

Beth shrewdly. "I daresay I've a milkmaid's cheeks, but they'll soon enough be pale here."

"She means to fall into a decline, Janey! Something or other—I can never quote correctly—is going to prey on her damask cheek."

"Nonsense," said Jane with what seemed unnecessary asperity; "do be quiet, Claire. Look here"—she turned her dark brows on Beth—"I can't make speeches. It's a very awkward position for all of us—most of all for you, perhaps, but we may as well make the best of it. I hope we'll get on. If you're ready, I'll take you downstairs and show you the house—your father's house."

"Go on!" mocked Claire. "I know it by heart if you can't finish, Jane. We're interlopers, Miss Bee-bee. (I've found a short cut for Bethia Beeton, you see). Greedy, grasping frauds. Don't you hate us?"

"I don't know," said Beth, with more truth than politeness. "I'll tell you when I know you better."

"There spoke the canny Scotchwoman! Good-bye." Claire pirouetted round lightly and blew a kiss from the door. "We'll have time to cement a cordial hatred this evening, for we're to be alone, and did you ever know four women left to themselves who kept the peace for three whole hours? There—Jane's waiting to take you into custody."

Beth felt undoubtedly rather like a prisoner as she walked downstairs behind her jailer. It was like speaking to a wall to address that straight, tailor-made back, but Beth had to ask if her father was not at home.

"No," said Jane, turning round and pausing beside an airy Hebe in bronze, her cup fitted as an electric light. "He left a message for you, I believe, to say he had to go out. He is a great deal out."

Beth's heart, laden with disappointment, sank to the tips of her bronze shoes, but she said nothing, for Jane was moving on.

"This is to be our room," she remarked, opening a door at the end of the passage, "when the drawing-room is finished. Mamma sits here at present, but it will be for us to practise or study or sew in. Claire is five years younger than me, and ought to be studying still, but she cares for nothing but music. We chose this room because Mr. Bethune can't be disturbed by the piano here."

Beth looked round her at the scattered evidences of family occupation, music sheets littered on the open piano, novels thrown face downwards here and there, work-baskets, a pair of slippers warming inside the fender, and privately decided that she would prefer to study in her own room.

"Then it is you who paint? Papa told me."

"I'm only a beginner," Jane spoke shortly.

Beth was marched from room to room in the large handsome house. She had conceived of nothing so tall and narrow. After the one easy flight of broad shallow steps at the End House, the stairs here seemed ambitious to reach the sky.

Jane performed her part of show-woman conscientiously, but without enthusiasm. Her manner implied that she took little interest in the task. Arrived at the hall, she led the way to the end farthest from the entrance door, and, dividing a thick curtain, said—

"That is the door of your father's room. I never go into it, but I suppose you may."

"Do you think he would like it—when he is out?" Beth's eyes showed her deep longing.

"I shouldn't think he would mind your going in," Jane answered, in her cold level tones. "It would be an impertinence in Claire or me, but naturally you are different."

"Thank you—Miss Hazlett." Beth blushed, her gratitude not for Jane's part as cicerone, but for the sense of justice that recognised her supreme claim as her father's child.

Jane nodded, turning away. Then she came back a step.

"You'd better call me Jane," she said, "it will save unpleasantness. I don't like silly names, so I won't call you Bee-bee, as my sister does. I'll call you Bethia. That's your proper name, isn't it?"

"My very proper name. I used to associate it always with scoldings and naughtiness, but I would prefer you to call me that rather than anything else."

"Very well. It's as well to come to a clear understanding from the beginning. If you press the button on the right hand side of the door as you enter, you will turn on the electric light. You can't fail to hear the dinner gong here."

(To be continued.)

WAGES OF DOMESTIC SERVANTS.

BY EMMA BREWER.

"Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it."—Gen. xxx. 28.

"*Thrift is good husbandry*, teaching us how to save and how to spend."—*Vanderbilt*.

IT is long since articles on our friends the servants appeared in THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER, but our interest in them has never flagged; indeed it has been kept alive and intensified by means of the papers sent in on the occasion of the Competition Prizes offered by the Editor to all girls who worked with their hands.

These papers brought us face with the writers, very many of whom were domestic servants scattered throughout the land, and who at the time were performing their daily round in the cottage, the farm, the house of the professional man, as well as in the castles and mansions of the rich.

The character of their work was admirably set forth, together with the hours they laboured, the way they were treated by their mistresses, the kind of recreation they were allowed, and in most cases the wages they earned.

Curiously enough, the Board of Trade is awakening to the fact that domestic service is the largest women's industry in the kingdom, and that domestic servants form one-third of the female working world, therefore a very important portion of the population, and it has been trying, without much success at present, to discover the amount of wages earned by this numerous class of workers, and how long on an average servants retain their situations. But with all its desire to succeed, and with the vast machinery at its command for collecting statistics, the Board has only been able to get reliable information as to the wages of 5,338 servants out of about one and three-quarter millions. Still the move it has made will be of infinite service in letting light in upon the subject of domestic service, which every person thinks he or she knows thoroughly, and of which very few have any real knowledge. Indeed how is it possible they should when every household that can afford a servant differs from all others both in the kind of servant employed, the conditions of the home, the wages paid and the treatment given and received?

Now that so many occupations are open to girls and women, the subject of the wages earned by domestic servants is a very important one, and the Board of Trade is to be thanked for looking into it. It is the first attempt at a serious investigation into the wages of domestic servants, and, though partial and incomplete, it contains a large amount of information which has not hitherto been available to the public, and which will no doubt prove very valuable as a foundation for comparisons in years to come.

