Stowe Harriet Beecher

Household Papers and Stories

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Содержание

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Mrs. Stowe had early and very practical acquaintance with the art of housekeeping. It strikes one at first as a little incongruous that an author who devoted her great powers to stirring the conscience of a nation should from time to time, and at one period especially, give her mind to the ordering of family life, but a moment's consideration will show that the same woman was earnestly at the bottom of each effort. In a letter to the late Lord Denman, written in 1853, Mrs. Stowe, speaking of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, said: "I wrote what I did because, as a woman, as a mother, I was oppressed and heartbroken with the sorrows and injustice which I saw, and because, as a Christian, I felt the dishonor to Christianity." Not under the stress of passionate emotion, yet largely from a sense of real responsibility as a woman, a mother, and a Christian, she occupied herself with those concerns of every-day life which so distinctly appeal to a woman's mind. How to order a household, how to administer that little kingdom over which a woman rules, and, above all, how to make family life stable, pure, and conservative of the highest happiness, these were the questions which she asked herself constantly, and which

she tried to solve, not only incidentally in her fiction, but directly in her essays, and in that field of one tenth fiction and nine tenths didacticism, which constitutes most of the present volume.

A Scholar's Adventures in the Country and *Trials of a Housekeeper* appeared in the miscellany to which she gave the name of *The Mayflower*, and reflect humorously the Cincinnati experiences which again are playfully recounted in letters published in her son's *Life*. The former, contributed in 1850 to *The National Era*, was drawn pretty closely from the experiments of Professor Stowe. It is noticeable that in this paper and in *Our Second Girl*, which was contributed to *The Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1868, the author poses as the masculine member of the household, as if this assumption gave her some advantage in the point of view. At any rate, she adopted the same rôle when she came more deliberately to survey a wide field in a series of articles.

The House and *Home Papers* were contributed first to *The Atlantic Monthly*, and afterward published in book form as the production of one Christopher Crowfield, though there was not the slightest attempt otherwise at disguising the authorship. The immediate occasion of the papers was no doubt the removal of the Stowes from Andover and their establishment in Hartford, an event which took place shortly before the papers began to appear in *The Atlantic*. The years which followed during the first Hartford residence saw also a marriage in the family and new problems of daily life constantly presenting themselves, so that

a similar series appeared in the same magazine, purporting to be from the same householder, entitled *The Chimney Corner*. This series, indeed, entered rather more seriously into questions of social morality, and deepened in feeling as it proceeded. The eleventh section is a warm appreciation of the woman who figured so largely in Mrs. Stowe's early life, and the last two papers rose, as the reader will see, to the height of national memories. Mrs. Fields has preserved for us, in her *Days with Mrs. Stowe*, a striking record of the mingling of the great and the near in this writer's mind. The period of which she writes is that in which *The Chimney Corner* series was drawing to a close: —

"In the autumn of 1864 she wrote: 'I feel I need to write in these days, to keep me from thinking of things that make me dizzy and blind, and fill my eyes with tears, so that I cannot see the paper. I mean such things as are being done where our heroes are dying as Shaw died. It is not wise that all our literature should run in a rut cut through our hearts and red with our blood. I feel the need of a little gentle household merriment and talk of common things, to indulge which I have devised the following.'

"Notwithstanding her view of the need, and her skillfully devised plans to meet it, she soon sent another epistle, showing how impossible it was to stem the current of her thought: —

> *"'November 29, 1864.*
>
> "'My dear Friend, —
>
> "'I have sent my New Year's article, the result of one of those peculiar experiences which sometimes occur to

us writers. I had planned an article, gay, sprightly, wholly domestic; but as I began and sketched the pleasant home and quiet fireside, an irresistible impulse *wrote for me* what followed, – an offering of sympathy to the suffering and agonized, whose homes have forever been darkened. Many causes united at once to force on me this vision, from which generally I shrink, but which sometimes will not be denied, – will make itself felt.

"'Just before I went to New York two of my earliest and most intimate friends lost their oldest sons, captains and majors, – splendid fellows physically and morally, beautiful, brave, religious, uniting the courage of soldiers to the faith of martyrs, – and when I went to Brooklyn it seemed as if I were hearing some such thing almost every day; and Henry, in his profession as minister, has so many letters full of imploring anguish, the cry of hearts breaking that ask help of him.'"…

HOUSE AND HOME PAPERS

I
THE RAVAGES OF A CARPET

"My dear, it's so cheap!"

These words were spoken by my wife, as she sat gracefully on a roll of Brussels carpet which was spread out in flowery lengths on the floor of Messrs. Ketchem & Co.

"It's *so* cheap!"

Milton says that the love of fame is the last infirmity of noble minds. I think he had not rightly considered the subject. I believe that last infirmity is the love of getting things cheap! Understand me, now. I don't mean the love of getting cheap things, by which one understands showy, trashy, ill-made, spurious articles, bearing certain apparent resemblances to better things. All really sensible people are quite superior to that sort of cheapness. But those fortunate accidents, which put within the power of a man things really good and valuable for half or a third of their value, what mortal virtue and resolution can withstand? My friend Brown has a genuine Murillo, the joy of his heart and the light of his eyes, but he never fails to tell you, as its crowning merit, how he bought it in South America for just nothing, – how it hung

smoky and deserted in the back of a counting-room, and was thrown in as a makeweight to bind a bargain, and, upon being cleaned turned out a genuine Murillo; and then he takes out his cigar, and calls your attention to the points in it; he adjusts the curtain to let the sunlight fall just in the right spot; he takes you to this and the other point of view; and all this time you must confess that, in your mind as well as his, the consideration that he got all this beauty for ten dollars adds lustre to the painting. Brown has paintings there for which he paid his thousands, and, being well advised, they are worth the thousands he paid; but this ewe lamb that he got for nothing always gives him a secret exaltation in his own eyes. He seems to have credited to himself personally merit to the amount of what he should have paid for the picture. Then there is Mrs. Crœsus, at the party yesterday evening, expatiating to my wife on the surprising cheapness of her point-lace set. "Got for just nothing at all, my dear!" and a circle of admiring listeners echoes the sound. "Did you ever hear anything like it? I never heard of such a thing in my life;" and away sails Mrs. Crœsus as if she had a collar composed of all the cardinal virtues. In fact, she is buoyed up with a secret sense of merit, so that her satin slippers scarcely touch the carpet. Even I myself am fond of showing a first edition of "Paradise Lost" for which I gave a shilling in a London bookstall, and stating that I would not take a hundred dollars for it. Even I must confess there are points on which I am mortal.

But all this while my wife sits on her roll of carpet, looking

into my face for approbation, and Marianne and Jenny are pouring into my ear a running fire of "How sweet! How lovely! Just like that one of Mrs. Tweedleum's!"

"And she gave two dollars and seventy-five cents a yard for hers, and this is" —

My wife here put her hand to her mouth and pronounced the incredible sum in a whisper, with a species of sacred awe, common, as I have observed, to females in such interesting crises. In fact Mr. Ketchem, standing smiling and amiable by, remarked to me that really he hoped Mrs. Crowfield would not name generally what she gave for the article, for positively it was so far below the usual rate of prices that he might give offense to other customers; but this was the very last of the pattern, and they were anxious to close off the old stock, and we had always traded with them, and he had a great respect for my wife's father, who had always traded with their firm, and so, when there were any little bargains to be thrown in any one's way, why, he naturally, of course – And here Mr. Ketchem bowed gracefully over the yardstick to my wife, and I consented.

Yes, I consented; but whenever I think of myself at that moment, I always am reminded, in a small way, of Adam taking the apple; and my wife, seated on that roll of carpet, has more than once suggested to my mind the classic image of Pandora opening her unlucky box. In fact, from the moment I had blandly assented to Mr. Ketchem's remarks, and said to my wife, with a gentle air of dignity, "Well, my dear, since it suits you, I think you

had better take it," there came a load on my prophetic soul which not all the fluttering and chattering of my delighted girls and the more placid complacency of my wife could entirely dissipate. I presaged I know not what of coming woe, and all I presaged came to pass.

In order to know just what came to pass, I must give you a view of the house and home into which this carpet was introduced.

