

## THE AVERAGE SERVANT.



“**UNDROUS** truly are the bonds that unite us one and all; whether by the soft chaining of love, or the iron chaining of necessity, as we choose”—or as they may fall to us. Was it not this soft chaining which of old bound mistress and maid, as a rule, so closely together that their interests were identical, their joys and sorrows the same? The domestic servant of the past made the home of her mistress her own adopted home also; she clung with a noble fidelity to the fortunes, good or bad, of the family she served; and in some cases even sacrificed her wages when sudden reverses overtook those with whom, really and truly, she had cast her lot. She rose with the lark, and took an honest pride in her work; that which her hand found to do, she did with her might, and did it well too. Truly the soft chaining of love was here. The average modern servant, on the other hand, seems to prefer the corroding iron; hers, it is to be feared, is not an affectionate disposition. She does not attach herself to place or employer; there are no tendrils of love and happiness observed peeping forth, clinging to the area, the garden, the nursery, or even the privileged pussy. There is no work-box or basket, no book, no pet of any kind in the kitchen. She does not make herself at home: there is a fretful unrest about her. In short, are not the too common faults of the average modern servant inefficiency and indifference? This inefficiency and indifference must arise from some distinct and tangible cause or causes. It is time, therefore, for thinking people to look the vexed servant question, which is one of growing importance, fairly and sternly in the face, and seek diligently for an explanation of the difficulty, with a view to the suggestion of some practical remedies.

And let us at once assure the reader that we enter upon this discussion in no spirit of harshness and unkindness towards any one class, least of all those whose lot it is, and whose pride it should be, to become the worthy and faithful helpmeets of worthy masters and mistresses, who can on their part make appropriate return for such service in more than the mere wages they give.

The present dearth of really superior domestics may be accounted for in various ways. The most prominent reason, perhaps, has been the numerous other channels for female industry, which have been opened up of late years: there are crafts and callings innumerable at which young women can earn their living, more or less precariously, by purely mechanical labour, without education, capital, or mental superiority of any sort.

These various occupations possess in the eyes of ignorant, inexperienced youth the questionable charm of liberty. When the machinist or seamstress has

finished her day's labour, she is, unfortunately for herself, her own mistress; as soon as the door of the work-room closes behind her, she can go where she pleases. There is no one to serve or obey: she may dress as she likes, and the more showily she is dressed the more she fancies she is thought of by her companions. But in return for this “liberty,” which so often degenerates into licence, she has comparatively but poor remuneration. When all the necessities of life have to be provided out of fifteen or sixteen shillings a week, there is little surplus. Her home is too often a wretched garret, her food inferior in quality, and insufficient. Still she clings fondly—too fondly—to privation, and the vicissitudes of business, for the sake of being her own mistress, and having her evenings to herself. The domestic servant is not exposed to the evils of this liberty: she is tied to time and place. On the other hand, however, the domestic servant has advantages possessed by no other wages-receiving class in the community. She has to pay neither rent nor rates, food, fire, light, and all the other expenses which so heavily tax the householder. She is exempt from all anxiety of this kind. She is well fed, and comfortably lodged, without any responsibility. Her wages are paid regularly to her, and out of them she has nothing to provide but her clothing; her position only demands neatness and simplicity in dress.

There is little doubt that the general scarcity of servants some few years back was largely owing to the opening of these new channels of industry. This temporary difficulty may be said to have righted itself in some measure in point of actual supply, but the sterling qualities of the old domestic are sadly missing. Here and there you may light upon them, but very rarely at best. What, then, are the influences which continue to demoralise the modern servant? First, added to the difficulties which we have shown were created by the limit of supply, and the facility of obtaining these new occupations, so largely adopted by the class from which the superior servants used to be drawn (and it is manifest that efficiency could not of itself be restored by even a returning increase of supply), account must be taken of the great inducements offered, and serious temptations afforded, to those actually engaged in domestic service, by the facilities of railway travelling, and its opportunities of frequent change and intemperate indulgence.