The domestic* servant is a member of the household and a very important one—one, in fact, on which the comfort of the home greatly depends.

The question is, can she earn sufficient wages to keep herself neat and respectable and put by something in the savings bank? Or, if she has aged or sick parents, can she help them with the wages she earns?

To answer this correctly will never be an easy task, for it does not depend solely on the wages earned but rather on the individual character and disposition of servants and the needs of those at home; and not the least important part of it is whether they may rely on the wages being paid punctually.

Can a girl do as well for herself and her belongings in domestic service as in an office, as typewriter or clerk, or in a laundry or factory?

Of course, she has her food and lodging, which can be put down as from £15 to £20 per annum, and in this respect the domestic servant scores, as those who go out to daily work often fare very badly as to food, lodging and home comforts; and indeed she scores all round except in one instance, that of not having every evening free.

In domestic service there are many grades of skilled and unskilled labour as in every other occupation, and on the lowest rung of the ladder is the little slavey of the lodging-house or coffee shop, whose wages, if any, are next to nothing, whose work is never-ending, and who can do nothing for home but relieve it of her board, such as it is.

She is doubtless the least well off of all those who work for their living, and she rarely rises in the scale. It may be interesting to learn that out of every hundred mistresses who employ servants fifty-nine keep only one servant, and although the wages paid and received are much the same, yet the conditions of the home vary so immensely as not to be capable of comparison.

As far as wages go the general servant under fifteen years of age earns as a rule £6 a year, and from sixteen to twenty years old £17. There are one or two reasons why very few general servants get into houses where four or five servants are kept; first, because they grow accustomed to their work and attached to the people whom they serve, and because as they grow older they obtain increased wages, though few ever get more than £20.

The average age of a general servant who gets £20 and more is thirty-five, and the length of her service from six to twelve years.

Another reason against a good general servant entering households of many servants and so obtaining higher wages is the want of professional training, which is a serious defect in our social organisation.

At present the good general servant, like the good mistress, is born, not made.

Out of every hundred households twenty-three employ two servants at an average wage of £15 per annum.

Strangely enough, the wage is higher where the number of servants is greater, so that in households of three, four or more servants the wages, taking one with another, are £18 per annum.

Perhaps you remember having seen a picture in *Punch* of a mistress engaging a cook. The lady asks, "What wages do you require?" To which the cook replies, "Well, ma'am, it all depends; if I am single-handed and have to do the ground-floor, area and front-door steps as well as cook, I shall want £20; but if you give me a kitchen-maid, and I have nothing to do but cook, I should want £40 a year." We pay for position, you see.

The number of households employing four servants is only nine in a hundred, and those employing a larger number are only four in a hundred, and taking the wages all round they average £18 a year.

Cooks and lady's-maids obtain the highest remuneration. Of the former you rarely find one under twenty or over forty, and their wage ranges from £25 to £50 per annum, while lady's-maids get from £20 to £35, according to the house in which they take service, beside very valuable perquisites.

Having looked into the average wage of the domestic servant, we come again to the question, Is the servant better off or less well off than the girl who goes out to her daily work? After weighing carefully all the circumstances, it seems to me that a domestic servant in a good household is much better off than either a shop-girl, a typewriter or clerk. She has her food, including tea, fire, no small item in these days, lodging and washing without cost to herself, and when her wages are paid quarterly the four or five pounds is her very own, to buy necessary clothing, put away in the savings bank or help her people at home. What girl other than a domestic servant ever has as much at her own disposal at one time? In addition to the wage a servant often receives quite a large sum in the year in tips from visitors. I wish this form of income was done away with, but the practice obtains in spite of my not liking it, and is often quite sufficient to provide them with clothes.

A good parlour-maid rarely gets more than £28, while the wages of a nurse vary from £16 to £40 per annum.

The difficulty of obtaining good servants is much greater in households employing one or two only, which is perhaps the reason why frequent holidays are offered as inducements instead of high wages.

The relations between mistresses and servants are very little affected by the rate of money wages agreed upon.

The servants find no difficulty really in obtaining full value for their services, and consequently there is an absence of bargaining on either side.

The important points which make a situation desirable are the quality of the food and lodging provided, the amount of work required to be done, the way the household is organised and the efficiency and personal characteristics of both mistress and servant.

We learned from the papers sent in, to which I have referred, that a large percentage of servants retain their situations for many years, some indeed for twenty, which speaks well for both mistresses and servants.

There is as much honour in these days attached to domestic service as to any other means of getting a living. The thing is to be sure and understand the work decided upon, and to do it to the best of one's power.

The way to decide upon our work is to select that best suited to our special capabilities and by which we can earn the most, and thus secure our own present and future well-being and enable us to help and do good to others.

Those who read this paper will be able to decide to what extent the wages of domestic servants will enable them to compete with girls who work out of the house in doing good to themselves and others.

We add a little group of figures for those who are interested in them.

We will suppose that there are 5,771,199 households in the United Kingdom. Out of every hundred of these employing servants—

| | £ | s. |
|--|----|----|
| 59 keep only one servant, average wage | 11 | 10 |
| 23 " two servants | 15 | 0 |
| 9 " three " | 18 | 0 |
| 4 " four " | 20 | 0 |
| 5 " over four " | 23 | 9 |

Average wage £17 17s.

Roughly speaking, servants employed under fifteen years of age are a little over 8 in every 100.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----|---|
| Between fifteen and twenty | 33 | " |
| " twenty and twenty-five | 24 | " |
| " twenty-five and thirty-five | 19 | " |
| " thirty-five and forty-five | 7 | " |
| Over forty-five | 9 | " |

* So called because she lives in the house or within the walls, as opposed to an outdoor servant.