

CADDY FLORENCE

HOUSEHOLD
ORGANIZATION

Florence Caddy

Household Organization

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Household Organization

PREFACE

One fine August bank-holiday many thoughts, more or less connected with the day, prompted me to write this essay, so forcibly did it appear that people required help to make their lives easier and happier.

Since then there have been several bank-holidays; and though trade is depressed throughout the country, though financial panic has ruined thousands, yet the demand for beer, spirits, and tobacco is as great as ever; the hollow gaieties of life are as noisy as ever – perhaps the more so for being more hollow; still our most precious friends kill themselves with overwork – mental pulverization. If they eased their minds by employing their hands they might yet live, even though many could not, last autumn, afford to buy the breath of sea or mountain air which would have strengthened them for the burdens of the new year. Those who were wise and who had capital invested it in health, that being likely to bring them in the best return.

We have had seven years of the highest national prosperity. Although fictitious, it gave us pleasure while it lasted, and we were able to enjoy all that life has to offer in its perfection. We may be going to pass through seven years of dearth, so we must husband our resources of health and wealth, instead of drawing upon them in the reckless way we have lately accustomed ourselves to do. Some years of scarcity may be a blessing to us all, if they lead us back from the habits of excess and idleness we have fallen into, and particularly the craving for excitement, whether in the form of literature, or by means of stimulants and cordials (absinthe).

A plain but short statement of our national losses will show the necessity of economizing the goods we still possess, financial as well as physical.

Independent of the stagnation of trade which paralyzes every branch of our commerce, we have lately had losses through foreign loans more severe than any we have experienced during the present century.

Since the announcement by Turkey in October, 1875, that the interest on the Turkish debt would be reduced, there has been a great fall in foreign stocks. The debt of Turkey – roughly speaking, £200,000,000 – has fallen, say, £125,000,000 in value. Egyptian securities, not including the floating debt, approximately estimated at £60,000,000, have fallen some £20,000,000 in value. In smaller stocks the fall has probably been some £20,000,000; and since the breaking out of the Eastern Question, Russian stocks, at an aggregate of about £165,000,000, have fallen 12 per cent., or a sum equal to more than £20,000,000 sterling.

Besides these calamities there have been in England, as shown by a recent return, 1,797 commercial failures, representing liabilities of £30,000,000 sterling, and it has been calculated that of the firms and persons occupied in business, 3 per cent. have been unable to meet their engagements.

These losses will account for less familiar faces being seen in the Park in the season, for the numerous houses unlet in fashionable quarters, for grouse-moors going almost begging; and, among many other significant facts, Tattersall, who generally has 150 applications for coachmen on his books, has now 150 coachmen applying to him for situations.

In our present abundance of money, through dearth of safe investments, many persons have purchased art treasures; which would be wise, but for the pain it always causes to part with things that have once adorned our homes, which makes this not a happy speculation.

It would be the part of a screech-owl to cry Woe! woe! and hoot triumphantly over the distresses of our country; but there seems so much of hope and promise in the fact of our meeting reverses of

fortune with courage, that we cannot feel that a real disaster has overtaken us. We have in the case of France an example of how a great nation can rise renewed in strength out of overwhelming troubles, and our trial is less severe than that of France.

It is not good for any people to sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play, any more than it is good for children to feed upon delicacies in lieu of simple fare. Persons suddenly reduced from affluence to comparative poverty may be glad of a few hints to show them how happiness and refinement are by no means incompatible with a smaller condition of fortune, with a shorter purse; for, after all, the purse is not the pleasure, it only helps us to procure it; our own taste and feeling must teach us what true pleasure is.

It may be demurred that some of the household improvements suggested in this book would be expensive to carry out – such, for instance, as the arrangement of the kitchen; and this is true: but looked at as an investment, they would yield large interest, and it might be prudent to invest under one's own eye, in one's own house, some of the capital we cannot afford to sink. If used in economizing wages, it will give us a profitable return.

We do not hesitate to lay out money in improvements on our farms. Why, then, need we fear to arrange our dwellings in accordance with principles of true economy, so that the ladies of our families may be able to co-operate with us in advancing the benefit of all? Every family might be its own Economical Housekeeping Company (Limited), comprising in itself its shareholders and board of directors, realizing cent. per cent. for its money, because £200 a year would go as far as £400.

If we save the money we now spend upon keeping servants to do our work for us, we shall have more to spend on our holidays, and so shall feel all the more refreshed by our respite from work.

Much is said in this book about superfluities, but although some passages may seem to give colour to such an idea, it is by no means wished to convey the recommendation that our homes and lives are to be bare of beauty. On the contrary, I hanker after profusion and love plenty, but wish them to be placed where they will not give more labour than pleasure, where they will not hamper our every movement at every moment, making us ever wear a sort of moral tight kid-gloves, be the weather hot or cold.

The rock which theories split upon is that they generally presuppose that we can make our lives, and are in independent position and good circumstances, whereas this is seldom the case. The majority of us are neither in good circumstances nor independent: often we have had no control over the purchase of our very furniture; so we must make the best of what we have, only, when we have the opportunity of making a change, let it be a reform as well as a change. My main object in writing this essay has been to show how frequently, and in how short a time, the saving effected by a reform covers the cost of carrying it out.

