

Gender Wars and Happy Endings, From both sides of the divide

The Nice Husband, or Patient Grizel

There lived in Dublin some years ago so peevish and morose a fellow, that his wife, though the usual indulgent dove-like creature in life, could never please him. He made it his constant practice to contradict every thing she said, and to curse and swear at every thing she did; if she brought him white bread to the table he would have brown; if she cut crust he would have crumb. In short, there was no such thing as obliging him, and her life was one continued scene of anxiety and noise.

One day after dinner he went to market, and he bought a brace of pike; and coming home, delivered the purchase to the maid, with orders to have them dressed for supper, and away he marched. The cook carried them directly to her mistress. The woman enquired what sauce to be directed. "Sauce, Madam", replies the wench, "he never opened his lips about sauce to me, but charged them to be ready by seven o'clock, and then went out that very moment". – "Bless me, my girl," says she, "how could you be so careless as not to ask him? We shall now be all untwisted. If we wait till he comes home for fresh orders, the kitchen will be too hot to hold us. If I should venture to boil them, he will have them stewed; should I stew them he will have them fried; should I broil them he will have them fricassed; in short, should I dress them any way whatever I shall have words enough, no question, and perhaps the marks of his conjugal affection to shew them for two months afterwards into the bargain".

"Well, Madam," says the maid, "make the best of a bad market, and take my foolish advice for once. The pike are fine pike; cut them into large modicums, and dress some one way and some another".

This expedient was approved of. The jack, the stewpan, the kettle, are all got into readiness. The pike are carbonated accordingly to the scheme proposed and proper sauce is made for each respective mode of dressing.

While they were thus in the heat of all their cookery a little child, that the mother had clapped down upon the table to be out of harm's way, cried most bitterly. The infant's bawling was music she could bear with; any noise was more agreeable than her husband's thunder.

Supper being now in some forwardness, Betty was ordered to remove the child, and lay the cloth, She soon found by the smell what a blessed pickle the child was in; but as she took the boy up, notwithstanding all the precaution imaginable, a fragment dropped accidentally on the tablecloth.

In comes our humorist in good speed, and there no time for mundification, therefore a plate was laid over it in the twinkling of an eye.

Scarce were all things well adjusted, but up stairs mounts Monsieur Morose, "Well, wife," cries he, surlily enough, "is supper ready?" – "All ready, my dear" says she, in the most obliging manner, and with all the cheerfulness imaginable. "What have you got!" cried he, "The fish, my love, which you brought home this afternoon; shouldn't I?" said she. "Well, and how have you dressed them, pray?" says he. "To

please you I hope,” said she, “I have boiled them my dear”. – “Then eat them yourself and be d---d, I’ll have none of your boiled fish, not I” – “How then would you like to have them done, deary? Don’t be in a passion”. – “Fried”, said he. Away she flies, and brings him a plate of fried fish. He picks up a mouthful or two, and begins to open: “Take your fried fish yourself; ‘I’ll have some stewed”. – “There then”, bringing him another plate, “taste them”. – “I’ll have none stewed now I think on’t, let the b---h your maid eat them; I’ll have some roasted”. – “Then have them roasted if you please, child; they are for you.” – “This won’t do, I must have some broiled”. – “Once more I’m prepared for you”, says she.

Our humorist finding she was so obsequious, and there was no just room for complaint, grew outrageous, and threw the plate about the house. He’d have none of her boiled dabs, not he. “In the name of goodness, what would’st thou have, my dear?” Not knowing what to say, “Why a t---d” said he, the indulgent wife takes off the plate, “There’s that for you too, my dear”.

Morose, nettled as he was, could not forbear laughing, and owned that his wife had studied once in her life to please him. Her good nature, in short, and affable deportment, wrought such a thorough reformation in him, that for ever after he behaved with prudence and discretion, and treated her beyond all expectation, with decency and good manners.

