

## THE HOME OF THE FUTURE.

(BEING THE ESSAY ON "HOME MANAGEMENT" FOR WHICH THE PRIZE OF FIVE POUNDS HAS BEEN AWARDED BY THE PROPRIETORS OF "CASSELL'S FAMILY MAGAZINE.")

NOTE.—The Editor, in printing the successful Essay, does not necessarily endorse all the views of the writer, or hold himself in any way responsible for them.



O both man and wife it is a momentous epoch—few more so—the sober, resolute beginning together of the domestic life. From the enchanted avenue of courtship, from the altar-steps and the plighting of the holy vows, from the halcyon days of the honeymoon, the young couple

by stages swift and easy stand on the threshold of their future home.

It is in the hope that the way may be somewhat smoothed, the obstacles overturned, and no rude hand of disillusion be laid upon the young romance, that the hints which follow are thoughtfully penned.

The beginning of housekeeping is too frequently the beginning of troubles, and the cause in most instances is not far to seek. It lies on the surface, in the absence of certain broad principles and in all that is implied by the ugly word—Ignorance.

It is on the housewife that the chief onus of making the home happy must always depend. She can in nowise neglect her task without imperilling not merely her own but other people's comfort. The mistress is the co-partner in a domestic despotism, and must shape her course by considerations of high policy; she is also the commandant of her own forces, and must see that her orders, to the last iota, are understood and obeyed. In a house of many servants especially, there is nothing so demoralising, so fatal to peace and happiness, as a slack hand at the helm.

Authority—always gentle and dignified, but authority still—should be felt through every grade, and no pains can be too great, no attention to detail too strict, to obtain this reasonable ascendancy. *It must be based on knowledge.* If the mistress has no well-conceived ideas in her own mind of household duties and household order, she will be but as clay in the hands of the potter and at the mercy of a thousand accidents. A personal acquaintance with work, with plan, with the value of time and punctuality, a habit of decision, a firm and cheerful *will*, are the things our young housekeeper will do well to cultivate at the very outset.

We have thus far taken it for granted that a house has been chosen, furnished, entered; yet, at risk of being accounted rambling, we will offer a word or two of advice by the way concerning this matter.

Suitability to means, convenience of site, soundness of frame, drainage, and ventilation are the points which in the choice of a dwelling should be

carefully looked to, and which must be suffered to guide the decision.

Furnish on the same strong principles of use before ornament, comfort before display. In days like these, when art is taking her lawful place as the queen of the humblest home, and claiming as her vassals both cabinet-maker and upholsterer, it will surely not be necessary to say that this recommendation is by no means a charter of grace to ugliness. It is an old delusion that *cost* measures beauty. "The furnishing of that drawing-room cost £300," says one. And the listener, if a lady, dimples her fair cheeks, casts a look within, and sighs, "How lovely!" She may be right or wrong; it is not our business to decide that; but we can and do say that too often the glitter of the guineas paid hides an arrant deformity, covers with its treacherous sheen a rank defiance of the canons of true art.

To the uninitiated the small outlay at which an air of real elegance may be given to an apartment appears truly marvellous. There is a lady's boudoir yonder which has awakened a strife of envy and admiration in many a fair heart, and yet the whole garnishing thereof has probably cost less than some single feature in the visitors' own rooms. What enchantment, what legerdemain, then, is this? Simply the magic of good taste, ready resource, deft fingers, and an artist-eye. Any one can revel in the same who has wit and will to use the proper incantation.

The ideal home is a resting-place, an oasis in the world's desert, and the wise housekeeper will do her best to retain it in its true character by giving to every chamber its own charm and grace. Why, for instance, should the drawing-room be the cold, formal rendezvous of state we so often find it? Exorcise its frigid stiffness, make it the recruiting-ground for the energies oppressed by household care or city worry. Dot it with chairs that may be used, strew its tables with books that can be read, sprinkle its walls with pictures that have their interest and associations for all. Indeed, from attic to basement, let light and warmth be in every sense the twin fairies of the dwelling.

A word about the bed-rooms. Over-furnishing is without any doubt the common fault here. The more air a sleeping apartment contains the better for its occupant, and hence, great or small, grand or mean, everything that savours of superfluity must, please, be banished.

The bedsteads, as a matter of course, will be of iron, or a combination of iron and brass. The huge wooden, canopied "tent" is luckily a thing of the past, or if still lingering in rural nooks in company with a

belief in witchcraft and magic, is as surely doomed. Of bedding, a thin mattress laid on the modern steel-spring foundation is far and away the best. Of the bed-clothing more anon.

