

her breaking had been done in three weeks, a year before.

'Sader was simply invaluable at this time. The way he taught the mare her work, shouldered her round corners, pulled her past alarming sights, and made her keep straight and trot steadily, was a sight in itself to see. She simply adored him, and would make love to him so vehemently whenever they were pulled up that the man was quite ashamed of her.

Phyllis is very gentle and engaging in her ways in stable, but not always so amenable on the roads, though she is very pretty, and has the making of an excellent horse in her. One day she gave us a good fright.

We were sitting at lunch when the maid looked in with a scared face, to tell us that the new horse was running about the garden and could not be caught.

Out we went at once, and out went Smith with us, unluckily, and the next moment the two playfellows were madly careering the whole length of the kitchen garden to the tennis lawn at the extreme end, Phyllis kicking her heels, leaping the celery trenches, and disporting herself generally like a wild thing. She had escaped from the stable at the critical moment when her rug and head-stall had been removed, and not a single piece of harness had been put on, and how to catch her was a puzzle. First Smith was ordered to his kennel, and reluctantly

trotted off, but Phyllis did not at all see being deprived of his company, and tore after him, capering and pawing, and sending our hearts into our mouths, for once or twice she seemed within an ace of dashing herself into one of the glass houses in her path. However she escaped doing herself an injury I really do not know, but she did get off with only a scratch or two, and by chasing Smith to the stable-yard she enabled us to pen her in and catch her, though not without difficulty, as she was full of tricks, and delighted in her freedom. She was from the first, however, very responsive to our voices, and we succeeded in quieting her down at last.

'Sader once got out into the garden much in the same way, but he was perfectly good, and came trotting up as soon as we called him, and let himself be led by his forelock to the stable.

For sense and spirit, combined with most engaging obedience and fidelity of disposition, I really doubt if our Smith and 'Sader could be easily matched. The only room for regret is that they cannot keep their youth for ever, and be the life-long companions of the mistresses they serve so well. Yet Mr. Smith, at least, appears to have the secret of eternal youth within him, and we will hope to keep him with us many years yet. He would like to be kindly remembered to all his unknown admirers, and hopes that this account of him and some of his friends may prove entertaining to them.

EVELYN EVERETT-GREEN.

THE MISTRESSES' UNION ; OR, HOW WE SOLVED THE SERVANTS' QUESTION.

BY HENRY FRITH.



I.
RS. CAMERON was seated in an easy-chair in her artistically furnished boudoir, plunged in thought. Her face wore a serious expression and the contraction of her eyebrows indicated that she had a problem to solve. As she was pondering upon this puzzle, which was evidently of a domestic character, a

knock at the door roused her, and, in reply to her permission, a servant, apparently the housemaid, entered.

"If you please, 'm, may I speak to you a minute?" said she.

"Certainly, Anne. What is the matter?"

"If you please, I should like to leave with cook on this day month."

"Very well, Anne. But may I know the reason? Cook has been given warning for incompetency—she cannot cook anything properly; but why do *you* wish to leave?"

"Well, 'm, I think I can better myself, and the work is heavy, 'm."

"Heavy! why, do you know what you are saying? Heavy work! Myself, and your master, and Miss Cameron are the only three people in the house for whom you have anything to do. Kate waits on us exclusively, and your master is——"

"Yes, 'm, but I don't like Mr. Cameron bein' called my 'master,' and if you please I will go when cook goes. You will give me a character, 'm?"

"I will give you a character, certainly, and say why you left my service; but I do not think you need apply for a second character to me."

Anne retired, but in a few moments ushered in Miss Cameron and her friend, Miss Bitterfont. They perceived that Mrs. Cameron was in some dilemma.

"What is the matter, mamma?" asked Constance Cameron. "Has Anne been worrying you? I thought she looked a little upset."

Mrs. Cameron explained the situation, and appealed to Miss Bitterfont for her opinion. "They are all alike," she concluded. "Our servants have no gratitude!"

"Well," replied Miss Bitterfont, "I cannot agree with you. I must say that my servants are by no

means bad specimens. Your condemnation is too sweeping, Mrs. Cameron. I speak of people as I find them."

"You cannot say that Anne has behaved well, I'm sure!" retorted Mrs. Cameron.

"No, she may be wrong; but surely she has a right to leave when she pleases? She has given warning in the terms of her contract. You cannot fairly blame her. Her remark about Mr. Cameron is ridiculous, but if she does her work until her service expires you need not complain, I think."

"You will next tell me that Mrs. Jennings-Brown has been well treated, Miss Bitterfont, or that Mrs. Deacon should be grateful."

"I am not acquainted with the particulars," replied Miss Bitterfont calmly.