In the case of young couples about to marry, and beginning to plan their lives, any work will be good which aids them to lay down their plans according to rules of economy and common sense.

January, 1877.

THE DIFFICULTY

Impossibility of getting good servants – Over-civilization – Labour has been made hideous – Sleeping partnership – Wealth exempt from this difficulty – Refinement of the professional class – Credit – Phase of insecurity and scarcity – Sweet are the uses of adversity – English people do not fear work – Servants too readily changed – Wilfulness of servants – Upper servants are easily obtained – Servants feel the pressure of the times – Ornamental servants costly luxuries – Two questions – Work must be efficiently done – Woman's work – Misuse of time – We keep servants to wait upon each other – Idleness – Pleasure made a toil.

For a long time past we, the middle-classes of England, have felt a great household perplexity, one which has been a daily burden to us all. This is the difficulty, almost impossibility, of getting good servants.

Machinery, though it has lightened other branches of labour and cheapened production, has not helped us much here. Social science has been deeply studied, but nothing practical has yet been brought to bear upon this vexed question. The theories are good, the projected reforms better; but so far there is nothing that people of average intellect, and moderate income, can take hold of and apply to their own case. During the late plethora of wealth throughout the nation, we have so multiplied our wants, and so refined upon the ruder social ideas of the early part of the century, that our servants have not been able to keep pace with our requirements; and notwithstanding that the lower orders have much more careful education than they had formerly, it seems to be of a sort which makes them discontented with their work, rather than instructing them how to do it better.

In fact, we have degraded labour by making it hideous, by pushing it into holes and corners, by shrinking from it ourselves, and casting it entirely into the hands of the lower orders; until we English are virtually divided into a contemplative and a working class. This would be all very well if it were true that our class could afford to pay liberally for work done well; but, in effect, the majority of those who wish to be relieved from work cannot pay liberally for hired labour, neither can the bulk of the labouring class perform their part of the bargain in a manner deserving liberal payment.

We have tried to keep ourselves as sleeping partners in the domestic concern; we have derived profit from our money invested in service, and we find that this is no longer a profitable investment. There is a large wealthy order exempt from these difficulties. By having ample means of recompense, it has the flower of service at its command, and the domestic economy of the mansions of England is perfect. Under steward and housekeeper, this may be compared to the beautiful system seen on board a large ship of war, for discipline, routine, and celerity of service. In both instances the reverse of the shield shows the injurious effects on the lower ranks of a large proportion of unoccupied time, spent in merely waiting for their hours of duty.

The suggestions I have to offer are not required by this wealthy class – the upper ten thousand, as they are popularly called, whose incomes range among the four and five figures; but help seems to be much needed by the upper twice ten hundred thousand who have incomes described by three figures, and who yet, by good birth, breeding, and education, form the backbone of England; whose boys, though only home-boarders at Eton, Harrow, and Rugby, fill all the other large schools of Great Britain, and whose daughters are the flowers of our land.

Of late years England has been passing through a period of unexampled prosperity, so much so as to make the customs of wealth a familiar habit with even those who only possess a competence. To them the domestic difficulty is very great, since they exact from inferior servants the quality of service that can only be obtained from the best trained of their order. This occasions disappointment and irritation. The people whose means are inadequate to the gratification of their tastes belong mainly

to the professional classes, whose brain-work most demands repose at home; yet these are, beyond all others, perplexed by the increasing toils and troubles of home life. They find that a struggle which should be peace, and so the whole machinery of their lives is thrown out of gear.

This upper working-class is so occupied by endeavours to make the fortune, or, if not fortune, at any rate to make both ends meet – which has been denied them by birth or accident – that they have no time nor energy left to think these things out for themselves. So they go on bearing the yearly increasing load piled upon them by the tyranny of fashion, of custom, or by their wish to keep up their credit in the eyes of the world; for their credit is in many cases their fortune, and it must be upheld at any sacrifice. A question occurs to many: Is this credit best maintained by outward appearances, or is it more firmly secured by seeming strong enough to dispense with artificial support? And, again, Is our money credit the best we can have?

A man of known wealth may go about in a shabby coat, a countess may wear a cheap bonnet, a Sidonia may dine off bread and cheese. If Gladstone fells trees, he is still Gladstone; if Ruskin grubs up a wood, he is still a great poet.

Without becoming mere *dilettanti*, may we not enjoy a reputation for taste, and so allow ourselves to be heedless of a few of the conventional proprieties of life; as a tree rises above the level of the grass? May we not strive, by the culture of our manners and discourse, to make our simpler social entertainments as highly prized as the feasts of our richer neighbours? The years of prosperity have passed away, and we seem to have entered upon a phase of society when scarcity and insecurity overwhelm or threaten us all; when the wealth of yesterday has crumbled into dust, the paper money shrivelled as if it had been burnt. We still have the same high culture, the tastes and feelings of yesterday; and unfortunately, the same habits of Idleness, Helplessness, Waste, and Luxury.

These are hard charges to bring against the cream of a nation which for centuries has held its own by its energy, abundance of resource, strength of character, and scorn of effeminacy; but it is impossible to deny that these characteristics of the British race have been much less strongly marked of late years. Still, these things are in our nature, and we must not weakly let ourselves decline from our former high standard.