The carpets to these rooms may give rise to more debate. Sanitarians have many protests still to urge against our habits in this respect. Carpets fitted to the rooms, carpets connected, carpets loose and fluffy, are alike banned. These harbour dust and sometimes disease. A better plan, the plan for the home of the future, is to have narrow, separate, tight-woven strips around the bed and in front of furniture *only*. These are easy to shake, and in every sense in harmony with the great laws of simplicity and utter cleanliness which, if health is to be preserved, must govern the bed-room.

Cultivate individuality. Even in the case of servants, teach them to take a pleasure in making sweet and bright their own special chambers, and give them the opportunity of stamping the best features of their characters thereupon. By such unobtrusive means as these an atmosphere of content and of mutual trust may be diffused throughout the entire home, and the inevitable friction between mistress and servant materially reduced. For children, too, a whole education may be comprised in the mere carrying out of this simple advice.

The dining-room—important and *absorbing* as is its function—needs the fewest hints of any. It should always shine with a sober, old-fashioned grace, born of much labour and trustworthy appurtenances.

The kitchen! Scene of many a *contretemps* in the experience of young housekeepers—region of awe and mystery still in the minds of some old ones. The kitchen should be light, airy, scrupulously neat, and, above all things, orderly and clean. A framed motto, "A place for everything, and everything in its place," may well be mounted upon its walls.

Quite a multiplicity of articles will be required here, and the outlay can scarcely be small if the place is to be well kept and the work well done. Let the cook, by all means, have every necessary appliance. On the equipoise of that lady's temper the success or failure of a dinner may not unfrequently depend, and if she is continually "cornered" by lack of resources and the consequent expenditure of time out of all proportion to her task, there is likely to be grumbling on more sides than one.

Have at least two tables—one large and the other small—and keep them well scrubbed. All saucepans, jars, and like utensils should be tightly fitted with lids or covers. The knives, forks, and spoons, the table-linen, the etceteras, must each be provided with their separate drawer.

The abuse of cutlery, by-the-by, is in many households a continual sore. The forks are broken; the knives, in some inscrutable way, vanish: they are improperly cleaned and spoilt; they are used on all sorts of incongruous objects and blunted. Buy good ones; give strict commands concerning them, and supply the void in kitchen economy by a special assortment.

Two or three strong, plain chairs and a reliable

clock must be appointed for service in this department, as well as a whole army of brushes, pans, pails, kettles, moulds, boards, sieves, &c. &c., well-nigh *ad infinitum*.

See to it that the safe—or special pantry—is cleaned out daily, and that every nook and corner of the place gets its scrubbing frequently and in due sequence. There can be no excuse for dust or dirt in the kitchen: water is handy, and water should be freely used. If only worthy Mrs. Poyser could have the overhauling of some modern kitchens for a day and an interview with some modern cooks! we fancy a few below-stairs revolutions would result, and maybe a "warning" or two.

One of the most prosaic, but nevertheless most important corners in the house, is the linen-closet. It should be well shelved, well stocked, and always tidy. A clean white cloth affixed to the edge of each shelf, and ready to be turned up as a cover for its dainty burden, will be of use.

Linen, we fear, is disappointing stuff to buy. It costs so much and shows so little for the outlay. In the days of the long-ago, before railways, telegraphs, gas-lamps, sewing-machines, and such-like innovations, the house-linen was a thing of pride and pomp, a valued wedding portion, and not seldom a bequest. It *wore*, and was well-nigh time-defiant then. We have changed all that. If a set goes ten or a dozen years it is generally as much as it will, and nobody wonders when the rents come. The days of honest homespun may follow into oblivion the days of the dodo.

The table-napery should be decidedly pure in texture if it is long to continue glossy. A little extra expense will well repay itself in this section. Purchase of a house you know to be reliable, and do not frown too much if the terms are high.

For both sheets and pillow-cases we still recommend linen, despite the usurpation on all hands of its rival, calico: The choosing of blankets, quilts, and the minor properties of the bed-room, will give occasion for the exercise of much taste and for the display of strictly personal predilections. Any hard and fast rules would be out of place, and would doubtless pass unheeded; but the lighter in weight the bed-clothing, consistent with due warmth, the better. With respect to towels, it may also be mentioned that good huckaback is undoubtedly the best material for ordinary use. You may have them with damask borders or without, as the consideration of cost shall determine.

From the arrangement of a home to the choice and management of servants is a natural and easy transition. We will proceed to make it. Few matters require more care, or occasion more genuine anxiety, than the selection by a young housewife of her "staff," few or many. The tendency of the present age is emphatically towards short service and slender bonds of consideration and trust. We cannot but think that this is a misfortune to both mistress and maid. It is the prolific cause of shirked or badly-done work, of grudging payment, of rows

innumerable, and discomfort past translating into words.