My wife and I were somewhat advanced housekeepers, and our dwelling was first furnished by her father, in the old-fashioned jog-trot days when furniture was made with a view to its lasting from generation to generation. Everything was strong and comfortable, – heavy mahogany, guiltless of the modern device of veneering, and hewed out with a square solidity which had not an idea of change. It was, so to speak, a sort of granite foundation of the household structure. Then we commenced housekeeping with the full idea that our house was a thing to be lived in, and that furniture was made to be used. That most sensible of women, Mrs. Crowfield, agreed fully with me that in our house there was to be nothing too good for ourselves, – no room shut up in holiday attire to be enjoyed by strangers for three or four days in the year, while we lived in holes and corners; no best parlor from which we were to be excluded; no silver plate to be kept in the safe in the bank, and brought home only in case of a grand festival, while our daily meals were served with dingy Britannia. "Strike a broad, plain average," I said to my wife; "have everything abundant, serviceable, and give all our

friends exactly what we have ourselves, no better and no worse;" and my wife smiled approval on my sentiment.

Smile? she did more than smile. My wife resembles one of those convex mirrors I have sometimes seen. Every idea I threw out, plain and simple, she reflected back upon me in a thousand little glitters and twinkles of her own; she made my crude conceptions come back to me in such perfectly dazzling performances that I hardly recognized them. My mind warms up when I think what a home that woman made of our house from the very first day she moved into it. The great, large, airy parlor, with its ample bow-window, when she had arranged it, seemed a perfect trap to catch sunbeams. There was none of that discouraging trimness and newness that often repel a man's bachelor friends after the first call, and make them feel, "Oh, well, one cannot go in at Crowfield's now, unless one is dressed; one might put them out." The first thing our parlor said to any one was, that we were not people to be put out, that we were widespread, easy-going, and jolly folk. Even if Tom Brown brought in Ponto and his shooting-bag, there was nothing in that parlor to strike terror into man and dog; for it was written on the face of things that everybody there was to do just as he or she pleased. There were my books and my writing-table spread out with all its miscellaneous confusion of papers on one side of the fireplace, and there were my wife's great, ample sofa and work-table on the other; there I wrote my articles for the "North American;" and there she turned and ripped and altered

her dresses; and there lay crochet and knitting and embroidery side by side with a weekly basket of family mending, and in neighborly contiguity with the last book of the season, which my wife turned over as she took her after-dinner lounge on the sofa. And in the bow-window were canaries always singing, and a great stand of plants always fresh and blooming, and ivy which grew and clambered and twined about the pictures. Best of all, there was in our parlor that household altar, the blazing wood fire, whose wholesome, hearty crackle is the truest household inspiration. I quite agree with one celebrated American author who holds that an open fireplace is an altar of patriotism. Would our Revolutionary fathers have gone barefooted and bleeding over snows to defend air-tight stoves and cooking-ranges? I trow not. It was the memory of the great open kitchen-fire, with its back log and fore stick of cord-wood, its roaring, hilarious voice of invitation, its dancing tongues of flame, that called to them through the snows of that dreadful winter to keep up their courage, that made their hearts warm and bright with a thousand reflected memories. Our neighbors said that it was delightful to sit by our fire, – but then, for their part, they could not afford it, wood was so ruinously dear, and all that. Most of these people could not, for the simple reason that they felt compelled, in order to maintain the family dignity, to keep up a parlor with great pomp and circumstance of upholstery, where they sat only on dress occasions, and of course the wood fire was out of the question.

When children began to make their appearance in our establishment, my wife, like a well-conducted housekeeper, had the best of nursery arrangements, – a room all warmed, lighted, and ventilated, and abounding in every proper resource of amusement to the rising race; but it was astonishing to see how, notwithstanding this, the centripetal attraction drew every pair of little pattering feet to our parlor.

"My dear, why don't you take your blocks upstairs?"

"I want to be where oo are," said with a piteous under lip, was generally a most convincing answer.

Then, the small people could not be disabused of the idea that certain chief treasures of their own would be safer under papa's writing-table or mamma's sofa than in the safest closet of their domains. My writing-table was dockyard for Arthur's new ship, and stable for little Tom's pepper-and-salt-colored pony, and carriage-house for Charley's new wagon, while whole armies of paper dolls kept house in the recess behind mamma's sofa.

And then, in due time, came the tribe of pets who followed the little ones and rejoiced in the blaze of the firelight. The boys had a splendid Newfoundland, which, knowing our weakness, we warned them with awful gravity was never to be a parlor dog; but somehow, what with little beggings and pleadings on the part of Arthur and Tom, and the piteous melancholy with which Rover would look through the window-panes when shut out from the blazing warmth into the dark, cold veranda, it at last came to pass that Rover gained a regular corner at the hearth, a regular status

in every family convocation. And then came a little black-and-tan English terrier for the girls; and then a fleecy poodle, who established himself on the corner of my wife's sofa; and for each of these some little voice pleaded, and some little heart would be so near broken at any slight that my wife and I resigned ourselves to live in a menagerie, the more so as we were obliged to confess a lurking weakness towards these four-footed children ourselves.

So we grew and flourished together, – children, dogs, birds, flowers, and all; and although my wife often, in paroxysms of housewifeliness to which the best of women are subject, would declare that we never were fit to be seen, yet I comforted her with the reflection that there were few people whose friends seemed to consider them better worth seeing, judging by the stream of visitors and loungers which was always setting towards our parlor. People seemed to find it good to be there; they said it was somehow home-like and pleasant, and that there was a kind of charm about it that made it easy to talk and easy to live; and as my girls and boys grew up, there seemed always to be some merry doing or other going on there. Arty and Tom brought home their college friends, who straightway took root there and seemed to fancy themselves a part of us. We had no reception-rooms apart, where the girls were to receive young gentlemen; all the courting and flirting that were to be done had for their arena the ample variety of surface presented by our parlor, which, with sofas and screens and lounges and recesses, and writing and work tables, disposed here and there, and the genuine *laisser aller* of the whole

mènage, seemed, on the whole, to have offered ample advantages enough; for at the time I write of, two daughters were already established in marriage, while my youngest was busy, as yet, in performing that little domestic ballet of the cat with the mouse, in the case of a most submissive youth of the neighborhood.

All this time our parlor furniture, though of that granitic formation I have indicated, began to show marks of that decay to which things sublunary are liable. I cannot say that I dislike this look in a room. Take a fine, ample, hospitable apartment, where all things, freely and generously used, softly and indefinably grow old together, there is a sort of mellow tone and keeping which pleases my eye. What if the seams of the great inviting armchair, where so many friends have sat and lounged, do grow white? What, in fact, if some easy couch has an undeniable hole worn in its friendly cover? I regard with tenderness even these mortal weaknesses of these servants and witnesses of our good times and social fellowship. No vulgar touch wore them; they may be called, rather, the marks and indentations which the glittering in and out of the tide of social happiness has worn in the rocks of our strand. I would no more disturb the gradual toning-down and aging of a well-used set of furniture by smart improvements than I would have a modern dauber paint in emendations in a fine old picture.

So we men reason, but women do not always think as we do. There is a virulent demon of housekeeping not wholly cast out in the best of them, and which often breaks out in unguarded

moments. In fact Miss Marianne, being on the lookout for furniture wherewith to begin a new establishment, and Jenny, who had accompanied her in her peregrinations, had more than once thrown out little disparaging remarks on the time-worn appearance of our establishment, suggesting comparison with those of more modern furnished rooms.

"It is positively scandalous, the way our furniture looks," I one day heard one of them declaring to her mother; "and this old rag of a carpet!"

My feelings were hurt, not the less so that I knew that the large cloth which covered the middle of the floor, and which the women call a bocking, had been bought and nailed down there, after a solemn family council, as the best means of concealing the too evident darns which years of good cheer had made needful in our stanch old household friend, the three-ply carpet, made in those days when to be a three-ply was a pledge of continuance and service.

Well, it was a joyous and bustling day when, after one of those domestic whirlwinds which the women are fond of denominating house-cleaning, the new Brussels carpet was at length brought in and nailed down, and its beauty praised from mouth to mouth. Our old friends called in and admired, and all seemed to be well, except that I had that light and delicate presage of changes to come which indefinitely brooded over me.

The first premonitory symptom was the look of apprehensive suspicion with which the female senate regarded the genial

sunbeams that had always glorified our bow-window.

"This house ought to have inside blinds," said Marianne, with all the confident decision of youth; "this carpet will be ruined if that sun is allowed to come in like that."

"And that dirty little canary must really be hung in the kitchen," said Jenny; "he always did make such a litter, scattering his seed chippings about; and he never takes his bath without flirting out some water. And, mamma, it appears to me it will never do to have the plants here. Plants are always either leaking through the pots upon the carpet, or scattering bits of blossoms and dead leaves, or some accident upsets or breaks a pot. It was no matter, you know, when we had the old carpet; but this we really want to have kept nice."