But another reason why the average superiority of the domestic servant is lowered is, that of late years a great number of persons keep servants who formerly did their own work, and even sent their children to service. They now put their daughters to business while mere children, and engage a general servant to do the work. She is generally engaged when quite a young girl, and is ignorant, careless, untidy, without the smallest idea of system or regularity in the performance of her manifold tasks. Presently this general

servant hears, perhaps through the too often irresponsible "registry office," of an opportunity to "better herself:" she goes as housemaid, or cook, into a larger family (it may be with a fair character, for her mistress has not herself been able to discern her faults), and turns out to be an ignorant, careless girl, too long accustomed to her own thriftless, unmethodical way of doing things, to learn neatness, order, and efficiency. In fact, she had received absolutely no training, and one can no more be a good servant without instruction than a good musician or a good linguist.

Another source—the agricultural labourers of the country, from whom we annually derive a large number of strong, healthy, useful servants—has threatened to fail us. Long ago, it filled the parents' hearts with gladness to get one of the girls into the scullery, kitchen, or laundry of the great house; now they must go out at once as school teachers, nursery-maids, to wait on one of the young ladies, or not go out at all. We think that this reluctance to enter service arises from a spirit of restlessness and discontent—which, indeed, is a national characteristic of the age—an impatience of wholesome restraint and patient exertion, a hankering after change of scene, or variety of occupation. We cannot but regard the agricultural class as the best from which to draw the average servant; and we have hopes of the continuity of the supply, if we can only impress upon this class the value of domestic service in contrast with that of many other competing occupations.

What we have just said reminds us that another and powerful reason for the dearth of a superior class of servants is the foolish notion or fancy which, we are driven to think, although it is really hard to believe, has taken possession of young women's minds—that to be a servant is a less respectable occupation than others open to them! To be "in business" of any sort—whether behind a bar, or in a coffee shop, whether in a wholesale or retail workroom—is to be, so they seem to imagine, in a superior position to that of domestic service. Doubtless a craving after superiority of position is a weakness natural to the human heart, but when it merely ministers to personal vanity it is a very ill-judged one; and it is a very great pity that young women cannot or will not see how many advantages a servant has over the majority of business girls, how many trials, temptations, and disappointments she is spared, how independent she is of the fluctuations of business and the wear and care of existence.

Seeing, then, that from the labouring and artisan classes we have at present no certainty of obtaining an increasing number of good servants, the question naturally arises, *Where are we to look for the further supply?*

Other directions that suggest themselves as a source whence a supply of well-trained servants may yet be procured are the orphanage, industrial, and even the modern-separated workhouse schools, some of which latter are admirably conducted, and well calculated to do away with every taint or element of pauperism. There are many such Institutions in London and its

vicinity, and from them we should be able to draw a large supply of useful, well-trained, thorough servants, who are not afraid of work, and who are early and thoroughly taught that domestic service, instead of being a disgrace, is the most respectable and legitimate, as well as the most comfortable and easy way young women who are dependent upon their own exertions can earn their daily bread. It is in the highest degree necessary to impress on them the idea, that the employer is not the enemy of the servant, but the friend; and the servant in all cases should endeavour to be the friend of her employer. It will be to the advantage of both parties to have an identity of interest, and to work together for the same object, namely, a happy, orderly, economical home. Where the servant looks on her master's interests as jealously as if they were her own, he is saved the countless petty impositions which otherwise he may daily suffer, and which at the end of the year make a sensible impression on his income; and such care and fidelity on the servant's part should never fail in meeting their reward.

