

WOMEN'S HOUSEHOLD GEMS

FICTION - TWO PAGES OF RECIPES AND IDEAS - AGES for GUESSES

A FORDYCE WESTBROOK

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COLONEL FORDYCE was by birth the lineal head of all the Fordyces of Westbrook, which in Lichfield, as degrees are counted there, is equivalent to being born a marquis in England. Handsome and trim and affable, he defied chronology by looking at least ten years younger than he was known to be. For at least a decade he had been invaluable to Lichfield matrons in the entertainment of an "out of town" girl, the management of a cotillon, and the prevention of unpleasant pauses among incongruous dinner companies. In short, he was, by all accounts, the social triumph of his generation; and his military title, won by four years of arduous service at receptions and parades, while on the staff of a former governor of the state, this seasoned bachelor carried off with an entire plausibility and distinction.

But at 45 he fell in love with Miss Harriet Wadleigh. The affair, conducted throughout with that benevolent decorum peculiar to the colonel, was set in train one summer at Whitebrier Springs, where his arrival found those other habits, with whom it was a rite to spend each August there because their grandparents had never failed to do so, a little dubious as to what recognition, if any, should be accorded the existence of the Wadleighs. Indisputably Wadleigh pere was very rich; but it was equally undeniable that he had made his money through a series of commercial speculations distinguished both by shiftiness and daring, and that the man himself had been, until the war, a wholly negligible "poor white" person—an overseer, indeed, for Colonel Fordyce's father, who was, of course, the same Lieutenant Colonel Fordyce, C. S. A., that met death at Gettysburg.

Colonel Paul Fordyce, I repeat, at 45 fell genuinely in love with Miss Harriet Wadleigh, fresh from Vassar and a "finishing" tour of Europe. No lover ever gave more propitious evidence of his ardor. For it was presently notorious, via the Sunday Courier-Herald, that "the opening cotillon of the season at Whitebrier was led by Colonel Paul Fordyce of Westbrook, dancing with Miss Harriet Wadleigh, in cerise mousseline de soie, over taffeta, with cerise velvet, and a necklace of pearls." Not a chaperone with daughters but was as venomous as she dared to be in private converse. But Miss Wadleigh was the belle of the season. The ensuing October David Wadleigh bought the Bellingham mansion in Lichfield, Tom Bellingham—of the Bellinghams of Bellemeade, who indeed immigrated after the revolution and have never been regarded as securely established from a social standpoint—being at this time in pecuniary difficulties on account of having signed another person's name to a check. Wadleigh refurbished the house in the severest elegance. Colonel Fordyce was his mentor throughout the process; and the oldest families of Lichfield very shortly sat at table with the overseer, and not at all unwillingly, since his dinners were excellent and an infatuated Paul Fordyce—an axiom now in planning any list of guests—was very shortly to marry the man's daughter.

In fact, the matter had been settled. First of all, Colonel Fordyce received from David Wadleigh an exuberantly granted charter of courtship—for the colonel would no more have thought of opening the topic with the girl herself than he would have of discussing it with his negro boy servant. And this befell upon the happiest day of David Wadleigh's existence. The banker was in business matters wonderfully shrewd, as all his life, since the signing of that half forgotten contract whereby he was to furnish a certain number of mules for the confederate service, strikingly attested; but he had rarely been out of the state wherein his mother bore him; and where other nabobs might have dreamed of a viscount, or even have soared aspiringly in imagination toward a countess-ship for his only child, he retained in consequence an unshaken faith in the dust-gathering creed of his youth. His daughter would become by marriage a Fordyce of Westbrook, no less. His Harriet's carriage would roll up and down the avenue from which he had so often stepped aside, with an uncovered head, while gentlemen and ladies catered by; and it would be her children that would play about the corridors of the old house at whose doors he had lived so long and never dared to enter, unnoticed—except on Christmas day and other recognized festivities, when, dressed to the nines, the overseer and his uneasy mother, together with the slaves, by immemorial custom, made free of the mansion.

"They were good days, sir," he chuckled. "Heh, we'll stick to the old customs. We'll give a dinner and announce it at dessert, just as your honored grandfather did your Aunt Constantia's betrothal."

"You will perhaps pardon me," said the colonel gently, "if I venture to suggest, sir, that I am not yet so fortunate as to have the young lady's consent."

