

LOVE AND ORDER IN THE HOME.



THOUGH it may not be always easy to clearly define what constitutes a *home*, there is no difficulty at all in discovering what does not. A fine house, with all the most modern improvements, well-fitting doors and windows, smokeless chimneys, dry walls, convenient water-supply, excellent drainage, a perfect immunity from

draughts and insect life, good servants, and good tradesmen in your immediate vicinity, go far to constitute a comfortable residence; while tasteful furniture, rare pictures, beautiful ornaments, and a good collection of good books, add still greater charms: yet all these, and a thousand other attractions, pleasant to the eye and very conducive to physical comfort, would never constitute a really happy home, without two other grand qualities—qualities like, yet unlike; independent, yet each to a great extent dependent on the other for its usefulness; each insufficient, of itself, to do all; each beautiful, but doubly so when allied; each within the reach of the humblest, as well as the highest—more lovely as well as more useful in the cottage than in the palace; each a corner-stone of happiness, and forming together the very foundation of peace—two grand simple qualities, all-powerful in heaven and on earth—Love and Order!

Let every person who possesses a home of any sort or condition whatever, look round and observe how far it is governed by those twin sisters; consider well if every action of every day is prompted by love, and carried out by order; if affection is the ruling principle, punctuality the ruling practice of every-day life.

It is the personal interest of every individual to make his or her home the brightest, pleasantest, most attractive spot on earth to every one near and dear to them; there should be no place like it. But we fear there are many people who never attempt doing so—many more who attempt and fail.

There are numbers of men who find *home* less attractive than the stately club, or the stifling theatre, the exciting billiard-room, or the insidious bar-parlour; many who even prefer the weary sordid street, with its legions of restless pilgrims and fated wanderers, to their own fireside; and yet every one admits, theoretically at least, that, "be it never so homely, there's no place like home!" Having admitted the fact, they immediately turn their backs upon the unparalleled place, and seek elsewhere for enjoyment! Such being the case, it may not be out of place in a

Family Magazine to offer a few remarks upon the simplest way of making our houses our homes too. And here we may observe that, in the first instance at least, this is entirely and essentially a woman's work—to the very last it will require a woman's patient, cheerful, energetic, hopeful, loving nature, to make home happy and keep it so. But love alone—no matter how true, devoted, admirable—will never do. David Copperfield and Dora, though perhaps the most loving couple on record, would unquestionably have drifted into matrimonial shallows, and been probably wrecked upon domestic rocks and reefs, had not their wise Master removed poor disorderly Dora from the storm which even her sweetness and loveliness could not prevent.

Man, though naturally an orderly, is by no means a patient or enduring animal. He cordially hates a *muddle*, and no amount of adoration can reconcile his mind to it for any length of time. Equally he abominates prim inartistic formality; therefore those things are to be religiously avoided. For women may say what they like to the contrary, but the great end and aim of their existence is man—to spoil him as a baby (to which circumstance much of his future assumption of superiority is due), to indulge him as a school-boy, to secretly admire him in incipient moustachios, and to love him honestly, faithfully, admirably as a man. His praise, esteem, friendship, affection, love, are (or ought to be) to a very great extent the laudable object of their ambition. From the moment a woman is able to understand anything, she recognises in some mysterious way that man is a superior being—a being to be looked up to, revered, admired, and even, under exaggerated circumstances, feared; a being whose commendation is coveted; whose praise is sweet, though it be given with the intolerant egotism of a school-boy; whose contempt is a thing too awful to be calmly contemplated. Sisters, when the boys go to school, is not the house a desert? are not all the ways of the school-room and playground, to you, weary, flat, and unprofitable? And when they come home—noisy, arrogant, domineering though they be—are not you and the house changed? Mothers, are not your grown-up sons an influence, a ruling power? nay, are they not absolute despotic tyrants? When Sub-Lieut. Jack, or Middy Tom—or even poor usher Ned—pays you a visit, do you ever think of appearing at the breakfast-table in your striped flannel dressing-gown? Do the girls, though there are only brothers and cousins in the house, dream of coming down in curl-papers? Not likely. Wherever there are men, women do all in their power to make themselves pretty and attractive, thereby tacitly admitting the superiority of the opposite sex! "Stuff and nonsense!" some strong-minded lady exclaims indignantly; "we acknowledge no such thing. Men are not our superiors; we are quite as good as they are, and mean one day to have equal rights and privileges with them." But such exclamations, and even the very existence of strong-minded women with a hankering after

"rights," prove beyond question that man is still superior, and the wildest flight of woman's ambition is merely to be equal with him. Until that time of equality arrives, women, or the great majority of them, will continue to make themselves attractive; and the only mistake is that it is too often only a surface and individual attraction.