Mamma stood her ground for the plants, – darlings of her heart for many a year, – but temporized, and showed that disposition towards compromise which is most inviting to aggression.

I confess I trembled; for, of all radicals on earth, none are to be compared to females that have once in hand a course of domestic innovation and reform. The sacred fire, the divine furor, burns in their bosoms; they become perfect Pythonesses, and every chair they sit on assumes the magic properties of the tripod. Hence the dismay that lodges in the bosoms of us males at the fateful spring and autumn seasons denominated house-cleaning. Who can say whither the awful gods, the prophetic fates, may drive our fair household divinities; what sins of ours may be brought to light;

what indulgences and compliances, which uninspired woman has granted in her ordinary mortal hours, may be torn from us? He who has been allowed to keep a pair of pet slippers in a concealed corner, and by the fireside indulged with a chair which he might *ad libitum* fill with all sorts of pamphlets and miscellaneous literature, suddenly finds himself reformed out of knowledge, his pamphlets tucked away into pigeonholes and corners, and his slippers put in their place in the hall, with, perhaps, a brisk insinuation about the shocking dust and disorder that men will tolerate.

The fact was, that the very first night after the advent of the new carpet I had a prophetic dream. Among our treasures of art was a little etching, by an English artist friend, the subject of which was the gambols of the household fairies in a baronial library after the household were in bed. The little people are represented in every attitude of frolic enjoyment. Some escalade the great armchair, and look down from its top as from a domestic Mont Blanc; some climb about the bellows; some scale the shaft of the shovel; while some, forming in magic ring, dance festively on the yet glowing hearth. Tiny troops promenade the writing-table. One perches himself quaintly on the top of the inkstand, and holds colloquy with another who sits cross-legged on a paper weight, while a companion looks down on them from the top of the sandbox. It was an ingenious little device, and gave me the idea, which I often expressed to my wife, that much of the peculiar feeling of security, composure, and enjoyment

which seems to be the atmosphere of some rooms and houses came from the unsuspected presence of these little people, the household fairies, so that the belief in their existence became a solemn article of faith with me.

Accordingly, that evening, after the installation of the carpet, when my wife and daughters had gone to bed, as I sat with my slippered feet before the last coals of the fire, I fell asleep in my chair, and, lo! my own parlor presented to my eye a scene of busy life. The little people in green were tripping to and fro, but in great confusion. Evidently something was wrong among them; for they were fussing and chattering with each other, as if preparatory to a general movement. In the region of the bow-window I observed a tribe of them standing with tiny valises and carpetbags in their hands, as though about to depart on a journey. On my writing-table another set stood around my inkstand and pen-rack, who, pointing to those on the floor, seemed to debate some question among themselves; while others of them appeared to be collecting and packing away in tiny trunks certain fairy treasures, preparatory to a general departure. When I looked at the social hearth, at my wife's sofa and work-basket, I saw similar appearances of dissatisfaction and confusion. It was evident that the household fairies were discussing the question of a general and simultaneous removal. I groaned in spirit, and, stretching out my hand, began a conciliatory address, when whisk went the whole scene from before my eyes, and I awaked to behold the form of my wife asking me if I were ill, or had had the nightmare,

that I groaned so. I told her my dream, and we laughed at it together.

"We must give way to the girls a little," she said. "It is natural, you know, that they should wish us to appear a little as other people do. The fact is, our parlor is somewhat dilapidated; think how many years we have lived in it without an article of new furniture."

"I hate new furniture," I remarked, in the bitterness of my soul. "I hate anything new."

My wife answered me discreetly, according to approved principles of diplomacy. I was right. She sympathized with me. At the same time, it was not necessary, she remarked, that we should keep a hole in our sofa-cover and armchair, – there would certainly be no harm in sending them to the upholsterer's to be new-covered; she didn't much mind, for her part, moving her plants to the south back room; and the bird would do well enough in the kitchen: I had often complained of him for singing vociferously when I was reading aloud.

So our sofa went to the upholsterer's; but the upholsterer was struck with such horror at its clumsy, antiquated, unfashionable appearance that he felt bound to make representations to my wife and daughters: positively, it would be better for them to get a new one, of a tempting pattern which he showed them, than to try to do anything with that. With a stitch or so here and there it might do for a basement dining-room; but, for a parlor, he gave it as his disinterested opinion, – he must say, if the case were his own, he

should get, etc., etc. In short, we had a new sofa and new chairs, and the plants and the birds were banished, and some dark-green blinds were put up to exclude the sun from the parlor, and the blessed luminary was allowed there only at rare intervals, when my wife and daughters were out shopping, and I acted out my uncivilized male instincts by pulling up every shade and vivifying the apartment as in days of old.

But this was not the worst of it. The new furniture and new carpet formed an opposition party in the room. I believe in my heart that for every little household fairy that went out with the dear old things there came in a tribe of discontented brownies with the new ones. These little wretches were always twitching at the gowns of my wife and daughters, jogging their elbows, and suggesting odious comparisons between the smart new articles and what remained of the old ones. They disparaged my writing-table in the corner; they disparaged the old-fashioned lounge in the other corner, which had been the maternal throne for years; they disparaged the work-table, the work-basket, with constant suggestions of how such things as these would look in certain well-kept parlors where new-fashioned furniture of the same sort as ours existed.

"We don't have any parlor," said Jenny one day. "Our parlor has always been a sort of log cabin, – library, study, nursery, greenhouse, all combined. We never have had things like other people."

"Yes, and this open fire makes such a dust; and this carpet is

one that shows every speck of dust; it keeps one always on the watch."

"I wonder why papa never had a study to himself; I'm sure I should think he would like it better than sitting here among us all. Now there's the great south room off the dining-room; if he would only move his things there and have his open fire, we could then close up the fireplace and put lounges in the recesses, and mamma could have her things in the nursery, – and then we should have a parlor fit to be seen."

I overheard all this, though I pretended not to, – the little busy chits supposing me entirely buried in the recesses of a German book over which I was poring.

There are certain crises in a man's life when the female element in his household asserts itself in dominant forms that seem to threaten to overwhelm him. The fair creatures, who in most matters have depended on his judgment, evidently look upon him at these seasons as only a forlorn, incapable male creature, to be cajoled and flattered and persuaded out of his native blindness and absurdity into the fairyland of their wishes.

"Of course, mamma," said the busy voices, "men can't understand such things. What can men know of housekeeping, and how things ought to look? Papa never goes into company; he don't know and don't care how the world is doing, and don't see that nobody now is living as we do."

"Aha, my little mistresses, are you there?" I thought; and I mentally resolved on opposing a great force of what our

politicians call backbone to this pretty domestic conspiracy.

"When you get my writing-table out of this corner, my pretty dears, I'd thank you to let me know it."

Thus spake I in my blindness, fool that I was. Jupiter might as soon keep awake when Juno came in best bib and tucker, and with the cestus of Venus, to get him to sleep. Poor Slender might as well hope to get the better of pretty Mistress Anne Page as one of us clumsy-footed men might endeavor to escape from the tangled labyrinth of female wiles.

In short, in less than a year it was all done, without any quarrel, any noise, any violence, – done, I scarce knew when or how, but with the utmost deference to my wishes, the most amiable hopes that I would not put myself out, the most sincere protestations that, if I liked it better as it was, my goddesses would give up and acquiesce. In fact I seemed to do it of myself, constrained thereto by what the Emperor Napoleon has so happily called the logic of events, – that old, well-known logic by which the man who has once said A must say B, and he who has said B must say the whole alphabet. In a year we had a parlor with two lounges in decorous recesses, a fashionable sofa, and six chairs and a looking-glass, and a grate always shut up, and a hole in the floor which kept the parlor warm, and great, heavy curtains that kept out all the light that was not already excluded by the green shades.

It was as proper and orderly a parlor as those of our most fashionable neighbors; and when our friends called, we took them stumbling into its darkened solitude, and opened a faint crack in

one of the window-shades, and came down in our best clothes and talked with them there. Our old friends rebelled at this, and asked what they had done to be treated so, and complained so bitterly that gradually we let them into the secret that there was a great south room, which I had taken for my study, where we all sat; where the old carpet was down; where the sun shone in at the great window; where my wife's plants flourished, and the canary-bird sang, and my wife had her sofa in the corner, and the old brass andirons glistened, and the wood fire crackled, – in short, a room to which all the household fairies had emigrated.