But as a matter of course the colonel

was accepted by Miss Wadleigh. His declaration, if tendered in a somewhat mannered style, was evidently sincere, and she had long admired him more than any other man she knew. Also the girl was frankly pleased at the prospect of being the chateleine of Westbrook. She had no ancestors of her own, except the dubious line of "honest and God fearing yeomen" her father's liberal retaining fee had caused to be traced out a brief 10 years ago; and being a sensible young woman, she had no lively faith in her "authenticated" descent from Edward the Third of England—most conveniently prolific of monarchs and the demonstrable progenitor of half Lichfield.

But about the Fordyces of Westbrook there could be no question. Harriet Wadleigh had their history at her finger tips. She could have told you every tincture in their armorial bearings, and had explained the origin of every rampant, counter charged, or couchant beast upon the shield. She knew it was the Bona Nova, in the November of 1619, which had the honor of transporting the forbear of this family into America; which scions of the race had represented this or that particular county in the house of burgesses, and for what years; which three of them were governors, and which had served as officers of the state line in the revolution; and, in fine, seemed amply satisfied to play Penelope to Colonel Fordyce's Cophetus. Colonel Fordyce was in a decorous fashion the happiest of living persons.

So, as a token of this, he devoted what little ready money he possessed to renovating Westbrook, where he had not lived for 20 years. He rarely thought of money, not esteeming it an altogether suitable object for a gentleman's meditations. And to do him utter justice, the knowledge that old Wadleigh's wealth would some day be at Paul Fordyce's disposal, was never more than an agreeable minor feature of her entourage whenever, as was very often, Colonel Fordyce fell to thinking of how adorable Harriet Wadleigh was in every particular.

And then some frolic god, en route from homicide by means of an unloaded pistol in Chicago, for the demolition of a likely ship off Palos, with the cooperation of a defective piston rod, stayed in his flight to bring Joe Parkinson to Lichfield.

It was David Wadleigh who told the colonel of this advent, as the very apex of jocularity.

"For you remember the Parkinson's, I suppose?"

"The ones that had a cabin near Westbrook? Very deserving people, I believe."

"And their son, sir, wants to marry my daughter," said Mr. Wadleigh; "my daughter—who is shortly to be connected by marriage with the Fordyces of Westbrook! I don't know what this world will come to next."

It was a treat to see him shake his head in deprecation of such anarchy. Then David Wadleigh said, more truthfully:

"Yes, sir! on account of a boy and girl affair five years ago, this half-strainer, this poor white trash, has actually had the presumption, sir—but I don't doubt that Harriet has told you all about it!"

"Why, no?" said Colonel Fordyce. "She did not mention it this afternoon. She was not feeling very well. A slight headache. I noticed she was not inclined to conversation."

"Though, mind you, I don't say anything against Joe. He's a fine young fellow. Paid his own way through college. Done good work in Panama and in Alaska, too. But, confound it, sir, the boy's a fool! Now I put it to you fairly, ain't he a fool?" said Mr. Wadleigh.

"Upon my word, sir, if the folly have no other proof than an adoration of your daughter," the colonel protested, "I must, in self defense, beg leave to differ from you."

Then after a little further talk they separated. Colonel Fordyce left that night for Westbrook in order to inspect the improvements which were being made there. He was to return to Lichfield on the ensuing Wednesday, when his engagement to Harriet Wadleigh was to be announced—just as your honored grandfather did your Aunt Constantia's betrothal."

Meanwhile, Joe Parkinson, a young man very much in love, who fought the world by ordinary, like Hal o' the Wynd, "for his own hand," was seeing Harriet Wadleigh every day. Colonel Fordyce remained five days at Westbrook, that he might put his house in order against his nearing marriage. It was a pleasant sight to see the colonel stroll about the paneled corridors and pause to chat with divers deferential workmen who were putting the last touches there, or mid-course in a consultation with the gardeners about the rolling of a lawn or the retrimming of a rosebush, and to mark the bearing of the man, so colored by a manifest good will toward everybody.