"Why, Mrs. Jennings-Brown's nurse gave warning because her mistress would not permit the nurse's young man to have beer in the kitchen! Ridiculous! And Mrs. Deacon, who is proverbially kind to her domestics, who dines early on Sunday, and has cold meat on that day, was last week informed that 'Cook wouldn't eat the cold meat!' She actually warmed it again for herself and her fellow-servants!"

"After declining to cook it hot for Mrs. Deacon!" added Constance.

"Yes," replied Miss Bitterfont; "those are isolated cases. Take mine. My nephew was seized with scarlet fever. Both my servants are young, and not very strong, I should say. Did they run away? No, they remained; they attended on the nurse and me without a murmur; they risked infection daily, and when I rewarded them at the end of the time they both declined the extra payment, until I actually forced it upon them. I could relate other instances. A great deal depends on the way you treat your domestics."

"Not always," replied Constance.

"No, not always; there are black sheep in every flock, and careless or unsympathetic servants can often be found as well as careless and unsympathetic employers. You must not imagine that you purchase a slave when you hire a servant! I have heard that employers of clerks often demand the 'pound of flesh.'"

"There are numerous cases even in our own neighbourhood," replied Mrs. Cameron. "We surely can find means to help ourselves. You remember Mrs. Faithfull, her sister, and Mrs. Ellice. They once co-operated and did very well. Both Mrs. Faithfull's servants deserted her last month, without warning, on one afternoon while she was at the Botanic Fête, and when her husband returned there was no dinner, and no cook, no housemaid! There had been no complaints—it was a whim!"

"My dear Mrs. Cameron, your friends are certainly unfortunate," said Miss Bitterfont. "They should be cautious concerning the characters of those they employ. There are plenty of good servants to be had. We hear of the complaints sooner than of the praises in this world."

"I am ready to admit that there may be, at times, faults on both sides. But the question of character

is important. I have been thinking of forming a Union, and Connie has already seen Mrs. Faithfull and her sister Georgie. They will be here immediately with Mrs. Ellice and Mrs. Deacon, I hope."

In a short time Mrs. Faithfull and her sister appeared, and the suggestion having been explained, Mrs. Faithfull at once agreed, and appealed to "Georgie," who said—

"I am quite sure we can form a Union of our own, and if you will give me a week to arrange it, I will have the details formulated. We are all suffering in some degree from our 'domestic tyrants,' as people call servants. Let us have a regular organised system and canvass the people. Mrs. Ellice and Lucy, and I and Connie, and Mrs. Deacon will begin. Mrs. Cameron can join if she has time, but we will commence to-morrow. Meanwhile we will discuss details, and let you know the scheme. I have thought of it before."

"Let us hear your plan, dear," said Mrs. Cameron, with satisfaction.

"My suggestion is to found a kind of local inquiry office in this neighbourhood, at which all candidates must appear. Our first step must be to secure the adherence of the residents."

"To be sure," said the other ladies. "Let us commence our canvass at once—this very afternoon!"

After some further conversation the committee separated, having arranged to meet on the next day but one at Mrs. Ellice's house in Barnabas Square, which, as everyone is aware, extends from Beverley Park Gardens to St. James's Crescent.

II.

On the appointed day at the time named Mrs. Ellice, who had borne so prominent a part in the co-operative housekeeping in days gone by, was awaiting her friends. She had had unfortunate experience as a mistress of servants, and more than once had regretted the old days—her "mother's days"—when servants came and remained faithful to their employers!

"It is education, and the many new employments for women, that prevent us procuring the same class of domestics," she would say. "Girls are too grand now-a-days to serve: they must be apprentices first and young ladies after."

"And why not?" asked her friend Miss Bitterfont, "why not? Surely girls may advance themselves."

"Yes; but that is no reason why *other girls* who make a contract to serve me should throw me over. If an employer be unkind, unjust, or arbitrary, let him suffer: but even his injustice is no excuse for the servants who break faith with *me*. I am not unjust nor tyrannous!"

The arrival of the "Committee," as they designated themselves, put an end to this discussion. Miss Bitterfont was invited to remain. As a friend of young servants, her experience would be valuable.

"I consider if you treat servants with proper consideration they will consider you too," said she.

"But what *is* proper consideration?" inquired Mrs. Faithfull. "It means in some cases a weekly holiday

at the servant's convenience—not at yours—it means men in the kitchen in the evening, and late hours out of doors. If I am to be responsible for my servant's well-being, I cannot in justice to anyone permit her to run wild."

"But," continued Miss Bitterfont, "you interfere with her dress; why cannot you let this girl wear her hair and dress as she pleases? *You* wouldn't like her to interfere with your gowns or hair-dressing."