When they once had found that out, it was difficult to get any of them to sit in our parlor. I had purposely christened the new room my study, that I might stand on my rights as master of ceremonies there, though I opened wide arms of welcome to any who chose to come. So, then, it would often come to pass that, when we were sitting round the fire in my study of an evening, the girls would say, —

"Come, what do we always stay here for? Why don't we ever sit in the parlor?"

And then there would be manifested among guests and family friends a general unwillingness to move.

"Oh, hang it, girls!" would Arthur say; "the parlor is well enough, all right; let it stay as it is, and let a fellow stay where he can do as he pleases and feels at home;" and to this view of the matter would respond divers of the nice young bachelors who were Arthur's and Tom's sworn friends.

In fact nobody wanted to stay in our parlor now. It was a cold, correct, accomplished fact; the household fairies had left it, – and when the fairies leave a room, nobody ever feels at home in it. No pictures, curtains, no wealth of mirrors, no elegance of lounges, can in the least make up for their absence. They are a capricious little set; there are rooms where they will not stay, and rooms where they will; but no one can ever have a good time without them.

II
HOMEKEEPING VERSUS HOUSEKEEPING

I am a frank-hearted man, as perhaps you have by this time perceived, and you will not, therefore, be surprised to know that I read my last article on the carpet to my wife and the girls before I sent it to the "Atlantic," and we had a hearty laugh over it together. My wife and the girls, in fact, felt that they could afford to laugh, for they had carried their point, their reproach among women was taken away, they had become like other folks. Like other folks they had a parlor, an undeniable best parlor, shut up and darkened, with all proper carpets, curtains, lounges, and marble-topped tables, too good for human nature's daily food; and being sustained by this consciousness, they cheerfully went on receiving their friends in the study, and having good times in the old free-and-easy way; for did not everybody know that this room was not their best? and if the furniture was old-fashioned and a little the worse for antiquity, was it not certain that they had better, which they could use if they would?

"And supposing we wanted to give a party," said Jenny, "how nicely our parlor would light up! Not that we ever do give parties, but if we should, – and for a wedding-reception, you know."

I felt the force of the necessity; it was evident that the four

or five hundred extra which we had expended was no more than such solemn possibilities required.

"Now, papa thinks we have been foolish," said Marianne, "and he has his own way of making a good story of it; but, after all, I desire to know if people are never to get a new carpet. Must we keep the old one till it actually wears to tatters?"

This is a specimen of the *reductio ad absurdum* which our fair antagonists of the other sex are fond of employing. They strip what we say of all delicate shadings and illusory phrases, and reduce it to some bare question of fact, with which they make a home-thrust at us.

"Yes, that's it; are people *never* to get a new carpet?" echoed Jenny.

"My dears," I replied, "it is a fact that to introduce anything new into an apartment hallowed by many home associations, where all things have grown old together, requires as much care and adroitness as for an architect to restore an arch or niche in a fine old ruin. The fault of our carpet was that it was in another style from everything in our room, and made everything in it look dilapidated. Its colors, material, and air belonged to another manner of life, and were a constant plea for alterations; and you see it actually drove out and expelled the whole furniture of the room, and I am not sure yet that it may not entail on us the necessity of refurnishing the whole house."

"My dear!" said my wife, in a tone of remonstrance; but Jane and Marianne laughed and colored.

"Confess, now," said I, looking at them; "have you not had secret designs on the hall and stair carpet?"

"Now, papa, how could you know it? I only said to Marianne that to have Brussels in the parlor and that old mean-looking ingrain carpet in the hall did not seem exactly the thing; and in fact you know, mamma, Messrs. Ketchem & Co. showed us such a lovely pattern, designed to harmonize with our parlor carpet."

"I know it, girls," said my wife; "but you know I said at once that such an expense was not to be thought of."

"Now, girls," said I, "let me tell you a story I heard once of a very sensible old New England minister, who lived, as our country ministers generally do, rather near to the bone, but still quite contentedly. It was in the days when knee-breeches and long stockings were worn, and this good man was offered a present of a very nice pair of black silk hose. He declined, saying he 'could not afford to wear them.'"

"'Not afford it?' said the friend; 'why, I *give* them to you.'

"'Exactly; but it will cost me not less than two hundred dollars to take them, and I cannot do it.'

"'How is that?'

"'Why, in the first place, I shall no sooner put them on than my wife will say, "My dear, you must have a new pair of knee-breeches," and I shall get them. Then my wife will say, "My dear, how shabby your coat is! You must have a new one," and I shall get a new coat. Then she will say, "Now, my dear, that hat will never do," and then I shall have a new hat; and then I shall say,

"My dear, it will never do for me to be so fine and you to wear your old gown," and so my wife will get a new gown; and then the new gown will require a new shawl and a new bonnet; all of which we shall not feel the need of if I don't take this pair of silk stockings, for, as long as we don't see them, our old things seem very well suited to each other.'"

The girls laughed at this story, and I then added, in my most determined manner, —

"But I must warn you, girls, that I have compromised to the utmost extent of my power, and that I intend to plant myself on the old stair carpet in determined resistance. I have no mind to be forbidden the use of the front stairs, or condemned to get up into my bedroom by a private ladder, as I should be immediately if there were a new carpet down."

"Why, papa!"

"Would it not be so? Can the sun shine in the parlor now for fear of fading the carpet? Can we keep a fire there for fear of making dust, or use the lounges and sofas for fear of wearing them out? If you got a new entry and stair carpet, as I said, I should have to be at the expense of another staircase to get up to our bedroom."

"Oh no, papa," said Jane innocently; "there are very pretty druggets now for covering stair carpets, so that they can be used without hurting them."

"Put one over the old carpet, then," said I, "and our acquaintance will never know but it is a new one."

All the female senate laughed at this proposal, and said it sounded just like a man.

"Well," said I, standing up resolutely for my sex, "a man's ideas on woman's matters may be worth some attention. I flatter myself that an intelligent, educated man doesn't think upon and observe with interest any particular subject for years of his life without gaining some ideas respecting it that are good for something; at all events, I have written another article for the 'Atlantic,' which I will read to you."

"Well, wait one minute, papa, till we get our work," said the girls, who, to say the truth, always exhibit a flattering interest in anything their papa writes, and who have the good taste never to interrupt his readings with any conversations in an undertone on cross-stitch and floss-silks, as the manner of some is. Hence the little feminine bustle of arranging all these matters beforehand. Jane, or Jenny, as I call her in my good-natured moods, put on a fresh clear stick of hickory, of that species denominated shagbark, which is full of most charming slivers, burning with such a clear flame, and emitting such a delicious perfume in burning, that I would not change it with the millionaire who kept up his fire with cinnamon.

You must know, my dear Mr. Atlantic, and you, my confidential friends of the reading public, that there is a certain magic or spiritualism which I have the knack of in regard to these mine articles, in virtue of which my wife and daughters never hear or see the little personalities respecting them which

form parts of my papers. By a peculiar arrangement which I have made with the elves of the inkstand and the familiar spirits of the quill, a sort of glamour falls on their eyes and ears when I am reading, or when they read the parts personal to themselves; otherwise their sense of feminine propriety would be shocked at the free way in which they and their most internal affairs are confidentially spoken of between me and you, O loving readers.

Thus, in an undertone, I tell you that my little Jenny, as she is zealously and systematically arranging the fire, and trimly whisking every untidy particle of ashes from the hearth, shows in every movement of her little hands, in the cock of her head, in the knowing, observing glance of her eye, and in all her energetic movements, that her small person is endued and made up of the very expressed essence of housewifeliness, – she is the very attar, not of roses, but of housekeeping. Care-taking and thrift and neatness are a nature to her; she is as dainty and delicate in her person as a white cat, as everlastingly busy as a bee; and all the most needful faculties of time, weight, measure, and proportion ought to be fully developed in her skull, if there is any truth in phrenology. Besides all this, she has a sort of hard-grained little vein of common sense, against which my fanciful conceptions and poetical notions are apt to hit with just a little sharp grating, if they are not well put. In fact, this kind of woman needs carefully to be idealized in the process of education, or she will stiffen and dry, as she grows old, into a veritable household Pharisee, a sort of domestic tyrant. She needs to be trained in artistic

values and artistic weights and measures, to study all the arts and sciences of the beautiful, and then she is charming. Most useful, most needful, these little women: they have the centripetal force which keeps all the domestic planets from gyrating and frisking in unseemly orbits, and, properly trained, they fill a house with the beauty of order, the harmony and consistency of proportion, the melody of things moving in time and tune, without violating the graceful appearance of ease which Art requires.