He joyed in his old home—in the hipped roof of it, the mullioned case-



---WHAT HARRIET WADLEIGH SAID TO THE COLONEL IN THE DRAWINGROOM---

ments, the wide window seats, the high and spacious rooms, the geometrical gardens and broad lawns, in all that was quaint and beautiful at Westbrook—because it would be hers so very soon: the lovely frame of a yet lovelier picture, as the colonel phrased it with an unwonted flight of imagery. Gravely he inspected the portraits of his feminine ancestors, that he might decide, as one quite without bias, whether Westbrook had ever boasted a more delectable mistress. Equity—or in his fond eyes, at least—demanded a negation. Only in one of these old canvases—a counterfeit of Miss Evelyn Ramsay, born a Ramsay of Blenheim, that had married the colonel's grandfather, Major Orlando Fordyce, an aide de camp to General Charles Lee in the revolution—Paul Fordyce found, or seemed to find, an odd likeness to Harriet Wadleigh.

He spent much time before this portrait. Yes, this woman had been lovely in her day. And this bright, regular shadow of her was lovely, too, eternally postured in white paint, trimmed with a vine of rose colored satin-leaves, a pink rose in her powdered hair and one white ostrich plume as well. Yet it was an adamantine colonel that remarked:

"My dear, perhaps it's just as well that you have quitted Westbrook. For I've heard tales of you, Miss Ramsay. No; I do not think that you'd have taken kindly to any young person—not even in the guise of a great-granddaughter in law—to whom you can not hold a candle, madam. A fig for you, madam," said the most undutiful of great-grandsons.

Let us leave him to his rosette meditations. Questionless, in the woman he loved there was much of his own invention; but the circumstance is not unacknowledged; and Colonel Fordyce was in a decorous fashion the happiest of living persons.

Meanwhile, Joe Parkinson, a young man very much in love, who fought the world by ordinary, like Hal o' the Wynd, "for his own hand," was seeing Harriet Wadleigh every day. Joe Parkinson—tall and broad shouldered, tanned, resolute, chary of speech, decisive in gesture, having close cropped yellow hair and frank, keen eyes like amethysts—was the one stranger present when Colonel Fordyce came again into David Wadleigh's fine and choicely furnished mansion. For this was on the evening David Wadleigh gave the long anticipated dinner at which he was to announce his daughter's engagement. As much, indeed, was suspected by most of his dinner company, so carefully selected from the aristocracy of Lichfield; and the heart of the former overseer, as these handsome, courtly, sweet voiced people settled according to their rank about his sumptuous table, was aglow with pride.

Then Colonel Fordyce turned to his companion and said softly: "My dear, you are like a wraith. What is it?"

"I have a headache," said Miss Wadleigh. "It is nothing."

"You reassure me," the colonel gayly declared, "for I had feared it was a headache."

She faced him. Desperation looked out of her brown eyes.

"It is," the girl said swiftly.

"Ah—"

Only it was an intake of the breath, rather than an interjection. Colonel Fordyce of Westbrook ate his fish with deliberation.

"Young Parkinson?" he presently suggested.

"Remember that these people are your guests," he said, in perfect earnestness.

"—and I refused him this afternoon for the last time, and he is going away tomorrow—"

But here Judge Allardyce broke in, to tell Miss Wadleigh of the genuine pleasure with which he had nolle prosequed the case against Tom Bellingham.

"A son of my old schoolmate, ma'am," the judge explained. "A Bellingham of Assequin, Oh, indiscreet of course—but, God bless my soul, when were the Bellinghams anything else? The boy regretted it as much as anybody."

And she listened with an almost morbid curiosity concerning the finer details of legal intricacy.

Colonel Fordyce was mid-course in an anecdote which the lady upon the other side of him found excruciatingly amusing. He was very gay. He had presently secured the attention of the company at large, and held it through a good half hour; for by common consent Paul Fordyce was at his best tonight, and Lichfield found his best worth listening to.

"Grinning old popinjay!" thought Mr. Parkinson; and he envied him and internally noted and with an unholo fervor cursed the adroitness of intonation and the discreetly modulated gesture with which the colonel gave to every point of his merry-Andrewing its precise value.

Then, as old David Wadleigh stirred in his chair and broke into a wide pramitory smile, Colonel Fordyce of Westbrook rose quickly to his feet. And of that company Nannie Allsotts at least thought of how like he was to the boy who had fought the famous duel with George Allsotts a whole quarter of a century ago.

Ensued a quite felicitous speech.