Let us, at the outset of our adversity, meet our altered circumstances with the strength of mind and wisdom befitting English people. Although wealth may be taken from us, we have our education and energy left, which, if properly used, will not allow us to sink into a lower condition than we have hitherto enjoyed; and while we hold our ground we shall strengthen our health, develop our ability, and increase our happiness.

Let us, the women of England, encourage and support the men in an endeavour to return to simplicity of life, to a more manly condition; call it Spartan, Roman, republican, what you will, it is, in fact, the training of soul and body. We have had a long holiday; let us return to school with renewed vigour. We women have been much to blame for the degeneracy which has been felt of late. If men trifle away their time and health upon tobacco, women are foolishly helpless, and they permit their dependents to be wantonly wasteful. Both men and women pass the best hours of daylight in their beds, and make their meals the important event of their days.

Englishmen abroad do not mind work – indeed, they may be said to love it – and never since the days of Drake have they felt it to be a degradation. He said "he would like to see the gentleman that would not set his hand to a rope and hale and draw with the mariners;" and herein the English differ from continental nations. But in England they let their love of bodily exertion have its scope almost exclusively in their games. Nor do Englishwomen in the Colonies shrink from work, and they are never in the least ashamed of it. You hear them talk quite freely of how Colonel So-and-so called in the morning while they were "stuffing the veal," to ask for the two first dances at the ball at Government House in the evening.

It seems to be only in England that we dread to be seen doing anything useful. And unless we soon cast off this fear we shall be condemned to the deadly-liveliness of Hotel Companies (Limited),

with their uninteresting routine; for the supply of servants not being forthcoming at our price, we must of necessity be reduced to this levelling American system, which will flatten all individuality out of us.

One cause of the ever-increasing difficulty of holding a staff of servants well in hand is that our connection with them is too easily changed or dissolved at pleasure. We should bear ourselves very differently towards each other if we knew we were compelled to live together during even one year certain. As the case now is, we do not get to know each other, and a small trial of temper on either side is the prelude to a change. The old patriarchal feeling of considering the servants as members of the family has quite died out, and so their relation to us has become confused. At times we rate them with the tradespeople who come periodically to polish our bright stoves, clean our chandeliers, and wind our clocks, and so we only care whether they do their specified work well or ill, taking no further trouble about them; sometimes we treat them as the horses which draw our carriage, and see that they are well fed accordingly; and sometimes we look upon them as machines merely.

We hear it said, servants do not take the interest in their places that they used to do; they are ready to leave you on the smallest provocation; they will not be told how to do any particular thing; they have their way, and if you do not like it, well, they think your place will not suit them. Indeed, one of the most docile and obliging among the servants I have known, on differing with his employer about some work in which he was engaged, said, "Well, I'll do it a little bit your way, and a little bit my way; and that will be fair, won't it, mum?"

It is easy enough to get servants of the superior grades – ladies'-maids, parlour-maids, and even house-maids, where two footmen are kept; but is there such a being as a really good plain cook, or has a servant-of-all-work been heard of lately? Although it is truly said that servants themselves are beginning to feel the pressure of the times, this is not from their actual losses by money-market panics, but from the fact that many domestics are out of place on account of those families who have met with losses dispensing with unnecessary assistance. But that does not ease our case, for we are none the less helpless and dependent. Although many upper servants are out of place, this does not make them seek our situations; and if they did so, they would do us a positive injury by bringing into our houses the habits of wealthier families. The reduction of wages, and lack of suitable situations in England, will cause these unemployed servants to seek in emigration the high wages they are still secure of in the Colonies, or in America. There they will be a godsend, and they may reasonably look forward to establishing themselves permanently and happily.

Independently of the collapse of foreign securities and the general depression of trade, the increased cost of all necessaries makes it impossible to many of us to allow ourselves luxuries, of which the most costly are ornamental servants; and the difficulty of obtaining any others makes it incumbent on us to put our own shoulders to the wheel, and try by diligent self-help to solve some of the problems which so miserably defy us to find a practical answer.

In this consideration of the subject of domestic work in middle-class households, I hope to show in what way the mistress may be rendered more self-reliant, and how the master's purse may be spared the perpetual drain the present system entails upon it at both ends, and from every mesh.

This is but a fraction of a vast subject, yet it is in itself so large, and stretches out into such a variety of kindred topics, that it is difficult to compress it into a form small enough to be easily handled, and still more difficult to make suggestions of reform generally palatable, since many vanities must be hurt by a proposal to reduce establishments, and sensitive feelings wounded by the bluntness of two direct practical questions —

1st. Must the great majority of our young ladies be elegant superfluities?

2nd. Must we keep many servants to wait upon each other?

These questions I hope to answer usefully in the following pages.

We must begin with the understanding that in every house there is work to be done, and that somebody must do it. Our aim will be to reduce its compass, and to do what remains in the cheapest

and pleasantest way. But it must be efficiently done, which is seldom the case when young ladies play at housekeeping, which too often means giving out the pepper, and such like. We have long shrunk from allowing our women to work at all. Husbands and fathers have taken a pride in keeping the ladies of their households in that state of ease that no call need be made on them to lift a finger in the way of useful work; so that if reverses befall them, their condition is deplorable indeed.