The Power of Scolding

Friend Benedict has got a wife,
Whose hand he took to sweeten life,
Her father gave her store of gold,
Her mother learned her how to scold,
In this she has much progress made,
To be quite mistress of the trade;
Betty one day washing up
The china, and she broke a cup;
Her lady heard the pieces clatter,
And strait ran in to know the matter;
The broken cup the mischief shewing,
Soon set her wondrous clack a-going,
It went so very loud and clear,
The servants left the room for fear;
But as they frightened ran away,
One touched her little lag-dog Tray;
The cur shrieked out, she head the noise,
With double fury raised her voice;
The tables, china, chairs, and glasses,
All animated, left there places;
Things scarcely moved from year to year,
Skipped through the room, as if for fear;
The scene was mighty odd and droll,
To see one after t’other roll;
The room near empty, she still scolding,
Stunned Benedict awhile beholding,
Who begged at last, her tongue she’d stay

For fear the house should run away;
Just then were stalking through the room,
The mops, the brushes, and long broom;
She took the latter, broke his head,
And laid poor Benedict for dead.
He motionless, in bloody plight,
Soon put his Peggy in a fright,
Not because she'd her husband lost,
But least her neck should pay the cost;
Security was needful next,
For which she on this project fixed;
Just over his head a ham there hung,
Which had kept motion with her tongue;
On seeing that suspended swing,
And only fastened by a string,
She thumped it till it tumbled down
And laid it by him on the ground.
Then, throwing by the guilty broom,
She ran distracted round the room,
Ringing her cap from off her head,
And screaming out "He's dead, he's dead",
The servants heard her speak of death,
Came running in, all out of breath,
Just then to his she laid her cheek,
And bubbling cried, "My heart will break,
Ah! Cruel ham, thus to destroy
My dear, dear husband, life and joy;
Where is the wretch, O tell me where,
That placed the ham to kill my dear?
Oh! Could I bring him back to life,
I'd be the kind indulgent wife,
But that's a wish the Gods deny,
Nor will they let me with him die.
Since tears of grief for ever must
Flow from my eyes, I will be just
To this dear man, nor ever name
A foible, that shall hurt his fame.
I cannot now a loss sustain,
That ever will give me cause for pain;
Since he is gone I loved most dear,
There's nothing left that merits care."

This spoke, she from the room was led,
And strait conducted up to bed;
There fell into a sound repose,
And in the morning early rose;
Sent John to call the mantua-maker,
The mercer, taylor, and undertaker;
They soon obeyed, the message sent,
Got orders, and away they went

To make all ready, that were fit
To lay her husband in the pit.
All things were finished in great haste,
And in the coffin he was placed;
His wife intended the next day
To put his carcase in the clay;
Which certainly had been his fate,
But for the thing I'll now relate;
She told her boy (whose name was Page)
To feed poor Poll and clean the cage;
He, with the parrot went to play,
And let the prisoner fly away.
When this was to his mistress told,
She did so stamp! So rave! So scold!
Wished things inhuman to the boy,
And vowed she would the house destroy!
The servants, goods, and what were near,
Absconded, as before, for fear;
The house it shook, the fires blazed,
The husband waked like one amazed;
Forced from his wooden trunk its lid,
And frightened from the prison fled,
Down stairs he ran, got to the door,
His Peggy saw him, screamed the more,
And quickly would the house have split,
Had not she fell into a fit;
The scolding ceased, the servants came,
Wondering what had got their dame,
Greatly frightened when they found
He stretched and silent on the ground;
Some took her hands, some raised her head,
But all concluded she was dead!
Poor Benedict, though in a shroud,
Was busiest of the frightened crowd,
He ran for water for her face,
But tumbled down, and broke the glass;
Whilst this mischief he was supplying,
His wife awoke, and fell a crying,
Astonished to behold again
A man she had so lately slain.
Guilt, conscious guilt, now touched her heart,
For acting the tyrannic part;
Her husband saw her inner pain,
And said, "My dear, your tears refrain."
This tender speech so strongly wrought,
It from her this confession brought:
"If you, my patient, injured love
Will not a guilty wife reprove,
My former errors I'll repent,
And henceforth be a penitent.

As wife I'll ever stand in awe,
And your commandments shall be my law."
This vow she keeps, has left her airs,
And now her spouse, the breeches wears.