame (horrified): Never! Monsieur (absently repeating the question): But you are not sick?

Madame: I certainly would be if I drank the horrid stuff.

Monsieur (putting down the glass he had just raised to his lips): Oh!

Madame (smiling graciously): How kind of you, my dear friend, to come to dinner with me in this informal way.

Monsieur: You know that I was only too delighted.

Madame (sweetly): Indeed! You do not come half often enough to Paris—but then I do not wonder, your chateau is a jewel!

Monsieur (gallantly): I return the reproach, fair lady. It is very seldom that you grace your charming country home. You are cruel to your neighbors, and, besides, how can I eat all the partridges alone?

Madame (coldly): I do not eat game.

Silence. Madame absently plays with the edge of her empty plate. Monsieur, who

adores partridges and has helped himself plentifully, draws a long sigh. He swallows one or two mouthfuls hurriedly and pushes away his plate.

Madame (in surprise): Have you finished? Why, I always thought you were a most valiant trencherman.

Monsieur, too polite to admit that his hunger ceases at the sight of a companion who does not eat a mouthful, murmurs some vague remark.

The plates are changed and a juicy roast is brought in, at the sight of which monsieur's appetite returns with a bound. Surely his delicate hostess will bear him company now.

But the butler is well trained in the ways of his mistress. He passes her by and offers the roast directly to monsieur, who turns eagerly to madame.

Monsieur: Pray allow me the pleasure of serving you.

Madame (with a faint shriek): Red meat—never, sir.

Monsieur (discouraged, waves away the roast): No, I thank you.

Madame does not insist. She is not sorry to reach the conclusion of a dinner, which, for her, ends with the buttered eggs and is only continued with the spinach and pulse. These are served separately, and as she helps herself to potatoes she explains that she is allowed to eat only boiled vegetables, which she always seasons herself.

Monsieur, usually a clever talker, is silent. A feeling of depression which he is powerless to combat has seized upon him. Also he particularly dislikes spinach.

Monsieur: Do you follow such a strict diet at every meal?

Madame: But this is not strict dieting! It becomes a matter of habit and pleasure very quickly, I assure you. And really one soon learns to pity the people, ignorant of the laws of hygiene who, like you, dear friend, amuse themselves by filling their stomachs with all sorts of indigestible things.

Monsieur: !!!

Madame: Now, you see, since I began to eat normally, and as every one should eat—

Monsieur: ?????!!!

Madame (more and more complacently): I never feel any of the discomfort experienced by those who eat meat and drink wine.

The butler appears with a sherbet of tempting appearance.

Monsieur (exasperated): You do not drink wine and you refuse meat. I am sure you must cram yourself with sweet!

Madame (with a low cry of horror): Sugar! What can you be thinking of, my friend? I had the sherbet prepared especially for you. I never allow myself to touch anything sweet; sugar is so fattening you know.

Monsieur refuses the sherbet.

Madame (smiling and candid): You will not take any?

Monsieur (sarcastically): I am afraid it would make me too fat!

They leave the table and enter a dainty parlor, where the butler presently serves the coffee.

Madame (pouring it): A cup of coffee, dear friend?

Monsieur (somewhat revived by the clear fragrance): Thank you—and you?

Madame: No, none for me. I drink nothing but camomile—see, this is my little tea ball.

Monsieur: Why do you do that?

Madame (in a tone of pity for such ignorance): For my digestion.

Monsieur: But what is there to digest? A few spoonfuls of buttered eggs.

Madame: And the spinach and my potato, Monsieur (ironically): Do not forget the mineral water.

Madame (counting two little pills from a golden box beside her): Ah! you are jesting now. One—two, that is enough.

Monsieur (horrified): What are you doing now? Putting medicine into the camomile?

Madame (with a look of superior pity): No, indeed! This is sugar specially prepared, free from all danger. It does not fatten.

Monsieur (in the tone of a man whose patience is exhausted): Sugar! free from all danger!

An hour later, monsieur rings at the door of a tiny apartment on the fourth floor of a cheap boarding-house. An old woman dressed in a cook's apron opens the door and smiles at the sight of the visitor.

Cook: Miss Alice will be glad to see you, sir. Walk in; she is still at the table; that is, she has just this minute sat down. Poor child she works hard with her classes.

Monsieur enters a tiny, cheery dining room, where a young lady is seated, reading

WOODSTOCK, N. B., MARCH 29, 1905.

as she eats. At the sight of her visitor she springs up with her hands outstretched.

Miss Alice: You, at Paris! What fun! Sit down, you must have dinner with me, unless you have already dined. It is late I know.

Monsieur (his face beaming at the warm welcome he has received, and also at the sight of a savory beefsteak surmounted by golden brown potatoes): Yes, I have dined—or, rather, I have not.

Miss Alice: My dear Roger, it certainly is good to see you! I know you won't mind taking pot luck! You can see the principal article, but there is a salad and a pate, and this wine isn't so bad either, though not much like what you get in the country. If I had known you were coming, I'd have prepared something different.

But monsieur is radiant. He eats his beefsteak in blissful content, all the time looking admiringly at Miss Alice. At last he can contain himself no longer.

Monsieur (in ecstasy): Alice! you are the kind of woman to make a man proud and happy! Any one who can eat and drink as you do. Ah! that is what renders true union possible.

Alice (astonished): ?????!!!

Monsieur (rapturously): Alice, I adore you! Once I doubted, but now I am sure of it. Your beefsteak is perfection—and you, also. Do not laugh. I am speaking seriously. Tell me, will you be my wife?

Alice overcome by emotion, is silent.

Cook (who has just entered): Oh! Miss Alice. How glad I am! Now you can live like a lady and always have enough to eat!

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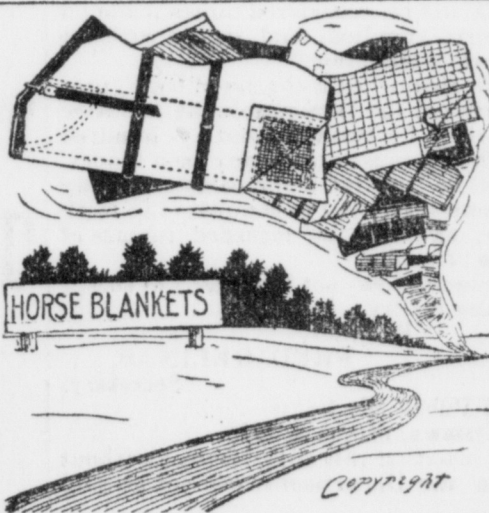
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