Now we are turning round and insisting upon every woman being able to support herself by her own exertions. Though a great part of woman's natural work has been taken out of her hands by machinery, this, which is mainly the preparation of clothing, was the occupation of her uncultivated leisure, and did no more than fill up the time which we now devote to culture. By retreating from our active household duties we now divide our time between culture and idleness, or the union of both in novel-reading.

For many years conscientious teachers tried to drive us to household work by calling it our duty: a dull name, sternly forbidding us to find pleasure or interest therein. It was a moral dose of physic, salutary but disagreeable. In the same way we were taught to make shirts and mend stockings, but an evening dress was held to be frivolity. Taste was discouraged, and beauty driven out of our work; no wonder, then, that the young and careless shunned it altogether, and threw as much of it as they could into the hands of hirelings. Is there no way of teaching duty without making it repulsive by its dreariness and ugliness?

Now that we pride ourselves upon being no longer weak-minded and silly, let us exert ourselves to act upon Lord Bacon's maxim, "Choose the life that is most useful, and habit will make it the most agreeable." We need not fear that the routine of daily handiwork – which will become interesting to us as we try to make it agreeable – will interfere with our further intellectual culture. And even should it do so, are not our leaders of thought beginning to perceive that manual labour is more commercially valuable than mental labour; that the demand for the former is greater as the supply becomes perceptibly less? The deadness of machine work causes us to prize the spirited and varied touch that can only be imparted by the hand. Every woman, among her acquaintance, knows some one who is a skilful, energetic manager of her house, and yet whose reading and accomplishments are above the average. Indeed, as I heard one of my friends of this stamp say, when asked how she found time for so much sketching from nature, "One always finds time for what one likes to do."

We see what priceless possessions we lose by our misuse of time, or waste of it in inanities, when we look at the embroideries and other work of our ancestresses, and compare these with the poor results of our months and years. We see splendid embroideries of the time of Titian, with the needlework still strong enough to outlast all our nonsense in "leviathan stitch" and "railroad stitch;" and old lace, by the side of which our work of mingling woven braids and crochet in such a manner as to get most show for the least cost of taste, labour, and invention, is worth nothing at all.

With regard to my second question – Must we keep many servants to wait upon each other? – I will here make one observation.

The heaviest part of the work of a cook and kitchen-maid consists in preparing the kitchen meals. Six servants require as many potatoes peeled, and as many plates, knives, forks, etc., cleaned, as six ladies and gentlemen. Multiply their five meals a day by six, and you will find that there are thirty plates, knives, forks spoons, cups or glasses, and many other things, to be laid on the table, used, washed, and put away again, at a computation of only one plate to each meal.

Think of the time alone consumed in this, and the breakage; and this merely in the meals.

I am not considering the houses which require a complement of ten servants to keep their machinery in motion, as these do not form part of my subject; but this slight calculation will enable us to form some estimate of the cost of maintaining a large retinue.

We may well ask why we have drifted into this enormous expenditure, and for what purpose we have gradually let our houses be filled up by a greedy and destructive class, who, notwithstanding many bright exceptions, seem to combine the vices of dirt, disorder, extravagance, disobedience,

and insolence. Why, indeed? For this simple reason, that we are idle. Gloss it over as we may, by calling it a desire to secure time for higher ends, the truth remains the same; we have neglected our duty in order that we may live in idleness and devote ourselves to pleasure. But if our lives are to be spent in pleasure, we shall ourselves degenerate; for pleasure wears out the body more than work, and excitement more than both. Let us take our appointed burden of steady work, and bear it onwards cheerfully and patiently. By so doing we shall feel it grow gradually lighter. It is not such slavery as the oar to which we chain ourselves. The artificial strain on our lives must be kept up by stimulants, and idleness must be roused by excitement. But our routine of gaiety is no idleness; and as for its name – gaiety – there never was a term more false. The gaiety is a hollow mockery, masking fatigue, untruth, and disappointment.

Sidney Smith says, "One of the greatest pleasures of our lives is conversation." If we will simply allow ourselves to talk upon subjects of common interest, we shall find social gatherings less wearisome than when we have to manufacture small-talk for civility's sake alone. If we meet together for enjoyment instead of for display, we shall replace dissipation – mere dissipation of time (what an endeavour for mortals, whose time is their life!) – by gaiety of heart, which is the best restorative to wearied spirits.

Let us Englishwomen make a strong effort to rescue ourselves from this bondage, this constant drain on our resources; and, leaving to men the duty to the state, let us seek our work in what is our duty – the rule and guidance of the house, securing, as Ruskin says, "its order, comfort, and loveliness."

But especially must we insist upon its loveliness, which is the point most neglected in all that portion of our lives which does not lie immediately upon the surface.

THE REMEDY

Bad habits to be reformed – Late hours – Value of the long winter evenings – Simplicity of manners – Over-carefulness – Instruction to be gained from foreign nations – Our manners should be natural – *Impedimenta* in our households – Comparison of former times with our own – Children trained to habits of consideration – Young men and boys over-indulged – Reduction of establishments – Lady helps – What is menial work? – Picturesque occupation – What is lady-like – Amateur millinery – Two subjects for an artist – Taste – Plan of the book – Eugénie de Guérin.