Colonel Fordyce alluded briefly to the pleasure which he took in addressing such a gathering. He believed no other state in the union could have afforded an assembly of more distinguished men and fairer women. But the fact was not unnatural; they might recall the venerable saying that blood will tell? Well, it was their peculiar privilege to represent today that sturdy stock which, when this great republic was in the pangs of birth, had, with sword and pen and oratory, discomfited the hirelings of England and given to history the undying names of several Revolutionary patriots—all of which he enumerated with the customary pause after each cognomen, to allow for the customary applause.

And theirs, too, was the blood of those heroic men who fought more recently beneath the stars and bars, as bravely, he made bold to say, as Leonidas at Thermopylae, in defense of their beloved southland. Right, he conceded, had not triumphed here, for hordes of soldiery had invaded the fertile soil, the tempest of war had swept the land and left it devastated. The south lay battered and bruised and prostrate in blood, the "Niobe of nations," as sad a victim of ingratitude as King Lear. The colonel touched upon the time when buzzards in the guise of carpet baggers had fattened upon the recumbent form, and spoke slightly of divers persons of antiquity as compared with various confederate leaders, all of whose names were greeted in an uproar of enthusiasm.

But the south, and in particular the grand old commonwealth which they inhabited, he stated, had not long sat among the ruins of her temples, like a sorrowing priestess with veiled eyes and depressed soul, mourning for that which had been. Like the fabled Phoenix, she had risen from the ashes of her past. Today she was once more to be seen, in her hereditary position, the brightest gem in all that glorious galaxy of states which made America the envy of every nation; her battle fields converted into building lots; tall factories smoked where once a holocaust had flamed, and where the cannon roared you heard today the tinkle of the school bell. Such progress was without a parallel. Nor was there any need for him, he was assured, to mention the imperishable names of their dear homeland's poets and statesmen of today, the orators and philanthropists and prominent businessmen who jostled one another in their splendid, new asphalted streets, since all were quite familiar to his audience.

In fine, by a quite natural series of transitions, Colonel Fordyce thus worked around to "the very pleasing duty with which our host, in view of the long and intimate connection between our families, has seen fit to honor me"—which was, it developed, to announce the imminent marriage of Miss Harriet Wadleigh and Mr. Joseph Parkinson.

I think that every one was much surprised. Old Wadleigh had half risen, with a purple face. The colonel viewed him with a look of bland interrogation. There was silence for a heart beat.

Then Wadleigh lowered his eyes. If just because the laws of caste had triumphed, and in consequence his glance crossed that of his daughter, who sat quite motionless, regarding him. She was a very beautiful girl, and he had always been inordinately proud of her. It was not pride she seemed to beg for now. This Harriet was not the fine daughter the old man was sometimes half afraid of, through that moment. She was, too, like the daughter of a certain mountaineer who had hastily put aside her blue checked sunbonnet and looked at young David Wadleigh, because this fashion very long ago, because the minister was coming down stairs and they would presently be man and wife—provided always her present brothers did not arrive in time. Old David Wadleigh cleared his throat. Old David Wadleigh said, half sheepishly: "My foot's asleep, that's all. I beg

everybody's pardon, I'm sure. Please go on—"

"He had come within an ace of saying 'Mr. Paul,' and only in the nick of time did he continue 'Colonel Fordyce.'"

So the colonel went on in a time halloved form, with many happy allusions to Mr. Parkinson's anterior success as an engineer before he cut "like a young Lochinvar to wrest away his beautiful and popular fiancée from us faint hearted fellows of Lichfield"; touched, of course, upon the colonel's personal comminglement of envy and rage and so on, as an old bachelor who saw too late all that he had missed in life, and concluded by proposing the health of the young couple.

This was drunk with all the honors. Upon what Harriet Wadleigh said to the colonel in the drawing room, what Joe Parkinson blurted out in the hall, and, chief of all, what David Wadleigh asseverated to Paul Fordyce in the library after the other guests had gone, I do not dwell in this place. To reach it, in various fashions, did Colonel Fordyce explain such reasons as had seemed to him sufficient cause for acting as he had done; but candidly, and with a touch of eloquence even, to David Wadleigh.

"You are like your grandfather, sir, at times," the latter said, inconsequently enough, when the colonel had finished.

