

REMOVING.



NOW really cannot stop another winter in this house, Jack," said I one evening to my husband. "It is so damp below-stairs that it is most unhealthy.

During the summer it may be all very well, but I quite dread the approach of winter, knowing that it means coughs and colds for the children and rheumatism for me. You do not feel it as we do, for you are away all day, and then sit in the up-stairs rooms, but we——"

"Well, well, my dear," said Jack, "if it really is necessary to remove, of course it must be done; but you cannot wonder that I am reluctant to see the necessity, for it is an awful bore. Where are we to move to?"

"We had better employ our evenings during the next three months in looking about," I replied. "Wherever we see a notice put up outside a house in a suitable situation, we must make inquiries about the terms and the accommodation, and very likely we shall meet with something in that way."

"That is no use at all," said Jack. "It would be a good plan in some places, I don't doubt, but not in a populous neighbourhood like this. I was speaking the other day to a gentleman who has a good deal of experience in this sort of thing, and he said that in the healthy, well-drained parts of almost all large towns, houses are in such request, that notices are scarcely ever put up to the most desirable ones, which are let through agents before the old tenants leave."

"Then what must we do?" said I.

"I think the best thing will be for me to write to five or six house agents, and tell them what rooms I want, and what rent I am prepared to pay, then they will send me a list of suitable houses. You can look over these during the day, and if there are any you think likely, I can go and see them after business hours."

"Very well, I will do so," I answered. "But I had better understand clearly what we have to look for, and what we have to avoid. Of course I know the accommodation we require; and I know we don't want a damp house——"

"Can you tell when a house is damp?" interrupted Jack.

"Yes, I think our experience here has taught me that. I shall examine carefully the bottom parts of the walls, and the colour of the edges of the boards in the lower rooms, and if they are dark in colour, or feel moist, I shall know from that alone that the house is damp. But this house is built on clay. If we were to get a gravelly or chalky soil, we should be all right, should we not?"

"At any rate we should stand a better chance. Now let us see if you understand what you are looking for. After we have got the requisite number of rooms,

we want—first, a house built upon either gravel, chalk, sand, or rock; secondly, a nice piece of ground for a garden; thirdly, a house with a southerly aspect; fourthly, a house with a distinct and separate drainage properly connected with the main sewer."

"But how can I tell whether a house is properly drained or not?" said I.

"You can notice, when you enter, whether there is any unpleasant smell, and make inquiries if possible of the last tenant. But I will see after the drainage. If a house suited us in every other respect, I would have it examined by a competent person before we went into it. We must be satisfied on that point."

"That would be much the best. What else is there, Jack?"

"We want a house with well-lighted, lofty rooms—with a good water supply—with chimneys that do not smoke—situated in a respectable, healthy neighbourhood, where the access is easy and convenient, and where the taxes do not bear an undue proportion to the rent."

"And fitted with a bath-room," I added, "and with hot and cold water up-stairs—with the kitchen on the ground floor—with all the windows opening and closing properly, and——You need not laugh, Jack. If we do go through the agonies of removing, we hope to benefit by the change, and at any rate we know what we should like."

"What we should like is one thing, what we shall get for the rent that will suit us is quite another," said my husband; "but we shall see."

Jack wrote to the agents as he had proposed. In two or three days the lists arrived, and I began my work of looking over the numerous desirable residences which were presented to our notice. Some people enjoy looking over houses; I cannot say that I do, or at any rate, whatever enjoyment I might have felt at the commencement of the undertaking was quite exhausted before it was over. I must have looked over eighty or a hundred houses before we were suited. Some were too small, some too large, some too dark, some too glaring, some too expensive, some not quite good enough, some damp enough to provide rheumatism for every member of the family who lived in them, and at length I almost came to the conclusion that the house we then occupied might, considering its rent, be looked upon as the healthiest and cheapest house in the neighbourhood. At last every house on my list was crossed out excepting three. These Jack was taken to inspect, and he decided that one of them would do for us, for though it by no means possessed all the virtues we desired, it was commodious, healthily situated, well-drained, and not too expensive. As it had not been done up for some years, the landlord agreed to paint it inside and out, to whitewash the ceilings, paper the rooms, and put it into thorough repair. We took it upon a lease, and rejoiced that that work was over.

