

WIT & HUMOR



Caroline Gordon

(1895-1981)

I'm fed up on starving.

The life of a person who is not writing a book is too strenuous for me.

I love to sew but you can't sew very well and have any kind of prose style.

[Nancy] asked me a minute ago "Mama, what does a person do when they go wild?"

She urges us constantly to efforts in her behalf with "Go on, Daddy and make me a living."

[Nancy] is very much excited...but a little disturbed that it is Little Lord Jesus' birthday, and not hers; she is afraid he will get all the toys.

[I replied to Nancy's desire to become a nun] by telling her that nuns had to promise God never to have any fun. Nancy is much addicted to fun.

[My little dog Uncle Bud] thinks the typewriter is my voice or rather that it is I who emit these constant clickings. When I go away he mopes and will not eat but they can always lure him into a room by typing rapidly.

Three illicit love affairs, an elopement, an illegitimate baby and a murder ought to keep things moving. I fear, however, that when I get through with these events reviewers will be saying the book has a muted charm or something like that.

I had a hard time with my nude...[in a painting] She kept crying out for umber shadows and nipples and navels and as soon as I'd get them in she looked like a corset ad. I finally compromised by making them all sort of mauve and now she doesn't seem to be advertising lingerie.

When I finished *Aleck Maury* I had the persistent delusion that I was a baseball and was just about to whiz over the fence.

My Muse turned the inspiration on again as if I had been a bathtub and she the keeper of the faucet.

I feel like one of these women who knows she is going to have another baby before the one in her arms is weaned. I have the subject for my next book.

Mr. Maury shook his head. "I can't hardly stand Ralph Waldo Emerson." He leaned forward suddenly. "You rascal!" he shouted. "You come out of those bushes." A blue-ticked setter burst through the shrubbery and, rushing up to him, stood, panting, saliva drooling from her open jaws onto his knee.

I have been here alone with [Robert Lowell] during the day time a great deal and pretty scared at times. I think he kissed me every five minutes (literally). Towards the last he took to kissing Allen, too, and coming up behind him and squeezing and lifting him off the floor, which scared the hell out of Allen.

Margaret Fuller...was perhaps more fortunate than Miss Stein in that she finally, albeit with reluctance, accepted reality in the shape of the universe.

I sat in a corner of Gertrude Stein's vast studio on the rue Fleurus and listened--impatiently--while Miss Stein descanted on the nature of her own genius.... It is sometimes amusing to listen to nonsense...

"I am of the opinion that your tongue is like a woman's, hung in the middle and capable of wagging at both ends," Heracles told him.

Simone de Beauvoir has named her book *The Second Sex*; one is tempted to think of poor Marcelle as a representative of some sex newly originated, a woman who, in order to get her rights, has given up all her prerogatives.

There was something warlike in the very tilt of her head, in the flash of her eye. He reminded himself of how valiant she was in battle, how wise in counsel, and yet, he thought, it would be pleasant if, at times, she presented a less warlike appearance. That helmet which she wore almost continually! And her breastplate, which bore the Gorgon's head! Perhaps if he went about the matter tactfully he might persuade her to lay her war gear aside occasionally and adopt a gentler mien.... Athene, as if she had read his thoughts, remarked... "Would you have me stay always by the hearth like your sister Hestia?"... Zeus said even more hastily that he was well aware of what he and all the other Olympians owed to Athene's prowess in battle, "But we are not always at war, my child," he said, and then, in his anxiety to make himself understood, explained that all he was asking for was a little more womanliness in her bearing--at times when she was not embattled. She might, indeed, take her stepmother Hera, as her model. "Hera is vain, capricious, overbearing, too fond of her own way, but there is no goddess who is more beautiful in her person or more stately in her bearing."

Hera went without anger for one whole day!

Cynthia [*The Malefactors*] has missed out on everything that makes life worth while to a woman. Therefore her ambition grows larger. Life must make up to her for what she has missed.

[Zelda was a] victim to Scott's delusions of grandeur in a silk hat.

[Faulkner was the] only person who conducted himself like a real he-writer, in the best Hemingway style, with some good touches of the Old South, [in a voice] like an indifferent weasel's.

[Faulkner] is a piece of cheese. I do not say this because he spit on me that time [vomited on her while drunk]; he just is. Too bad. He sure can write.

[Faulkner] was trying to say "Yes ma'am," and the drink he had just taken went the wrong way and there was a geyser in which I was engulfed.... Faulkner reeled off into a corner with a handkerchief. The poor devil felt pretty bad about it. I heard him muttering something about his bad manners...and I went over and said everything pleasant I could think of to him but he just sat there staring at me like a dejected coon.

"Yes, ma'am, I'm a Yankee and I eat little children. Gal babies mostly, fried."

As a result of the Fall the understanding of the soul in divine things is blinder than that of a mole.

Lucy said that there were boys in their class at school whom she would not allow to kiss her big toe.

The old woman was out of the bed and was coming toward them. A fierce, incredibly fat white cockatoo.

She turned her prettiness off so you would have a chance to see what she was really like.

He put his hand out, as if he could push the sun away.

The worship of mediocrity is almost a religion in Princeton.

Practically every member of the faculty here [Princeton] thinks that every other member is on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

It seemed to her that they themselves spent half their time drinking something that made them feel so bad that they had to drink something else to make them feel better and that something else made them feel like drinking something else again: what Daddy called a vicious circle.

When it became evident that Metis was pregnant, he had acted with his customary decisiveness (and in accordance with an old family tradition), swallowing her in the first stages of her pregnancy. He had regretted the necessity--as, doubtless, his own father had regretted the necessity of swallowing his children.

The cuckoo [Zeus] that presently flew out of the thicket was so bedraggled by the sudden storm that Hera had allowed him to perch, for warmth, in her bosom. It had been an easy matter, after that, to ravish her. The proceeding, on the whole, had been undignified.

Their wedding night had not been spent in Hera's Garden of the Hesperides, but on the island of Samos, where Hera (on occasion) claimed to have been born.... It had lasted three hundred years.

Hera claimed to have produced Hephaestus--and Hebe, too, on occasion--as the result of intercourse with a lettuce leaf.

If only I hadn't bitten off such a sizable chunk of the universe.

This modern substitute for prayer is not really an improvement. You stood some chance of getting hold of God when all you had to do was kneel down at your bedside, but getting hold of your psychiatrist takes all the energy and skill you can muster. And then he can only give you an hour.

I am well past eighty and am so tired I would like to get dead as soon as possible--or would if I weren't so wicked.