So I had an eye to Jenny's education in my article which I unfolded and read, and which was entitled

HOMEKEEPING VERSUS HOUSEKEEPING

There are many women who know how to keep a house, but there are but few that know how to keep a home. To keep a house may seem a complicated affair, but it is a thing that may be learned; it lies in the region of the material; in the region of weight, measure, color, and the positive forces of life. To keep a home lies not merely in the sphere of all these, but it takes in the intellectual, the social, the spiritual, the immortal.

Here the hickory stick broke in two, and the two brands fell controversially out and apart on the hearth, scattering the ashes and coals, and calling for Jenny and the hearth-brush. Your wood fire has this foible, that it needs something to be done to it every five minutes; but, after all, these little interruptions of our bright-faced genius are like the piquant sallies of a clever friend, – they

do not strike us as unreasonable.

When Jenny had laid down her brush she said, —

"Seems to me, papa, you are beginning to soar into metaphysics."

"Everything in creation is metaphysical in its abstract terms," said I, with a look calculated to reduce her to a respectful condition. "Everything has a subjective and an objective mode of presentation."

"There papa goes with subjective and objective!" said Marianne. "For my part, I never can remember which is which."

"I remember," said Jenny; "it's what our old nurse used to call internal and *out*-ternal, – I always remember by that."

"Come, my dears," said my wife, "let your father read;" so I went on as follows: —

I remember in my bachelor days going with my boon companion, Bill Carberry, to look at the house to which he was in a few weeks to introduce his bride. Bill was a gallant, free-hearted, open-handed fellow, the life of our whole set, and we felt that natural aversion to losing him that bachelor friends would. How could we tell under what strange aspects he might look forth upon us, when once he had passed into "that undiscovered country" of matrimony? But Bill laughed to scorn our apprehensions.

"I'll tell you what, Chris," he said, as he sprang cheerily up the steps and unlocked the door of his future dwelling, "do you know what I chose this house for? Because it's a social-looking

house. Look there, now," he said, as he ushered me into a pair of parlors, – "look at those long south windows, the sun lies there nearly all day long; see what a capital corner there is for a lounging-chair; fancy us, Chris, with our books or our paper, spread out loose and easy, and Sophie gliding in and out like a sunbeam. I'm getting poetical, you see. Then, did you ever see a better, wider, airier dining-room? What capital suppers and things we'll have there! the nicest times, – everything free and easy, you know, – just what I've always wanted a house for. I tell you, Chris, you and Tom Innis shall have latch-keys just like mine, and there is a capital chamber there at the head of the stairs, so that you can be free to come and go. And here now's the library, – fancy this full of books and engravings from the ceiling to the floor; here you shall come just as you please and ask no questions, – all the same as if it were your own, you know."

"And Sophie, what will she say to all this?"

"Why, you know Sophie is a prime friend to both of you, and a capital girl to keep things going. Oh, Sophie'll make a house of this, you may depend!"

A day or two after, Bill dragged me stumbling over boxes and through straw and wrappings to show me the glories of the parlor furniture, with which he seemed pleased as a child with a new toy.

"Look here," he said; "see these chairs, garnet-colored satin, with a pattern on each; well, the sofa's just like them, and the curtains to match, and the carpets made for the floor with

centrepieces and borders. I never saw anything more magnificent in my life. Sophie's governor furnishes the house, and everything is to be A No. 1, and all that, you see. Messrs. Curtain & Collamore are coming to make the rooms up, and her mother is busy as a bee getting us in order."

"Why, Bill," said I, "you are going to be lodged like a prince. I hope you'll be able to keep it up; but law business comes in rather slowly at first, old fellow."

"Well, you know it isn't the way I should furnish, if my capital was the one to cash the bills; but then, you see, Sophie's people do it, and let them, – a girl doesn't want to come down out of the style she has always lived in."

I said nothing, but had an oppressive presentiment that social freedom would expire in that house, crushed under a weight of upholstery.

But there came in due time the wedding and the wedding-reception, and we all went to see Bill in his new house, splendidly lighted up and complete from top to toe, and everybody said what a lucky fellow he was; but that was about the end of it, so far as our visiting was concerned. The running in, and dropping in, and keeping latch-keys, and making informal calls, that had been forespoken, seemed about as likely as if Bill had lodged in the Tuileries.

Sophie, who had always been one of your snapping, sparkling, busy sort of girls, began at once to develop her womanhood and show her principles, and was as different from her former

self as your careworn, mousing old cat is from your rollicking, frisky kitten. Not but that Sophie was a good girl. She had a capital heart, a good, true womanly one, and was loving and obliging; but still she was one of the desperately painstaking, conscientious sort of women whose very blood, as they grow older, is devoured with anxiety, and she came of a race of women in whom housekeeping was more than an art or a science, – it was, so to speak, a religion. Sophie's mother, aunts, and grandmothers, for nameless generations back, were known and celebrated housekeepers. They might have been genuine descendants of the inhabitants of that Hollandic town of Broeck, celebrated by Washington Irving, where the cows' tails are kept tied up with unsullied blue ribbons, and the ends of the fire-wood are painted white. He relates how a celebrated preacher, visiting this town, found it impossible to draw these housewives from their earthly views and employments, until he took to preaching on the neatness of the celestial city, the unsullied crystal of its walls and the polish of its golden pavement, when the faces of all the housewives were set Zionward at once.

Now this solemn and earnest view of housekeeping is onerous enough when a poor girl first enters on the care of a moderately furnished house, where the articles are not too expensive to be reasonably renewed as time and use wear them; but it is infinitely worse when a cataract of splendid furniture is heaped upon her care, – when splendid crystals cut into her conscience, and mirrors reflect her duties, and moth and rust stand ever ready to

devour and sully in every room and passageway.

Sophie was solemnly warned and instructed by all the mothers and aunts, – she was warned of moths, warned of cockroaches, warned of flies, warned of dust; all the articles of furniture had their covers, made of cold Holland linen, in which they looked like bodies laid out, – even the curtain tassels had each its little shroud, – and bundles of receipts, and of rites and ceremonies necessary for the preservation and purification and care of all these articles, were stuffed into the poor girl's head, before guiltless of cares as the feathers that floated above it.

Poor Bill found very soon that his house and furniture were to be kept at such an ideal point of perfection that he needed another house to live in, – for, poor fellow, he found the difference between having a house and a home. It was only a year or two after that my wife and I started our ménage on very different principles, and Bill would often drop in upon us, wistfully lingering in the cosy armchair between my writing-table and my wife's sofa, and saying with a sigh how confoundedly pleasant things looked there, – so pleasant to have a bright, open fire, and geraniums and roses and birds, and all that sort of thing, and to dare to stretch out one's legs and move without thinking what one was going to hit. "Sophie is a good girl!" he would say, "and wants to have everything right, but you see they won't let her. They've loaded her with so many things that have to be kept in lavender that the poor girl is actually getting thin and losing her health; and then, you see, there's Aunt Zeruah, she mounts

guard at our house, and keeps up such strict police regulations that a fellow can't do a thing. The parlors are splendid, but so lonesome and dismal! – not a ray of sunshine, in fact not a ray of light, except when a visitor is calling, and then they open a crack. They're afraid of flies, and yet, dear knows, they keep every looking-glass and picture-frame muffled to its throat from March to December. I'd like, for curiosity, to see what a fly would do in our parlors!"

"Well," said I, "can't you have some little family sitting-room where you can make yourselves cosy?"