But these orphanages, industrial and other schools ought to be (they unfortunately are not) a source of supply on which we can at present sufficiently depend, and this may be accounted for in various ways. Numbers of girls so brought up, emigrate, as soon as an opportunity offers, thinking that in a strange country they can more readily forget their true grade, and gain better situations than they could in England. Others—far too many—of the inmates of these Institutions are educated far above the requirements of the average domestic servant, frequently as governesses, without a single moment's reflection on the serious fact that the community is already more than fully supplied with governesses, and that the unforeseen chances of fortune and uncertainty of human life supply every year necessitous widows and orphans of gentle birth and superior education, who are infinitely better adapted to be companions. Others, still, when they go out in the world prefer business to service chiefly because they were not made clearly acquainted with the advantages and disadvantages of both. It is, moreover, to be feared that the supporters of these Institutions have not caused it sufficiently to be felt that their support must be measured and guided by the extent to which practical usefulness in the training is insisted upon by the directors and managers.

Servants' Homes, either in connection with or independent of a "registry office," have been founded from time to time with varying success. One maintained by the "Female Aid Society" at Millman Street has, we believe, been of much assistance to respectable servants while out of situations; but such Homes, though very valuable in themselves, are on too small a scale, and throw no light on the great difficulty of finding the good servants to begin with. Beneficial as are such Institutions as this, and those in New Ormond Street and at Stockwell, where young girls of the poorest classes are trained—practically taught to be domestic servants—it is evident they are

but few in number and small in their range. They may be increased in number and in efficiency; and we believe it to be a public duty to call attention also to this aspect of the matter. We cannot do more than this; but it remains with those who have influence and leisure, as well as the courage to look a great social question in the face, to act at once—it may be to combine as an Association on a large scale for the improvement of the quality of our domestic service. Such a body as this would not fail to impress managers or directors of Institutions such as we have described, as well as the proprietors of registry offices, with the growing importance of the whole question, and their own moral responsibility to their supporters in regard to it. If the subject is approached, and the work carried on, with an earnest spirit, we are convinced that a revived order of things will be the result, and that the calling of a domestic servant will be restored to its rightful place in our social economy.

Let, then, such a good work be instituted, founded without sentimentality, and conducted on common-sense principles; let the organisers of this work not be merely content with having given it an impetus,

but continue steadfastly in looking after the respective needs of mistresses and servants, and following the after-career of the latter with continuous, watchful care. Let it be kept in mind, as a further incentive, how the moral well-being and the religious welfare of a girl are too frequently endangered by the temptations surrounding such a life as that which we recently dwelt upon, when speaking of the lower section of the "Business Girls of London," as described by one of themselves; and let us contrast with that painful but true picture the inestimable blessings of a home, and a mistress's wise and gentle care and solicitude.

Lastly, let it be early impressed on young girls that life is real, life is earnest, and that work is the natural lot of by far the greater portion of the human race, and that to the end of time there must of necessity be master and servant, employer and employed. There is no disgrace in honest toil, of whatever kind; it is only idleness and ill-performed labour that is really disgraceful. The highest praise and the noblest reward any of us can ever desire or hope for is to hear the Great Taskmaster say some day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

#### A TIN OF SARDINES.



of Cornwall forms an important branch of industry. Very little is usually known regarding either pilchard or sardine, and it may therefore prove somewhat interesting if we endeavour to give a brief description of the sardine-fishery, and of the preparation of these fishes for our tables.

A visit paid to Brittany, and a short sojourn on the coast of that charming province, afforded an opportunity of acquiring information regarding the sardine-

trade. Arriving at Douarnenez, the centre of the sardine-fishery, in August, we found that the usual festival of the fishermen was to be celebrated, on the Sunday after our arrival, at the little church of St. Jean, situated about a mile from the small town just named. As it happened, the Sunday was a bright, sunny day, and the natives flocked in large numbers to the church, where a special service was held, and where the benefits derived from the sea, and the importance of securing a blessing on the waters, were duly enforced by the preacher. Highly picturesque were the dresses of the women, who appeared in full holiday-costume, attired in white, with muslin shawls; the costume being completed by a wonderful cap of stiff muslin, which terminated above in a kind of double peak, and which rose to a height of about a foot above the head. We saw, however, none of the very gay and bright colours that are sometimes so conspicuously displayed in the holiday-dresses of the French peasantry, and which are well illustrated amongst ourselves by the rainbow-hues wherein our rustic population sometimes delights. The men were dressed in short black jackets—ornamented with a wonderful complexity of buttons in front—and knickerbockers of ample extent. A scarf was tied round the waist, and a large black felt hat of wide-awake pattern completed the male attire. The wooden *sabots* were worn by many; but, as it was a fête-day, leather shoes were very generally to be seen. Altogether, the crowd that Sunday afternoon at St. Jean was a highly picturesque gathering, and, sketch-book in hand, one might

bilitated constitutions of ordinary invalids. As this has never probably been recommended by a medical man before, it is but right that I should add, I speak from experience.