"I wonder what is the best way to set about removing," said I to Jack. "Do you remember when the Grahams moved, how quickly they seemed to be settled in their new home? It was like magic. I should like to know how they did it."

"You had better call upon Mrs. Graham and ask her," said Jack. "I am looking forward to the time with great dread, I assure you, and the more quickly it can be done the better pleased I shall be."

Accordingly I called on Mrs. Graham; when I told her we were to move, she congratulated me very heartily, and said that she felt sure we should like the change.

"And how are you going to set about moving, my dear?" she asked.

"That is just what I wanted to get your advice about," I replied. "Of course it is a great undertaking for us, with our family. When you came into this house you were so quickly settled and comfortable in it, that I felt I could not do better than adopt your plans, if you would tell them to me."

"That I will, and with pleasure. First of all we had every chimney swept in the new house, then we had done to it whatever whitewashing and paper-hanging was necessary——"

"Fortunately for us, the landlord is going to do up the house throughout," I interrupted.

"That is good, and will save you a great deal of expense and trouble. If you can arrange it, I should have the chimneys swept before the men commence operations."

"Of course I can. And when they have finished, I am going to have the house cleaned thoroughly from top to bottom."

"And after that, have all the carpets, with the exception of the stair carpets, fitted and put down."

"The carpets put down before the furniture is taken into the house?" said I.

"Certainly," answered my friend. "You asked the reason why we were so quickly settled. That was the principal cause. You see, when you are removing you have to put up with a certain amount of discomfort, and I think it is much better to go through that at the old house than at the new one. Besides which, it is much easier to plan and put down carpets in an empty room than it is when the furniture has to be moved backwards and forwards. Therefore, I had all the carpets taken up in good time, thoroughly shaken or cleaned, and afterwards taken to the new house, planned, and laid down."

"How did you manage about making the carpets and fitting them to the new rooms, then?" said I. "Did you employ an upholsterer?"

"I employed an upholsteress, who did the work, I believe, quite as well, and at about half the cost that an upholsterer would have done. I can recommend to you the one I employed, though there are plenty of these women about. They go out working at so much a day, and will make and plan carpets, hang beds, cover mattresses, make curtains, or do any of the kind of work that upholsterers usually undertake."

"And of course whilst the woman was at work you were without carpets at home?"

"Yes, but we were accustomed to the rooms, and the furniture was all in its place, so that we were not very uncomfortable; and we made up our minds to put up with what discomfort there was for the short time that was necessary. Whilst the carpets were being made, the furniture was cleaned and polished, and repaired where it was required. Then, when all was ready, we hired a large van, had the furniture put into it without any packing, taken to the new house, and put at once into its place."

"Did not the men spoil the carpets with their boots?"

"Wherever the men had to step, we covered the carpets over with dust-sheets or brown paper, and they were not at all dirtied. It is necessary to look after the men, and see that they do not put each article into its right room. They are rather partial to popping things down where it is most convenient, and when this is allowed, it makes a good deal of work afterwards. A responsible person ought to be in the house when the van arrives, and as each article is brought in, ought to give directions which room it is to be carried into."

"I can see it will be very quickly arranged after that," said I.

"I have no doubt," said Mrs. Graham, "that if you do your moving like this, and are tolerably energetic about it, even with your little family, you may be so far settled at the end of the second day, that a stranger coming into the house would not know that you were new-comers. How are you going to manage about the blinds?"

"I don't quite know what will be for the best," I answered. "We have Venetian blinds to fit all the windows in our present house, but they will not do for the new ones. The out-going tenants have good blinds, which were made for the windows, and which they would sell at a reasonable price; but it seems such a shame to buy new blinds, when we have all those old ones."