Before speaking of work which has to be done in order to make our homes comfortable and beautiful, it is necessary to point out what ought not to be done.

We have fallen into one form of self-indulgence which goes far towards unfitting us for work, except under the stimulus of excitement. This is our national habit of keeping late hours.

This is an important matter, and one wherein every member of every family may, if he pleases, aid reform. This, unless we are printers, bakers, or policemen, is entirely in our own hands.

Later hours are kept in England than in any other part of the world, and they grow later and later. We read in the life of the Prince Consort how painfully he felt this difference between England and Germany; yet the latitude and climate of the two countries differ but little, and we are of the same race. It is merely a matter of custom.

Many persons pride themselves on breakfasting at ten o'clock, and nine is thought quite an early hour in comfortable houses. It is deemed aristocratic to breakfast late, as well as to dine late; and as the day begun at ten o'clock would be too short for people to have a probable chance of sleep at ten at night, they are obliged to sit up till after midnight. Thus the best hours of the day are wasted, and the health of many injured by remaining an unnecessary length of time in a gas or paraffin laden atmosphere.

This shows an astonishing contrariety of disposition on the part of persons of refined sensations, so completely does it reverse the order of nature, which gives us the early sunshine for our enjoyment. Sunrise is the only beautiful natural spectacle that we modern English do not care about, except once or twice in our lives, when we get a shivering glimpse of it from an altitude of many thousand feet above the level of the sea.

From six to six is the natural day throughout by far the largest half of the globe, and the nearer we bring our practice to this measure the better; taking our day of sixteen hours (two-thirds of the twenty-four) from six o'clock in the morning instead of from nine. Old folks in the country ask their young people what is the good of sitting up burning out fire and candle. We never ask ourselves this question in London. Many persons take a nap after their heavy dinner, and only begin to feel lively as the clock strikes ten. To these the midnight oil is invigorating.

We have a valuable provision of nature in our long winter evenings, reckoning them at from five till ten. This gives us time for study, which we need more than do southern nations, to learn to contend against our climate. The northern peoples are famed for their mental culture: Scotland and Iceland bear witness to this. This is the season, too, for work in wool, to provide warm garments which are not required in the south. The wise woman does not fear the cold when her household is clothed in scarlet. This is the time when we may gather round the lamp or the fireside, and draw closer the family links under the influence of social warmth and progress.

Simplicity in our meals and dress is another point in which we may unite economy of money, time, and trouble, with comfort to ourselves and a regard for the beautiful. We need not drift into the carelessness of the picnic style of living, which is but the parody of simplicity. The real picnic is

only suited to a few exceptional days in the year, and these our holidays. We may have simple meals indoors which should have all the freedom of picnic without its inconveniences.

Do we not all remember Swiss breakfasts with pleasure: the thyme-flavoured honey, and the Alpine strawberries? Or, better still, those at Athens, where the honey of Hymettus is nectar, and the freshly made butter ambrosia; and our enjoyment of both was enhanced by the scent of the orange blossoms coming in at the open windows, and the sight of sunrise glowing on the purple hills? Or luncheons in Italy, under a pergola of vines, where a melon, macaroni, a basket of grapes, and a tricolour salad constituted the feast?¹

These things dwell longer in our memories than does the aldermanic banquet.

Although every faculty need not be swamped in the gratification of the palate, our meals ought to give us pleasure. It is only when they are made of supreme importance that the satisfaction of a healthy appetite degenerates into mere greed, and what we call housekeeping means merely thinking of dinner.

Simplicity allows play (not work) to our higher faculties, which cannot be refreshed while we are overwhelmed with domestic cares.

"Martha was cumbered about," not with serving, but with too much serving. Doubtless, in the fulness of her hospitality, she tried to do too much, and so she showed irritability. Our Lord's teaching is always that there are good things prepared for us, which we cannot attain if we are over-careful and troubled about provision for the body.

There are roses in life for those who look for roses, if they will but give themselves time to gather them.

We may study with instruction and profit to ourselves the daily habits of foreign nations, and see where they fail, and also wherein they excel us.

M. Taine has put into words an observation which must have occurred to all of us who have travelled, how that "from England to France, and from France to Italy, wants and preparations go on diminishing. Life is more simple, and, if I may say so, more naked, more given up to chance, less encumbered with incommodious commodities."

From Italy we may go on to Arabia, and there see how little is used to keep the body in health. A woollen garment, warm enough to sleep in the open air (we cannot say out of doors where there are no doors), and thick enough to keep off the scorching rays of the sun by day, and a thin shawl for the head, is all their clothing; and the simplest meal once a day seems to be enough to keep them strong and active. Arabs have walked or run by my horse during whole days in the heat of the sun, and lived upon air until sundown, when they seemed to eat nothing but a little parched corn before stretching themselves down to sleep. It is not customary, even among the upper classes in Southern Europe and in the East, to eat more than two meals a day.

Liebig tells us of the nutrition of plants from the atmosphere: we may go further, and proclaim the nutrition of man from the atmosphere. On the moorland, on the mountain side, at sea, and in the desert, I have over and over again felt its feeding properties; and we know that although we are, in such circumstances, hungry for our meals, we are not at all exhausted, nor do we want to feed frequently.