Let me just here repeat, before dropping the subject of climates, some simple words of advice to the invalid who proposes travelling. You must not forget a small store of medicines likely to be useful, nor your flannel under-clothing, nor a goodly supply

of warm stocks. Don't expect miracles from any climate; remember, a really perfect climate does not exist. Avoid fatigue, over-excitement, searching winds, scorching suns, and damp. Never angrily object to the viands placed before you—rather suggest than demand improvement. Never lose your temper any more than your purse, for more can be done by a smiling countenance than by a Scottish claymore.

“NOT YET.”

THE night is dark, and on the sands  
A maiden walks with clasped hands;  
Her eyes with tears are wet.  
She gazes o'er the raging waves,  
And hears the wind, as loud it raves,  
Repeat the words, “*Not yet!*”

A bark appears, and fades again  
With ghostly mien across the main,  
And leaves but sore regret;  
A hope had sprung within her heart,  
Too soon, alas! to swift depart,  
Whilst whispering still, “*Not yet!*”



Her heart is sad, for far away  
Her lover sail'd a year to-day—  
A year since last they met;  
He said he would return ere this,  
And bring with him the parting kiss,  
But sea-birds shriek, “*Not yet!*”

“And must I pine,” that maiden says,  
“Heart-broken live for all my days?  
Can he my love forget?”  
No! near at hand, with rapid stride,  
Her lover comes—he gains her side  
With “Darling, no! *Not yet!*”

E. O.

TRAINING-SCHOOLS FOR SERVANTS.

OUR recent observations upon “The Average Servant” have created so deep an interest and so much discussion, that we are induced to continue our remarks upon this, one of the most pregnant social questions of our day.

When the mistress of a household requires a servant, and puts the usual machinery in motion to make her

want known, there is little or no difficulty in getting a stream of applicants—that is, pre-supposing that the wages offered are quite up to the present scale. This matter of the mere amount of money tendered appears to exercise a strong fascination upon a number of domestic servants. A housemaid, or cook, who has really a comfortable home, and perhaps comparatively little

work to do, is too prone to exchange these advantages for some very insufficient consideration—perhaps even for some small advance in her wages. It may be that in the new situation more will be expected of her—that her hours of rest may be curtailed, and that possibly the mistress may not be so kind, or the master so considerate. It is this disposition, so prominently displayed in so many cases, that has led to the general opinion among ladies that servants really do not know when they are well off. They do not seem able to appreciate the substantial advantages they enjoy; but, like the dog in the fable, drop the meat to grasp at its shadow in the water. Under the influence of the causes to which we referred in our previous paper, they must risk bettering themselves—overlooking the fact that masters and mistresses, with whom it is a matter of serious importance to have a well-ordered household, will certainly as time goes on increase their pay. This is a point which, however, some employers lose sight of, that a servant naturally looks to rise as well as the rest of the world, and cannot be expected to go on year after year upon precisely the same wages. On the other hand, servants should remember that an increase of one pound in a house where they are well treated is of greater actual value than three or four in a strange establishment where twice the work is required, and where, very possibly, the new employer may be captious and exacting and give notice of discharge in a very short time. The servants who save money are invariably those who have been many years in the same situation. In connection with this roaming disposition there comes the important and somewhat delicate point of marriage. Frequently it happens that just when the establishment is working smoothly, and the master and mistress congratulate each other that at last they have got servants who understand their work and are contented, suddenly the announcement is made that Mary wishes to leave, because she is going to be married. Now into the sentimental, or even the moral aspect of the question, it would be out of place to inquire here: it is from a purely practical standpoint that we must regard it. The mistress, naturally feeling an interest in the servant who has pleased her, would be willing to make an investigation into the position of the man to whom she is to be married, but too frequently she is kept in ignorance of the fact. However, we will suppose the man is of good character, perhaps not a bad workman, in receipt of fair wages; but has been compelled by the exigencies of his position to live in a very poor and not over-respectable neighbourhood. The affair may turn out well—but look at the odds against it. The girl for years has been accustomed to good and often luxurious food, to comfortable warm rooms, and clothes, to attention in illness, and a relaxation of her duties if only slightly indisposed, and she has been guarded from the approach of bad characters of either sex. Now all this will be changed; her food must be poorer and less in quantity; so soon as children arrive, her clothing