A short time since, I had occasion to call at the residence of a comfortable middle-class farmer. On the parlour table there were three delicate monthly roses, with their lovely blushing petals, and pale shiny green leaves, thrust carelessly into a *ginger-beer bottle*. Just like those poor roses, is a pretty woman prettily dressed, in a disorderly room, and however much we may admire the flowers, however delicate their beauty or sweet their fragrance, the *ginger-beer bottle affronts us*. At first we may overlook it, in the enjoyment of the bouquet, but when we draw back a little to admire it at our leisure, then the obnoxious bottle thrusts itself upon our notice; it stares at us, disconcerts us, positively worries us; and ten to one, if we cannot find a more sightly vase for our nosegay, we will give up contemplating it altogether. The moral is that men, or at least most men, are far more impressed and influenced by *order, or its reverse*, than is generally supposed; they recognise more clearly than women that "order is heaven's first law," and earth's too. We know many women who rather like confusion; there's something comfortable about it, they say; but men do not. Even when personally untidy, they like neatness and regularity in others. When a business man returns from his office, where he has been plodding all day over columns of neat figures, and ledgers, and day-books, kept with mathematical precision, it frets him to see a disorderly room—table-cloth and window-curtains awry, sofa-cushions wrong side up, books and work wandering apparently at their own sweet will over the chairs or the carpet. His first impulse is to put the table-cover straight; his second, to throw himself into his easy-chair and shut his eyes to it. Being a business man, he follows his *second* impulse, after one hopeless, helpless glance round. Everything is out of place, and before very long he begins to feel out of place too, and seeks some more congenial atmosphere to spend his evenings in. Disorder has driven many a man to destruction; for the masculine is essentially a well-regulated, methodical, systematic mind, though perhaps a slightly intolerant one. Conscious of his own ability to find a place for everything, and to keep everything in that place, man makes few allowances for the multitude of extraneous things a woman has to see to, and of which he really knows nothing. He is only very sure that he hates a muddle; yet the house seems perpetually in one. He detests things being taken out of their place; still there is ever something missing from his writing-table—the letter-press, or paper-knife, or an ink-bottle, or the taper. He can't endure a noise; yet his entrance seems the signal for a general rattling of fire-irons, and clatter of cups and saucers. His pet aversion is hurry; still, the moment he comes in there begins a general scramble after something lost during the day—a

scramble commenced by the dearest little wife in the world, who rushes to kiss him and hang up his coat, and continued energetically by his children—healthy, happy, rosy, affectionate, but rather tiresome children, because *disorderly*. Perhaps he has a headache; and the whispered, still audible threats to pack these children out of the room if they are not mute as mice, the frowning commands to the servant to be extra careful, which invariably result in her being extra careless, the well-meant but fussy attentions and inquiries are infinitely harder to bear than calm, polite, positive indifference. Love, no matter how devoted, cannot, without order, make any home really happy; and, on the other hand, order without love changes the home into a sort of prison. To have a well-regulated table, and trim bright fire, without cheerful, happy, loving faces gathered round them—to have automatic servants, and a wife with one cold mathematical eye always fixed on you, flashing rebuke if your easy-chair does not happen to be placed on its own particular octagon of the carpet, would be simply intolerable.

But when we find merry voices, shining faces, ringing laughter, or gentle, hushed, still not suppressed, enjoyment; when we see a neat room, the blinds straight, the hangings even, the pictures in a line, the books, if there are any, neatly arranged, everything orderly without being stiff; when we find sympathy and companionship between parents and children, observe more looks than mere words of love, find more to reflect on in the tone than general substance of the conversation; when we find the head of the family don his slippers and curl himself cosily up in his easy-chair when he comes home from business; when we see his sons, if he has any, gathered eagerly about him, or engaged in some intellectual pursuit; when we find the fireside supply amusement enough for a winter's evening, we may rest assured that we have seen a happy home!