"Not a bit of it. Sophie and Aunt Zeruah have fixed their throne up in our bedroom, and there they sit all day long, except at calling-hours, and then Sophie dresses herself and comes down. Aunt Zeruah insists upon it that the way is to put the whole house in order, and shut all the blinds, and sit in your bedroom, and then, she says, nothing gets out of place; and she tells poor Sophie the most hocus-pocus stories about her grandmothers and aunts, who always kept everything in their houses so that they could go and lay their hands on it in the darkest night. I'll bet they could in our house. From end to end it is kept looking as if we had shut it up and gone to Europe, – not a book, not a paper, not a glove, or any trace of a human being in sight; the piano shut tight, the bookcases shut and locked, the engravings locked up, all the drawers and closets locked. Why, if I want to take a fellow into the library, in the first place it smells like a vault, and I have to unbarricade windows, and unlock and rummage

for half an hour before I can get at anything; and I know Aunt Zeruah is standing tiptoe at the door, ready to whip everything back and lock up again. A fellow can't be social, or take any comfort in showing his books and pictures that way. Then there's our great, light dining-room, with its sunny south windows, – Aunt Zeruah got us out of that early in April, because she said the flies would speck the frescoes and get into the china-closet, and we have been eating in a little dingy den, with a window looking out on a back alley, ever since; and Aunt Zeruah says that now the dining-room is always in perfect order, and that it is such a care off Sophie's mind that I ought to be willing to eat down cellar to the end of the chapter. Now, you see, Chris, my position is a delicate one, because Sophie's folks all agree that, if there is anything in creation that is ignorant and dreadful and mustn't be allowed his way anywhere, it's 'a man.' Why, you'd think, to hear Aunt Zeruah talk, that we were all like bulls in a china-shop, ready to toss and tear and rend, if we are not kept down cellar and chained; and she worries Sophie, and Sophie's mother comes in and worries, and if I try to get anything done differently Sophie cries, and says she don't know what to do, and so I give it up. Now, if I want to ask a few of our set in sociably to dinner, I can't have them where we eat down cellar, – oh, that would never do! Aunt Zeruah and Sophie's mother and the whole family would think the family honor was forever ruined and undone. We mustn't ask them unless we open the dining-room, and have out all the best china, and get the silver home

from the bank; and if we do that, Aunt Zeruah doesn't sleep for a week beforehand, getting ready for it, and for a week after, getting things put away; and then she tells me that, in Sophie's delicate state, it really is abominable for me to increase her cares, and so I invite fellows to dine with me at Delmonico's, and then Sophie cries, and Sophie's mother says it doesn't look respectable for a family man to be dining at public places; but, hang it, a fellow wants a home somewhere!"

My wife soothed the chafed spirit, and spake comfortably unto him, and told him that he knew there was the old lounging-chair always ready for him at our fireside. "And you know," she said, "our things are all so plain that we are never tempted to mount any guard over them; our carpets are nothing, and therefore we let the sun fade them, and live on the sunshine and the flowers."

"That's it," said Bill bitterly. "Carpets fading, – that's Aunt Zeruah's monomania. These women think that the great object of houses is to keep out sunshine. What a fool I was when I gloated over the prospect of our sunny south windows! Why, man, there are three distinct sets of fortifications against the sunshine in those windows: first, outside blinds; then solid, folding, inside shutters; and, lastly, heavy, thick, lined damask curtains, which loop quite down to the floor. What's the use of my pictures, I desire to know? They are hung in that room, and it's a regular campaign to get light enough to see what they are."

"But, at all events, you can light them up with gas in the evening."

"In the evening! Why, do you know my wife never wants to sit there in the evening? She says she has so much sewing to do that she and Aunt Zeruah must sit up in the bedroom, because it wouldn't do to bring work into the parlor. Didn't you know that? Don't you know there mustn't be such a thing as a bit of real work ever seen in a parlor? What if some threads should drop on the carpet? Aunt Zeruah would have to open all the fortifications next day, and search Jerusalem with candles to find them. No; in the evening the gas is lighted at half-cock, you know; and if I turn it up, and bring in my newspapers and spread about me, and pull down some books to read, I can feel the nervousness through the chamber floor. Aunt Zeruah looks in at eight, and at a quarter past, and at half past, and at nine, and at ten, to see if I am done, so that she may fold up the papers and put a book on them, and lock up the books in their cases. Nobody ever comes in to spend an evening. They used to try it when we were first married, but I believe the uninhabited appearance of our parlors discouraged them. Everybody has stopped coming now, and Aunt Zeruah says 'it is such a comfort, for now the rooms are always in order. How poor Mrs. Crowfield lives, with her house such a thoroughfare, she is sure she can't see. Sophie never would have strength for it; but then, to be sure, some folks ain't as particular as others. Sophie was brought up in a family of very particular housekeepers.'"

My wife smiled, with that calm, easy, amused smile that has brightened up her sofa for so many years.

Bill added bitterly, —

"Of course, I couldn't say that I wished the whole set and system of housekeeping women at the – what-'s-his-name? – because Sophie would have cried for a week, and been utterly forlorn and disconsolate. I know it's not the poor girl's fault; I try sometimes to reason with her, but you can't reason with the whole of your wife's family, to the third and fourth generation backwards; but I'm sure it's hurting her health, – wearing her out. Why, you know Sophie used to be the life of our set; and now she really seems eaten up with care from morning to night, there are so many things in the house that something dreadful is happening to all the while, and the servants we get are so clumsy. Why, when I sit with Sophie and Aunt Zeruah, it's nothing but a constant string of complaints about the girls in the kitchen. We keep changing our servants all the time, and they break and destroy so that now we are turned out of the use of all our things. We not only eat in the basement, but all our pretty table-things are put away, and we have all the cracked plates and cracked tumblers and cracked teacups and old buck-handled knives that can be raised out of chaos. I could use these things and be merry if I didn't know we had better ones; and I can't help wondering whether there isn't some way that our table could be set to look like a gentleman's table; but Aunt Zeruah says that 'it would cost thousands, and what difference does it make as long as nobody sees it but us?' You see, there is no medium in her mind between china and crystal and cracked earthenware. Well, I'm wondering

how all these laws of the Medes and Persians are going to work when the children come along. I'm in hopes the children will soften off the old folks, and make the house more habitable."

Well, children did come, a good many of them, in time. There was Tom, a broad-shouldered, chubby-cheeked, active, hilarious son of mischief, born in the very image of his father; and there was Charlie, and Jim, and Louisa, and Sophie the second, and Frank, – and a better, brighter, more joy-giving household, as far as temperament and nature were concerned, never existed.

But their whole childhood was a long battle, – children versus furniture, and furniture always carried the day. The first step of the housekeeping powers was to choose the least agreeable and least available room in the house for the children's nursery, and to fit it up with all the old, cracked, rickety furniture a neighboring auction-shop could afford, and then to keep them in it. Now everybody knows that to bring up children to be upright, true, generous, and religious needs so much discipline, so much restraint and correction, and so many rules and regulations, that it is all that the parents can carry out, and all the children can bear. There is only a certain amount of the vital force for parents or children to use in this business of education, and one must choose what it shall be used for. The Aunt Zeruah faction chose to use it for keeping the house and furniture, and the children's education proceeded accordingly. The rules of right and wrong of which they heard most frequently were all of this sort: Naughty children were those who went up the front stairs, or sat on the

best sofa, or fingered any of the books in the library, or got out one of the best teacups, or drank out of the cut-glass goblets.

Why did they ever want to do it? If there ever is a forbidden fruit in an Eden, will not our young Adams and Eves risk soul and body to find out how it tastes? Little Tom, the oldest boy, had the courage and enterprise and perseverance of a Captain Parry or Dr. Kane, and he used them all in voyages of discovery to forbidden grounds. He stole Aunt Zeruah's keys, unlocked her cupboards and closets, saw, handled, and tasted everything for himself, and gloried in his sins.

"Don't you know, Tom," said the nurse to him once, "if you are so noisy and rude, you'll disturb your dear mamma? She's sick, and she may die, if you're not careful."

"Will she die?" says Tom gravely.

"Why, she may."

"Then," said Tom, turning on his heel, – "then I'll go up the front stairs."

As soon as ever the little rebel was old enough, he was sent away to boarding-school, and then there was never found a time when it was convenient to have him come home again. He could not come in the spring, for then they were house-cleaning, nor in the autumn, because then they were house-cleaning; and so he spent his vacations at school, unless, by good luck, a companion who was so fortunate as to have a home invited him there. His associations, associates, habits, principles, were as little known to his mother as if she had sent him to China. Aunt Zeruah used

to congratulate herself on the rest there was at home, now he was gone, and say she was only living in hopes of the time when Charlie and Jim would be big enough to send away, too; and meanwhile Charlie and Jim, turned out of the charmed circle which should hold growing boys to the father's and mother's side, detesting the dingy, lonely playroom, used to run the city streets, and hang round the railroad depots or docks. Parents may depend upon it that, if they do not make an attractive resort for their boys, Satan will. There are places enough, kept warm and light and bright and merry, where boys can go whose mothers' parlors are too fine for them to sit in. There are enough to be found to clap them on the back, and tell them stories that their mothers must not hear, and laugh when they compass with their little piping voices the dreadful litanies of sin and shame. In middle life, our poor Sophie, who as a girl was so gay and frolicsome, so full of spirits, had dried and sharpened into a hard-visaged, angular woman, – careful and troubled about many things, and forgetful that one thing is needful. One of the boys had run away to sea; I believe he has never been heard of. As to Tom, the eldest, he ran a career wild and hard enough for a time, first at school and then in college, and there came a time when he came home, in the full might of six feet two, and almost broke his mother's heart with his assertions of his home rights and privileges. Mothers who throw away the key of their children's hearts and childhood sometimes have a sad retribution. As the children never were considered when they

were little and helpless, so they do not consider when they are strong and powerful. Tom spread wide desolation among the household gods, lounging on the sofas, spitting tobacco juice on the carpets, scattering books and engravings hither and thither, and throwing all the family traditions into wild disorder, as he would never have done had not all his childish remembrances of them been embittered by the association of restraint and privation. He actually seemed to hate any appearance of luxury or taste or order, – he was a perfect Philistine.