will deteriorate, and her hours of liberty will be cut down to the shortest; in fact, she will have none. The garden at the back of the cottage will bring her in contact with slatternly, dirty women, and too often she will descend to their level. Mistresses with an affection for their servants may well dread to think of the frequent consequences of early marriage. Here, again, is the same inability to discern when they are well off; and must not this very prominent feature of the servant's character be put down in great measure to the lack of early training? For by training we mean not only technical instruction in manual duties, but the acquisition of some small power of judgment, of mental ability, so as not to be caught by everything that glitters.

And this brings us to another aspect of the question, for if the domestic servant had any such perception, she might observe a phenomenon not without a serious meaning to the future of her class. It is the diminution of establishments. Ladies wearied out at last by incessant worry of this kind, first in "getting suited," next in studying the whims and enduring the insolence of servants, finally take refuge in the only resource left of reducing the number kept. Where four were employed, three are now often only found, five are reduced to four, and three to two. Families of moderate means who in ordinary times would have far preferred a house of their own, and could well afford it, now look with favour upon the system of living in flats, at present extending itself in London, so as to partially avoid the necessity of servants. There are symptoms that the foreign method of renting a portion of a dwelling in this way, depending upon the restaurant for dinner, is coming into use amongst us. Even really wealthy people feel a relief when they shut up their mansions, and betake themselves to the palatial hotels at the sea-side, or in Continental cities. There, and there alone, they are served with something approaching what they have a right to expect, free from the excessive labour of superintendence. The lady-help movement, though perhaps hardly successful at present, yet was hailed with hope quite as much from the mistresses' side as from the ranks of unemployed gentlewomen. Everywhere there are signs that a reaction has set in against the employment of domestic servants in the numbers to which we were formerly accustomed. It is desirable that this fact should be brought home to the floating servant population. Already it has had one effect, and we find a dearth not so much of ordinary servants, but of really superior ones.

Among the numerous applicants who answer advertisements, or whom a mistress meets at the registry offices, how many are there who she feels are utterly useless from the moment she sees them! The difficulty of selection is immense, trying both to purse and temper, and when it is made the chances are that it will be a failure. Now why is this? If the owner of a mill or a factory, or a workshop of any kind, desires fresh hands, his course is tolerably clear. The men who apply upon the premises are referred to the superintendent, and he in a few pertinent questions probes their ability.

The first question is, *Have you served your time?* This goes at once to the root of the matter, for by the rules of the various trades a man cannot take a man's wages till he has served his apprenticeship, and if he can produce evidence (his indentures) to show that he has served it, there is *primâ facie* evidence that he knows something about his business. But with the domestic servant there is nothing of this: it is all vagueness, uncertainty; the "character" upon which stress is laid goes back but a few months; there is no certificate that the servant has "served her time" in the higher sense of the phrase—*i.e.*, has acquired the spirit as well as the letter of the business. In short, what is wanted is an organised institution for the training of domestic servants, with branches in every part of the country. Already there are schools for cooking in connection with a national establishment; a school for servants is but a step farther. The necessity for something of the kind is obvious the moment the career of a servant is traced backwards. Where does she come from? Whether from town or country, from a poor neighbourhood, from a cottage in which the ordinary rules of sanitary science are totally disregarded, and too often the sense of decency quite obliterated; and, lastly, from a mental training inseparable from poverty. She has no self-control, no power of thinking twice. As for taste, deportment, manners, they are *nil*. After awhile she goes into service, and unless exceptionally fortunate generally begins, as we have seen, in a household possessing no advantages in the way of superior training. She is compelled to work and pick up the lower kind of domestic knowledge, and there it ends.