But how is such a blissful state of things to be arrived at? some one asks—some one worried to death, perhaps, with troublesome children, tiresome servants, heavy expenses, and limited income; with duties innumerable, that must be performed, though they be not at all conducive to order, cheerfulness, or even quiet. How is father to find an orderly sitting-room, if it has been the scene of dressmaking operations all day, which must be continued? how can tea be all ready to the minute when it's washing-day, or ironing-day, or any other cleaning-up day, which it usually is about six days in a week? *Only by order, and the most rigid economy of time; only by unflinching good-humour, good management, and resolution.* "Order and quiet," says the mother of the great Goethe, "are my principal characteristics. Hence I despatch at once whatever I have to do—the most disagreeable always first, and I gulp down the evil without looking at it: when all has returned to its proper state, I defy any one to surpass me in good-humour." She was a lively, orderly, energetic, sensible woman, and her example had doubtless a great influence on her illustrious son; and we would strongly

advise every one to take pattern by her and get through the most disagreeable portions of their work first. Get through the ugly, fussy things in the morning, and surely some pleasant, slightly, useful portion may remain for the evening, when the men are at home. Or if there does not, what does it signify? if you work all day, rest in the evening; no one can work all the time—it's absurd to attempt it. Devote a few hours to rational, cheerful conversation, to music, to some innocent recreation with your children; you will feel morally and physically the better for it, even though you may have to work extra hard the next morning to make up for it. Or, if there are no children, devote yourself to your husband; study to interest, to amuse him, to make him happy; for man is such a complex creature that, if left to himself, he is very likely to choose and follow a path that will lead only to unhappiness.

But some one asks, Is it fair to throw the whole onus of making home happy on the female portion of the establishment? is it just or reasonable to expect a woman to be always doing? We think it is, especially when she is only expected to do what is in very truth her duty, and should be her pleasure, and what is very requisite for her own happiness and her children's well-being. Besides, woman must take the initiative; she alone must be the home queen, to the end of the chapter. This, for many reasons; she is more adaptable than man—conforms more readily to circumstances of all sorts; she has more "faculty," and often bends gracefully where a man would break miserably; she is more observant, too, and soon reads a man's character, and understands his tastes, habits, and disposition; for with all his grand physical strength, daring will, stern resolution, and quick courage, man is a very weak, helpless creature; useless, or worse, in the touches and tendernesses that make existence bright and joyous, instead of dark and dreary. And it is a very singular thing that, in all our ideas of home life, man is a very prominent feature. Women, no doubt, can get on very comfortably together; but there is a want of stimulant and energy, a sort of easy calm—pleasant, but apt to become a little monotonous—where the household is entirely composed of ladies. Let the husband, or father, or brother come but once in a week or once in a month, and his advent is regarded as an event to be looked forward to and prepared for; and there is nothing in the whole world better to see than the anxious, busy, careful preparation of a loving

wife or tender mother, against the coming of him she loves. How many final glances are given round his room, to be sure that nothing is forgotten; how many final touches are given to her own hair, or collar; how many half-shy, half-proud peeps in the mirror, to convince herself that she is looking her very best! It is indeed good to see how she watches for his arrival, remembers all his favourite dishes, anticipates his wants, and waits upon him with a graceful air of proprietorship. And putting aside everything else, looking at the matter from its lowest level, it is woman's *interest* to study man; by study only can she really know him, and knowledge gives her power and influence over him; and assuredly the greater her power over him, the more earnestly will he strive to please her in all things. It is a beautiful arrangement of Nature to make the strong subservient to the weak, and the weak lead even while she bows to the strong.

Few persons fully realise how essential a really happy home is to men—how strong a magnet is needed to draw them away from the temptations and pleasures of the world; equally few perhaps reflect what a grand thing it is, where home is the dearest spot on earth to the young husband or grown-up son. Women have, comparatively speaking, little to draw them from their homes, and much to keep them there—house-keeping, children, needle-work, social duties, fully occupy their time. Men, on the contrary, have often much to entice them away, and little to attract them back sometimes; therefore it is for them that all true women should strive to make their homes cheerful and attractive. There are many men by nature cold and unobservant, some careless and indifferent, who seem to take no notice whether their homes are orderly or the reverse, who would rather dawdle in the most slatternly drawing-room of a neighbour than rest contentedly in their own—men who have no real idea of responsibility, regularity, or wholesome restraint, whose minds are always "staggering about;" but there are few, very few, who do not *respect* good qualities, even where they do not emulate or imitate them. There may be a few men who are not so proud as they should be of pleasant, orderly, well-managed homes; but we feel certain that there are fewer still who are not ashamed of the reverse. And we have unbounded faith in the fact that *Love and Order* will eventually smooth away all difficulties, and ultimately construct a real lasting Happy Home!