As the leaves of a plant absorb the carbon in the air and give back the oxygen, so do we feed upon the oxygen and return the nitrogen. But we must have the oxygen. By our own present system of frequent heavy meals we throw all the hard work done by our bodies entirely upon the digestive organs, and when these are exhausted with their efforts, we feel faint, and mistakenly ply them with stimulants and concentrated nourishment, until at last they break down under their load.

But leaving the Arabs, who are types of a high race in a natural (uneducated) condition, may we not learn much from more civilized nations?

¹ The tricolour salad imitates the Italian banner – red, white, and green. Green salad, beetroot, and cream, or white of egg whipped to snow.

Besides taking example by the early hours of the Germans, we may imitate their industry, and, in our studies, their thoroughness and diligence of research.

From the bright, elastic French people we may (we women especially) copy their cheerfulness, frugality, and their keen, clear-headed habits of business. See how diligent they are at accounts, how quick at estimates, in ways and means; how they sharpen their wit, until it shines and makes their society sought as we in England seek a clever book. The Frenchwoman works the machinery of her own house, goes into the market and fixes the market-price of what she decides upon as suitable to her purposes (she always has a purpose, this Frenchwoman); she dresses herself and her children with taste, and she glitters in society.

From the Spaniards we may learn, by the warning of a proud race, what it is to sink into the scorn of other countries through smoking and debt.

From the Dutch we may learn cleanliness, from the Swiss simplicity, and from the Italians to foster our patriotism. Our American cousins are part of our own family; they only differ from us in having carried our virtues and some of our follies into the superlative.

We should endeavour to be natural in all our doings: to be ourselves, and not always acting a part, and that generally the part of a person of rank, or a millionaire. Let whatever we do be openly done, though not obtrusively nor boastfully; and this whether it is ornamental or only useful. To be truly ornamental it must combine utility. Is not the flower as useful as the leaf?

As an example of what I mean, I will give two opposite instances. A young lady was making the bodice of a dress when a visitor called; she quickly pushed the work under a sofa pillow, and caught up a gold-braided smoking-cap, half worked at the shop, which had lasted a long time as a piece of show-needlework.

The other case is that of a lady who set up for an example to her sex, and always displayed, as a manifestation of superiority, a basket full of gentlemen's stockings, which she seemed to be ever mending. Both of these ladies were acting a part.

Good taste has no false shame; so we need not add the vexations of concealment to the accumulation of cares we have heaped upon our houses, till they are so encumbered with *impedimenta* of all kinds that our whole strength is taken to keep them in order, and the household machine has to move through such a mass of difficulties that it is like a loaded carriage lumbering through a Turkish road. Why should we add these things to life?

We are daily bringing mechanism to greater perfection, and it is our own fault that we do not make it perform for our houses what Manchester has made it do for our looms, and render ourselves mistresses in reality, instead of merely in name, of our own households.

If we had to go back to the old flint-and-tinderbox days, when it was an hour's hard work in the dark to strike a light, when gas was unknown, when water was not laid on, when all bread must be made at home, all stockings knitted; when there was no such thing as a ready made shirt, much less gowns and polonaises; no perambulators, nor washing machines; – we should not heap upon ourselves superfluous work in the thoughtless way we do at present, and then leave all to the attention of the most careless and irresponsible members of the community.

In a small family there is less work to be done; in a large one there are more hands to do the work, and many hands make light labour.

We would have no mistress of a family a household drudge, while her daughters lounge over fancy-work or a novel; but we would ease her hands, and uphold her in her true position of administratrix, mainspring, guiding star of the home.

Modern educational pressure causes too many of us to indulge our children, and release them from every personal duty. They must have time and quiet for their studies, and so they are allowed to become selfish, and to think that everything must give way to their mental improvement. Whereas we should train them to give as little trouble as possible; and by good management, or by sacrifices, such as getting up earlier, to do at least the extra work appertaining to their individual enjoyment.

Why should they, for instance, require hot water brought to their rooms several times a day? Their grandparents used cold, and it was better for them. Why must girls have their hair brushed and braided for them? Why must their lost gloves be found for them, and their wardrobes tidily arranged for them to throw into confusion in their hurry?

Boys, especially, are so seldom trained to habits of consideration, that a young man in a house gives at least twice the trouble that his father does. Boys ring bells with intense heedlessness of its being some one's journey – oftener four journeys – to answer them. They make their boots unnecessarily dirty, and their other clothes also; while the extra baths on football days, and the cleansing of the white garments, make many mothers wish the noble game were not so popular; and to sweep up the dirt the boys bring into a house often constitutes the chief work of a housemaid. We do not expect boys to mend their clothes, but they should be made to put them away, and to keep their books, papers, and toys in their proper places, and to take care of their own pets.

We excuse young men from doing these things, instead of smoking or novel-reading through the whole of their spare time, on the plea that they work at money-making, forgetting that they do so for themselves, and not, like their father, for the family benefit. We might reform these things materially, and remove much of the self-indulgence which causes what has been truly called "the shame of mixed luxury and misery over our native land." If we all habitually gave less trouble, we should require fewer servants to wait upon us.

There is a scarcity of good working servants, while the governess market is largely over-stocked. How many thousand of the poorest subjects of our Queen are now sinking, sick with hope deferred, into despondence, hating the present, dreading the future.