Having found a girl who, however raw, has the making of a good servant in her, and the will to learn, train her with care, treat her kindly though without coaxing, win her confidence by giving her your own; do not be too ready to take offence or to apportion blame for a *mal-apropos* act born of ignorance; keep her so long as she suits you and is willing to stay; and, lastly, pay her reasonably, both with cash and with intervals of innocent relaxation.

Servants should be chosen, in the absence of any strong and unquestionable recommendation, for honest appearance rather than for a glib tongue, for health, clean hands, and modest manners. Set aside at once the girl who comes in tawdry finery, however plausible her arguments and earnest her petition. A good judge of character who knows her own requirements will often be able to tell at the very first glance whether Mary Ann or Susan will make the most suitable housemaid or the best cook. Never engage any one on the strength of a written testimonial from an unknown hand. Many a disaster has come by this road to young and inexperienced matrons. Make inquiries, insist on references, have a trial and observe quietly words, ways, habits. If you decide then to accept, have a clear and definite understanding as to terms, perquisites, and manner of possible dismissal.

One other note here: never try by undue blandishments to keep a servant who is bent on leaving. It is a direct incentive to encroachment on the part of others, and almost certain, even if temporarily successful, to work a bitter retribution. Neither entice a servant from another home by higher offers. Apart from the intrinsic meanness of the action, this also is bad policy and for much the same reasons. In any subordinate look not for perfection; only in an ideal state will be found the ideal servant, and Utopia is still a vision of the future.

From this point it may be convenient to treat briefly, by turns, of the duties of housemaid, cook, and laundress.

The housemaid should be quick, neat, intelligent, and pleasant-mannered. It is her business to keep the whole dwelling bright, airy, and tidy—see that she does it. The rapid degeneration from its first estate of speckled beauty, which young housekeepers so often lament in the case of new furniture, is in nine instances out of ten the result of reckless cleaning and abuse. For example, the hearth is "put right," the grate polished, the fire lit, and in each case the entire apparatus of the operation finds its resting-place *on the rug*. Who is to wonder if, by-and-by, an air of grimy roughness appears upon the once cheerful face of the long-suffering floor ornament? Insist on having every rug carefully rolled away before the work begins. Never allow the girl to forget that dust alone will suffice to fade carpets and make every colour in the prettiest pattern grow dingy.

In addition to having your carpets swept and shaken, have them frequently beaten and dragged on

grass. Nothing cleanses them so effectually or preserves so long their vividness of hue.

It is the housemaid's duty to open windows, tidy rooms, and make all preparations down-stairs while the family is still aloft. During the time that breakfast is about, the bed-rooms should take their turn. There is nothing like system in all these matters; a regular plan, never broken, never encroached upon, means ease to the servant and satisfaction to the mistress.

There should be a particular day for cleaning every particular room, and the task should be done thoroughly. To go stage by stage from the *top* to the *bottom* of the house is perhaps the most preferable course.

Let the housemaid's closet be well supplied with all its proper paraphernalia. It is well too to give her a plainly-written list of her work, and of the time it takes to do it.

The cook is a person of very weighty consideration, and cannot be lightly dismissed. She is apt to stand—even irritatingly—upon the dignity of her "office," and many a household is ruled from the kitchen in a way that grows galling. The best cure (alas! a cure so seldom tried) is the knowledge of practice as against theory on the part of the mistress herself—the knowledge we have before invoked.

Quite a host of good qualities are called for in the cook. She must have health, sobriety, and strict cleanliness; she must be active and strong, tidy and patient, willing and economical, honest and good-tempered. The model cook, if only you can find her, will be above price, and will doubtless be treated with proper trust and kindness.

But to come to the cook of the prosaic present. Make a firm stand at the very outset against the obnoxious system of "cook's perquisites." Many a temptation to dishonesty comes to a servant in this specious guise, and is the harder to resist. If you pay your employées fairly, there can be no excuse for clandestine sales in the area. A stern rule of this kind is the best safeguard against speculation and waste. Do not be unduly prying in your dealings with her, but nevertheless keep a strict supervision over both the quantity and the quality of the provisions she uses. See that they are good and sufficient, but not prodigal. Always attend to the tradesmen's books yourself.

The cook—if reliable—may be made responsible for the contents of the store-room, for the order kept in the larder, for the articles given out for the consumption of each day, as well as for the usual routine of her province. Give her your orders *early*, clearly, and with no indecision. She will see that each meal, from breakfast onwards, is well and punctually served; that her fellow-domestics do not waste their time down-stairs when tasks await them above; that a spick-and-span cleanliness rules amidst her dishes; and, in short, that order is supreme in every department of the kitchen economy.

