

## HOW I MANAGED MY SERVANTS.



HAVE inquired of all the tradespeople, Jack, and asked every one I know, and I cannot hear of a girl anywhere, and Eliza goes on Monday."

"Let me see," said Jack, "you have asked all the tradespeople?"

"Yes, and they almost laughed in my face."

"Have you written to somebody in the country?"

"I don't know anybody to whom I could write. I expect that people who get servants from the country have friends who engage them there, and send them up. Besides, Mrs. Harcourt told me that a country friend of hers said there used to be a good many servants to be had, but now-a-days there were so many inquiries for them that they were taken up directly."

"Oh! Have you asked your friends?"

"Yes, and they all promised to look out for me, but I have not heard of one yet."

"Have you been to the registry office?"

"Yes; I have paid half-a-crown at three different places, and there the matter has ended. I don't see any advantage in paying an indefinite number of half-crowns, and not hearing of one servant."

"Nor I," said Jack. "Have you advertised?"

"No, I never thought of that."

"Why, that's the very thing. Put an advertisement in the paper, and I have no doubt you will soon hear of one. There must be plenty of servants to be had. Here, get me the pen and ink, and I will draw the advertisement up for you, and then put it in to-morrow. What are we to say?"

"Wanted—a good general servant, honest, respectable, obliging, efficient, and cleanly. She must be a good plain cook, and able to wash and get up linen. A person accustomed to children preferred."

"That's the sort of thing, I think."

"Oh, no, I am sure that will not do, Jack. The woman at the registry office said she had better not say anything about the children or the washing, or we should not have a single application. The best way was to give no particulars, but get them to apply, and then try and induce them to come. How will this do?"

"Wanted—a general servant where another servant is kept. Liberal wages and a comfortable home for a respectable person. Apply, &c., on Thursday, between 12 and 2."

"Very well," said Jack; "if you want vagueness, that is vague enough. Let us see what that will bring."

I waited for Thursday morning with some anxiety. This was the first time I had had any difficulty about servants. Mother, I knew, had never had more than three in all her long married life, one of whom came to her when quite a child, and stayed until she married at the respectable age of thirty-five; and when she

heard that mother was ill and not likely to recover, she insisted upon leaving everything and coming to nurse her "best earthly friend;" and I am sure that not one of my mother's daughters mourned her loss more sincerely than did Hannah. Hannah's youngest sister had lived with me from the commencement of my married life until now, when she too was going to be married; and my present difficulties arose from the necessity of finding some one to take her place.

Four applications were the result of my advertisement. The first was made by a young lady most elaborately dressed. On entering the room, she immediately took the initiative—inquired how many we were in family—what perquisites were allowed—what holidays given. After hearing my replies, she considered a moment; then, rising, she bowed gracefully—said, "Thank you; I am sorry to have troubled you. I don't think this is quite the sort of thing to suit me"—and politely withdrew.

The mind of the second applicant was entirely engrossed by the desire to make me acquainted with the bad qualities of her last mistress—"She was so mean, and so bad-tempered. I told her several times that I should have to leave her, and she kept asking me to forgive her, and saying she would try to do better; and the master he'd come into the kitchen, and he'd say, 'Emma,' he'd say, 'I know you've a deal to put up with,' he'd say, 'but never mind,' he'd say; and she cried bitterly, for at last I said, 'No, 'm,' I said, 'I can't put up with it no longer,' I said; 'you and me will have to part, 'm,' I said." As I displayed no eagerness to be the successor of this misguided lady, this long-suffering individual withdrew.

The third was a sad, depressed-looking girl, whose appearance interested me at once. She told me her parents were dead, and she had come up from the country to a situation, which she was leaving at the end of three weeks, her mistress refusing to give her a character.

"I'm afraid, ma'am, I am not clever; but if you would teach me I would try to learn," she said pitifully.

"But, my good girl, I want some one who can do the work, not who requires to be taught. However, I will take your name and address, and think about it and let you know."

The fourth applicant was exactly the servant I wanted. Clean, tidy, and rather quick, she evidently knew what she was about and what she ought to expect. The lady with whom she had lived told me she understood her work and would do it. I had to make choice between the two. Jack told me I was to please myself, but no one in their senses would hesitate for a moment. With many misgivings, I sent the clever servant over to my friend, Mrs. Harcourt, and chose the inefficient one.