And Paul Fordyce gave a little bowing gesture, with an entire gravity. He knew it was the richest of rebuffs that Wadleigh could pay to any man. "She's a daughter any father might be proud of," said the banker, also. He removed his cigar from his mouth and looked at it critically. "She's rather like her mother sometimes," he said carelessly. "Her mother made a runaway match, you may remember—damn poor cigar, this. But no, you wouldn't I reckon. I had branched out into cotton then, and had a little place just outside of Fairhaven—"

So that, all in all, Colonel Fordyce returned to his rooms not entirely dissatisfied.

He was a long while before his fire that night. The room seemed less comfortable than he had ever known it. So many of his books and pictures and other furnishings had been already carried to the attic, that the walls were a little bare. There were a considerable pile of bills upon the table by him—from contractors and upholsterers and furniture houses and so on, concerned in the late renovation of Westbrook—the work of a host he hardly saw his way to deal with.

He had flung away a vast amount of money that evening with something which to him was dearer. Had you attempted to confide with him he would not have understood you. "But what would you have had a gentleman do, sir?" a Fordyce of Westbrook would have said in real perplexity. No, it was not sorrow that he felt, rather it was contentment; when he remembered the girl's present happiness; an excellent alone depressed the colonel's courtly affability toward the universe at large was this queer, horrible new sense of being somehow out of touch with yesterday's so comfortable world, of being out of moded, of being almost old.

"Eh, well!" he said, "I'm of a certain age undoubtedly."

By an odd turn the colonel thought of how his friends of his own class and generation—his own generation—had after dinner speech which he had made that evening. And he smiled, but very tenderly, because they were all men and women whom he loved.

"The most of us have known each other for a long while. The most of us, in fact, are of a certain age. I think no people ever met the sorry problem that we faced. For we were born the masters of a leisured, ordered world; and by a tragic quirk of destiny were thrust into a quite new planet where we were for a while the inferior and after that just the competitors, of yesterday's slaves."

"We couldn't meet the new conditions. Oh, for the love of heaven, let us be quite frank and confess that we of Lichfield haven't met them as things are. We've had not the training for it. A man who has not been taught to swim may rationally be excused for preferring to sit upon the bank; and should be elect to diversify his idleness by protestations that he is self-evident an excellent swimmer because once upon a time his progenitors were the only people in the world who had the slightest conception of how to perform a natural masterpiece, the thing is simply human nature."

"And yet we haven't done so badly. For the most part we of Lichfield have sat upon the bank our whole lives long. We have not done nothing—after all—which was absolutely earth staggering; and we have talked a deal of claptrap. But, meanwhile, we have at least enhanced the comeliness of our particular courtesies, and, honest life thereon, just as our fathers taught us. It may be—in the final outcome of things—that will be found an even finer pursuit than the old one of producing presidents. But, we have not done our duty. We have been gentlefolk in a generation of all, we have been true to the tradition of our race, we have defiantly embroiled our life, and indomitably we have converted the commonest happening of life into a comely thing. We have been artists if not artisans."

There was upon the table a large photograph in sepia of Harriet Wadleigh. He studied this now. She was very beautiful, he thought. "Nor thou detain thy vesture's hem—" said the colonel aloud. "Oh, that infernal Yankee understood, even though he was born in Boston!" And then, rising from Colonel Fordyce, may fairly be considered as a sweetening tribute to the author of "Give All to Love."

Colonel Fordyce was intent upon the portrait. So! she had chosen at last between Parkinson and the young fellow, a workman born of workmen who went about the world building bridges and canals and tunnels and such in those far countries which were to Colonel Fordyce just so many gray or pink or fawn colored patches on the map. It seemed to Colonel Fordyce almost an allegory.

So Colonel Fordyce filled a glass with the famed Lafayette madeira of Westbrook, and solemnly drank yet another toast.

"To the new south," he said. "To this new south that has not any longer need of me or of my kind. She does not gaze unwillingly, nor too complacently, upon old years, and dares concede that but with loss of manliness may any man encroach upon the heritage of a dog or a trotting horse, and consider the exploits of an ancestor to guarantee an innate and personal excellence. For to her all former glory is less a jewel than a touchstone, and with her portion of it daily she appraises her own doing, and without vain speech, she says: 'It may be his will serve you better. But, oh, it isn't possible that he should love you more than I.'" said Colonel Fordyce of Westbrook.