Let every vessel on shelves, &c., when empty be turned upside down to keep out the all-invading dust. Note:—Usually not half enough care is taken about

the washing-up of china, earthenware, and glass. A hurried dip into Laodicean (*i.e.*, lukewarm) water, a twist round with a couple of fingers, a wipe, and "Hey, presto!" the thing is done; or the water, by some inadvertence, is well-nigh boiling, and a series of mosaic-like cracks is the result. An intelligent cook who knows her work will neither half wash nor break the most delicate ware with which you may entrust her. Her fingers will be gentle, her wash-cloth inexorable; she will have two vessels, one of warm water to wash, the other of cold to rinse with; and her trophies will find their way one by one into their proper stations, whole and sound and sweet.

Very much of the comfort of a dinner (or indeed of any meal) depends on the serving, and the widest difference exists between cooks in this respect. Do not encourage a slovenly, slipshod dress either on the part of the servant or of the dishes she presents. See that she herself is habited in a clean collar and apron at the very least, with smooth hair and well-washed features, and that her dishes when brought to the table are pleasing to the sight as well as tempting to the palate.

Now to the laundress, if indeed you sever this section of the household toil from the duties of the chambermaid. She should be well advanced in the technical details of her occupation, and should be neat and painstaking. Tried by results it will soon become evident to an intelligent young housekeeper whether or not this servant is—to use a common phrase—"worth her salt."

Labour-saving appliances in this line abound and may be furnished to the laundress as the question of expense permits. Even a private mangle is of use.

See that the fine and coarse clothes are kept apart, and that soiled water is exchanged for fresh sufficiently often. Eschew too much soap or blue—the latter is a common fault. Let the flannels be washed *in* soap-suds, but without any soap administered by hand. Mend clothes either before washing or before starching and ironing, *i.e.*, in the condition currently known as rough-washed.

The great tribe of men-servants, of lady's-maids, of waitresses, &c., is beyond the scope we have set to ourselves in this paper. They are luxuries rather than necessary adjuncts to the comparatively modest home we have laboured to describe. A paragraph or two concerning the nurse may bring to a close this particular division of our task.

There is one grand rule for any mother, young or old, to remember and to act by. The mother must be her own chief nurse, and hand over to no deputy the ultimate supervision of her offspring.

*In medias res.* Temper is a great point in a nurse. How a petulant, ill-natured woman can mar the peace of a nursery, and stamp premature frowns on little faces that should be as unclouded as a summer sun! A quiet, gentle firmness, grounded in love, buttressed by reason, is what the tender saplings need, and the quality, rare but invaluable, for which the parent should seek. A higher average of education, too, will be required in a person chosen for this service.

The training of the nursery is a training that more or less may be depended upon to colour and to bend the whole after-life of its inmates. See to it then that it be a training towards brightness, towards health, towards virtue. Let the nursery itself be cheerful; its contents, in the way of books and toys, ample and discriminating; its guardian soft in manners, wise in mind, healthy in body, pure in habits, and beyond everything a person in whom entire confidence can be placed by both parents and children.

To pass, finally, to the habits of the household proper, to the daily doings of its master and mistress, is to reach a position of much delicacy and yet of supreme importance.

Such is the influence of mind on mind, of character on character, that as the mistress so in five cases out of six will be the maid. If the one is extravagant, the other will be wasteful; if the one is indolent, the other will be lazy; if the superior is careless of other people's comfort, the subordinate will not be particularly obliging or particularly resolute to please. Be regular and consistent. Practise that which you preach. See that early rising be one of the family rules, and obey it—in reason—yourself.

Remember that plenty of free air, fresh water, and wholesome food will do wonders in keeping a home healthy and happy. Let every member of the household be quietly and fittingly attired; countenance no extravagance; parley with no flaunting and unnecessary finery. Be circumspect in all your dealings, simple in habits, cheerful in mind. Try to give every one an interest in home, and the feeling that they have a tangible stake in the home peace and the home pleasures.

Have settled hours for meals—hours as unchangeable under ordinary circumstances as the famous laws of the Medes and Persians. Few things are more significant of how a household is managed than this. The system of continual uncertainty in which some families live—cups and saucers, plates and dishes, to be found in the dining-room at all sorts of proper and improper hours—is a bad one, and betokens very surely shiftiness and future trouble. Cultivate a wise and discriminating hospitality. Make your friends know that they are welcome, and yet by no means make a parade of your dinner-parties and select "at-homes." Let every young couple learn that true dignity consists in character and not in ostentatious show.

Ape nobody. Pry into nobody's business. Be true to yourselves, to each other, and to the great outside world; so shall the shelter of your roof-tree be a true haven from care, a centre of trust and love, a starting-place for great thoughts and high endeavour.

To return to our first premises: married life must always be something of an experiment. Enter upon it with the determination (trite, but still sound advice) to bear and forbear; and may our hints, however discursive, aid in the task of making bright and happy "the home of the future."

WILLIAM J. LACEY.