"Of course not; but the parallel does not hold good. There *can* be no comparison. If my guests and myself prefer a tidy to an untidy servant, and a neat girl to an unkempt, fringed creature, surely, as I feed her and pay her wages, I may suggest a change? I do not *insist*. I say, I prefer your hair tidy in my house. I prefer you clean: if you cannot conform, go elsewhere, but do not come into my service on false pretences, and then leave in dudgeon, when I point out the fault. That is my argument," concluded Mrs. Faithfull.

"Now, Georgie, let us hear your scheme," said Mrs. Ellice. "We, most of us, agree with your sister, I think. What success have you had?"

"Nearly everyone of our acquaintance will join us," replied the young lady. "Connie will tell you their names: she is secretary. We have interviewed Mr. Folio, the stationer, at the corner of Beverley Park Gardens Road; he will open the office."

"What office?" inquired Miss Bitterfont.

"The Registry Office. My plan is this: in every district in London we shall have a registry office, perhaps two offices. We, as housekeepers, bind ourselves to engage no servant whose character will not bear investigation, and who will not consent to have her written character entered in a book which she will keep. In this book will also be entered the date of her arrival, her rate of wages, her general conduct, and the cause of her leaving, signed by her employer, with other particulars; so that almost at a glance one may perceive, under undoubted authority, her fitness for the duty she is required to perform.

"(2) Every employer will engage to give a perfectly truthful character—good, bad, or indifferent—to any servant who quits his house; and the deceiver, the thief, and the still more dangerous servant will not find employment again."

"Then you prevent the poor girls from getting a living," exclaimed Miss Bitterfont. "How unjust!"

"Would not you prevent a thief from entering your premises at night?" asked Georgie quickly. "Why admit a female thief by day with your eyes open? People who tell falsehoods and slander you to your tradespeople are equally dangerous. And how unfair to the many honest and honourable servants!"

"Quite so," said Mrs. Cameron. "We have all agreed to found a Union—a Mistresses' Union on proper terms—and to defend ourselves. We will on our part, when we want servants, furnish all particulars of wages, requirements, &c., to our registrar. The servant who applies may take the place or leave it alone; but having accepted it, he or she will

be bound to remain and perform the duties properly for one month. If not, their character will be endorsed, and they will receive no wages. They will sign an agreement to this effect. Of course illness, or the wishes of parents, will be treated as exceptions, and the reason for their departure will be stated. By these means we hope to check, and finally eradicate, the unfair and mischievous habit of giving wrong characters to servants."

"It's only kind," said Miss Bitterfont. "You may deprive a servant of a place, else."

"And may saddle a lady with a most immoral occupant of her house: a mean, lying woman, or a thief and the companion of thieves! I am sorry you advocate the statement of untruth and the suppression of truth, Miss Bitterfont," said Mrs. Deacon warmly.

Miss Bitterfont was not yet quite convinced. "Let me say a few words," she began. "I am now in a manner advocating your scheme, though I do not altogether accept your reasons for it. You must not be one-sided. Servants are women with feelings, tempers, and anxieties, like other women. Instead of finding fault, and attributing mistakes to temper and wilfulness, cannot you try to ascertain the real reason—pain, trouble, worry—which may have interfered with your domestic's performance of her duty? Mind, I am not about to defend the bad and unfaithful; I am only pleading for *consideration* for the majority; deprecating sweeping assertions and wholesale accusations. Get rid of the bad servants. But do not include *all* in your category. Be fair," said Miss Bitterfont. "They will learn better."

"I hope so," remarked Mrs. Deacon. "For my part, I will gladly unite with you, and do all in my power to befriend my servants, if they will permit me. Some will not be 'interfered with.'"

"Let us come to some resolution," said Mrs. Faithfull. "We will bind ourselves by proper rules not to engage any servant whose character will not bear investigation. We will not give false or misleading characters on any pretence; and should any servant be foolish enough to bring us to book, we will defend the action in court, if necessary. On the other hand, we will pledge ourselves to treat our servants well, and give them every possible and proper indulgence; holding them as human beings like ourselves, with tastes and feelings which should be improved and considered. On these conditions our domestics will be engaged, and on no others. Is it resolved?"

"Yes: resolved," replied all the ladies, Miss Bitterfont then expressing a hope that the rights of servants would not be interfered with.

"But surely employers have rights also?" said Mrs. Deacon. "Let us be candid. If we find that servants combine to protect themselves, why should not mistresses also combine for protection? Our Union is only intended to weed out the bad, slatternly, wickedly disposed servants, whom *no one, if they knew the truth about them, would employ*. It is really an advantage to the servants as a class. The good are encouraged—the majority protected—by our Union. Only the bad need fear it."