

breakfast of weak tea and bread and margarine, half-starved, miserable, friendless. To feed and shelter men of broken constitution, as most asylum patients are, in a place like this was little short of an outrage. And this had been going on, as I was informed, for two years, though I learnt from the same Head Attendant that the Superintendent's attention had more than once been drawn to the matter without any result." The action taken by Dr. Lomax forthwith resulted in the gang being breakfasted in future under proper cover.

(To be concluded.)

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

### "JOANNA GODDEN."\*

Joanna, the daughter and heiress of a farmer in the neighbourhood of Romsey Marsh, is the very dominating personality of this interesting story, and truly she is arresting.

The author, as is well-known, is exceptionally happy in her descriptions of rural life and no one knows better than she how to introduce vivid local colour.

Her characters, it must be admitted, are more forceful than pleasing and human frailty in this, as in some of her other books, occupies a place of prominence.

Joanna has the making of a grand character, and she is a curious mixture of masculine independence and feminine susceptibility, and her dismissal of her experienced shepherd and her engagement of the incompetent Sockernish, because in some subtle way the latter appealed to her, are good examples of her complexity. She came near to wrecking herself over her infatuation for Sockernish. That danger was averted none too soon.

The story begins at the death of Joanna's father. She is, at that time, a fine young woman of twenty-three, with strong features; but any impression of heaviness was at once dispelled by a pair of eager, living blue eyes.

One of her father's farmer friends was of opinion that "she's a mare that's never benn präaperly broken in and she want a strong hand to do it." Farmer Furnese may have been right in the main, but Joanna tasting the sweets of independence, had no mind to assume harness at that stage. She firmly declined the advice of the old lawyer to engage a competent bailiff.

"I don't want a strange man messing around, and Andsidor's mine and I'm proud of it. Poor father said to me only a week before he died, 'Pity you ain't a man, Joanna, with some of the notions you've got.' Well, maybe it's a pity and maybe it isn't, but what I've got to do now is to act up proper and manage what is mine, and what you and other folks have got to do is not to meddle with me."

The whole neighbourhood disapproved of her decision, as it had decided that the terms of the

will would provide that Joanna's inheritance would be conditional upon her marrying Arthur Alce, who had long been courting her. The neighbourhood was wrong, however, as her father had made no conditions for his heiress, even leaving it to her bounty to provide for the younger girl, Ellen. Her autocratic control of the child covered a passionate fondness, as he well knew.

"So Joanna's going to run our farm for us, is she?" said old Stupenny, the head man. "That'll be valiant wud some of the notions she has; she'll have our pläace sold up for us in a twelvemonth, surely."

"I doant stand her meddling with me and my sheep," said Fuller the Shepherd.

"Its her sheep come to that," said Martha, the chicken girl.

Fuller dealt her a consuming glance out of his eye, which the long distances of the marsh had made as keen as the wind.

"She doant know nothing about sheep and I've been a looker after sheep when you and she was in your cradles, and I woant take sass from neither of you."

Martha laughed with her mouth wide open.

"When she's had a terrification wud me she's give me a gownd of hers or a fine hat. Sometimes I think as I make more out of her tempers than I do out of my good work what she pays me wages for."

Thus her servants. Martha's word "terrification" gives a good idea of the turbulent young mistress when her undisciplined temper got the upper hand. She rather enjoyed being the centre of discussion. She had none of the modest shrinking from being talked about which might have affected some young women.

She was glad when her chicken-girl brought her overheard scraps. "Oh, that's what they say, is it?" and she would laugh, a big, jolly laugh, like a boy's.

Her great physical vitality and her untiring energy exacted a like expenditure from those who served under her. She had unbounded self-confidence which landed her into serious farming mistakes, but on the whole she prospered and grew rich. Her only true affair of the heart was her engagement to Martin, the squire's son, who, in spite of social inequality, loved her deeply, and to whom she was a never-failing source of tender amusement. But Martin died before he could make her his wife, she deferring their union from time to time on account of the "lambing season" or what not.

The big-souled tender woman was once more left to pretend that her heart was satisfied with her farming interests.

The conclusion of the book is to be regretted. Her association with the vulgar little Cockney clerk jars upon a work that teems with simple and primitive things. In like manner we see no reason for Ellen's downfall.

By all means let writers hold the mirror up to Nature, but the vulgarising of Joanna leaves us with a sense of injury to art.

H. H.

\* By Sheila Kaye-Smith. Cassell & Co.

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