And yet on all hands we hear our lady friends say, "We must all wait upon ourselves now." The impossibility of finding the average of three servants for every house in London being now recognized. Why need there be three servants to every house, when servants are the greatest drain to the fortune of a family, worse even than the dress and society of its lady members, or than the tobacco of the men?

With study, and application of modern inventions, the three servants might be reduced to two; the two-servant-power establishments might dispense with one; and in many families where only one servant is kept, a lady-help would be found more useful, as well as more ornamental, than the "dolly-mop."

Trade is bad, and many young women, such as lace-makers, seek service. But being of the lower orders does not necessarily make them efficient servants, not more so than young ladies who have never learnt household work.

The existing puzzle is how to utilize the lady-help, for we must always bear in mind that she is a lady. She must not be merely ornamental, nor may we expect her to do anything menial. And here we must distinguish – this indeed is the great point for distinction – what is menial and what is not, and then see if we can reduce the number of works considered menial.

When we read of Marie Antoinette's delightful playing at work at the Trianon, and think of her in her bewitching costume, her work, the work she supposed herself to be doing, is placed in the region of picturesque poetry; as Tennyson's gardener's daughter, training her wreaths over the porch, is as poetical a personage as his pensive Adeline or stately Eleonore.

We hear that the daughters of Queen Victoria take pride in, and give personal attention to, their dairies, and love to work among their gardens and model farms. And the Prince Consort designed model cottages for the poor in which it would be bliss to dwell, only it is impracticable to make the poor endure novelties in domestic life. Why, then, should we alone think it improper, unlady-like, and what not, to study these every-day utilities, and plan improvements in sinks and boilers?

But things are not so bad as they were thirty and forty years ago, as regards what is lady-like and what is not. We are emancipated from the thralldom of its being considered genteel to be idle, and interesting to be helpless, unable to dress ourselves, or tie our own bonnet-strings without the

assistance of our maid. In my young days we always had to wait for a maid to come and hook our dresses; we should not endure this now.

The favourite story of the Queen always putting away her own bonnet, and folding up the strings(!) helped much in sweeping away this fanciful gentility. Since the introduction of the sewing-machine, made as a piece of furniture fit for a lady's sitting-room, ladies have been less ashamed to be seen making their own dresses; and every girl now, of any pretension to taste, twists up her silk, tulle, and ribbons, mingling them in hats and bonnets with flowers or feathers, the most graceful objects in creation, until her skill produces a thing of beauty which is a joy throughout the summer.

What artist would desire a more charming subject for his picture than a pretty girl before her glass, trying in which position these delicate gauds best become the face they will adorn. It is holding nature up to the mirror. Yet some years ago girls were ashamed of a home-made bonnet, because their careful elders taught them it was more virtuous to make shirts than to cultivate their taste. The consequence was they were obliged to pay some guineas for a bonnet, as amateur millinery was a tissue of horrors.

The cooking-schools are helping us in another useful branch of housewifery. Here again woman's work is being raised out of the dulness of the "Berlin repository" into an atmosphere in which all the senses may revel. Smell and taste are here perfectly satisfied, and here we offer another picture for our imaginary artist – or perhaps the beholder may be a lover.

What more captivating sight than the girl of his heart deftly moving about among bright pots and kettles, and delicious bits of blue and other ware, gleaming among the copper stewpans? Dutch tiles all round the stove, and everything as picturesque as in a Friesland kitchen (which we admire enough to go a long way to see), and the young housewife in a fresh and prettily worked dress of Holland or cambric, made short, showing her red morocco shoes, her sleeves short to the elbow, with a dainty bib and apron to keep her dress from soil: she rolling out pastry at a marble table, having by her side a graceful ewer of water, or fanciful milk-pot, and, in neat arrangement, quaint jars for jams, and pails and tubs of the carved wood which is so artistically made by the Norwegian peasants. But I must fill up my outlines further on, as I enter into detail of each department of the house, and show how the first steps may be made easy in the direction of pleasant employment which shall be both useful and economical.

Do not look upon the taste and beauty of details as unimportant. They make up the harmony of our lives. Taste exercises a larger influence than we give it credit for. What makes Paris flourish? Why do we all enjoy it? Not for its Louvre galleries, nor for its intellectual life and culture most, but for its tasty shops!

We will speak of the house in the following order. First, the hall by which we enter it from the street; then we will bring our housewife into the kitchen, not necessarily, nor even advisably, downstairs, but near the entrance-door, so that the goods brought into the house need not have far to travel and be lifted (which would entail fatigue) before they reach the scene of their transmutation; the dining-room will come naturally next to the kitchen, as it should be nearest in a topographical sense.

Then we can adjourn to the withdrawing-room, and refresh ourselves with *jardinière* or conservatory before undertaking the arrangement of the bed-rooms and nurseries, where we pass so large a portion of our lives; and lastly, we will speak of the inhabitants, more particularly of the children. In considering the latter, we shall find the greatest benefit of anything I have recommended in this book, namely, that in place of the low-minded words and sentiments and vulgar habits of those who come nearest to ourselves in the society of our children, we may have a higher and purer association, so that the good of their future education will not have already been neutralized by corrupted early principles.

