

# Annotations of Annabel

## The Letters of Katherine Mansfield

### DEAREST:

If one had power to award dramatic cross of valour for prowess in the theatrical field in face of heaviest odds, then would it go to Mr. Allen Wilkie for resolutely and undauntedly hitching his waggon to a star and pursuing, without haste or pause, the moon of his delight that knows no wane—presentation of the Plays of his Well-beloved Bard.

Surveying the somewhat sparse and stolid audience assembled to witness "Coriolanus," one reflected how greatly was needed a little leaven of imagination to leaven the bland but dull reception accorded to the martial tragedy. For 'twas a notable dramatic event, past years not having afforded opportunity of witnessing the doughty needs of this particular war-lord, or listening to the inspired periods of the tempestuous Volumnia, wolfish mother of the great lion cub; ably played by Miss Lorna Forbes, who literally swept all before her, garbed in cyclamen-shot purple draperies that fringed and hung upon her magnificent proportions as though swathed by Juno herself.

A lovely, drooping Virgilia was Miss Hunter-Watts, making arresting foil to the warrior-mother inciting her more than willing hero to deeds that won the empire. The stage mob, as it blundered in and out and decimated quite in the modern way of communist with his quarry, was strangely reminiscent of our socialist friends who occasionally lift their voices in our peaceful isles. Fierce and futile, yet were they successful in bringing extinction upon their sometime saviour who in spite of backsliding, was yet the noblest Roman of them all. In the seething crowd of shrieking detractors I picked several familiar figures; petty, pilfering mischief-maker, peripatetic agitator, and bustling barker, all out for themselves, as large as life, and devil take the hindmost.

Arresting was Mr. Wilkie as the haughty autocrat, mighty in prowess, and of eloquence unparalleled. Imposing his entrances, majestic his gesticulation, his noble lines orated with fiery force. Unhappily, by some fluke of acoustics, much of the dialogue was missed and, so to speak, went up in hot air; this being vastly disappointing to one devout listener who, on many a hot Sunday afternoon in the past, had tried and failed to read the play through for herself.

### Fairy Custard

**B**LEND a tablespoonful of flour and the same amount of butter, thoroughly first with themselves and then with a breakfastcupful of very hot (not quite boiling) milk, stirring over

**A**NOTHER of the Dominions' gifted girls is leaving shortly to follow the gleam in the wider world of opportunity that lies beyond our islands. Clever Miss Kathleen Salmon's work as a painter is already notable, and it needs no sibyl to prophesy success for this dweller in the Scottish city of the south, which is ever prone to appreciation of whatsoever things are lovely in the arts, and warmly generous to young strivers and treaders of the flinty path of achievement.

**A**LREADY the advance guard of wintry habilaments is upon us, and helmeted we shall go, or so it appears in the meantime. For which praise be, a disguising headpiece being a very present help in time of trouble of unpowdered nose and aftermath of sunburn that would detract from the allure of Cleopatra herself. Ingratiating shop assistants subtly suggest the coming mode in sibilant aside, and we are initiated into the glory that is to be of reversible silk of heavenly hue and texture; so that it begins to seem hardly worth while to amass oddments at three and three-farthings, cut into strange and useless lengths, and apt, as the weeks and months go by, suddenly to confront one like the ghosts of forgotten sins.

**I**T would seem that Mr. St. John Irvine, nothing if not versatile, is hardly likely to emulate, in these later years, his memorable "Changing Winds." In some short stories recently published, although the interest never becomes absorbing, the Irish author interests in the wide scope of his clear-eyed vision, ranging from Michael, weary of his bogs, to the shy, quiet Englishman journeying to Paris to worship at the shrine of the Winged Victory, "tameless and swift and proud." Though disillusion is the prevailing note, yet there are passages that enchain attention by virtue of intuitive observation and merciless analysis of motive, and he does not love the Bolsheviks. Says one of his characters—

"... Seems to me, when it comes to real cruelty and torture and killing, the brotherly-love merchants and the we're-all-as-good-as-one another brigade have tyrants like Nero licked. I don't know as I wouldn't rather spend a weekend with old Momma Borgia than a couple of minutes with Comrade Trotsky. I'd feel safer somehow! ! !"

Your

ANNABEL LEE.

the fire for about ten minutes. Beat the yolks of four eggs with a tablespoonful or so of soft sugar and add; then cool the lot. When stone cold and in a fireproof dish, cover with a foam made by beating the whites of those eggs, plus a trifle of lemon juice, till stiff as stiff and frothy. Then bake in a very fast oven for about a quarter of an hour.

**T**HE world is very aware of Katherine Mansfield, her genius and personality, her courage, faith, and restless searching for the stark and absolute truth which was ever the one true light that beckoned her like a flame.

It is to be doubted whether Mr. Middleton Murry is justified in casting upon the troubled waters of the world these intimate revealings of a valiant spirit tried beyond all limit of high faith and courage; but there can be no doubt that literature is enriched by this chronicle of gallant endeavour, and many who faint by the wayside of life will gain fresh impetus in realising the gallantry with which Katherine Mansfield faced that grim valley of shadows which is paved with pain, whose final Mecca is Death.

In these letters of the closing years of her life, she is discovered as poet and child; brilliant exponent of aims and technique of the artist; acute, clear-sighted critic of her contemporaries' work; and wistful woman whose heart's hope was some day to dwell with those she loved in a sweet, small home with multitudes of flowers, when "the time for singing of birds is come."

"I want to range about with you," she wrote to Mr. Middleton Murry, "but always with our own cottage to come back to, and its thread of smoke to see far away. That's life, that's the warm south, wherever it is."

The literary quality is of assured richness and clarity, with a wealth of comment on the passing show, notably humorous and ironic being her observations on life in foreign pensions; all illuminated by an exquisite faculty of conveying every shade and facet of earth's loveliness; which, combined with penetrating realisation of cruelties and ineptitudes of the Great War, her wide appreciation of the sweeping panorama of the world and impatience

with its vulgarities, shams and foolish curiosities, hold spellbound the discriminating student of books and men. All heightened and adorned with lovely descriptive touches—

"The wind with light, faint footfalls walks over the sea: the water rings against the shore, like a bell, striking softly."

In a mood of despondency she wrote:—

"I know so devilishly well the agony of feeling an immense longing just to have what everybody else takes so easily as their portion—health—a body that isn't an enemy—a body that isn't fiendishly engaged in the old, old torture of breaking one's spirit. . . ."

Profound and tragic and gay, lighting up the intricacies of existence with the beacon of her genius, these gallant letters will live on in the literature of England, together with those of her fellow-immortals, Keats and Wordsworth and gentle Charles Lamb. At one with that great company is the gifted girl who hailed from our own little land, to whom the world pays homage, and to whom, in her gay, brave acceptance of a bitter destiny, our hearts go out in a great pity and a great admiration.

"Cover her face, mine eyes dazzle,  
She died young."

—R.U.R.

### Doughnuts.

1 cup water, 1 tablespoon "Anchor" milk powder, 1 cup sugar,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt, 4 teaspoons baking powder, 1 egg, 5 cups of flour (scant measure),  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon grated nutmeg.

Method.—Beat up egg well, and add sugar and water. Sift flour, milk powder, baking powder, salt, and nutmeg together, and then add it to the mixture. Mix well. Turn the mixture on to a well-floured baking board, roll out to about quarter-inch thickness. Cut the mix with doughnut cutters. Fry in deep fat, and drain on brown paper.

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