The remembrance of the first month we spent with that girl is like the remembrance of a nightmare. She

was so willing that I never asked her to do anything but she rushed at it, and in rushing broke half the crockery of the establishment. Her idea of cleaning was to remove dust from one part of the house to another, and in tidying one room she would untidy three or four. She had no idea of punctuality, or method, or order; and yet she would work, work, work, from early morning till late at night, until I felt like a slave-driver. And then I had got her on my hands. I could not send her away, because she had no home to go to, and I could not conscientiously recommend her to any other situation. At last I made up my mind I would set to work and devote myself to teaching her. I began first thing in the morning, and kept on all day, showing her how to do everything. Whatever she did badly I made her do over again. After repeated efforts I got her to put things into their proper places; and when once she understood that there must be a place for everything and that everything must be in its place, the rest was comparatively easy. She seemed to wake up to it all at once; and though I could not recommend any one else to make the experiment I did, yet for me the result was most satisfactory. That girl has been with me now four years, and has grown more efficient and more devoted with each year. The girl I had sent to my friend stayed with her eighteen months, then left to better herself; but I do not think any amount of wages would tempt my household treasure to leave my service.

For my own part, I must say, if I were a girl of the present day I should not like to live as servant under the majority of mistresses. I should know that I was expected to render unceasing, untiring, and devoted service, and in return be suspected of numberless faults, and begrudged many reasonable comforts. What a miserable custom that is, for instance, that prevails in so many households of "allowancing" a servant—weighing her food out to her, and giving her so many ounces per week! Why not be liberal, and take into consideration that servants working hard all day require far more food than we do, who sit sewing, and take a very moderate amount of active exercise?

After many years' experience, my advice to those mistresses who keep one or two servants only would be: In inquiring the character of a servant, be very careful to ascertain that she is thoroughly honest. Tell her when you engage her that you understand she is so, and that you want her to assist you in preventing anything that in the least approaches to waste or extravagance. Let her see from your conduct that you have a regard to economy, and after that trust her. Do not lock up any household necessary from her, but make her entirely welcome to all she needs. With the majority of girls you will find at the end of a twelvemonth that you are not the loser. You may spend the greater part of your time in locking up, and if a girl is disposed to do it, she can outwit you. If, on the contrary, she is on your side, she can economise in many ways that you could not, and save you besides from the moral degradation of living in an atmosphere of watchfulness and suspicion of those about you. At

the same time, keep your eyes open. If you find that you have unfortunately taken into your service a girl whose sense of honour does not answer to the trust reposed in her, far better send her away at once; you will never make anything of her. I am quite sure, however, that these girls are decidedly the exception.

When once you have secured a good servant, do not be backward in raising her wages without being asked to do so. Ten shillings given willingly and unasked is as much thought of as a pound or two would be which had been obtained after a struggle. If a girl does her duty, and stays with you, she is worth more wages at the end of twelve or eighteen months than she was when she first came, and she ought to have it.

A very vexed question between servants and their mistresses is that of "followers." I have heard ladies talk as if the height of moral depravity consisted in a girl having a follower. My good lady!—happy wife and happy mother!—did you ever have a follower? Did any one ever venture to make love to you? And did you not find it on the whole rather enjoyable? Think of that time, and do not be too hard upon your servant, who is only following your own most excellent example.

So much for what your servant has a right to expect from you. In return, you have certain work for her to do. Take care that that work is done properly and regularly; and if anything is missed or slipped, no matter how small, speak about it at once. No greater mistake can be made than to let a fault pass and say nothing about it, hoping things will be better next time. A right-minded girl likes to feel that a firm hand guides the domestic reins, and that if bad work will surely be blamed, good work will as surely be appreciated and understood. And, again, never allow yourself to argue with a servant. A lady who does that, loses her position at once. Let your wishes be reasonable, speak them quietly and firmly, and there let the matter end.

As the result of experience, I would say that unless this sort of feeling can be established between servants and their mistresses—a feeling of respect and regard on one side, and of sympathy and consideration on the other—we must expect that a very few years will work deplorable changes; and that whatever discomforts the ladies of the present day may have to endure, their daughters will have far worse. She will be a wise mother who endeavours to prepare her child for the trouble which may lie before her. If a girl be acquainted early with the details of household management—if her mind be filled with a sense of the dignity of labour, instead of the foolish scorn for it which, unfortunately, so many young ladies now possess—if she be taught that no work can be degrading which is done from a sense of duty, and in the service of those we love, she will be placed at once in a position independent of, and in sympathy with, her sisters in an inferior rank to her own, and will be in a great measure qualified to achieve a woman's noblest work—namely, to make the happiness of a happy home.