As for my friend Bill, from being the pleasantest and most genial of fellows, he became a morose, misanthropic man. Dr. Franklin has a significant proverb, – "Silks and satins put out the kitchen fire." Silks and satins – meaning by them the luxuries of housekeeping – often put out not only the parlor fire, but that more sacred flame, the fire of domestic love. It is the greatest possible misery to a man and to his children to be homeless; and many a man has a splendid house, but no home.

"Papa," said Jenny, "you ought to write and tell what are your ideas of keeping a home."

"Girls, you have only to think how your mother has brought you up."

Nevertheless, I think, being so fortunate a husband, I might reduce my wife's system to an analysis, and my next paper shall be, What is a Home, and How to Keep it.

III
WHAT IS A HOME

It is among the sibylline secrets which lie mysteriously between you and me, O reader, that these papers, besides their public aspect, have a private one proper to the bosom of mine own particular family. They are not merely an *ex post facto* protest in regard to that carpet and parlor of celebrated memory, but they are forth-looking towards other homes that may yet arise near us. For, among my other confidences, you may recollect I stated to you that our Marianne was busy in those interesting cares and details which relate to the preparing and ordering of another dwelling.

Now, when any such matter is going on in a family, I have observed that every feminine instinct is in a state of fluttering vitality, – every woman, old or young, is alive with womanliness to the tips of her fingers; and it becomes us of the other sex, however consciously respected, to walk softly and put forth our sentiments discreetly, and with due reverence for the mysterious powers that reign in the feminine breast.

I had been too well advised to offer one word of direct counsel on a subject where there were such charming voices, so able to convict me of absurdity at every turn. I had merely so arranged my affairs as to put into the hands of my bankers, subject to my wife's order, the very modest marriage portion

which I could place at my girl's disposal; and Marianne and Jenny, unused to the handling of money, were incessant in their discussions with ever patient mamma as to what was to be done with it. I say Marianne and Jenny, for, though the case undoubtedly is Marianne's, yet, like everything else in our domestic proceedings, it seems to fall, somehow or other, into Jenny's hands, through the intensity and liveliness of her domesticity of nature. Little Jenny is so bright and wide awake, and with so many active plans and fancies touching anything in the housekeeping world, that, though the youngest sister and second party in this affair, a stranger, hearkening to the daily discussions, might listen a half-hour at a time without finding out that it was not Jenny's future establishment that was in question. Marianne is a soft, thoughtful, quiet girl, not given to many words; and though, when you come fairly at it, you will find that, like most quiet girls, she has a will five times as inflexible as one who talks more, yet in all family counsels it is Jenny and mamma that do the discussion, and her own little well-considered "Yes" or "No" that finally settles each case.

I must add to this family tableau the portrait of the excellent Bob Stephens, who figured as future proprietor and householder in these consultations. So far as the question of financial possibilities is concerned, it is important to remark that Bob belongs to the class of young Edmunds celebrated by the poet: —

> "Wisdom and worth were all he had."

He is, in fact, an excellent-hearted and clever fellow, with a world of agreeable talents, a good tenor in a parlor duet, a good actor at a charade, a lively, off-hand conversationist, well up in all the current literature of the day, and what is more, in my eyes, a well-read lawyer, just admitted to the bar, and with as fair business prospects as usually fall to the lot of young aspirants in that profession.

Of course, he and my girl are duly and truly in love, in all the proper moods and tenses; but as to this work they have in hand of being householders, managing fuel, rent, provision, taxes, gas and water rates, they seem to my older eyes about as sagacious as a pair of this year's robins. Nevertheless, as the robins of each year do somehow learn to build nests as well as their ancestors, there is reason to hope as much for each new pair of human creatures. But it is one of the fatalities of our ill-jointed life that houses are usually furnished for future homes by young people in just this state of blissful ignorance of what they are really wanted for, or what is likely to be done with the things in them.

Now, to people of large incomes, with ready wealth for the rectification of mistakes, it doesn't much matter how the ménage is arranged at first; they will, if they have good sense, soon rid themselves of the little infelicities and absurdities of their first arrangements, and bring their establishment to meet their more instructed tastes.

But to that greater class who have only a modest investment

for this first start in domestic life, mistakes are far more serious. I have known people go on for years groaning under the weight of domestic possessions they did not want, and pining in vain for others which they did, simply from the fact that all their first purchases were made in this time of blissful ignorance.

I had been a quiet auditor to many animated discussions among the young people as to what they wanted and were to get, in which the subject of prudence and economy was discussed, with quotations of advice thereon given in serious good faith by various friends and relations who lived easily on incomes four or five times larger than our own. Who can show the ways of elegant economy more perfectly than people thus at ease in their possessions? From what serene heights do they instruct the inexperienced beginners! Ten thousand a year gives one leisure for reflection, and elegant leisure enables one to view household economies dispassionately; hence the unction with which these gifted daughters of upper air delight to exhort young neophytes.

"Depend upon it, my dear," Aunt Sophia Easygo had said, "it's always the best economy to get the best things. They cost more in the beginning, but see how they last! These velvet carpets on my floor have been in constant wear for ten years, and look how they wear! I never have an ingrain carpet in my house, – not even on the chambers. Velvet and Brussels cost more to begin with, but then they last. Then I cannot recommend the fashion that is creeping in of having plate instead of solid silver. Plate wears off, and has to be renewed, which comes to about the same thing

in the end as if you bought all solid at first. If I were beginning as Marianne is, I should just set aside a thousand dollars for my silver, and be content with a few plain articles. She should buy all her furniture at Messrs. David & Saul's. People call them dear, but their work will prove cheapest in the end, and there is an air and style about their things that can be told anywhere. Of course, you won't go to any extravagant lengths, – simplicity is a grace of itself."

The waters of the family council were troubled when Jenny, flaming with enthusiasm, brought home the report of this conversation. When my wife proceeded, with her well-trained business knowledge, to compare the prices of the simplest elegancies recommended by Aunt Easygo with the sum total to be drawn on, faces lengthened perceptibly.

"How *are* people to go to housekeeping," said Jenny, "if everything costs so much?"

My wife quietly remarked that we had had great comfort in our own home, – had entertained unnumbered friends, and had only ingrain carpets on our chambers and a three-ply on our parlor, and she doubted if any guest had ever thought of it, – if the rooms had been a shade less pleasant; and as to durability, Aunt Easygo had renewed her carpets oftener than we. Such as ours were, they had worn longer than hers.

"But, mamma, you know everything has gone on since your day. Everybody must at least approach a certain style nowadays. One can't furnish so far behind other people."

My wife answered in her quiet way, setting forth her doctrine of a plain average to go through the whole establishment, placing parlors, chambers, kitchen, pantries, and the unseen depths of linen-closets in harmonious relations of just proportion, and showed by calm estimates how far the sum given could go towards this result. *There* the limits were inexorable. There is nothing so damping to the ardor of youthful economies as the hard, positive logic of figures. It is so delightful to think in some airy way that the things we like best are the cheapest, and that a sort of rigorous duty compels us to get them at any sacrifice. There is no remedy for this illusion but to show by the multiplication and addition tables what things are and are not possible. My wife's figures met Aunt Easygo's assertions, and there was a lull among the high contracting parties for a season; nevertheless, I could see Jenny was secretly uneasy. I began to hear of journeys made to far places, here and there, where expensive articles of luxury were selling at reduced prices. Now a gilded mirror was discussed, and now a velvet carpet which chance had brought down temptingly near the sphere of financial possibility. I thought of our parlor, and prayed the good fairies to avert the advent of ill-assorted articles.

"Pray keep common sense uppermost in the girls' heads, if you can," said I to Mrs. Crowfield, "and don't let the poor little puss spend her money for what she won't care a button about by and by."