"I know it does, but that is one of the expenses that *must* be. If you can buy blinds that fit at an inexpensive rate, you will find it cheaper to do so than to have the old ones altered. Indeed, you are likely to lose more money by trying to use them than by selling them even at a sacrifice. Perhaps the people who are coming into your present house would take them off your hands."

"Yes, they might. It is not pleasant, though, to try and push a number of fixtures upon any one."

"If it is an advantage to them you need not mind. At any rate, I am quite sure that things may often be bought very cheaply in that way. I bought the carpet in this room of the lady who lived here before us. The room is a good-sized one, and the carpet is Brussels, and in excellent condition; yet I only gave four guineas for it."

"Four guineas! I should think it cost fifteen or sixteen."

So it would have done if I had had to buy it at a shop, and have it fitted down. But very likely it would not have come in nicely for a new room, and it was

better for the lady to sell it, even at a loss, than to have it cut up to waste. If the tenants have not left the house into which you are going, I should certainly advise you to inquire whether there are any carpets, &c., to dispose of. You will, in all probability, be able to purchase canvas for the hall, gas-fittings, or blinds, at a much cheaper rate than you would get them at a shop. Of course I am supposing that the people are clean, and the things are good. Carpets three parts worn would be dear at a very low price."

"And you do not pack anything?"

"Nothing of the household furniture. The large vans which are at present used will take most things just as they are, and they can be carried in them from one house to the other. I think it is best to leave the packing even of the glass and china to the proper men. It is their business, and they will be more likely to avoid breakages than you will with all your care. If I were going from one part of the country to another, I should not pack the furniture."

"Should you not?"

"No. I have had a painful experience on that subject. Some years ago we removed from one town to another, a distance of about two hundred miles. We decided to bring everything with us, very foolishly as we found afterwards; for if we had sold the heavy common things, we could have bought new furniture with the money that we paid for the carriage of them."

"And I suppose you packed everything?"

"Yes. We got estimates from three or four people in that line of business. One of them advised us very strongly to have our furniture put unpacked in the ordinary way into the trucks which they used specially for the carriage of furniture by rail, and assured us that there was very little fear of its being at all spoilt. Another as strongly recommended us to have everything bound round with straw, and said that, though

a little more expensive, the plan was much safer. We, feeling very desirous to take all the care we could, adopted the latter plan, and very much we regretted it."

"Why?"

"Because, first of all, it was such a trouble to get all the straw off again. Instead of being able to carry the things to their places, they had to be put into a back yard to have the straw carefully removed. Then the surface was so much dulled that it had to be polished again and again before it was fit to be seen; and, besides, it was the more expensive plan of the two."

"But if you had employed the other people, your things might have been more spoilt."

"I think not. Some friends of ours had to move to a distance shortly afterwards. They profited by our experience, and adopted the other plan. Their removal was managed so cleverly that the only injury they sustained was the breakage of one cup. Perhaps they were particularly fortunate, but still that was the fact."

"Well," said I, rising to take my leave, "I am very glad to think we have not to move such a distance as that. For I expect, manage it as cleverly as you may, it is a very uncomfortable time. Does not the old proverb say that 'three removes are as bad as a fire?'"

"Yes, it does," said Mrs. Graham laughing. "But for all that, when it is done with forethought and care, I do not think a removal is any worse than a thorough spring cleaning. Of course, I have had my troubles and perplexities, and I remember that even the prospect of my first "move" so distracted me that I fairly broke down and cried; but experience is a wholesome teacher, and I shall be delighted if mine will prove of a little use to you."

It proved invaluable. PHILLIS BROWNE.



"I FAIRLY BROKE DOWN."

A PASSING CLOUD.

MY love and I fell out one night,
And foolish words were spoken;
We quarrelled o'er some trifle light—
An idle speech, a fancied slight—
For this two hearts seemed broken.

We parted both in angry mood—
Full darkly loomed the morrow—
Parted that sad eve in the wood,
We two whose love so long had stood
The tests of time and sorrow.