By interesting occupation our young ladies will have less time for sentimental troubles and fancied ill-health, which is nervousness. Eugénie de Guérin hit the mark when she wrote, "Yes; work, work! Keep busy the body, which does mischief to the soul! I have been so little occupied to-day,

and that is bad for one, and it gives a certain *ennui* which I have in me time to ferment." On another occasion she speaks of having been writing and thinking, and then going back to her spinning-wheel or a book, or taking a saucepan, or playing with her dogs; and then she adds, "Such a life as this I call heaven upon earth."

THE ENTRANCE-HALL

The evil of side doors – Difficulties with cooks – Who is to answer the door? – Four classes of applicants – Arrangements for trades-people – Visitors – Furniture of the hall – Warming the passages – Dirt and door-mats – The door-step – Charwomen.

Many of the most respectable old houses in London and other large cities have only one street door and no area gate; and this is a great advantage, for of all inventions for the demoralization of households, the side or servant's door is the one which does its work most surely. There is no oversight of it; and neither master nor mistress can tell what is going on below-stairs, or at the back of the house, when the shutters are closed and the family are at dinner, or in the drawing-room in the evening.

The side door had its origin in a pride, or false shame, which could not bear to see a vestige of the working of the machinery of the house, and in that tendency to separate the ornamental from the necessary part of the household economy which has worked so disastrously for us all, making us, first, unwilling to take a practical share in the management of our houses, so widening the class division between mistress and servant; and secondly, has thrown us into such a state of dependence upon our subordinates that the boldest of us dare not venture into the kitchen except at stated hours; and then, having received the programme of the proposed arrangements for the day from the cook, we are expected to go away and be no further hindrance to the eleven o'clock luncheon, which is one of the five solid meals daily required to sustain life in the hardships of service. Most ladies know what it is to wince under the sharp tongues of their cooks, who "don't like to have missuses come messing about in their kitchens," and their sarcasms upon "ladies who are not ladies," etc., etc., until many weak-minded victims retire before the enemy, and, giving up the vain pretence of ordering the dinner and examining the kitchen daily, send for the cook after breakfast, and get the interview over as soon as may be. It requires a very strong sense of duty to make one go where one is so palpably unwelcome, where one's most innocent looks are construed into a mean peeping and prying, and the least remonstrance is met by insolence.

I have, as a rule, been fortunate with my servants, and of late years I have successfully employed foreigners, who are generally more tractable than English servants.

I carried my point, when living in a villa near London, and locked the side door, retaining the key. I found great advantage in so doing on comparing notes with my neighbours, who told me their servants had threatened to leave directly there was a question of closing the side doors.

But this is only a recommendation where servants are kept. A responsible supervision of young servants is quite consistent with allowing them due liberty. This should always be granted them, as a dull imprisonment is misery to the young, and then they would not endeavour to take it in a clandestine manner, and surreptitious dealings with dishonest characters outside would be avoided.

To our present argument it matters little whether there be a side door or not, except that it affords greater facility to burglars; so we will treat of the principal door as the only one, because this is most frequently the case in town-houses where there is no area gate, and the use of that does not enter into our plan of proceeding at all.

One of the first difficulties that presents itself to the lady wishing to maintain a small household staff is the opening of the front door. The question meets us on the threshold, who is to answer the door? Who will be the slave of the ring?

A lady-help does not like to undertake this office, and to the mistress it appears still more unsuitable. But let us analyze the subject.

There are four classes of people who knock at our door: the family, tradespeople, visitors, and casuals. The first division of the difficulty may be easily disposed of. The master and mistress, for

these titles must be strictly maintained, have each a latch key; the rest of the family may habitually use a particular knock agreed upon between them, and then the person who happens to be nearest to the door will open it.

Schoolboys and girls return at stated hours, and one is prepared for their appeal. For several years past my family has used four single knocks, which is a sign sufficiently unlike other knocks to be recognized immediately.

The postman's knock is well known, and in families where there is no great eagerness to get the letters, they fall naturally into the letter-box, which should be made deep, and the slit large enough to admit the *Times* newspaper easily.

In Italy it is usual to write the word *fuori* on a card, and stick it in the door when one is not at home; and in this case visiting-cards would also be left in the letter-box. We might adopt this method, or even the Temple fashion of saying when we are likely to be home again.

The tradesmen are the most difficult to arrange for, and here invention must be called into play. Tradespeople first call for orders, and then with supplies.

Suppose we had our doors fitted with a kind of turnstile door, something like the birdcage gates which used to be at the Zoological Gardens, only with the outside made of wood, closely fitting, so as to admit no draught. This, by a push, would allow the goods to be deposited within the door, on the table upon which the cage turns round. The opening should be of a size to admit a leg of mutton easily. The goods, once deposited, could not be removed from the outside, as the door only works one way.

Through this opening the lady-housekeeper might give her own orders without their interpretation by an underling, and without being exposed to the public gaze, as she would be if the front door were fully opened, while the leg-of-mutton aperture would be sufficient for both parties to see to whom they were speaking. In the case of a single door, instead of the very general folding doors, it would be necessary to have the cage made to fold back, and the table to let down with hinges, to allow of the door being opened back against the wall; the table might be lowered after midday. This arrangement would also dispose of most of the casuals – the beggars, pedlars, and others who haunt our door-steps – to the entire prevention of hall robberies.

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