There are now in every parish schools for the primary education of girls. Could not such of these as are intended for domestic service, after leaving school, come under the influence of a Ladies' Committee, or association formed for the express purpose of preparing them for their future duties? No more truly charitable work could be imagined; the good that might be accomplished requires no description, it is so apparent. Difficulties there are, of course, but cannot these be overcome? The first matter to arrange would be, where and how are these girls to receive instruction? Must there be a building, say in close proximity to the school, specially adapted for this purpose, or can such information only be imparted in the actual work of a household? If we may imagine a central institution in London, like the School for Cookery, sending its trained teachers out into every part of the kingdom, the subject becomes simplified. But even then, without the assistance of Local Ladies' Committees in every parish where such an attempt was made, only half what is required would be accomplished. It is not merely technical instruction, how to lay the cloth and the hundred other minutiae of daily domestic duty: it is the awakening of the moral faculty, and the widening of the mental horizon. This can only be brought about under the impact of example—insensibly imbibed from contact, in short, with persons of superior rank in life, whom the girl from early associations would look up to with a certain degree of reverence. There-

fore, if we suppose a regular training-school in connection with the parish schools, we shall still want a personal interest on the part of resident ladies and active superintendence. If they could go so far as to occasionally take a promising girl into their household for a few weeks, to show her in practice what she has learnt in theory, the effect would be more lasting. The next difficulty lies with the parents. No girl could be compelled to undergo training of this sort. We sometimes see in the papers accounts of very excellent work, corresponding in character with that to which we have before referred, in connection with orphanages, refuges, &c.; the girls, it is alleged, generally turning out well. But they are orphans, or removed altogether from the influence of parents; they are consequently never subjected to disturbing ideas. For it is greatly to be feared that much of the deterioration of domestic servants is due to the lessons they learn at home in early life. Schools for the training of domestic servants have, then, this great difficulty to contend with: they have first to get the girls to attend, next to strengthen them to resist the tendency of home teaching after hours. Despite this, there is reason to think that very substantial progress might be made in this manner, and one point would at least be gained. After passing a given period in such a training establishment, the girl would be presented with a certificate, showing her proficiency—evidence, in fact, that she had *served her time*. When the mistress of a household received applications for a situation, she would at once ask for this certificate; if it was refused, her suspicions would be aroused; if produced, she would write to the school granting it, and duly receive all particulars. So that the career of a servant could always be traced, since she must produce this certificate at every fresh situation, and a record would be kept at the training-school. By taking girls almost immediately after leaving the primary schools, the training system would abolish the present unsatisfactory method by which the first years of service are passed in the houses of poor persons—cottagers themselves—where no preparation can possibly be acquired for a gentleman's house. When parents learnt that such training institutions were a direct passport to service of a superior and better-paid character, they would naturally strive to get their children admitted.

One lesson which should be inculcated in these schools should be, that it lies with the servant herself to lessen the social gulf which separates her from her employer. A servant may so deport herself, with perfect willingness yet with perfect dignity, as to obtain both the affection and the respect of her employers, arousing an interest that may extend beyond herself into her family, and lead to the pecuniary advancement of her brothers, if young, by the offer of situations; if in trade, by orders and business. A domestic servant has, in fact, peculiar opportunities for creating affection towards herself; there are so many ways in which she may minister to the comfort and well-being of her mistress and the house, that it is generally her own fault if she is looked upon as a servant in the derogatory sense of the word.