"I shall try," she said; "but you know Marianne is

inexperienced, and Jenny is so ardent and active, and so confident, too. Then they both, I think, have the impression that we are a little behind the age. To say the truth, my dear, I think your papers afford a good opportunity of dropping a thought now and then in their minds. Jenny was asking last night when you were going to write your next paper. The girl has a bright, active mind, and thinks of what she hears."

So flattered, by the best of flatterers, I sat down to write on my theme; and that evening, at firelight time, I read to my little senate as follows: —

WHAT IS A HOME, AND HOW TO KEEP IT

I have shown that a dwelling, rented or owned by a man, in which his own wife keeps house, is not always, or of course, a home. What is it, then, that makes a home? All men and women have the indefinite knowledge of what they want and long for when that word is spoken. "Home!" sighs the disconsolate bachelor, tired of boarding-house fare and buttonless shirts. "Home!" says the wanderer in foreign lands, and thinks of mother's love, of wife and sister and child. Nay, the word has in it a higher meaning hallowed by religion; and when the Christian would express the highest of his hopes for a better life, he speaks of his *home* beyond the grave. The word "home" has in it the elements of love, rest, permanency, and liberty; but, besides these, it has in it the idea of an education by which all

that is purest within us is developed into nobler forms, fit for a higher life. The little child by the home-fireside was taken on the Master's knee when he would explain to his disciples the mysteries of the kingdom.

Of so great dignity and worth is this holy and sacred thing, that the power to create a HOME ought to be ranked above all creative faculties. The sculptor who brings out the breathing statue from cold marble, the painter who warms the canvas into a deathless glow of beauty, the architect who built cathedrals and hung the world-like dome of St. Peter's in midair, is not to be compared, in sanctity and worthiness, to the humblest artist who, out of the poor materials afforded by this shifting, changing, selfish world, creates the secure Eden of a home.

A true home should be called the noblest work of art possible to human creatures, inasmuch as it is the very image chosen to represent the last and highest rest of the soul, the consummation of man's blessedness.

Not without reason does the oldest Christian church require of those entering on marriage the most solemn review of all the past life, the confession and repentance of every sin of thought, word, and deed, and the reception of the holy sacrament; for thus the man and woman who approach the august duty of creating a home are reminded of the sanctity and beauty of what they undertake.

In this art of homemaking I have set down in my mind certain first principles, like the axioms of Euclid, and the first is, —

No home is possible without love.

All business marriages and marriages of convenience, all mere culinary marriages and marriages of mere animal passion, make the creation of a true home impossible in the outset. Love is the jeweled foundation of this New Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven, and takes as many bright forms as the amethyst, topaz, and sapphire of that mysterious vision. In this range of creative art all things are possible to him that loveth, but without love nothing is possible.

We hear of most convenient marriages in foreign lands, which may better be described as commercial partnerships. The money on each side is counted; there is enough between the parties to carry on the firm, each having the appropriate sum allotted to each. No love is pretended, but there is great politeness. All is so legally and thoroughly arranged that there seems to be nothing left for future quarrels to fasten on. Monsieur and Madame have each their apartments, their carriages, their servants, their income, their friends, their pursuits, – understand the solemn vows of marriage to mean simply that they are to treat each other with urbanity in those few situations where the path of life must necessarily bring them together.

We are sorry that such an idea of marriage should be gaining foothold in America. It has its root in an ignoble view of life, – an utter and pagan darkness as to all that man and woman are called to do in that highest relation where they act as one. It is a mean and low contrivance on both sides, by which all the grand work

of home-building, all the noble pains and heroic toils of home education – that education where the parents learn more than they teach – shall be (let us use the expressive Yankee idiom) *shirked*.

It is a curious fact that, in those countries where this system of marriages is the general rule, there is no word corresponding to our English word "home." In many polite languages of Europe it would be impossible neatly to translate the sentiment with which we began this essay, that a man's house is not always his home.

Let any one try to render the song, "Sweet Home," into French, and one finds how Anglo-Saxon is the very genius of the word. The structure of life, in all its relations, in countries where marriages are matter of arrangement and not of love, excludes the idea of home.

How does life run in such countries? The girl is recalled from her convent or boarding-school, and told that her father has found a husband for her. No objection on her part is contemplated or provided for; none generally occurs, for the child is only too happy to obtain the fine clothes and the liberty which she has been taught come only with marriage. Be the man handsome or homely, interesting or stupid, still he brings these.

How intolerable such a marriage! we say, with the close intimacies of Anglo-Saxon life in our minds. They are not intolerable, because they are provided for by arrangements which make it possible for each to go his or her several way, seeing very little of the other. The son or daughter, which in due time makes

its appearance in this ménage, is sent out to nurse in infancy, sent to boarding-school in youth, and in maturity portioned and married, to repeat the same process for another generation. Meanwhile father and mother keep a quiet establishment and pursue their several pleasures. Such is the system.

Houses built for this kind of life become mere sets of reception-rooms, such as are the greater proportion of apartments to let in Paris, where a hearty English or American family, with their children about them, could scarcely find room to establish themselves. Individual character, it is true, does something to modify this programme. There are charming homes in France and Italy, where warm and noble natures, thrown together perhaps by accident, or mated by wise paternal choice, infuse warmth into the coldness of the system under which they live. There are in all states of society some of such domesticity of nature that they will create a home around themselves under any circumstances, however barren. Besides, so kindly is human nature, that Love, uninvited before marriage, often becomes a guest after, and with Love always comes a home.

My next axiom is, —

There can be no true home without liberty.

The very idea of home is of a retreat where we shall be free to act out personal and individual tastes and peculiarities, as we cannot do before the wide world. We are to have our meals at what hour we will, served in what style suits us. Our hours of going and coming are to be as we please. Our favorite haunts are

to be here or there; our pictures and books so disposed as seems to us good; and our whole arrangements the expression, so far as our means can compass it, of our own personal ideas of what is pleasant and desirable in life. This element of liberty, if we think of it, is the chief charm of home. "Here I can do as I please," is the thought with which the tempest-tossed earth-pilgrim blesses himself or herself, turning inward from the crowded ways of the world. This thought blesses the man of business, as he turns from his day's care and crosses the sacred threshold. It is as restful to him as the slippers and gown and easy-chair by the fireside. Everybody understands him here. Everybody is well content that he should take his ease in his own way. Such is the case in the ideal home. That such is not always the case in the real home comes often from the mistakes in the house-furnishing. Much house-furnishing is too fine for liberty.

In America there is no such thing as rank and station which impose a sort of prescriptive style on people of certain income. The consequence is that all sorts of furniture and belongings, which in the Old World have a recognized relation to certain possibilities of income, and which require certain other accessories to make them in good keeping, are thrown in the way of all sorts of people.

Young people who cannot expect by any reasonable possibility to keep more than two or three servants, if they happen to have the means in the outset furnish a house with just such articles as in England would suit an establishment of sixteen. We have seen

houses in England having two or three housemaids, and tables served by a butler and two waiters, where the furniture, carpets, china, crystal, and silver were in one and the same style with some establishments in America where the family was hard pressed to keep three Irish servants.

This want of servants is the one thing that must modify everything in American life; it is, and will long continue to be, a leading feature in the life of a country so rich in openings for man and woman that domestic service can be only the stepping-stone to something higher. Nevertheless we Americans are great travelers; we are sensitive, appreciative, fond of novelty, apt to receive and incorporate into our own life what seems fair and graceful in that of other people. Our women's wardrobes are made elaborate with the thousand elegancies of French toilet, – our houses filled with a thousand knick-knacks of which our plain ancestors never dreamed. Cleopatra did not set sail on the Nile in more state and beauty than that in which our young American bride is often ushered into her new home, – her wardrobe all gossamer lace and quaint frill and crimp and embroidery, her house a museum of elegant and costly gewgaws, and, amid the whole collection of elegancies and fragilities, she, perhaps, the frailest.

Then comes the tug of war. The young wife becomes a mother, and while she is retired to her chamber, blundering Biddy rusts the elegant knives, or takes off the ivory handles by soaking in hot water; the silver is washed in greasy soapsuds,

and refreshed now and then with a thump, which cocks the nose of the teapot awry, or makes the handle assume an air of drunken defiance. The fragile china is chipped here and there around its edges with those minute gaps so vexatious to a woman's soul; the handles fly hither and thither in the wild confusion of Biddy's washing-day hurry, when cook wants her to help hang out the clothes. Meanwhile Bridget sweeps the parlor with a hard broom, and shakes out showers of ashes from the grate, forgetting to cover the damask lounges, and they directly look as rusty and time-worn as if they had come from an auction-store; and all together unite in making such havoc of the delicate ruffles and laces of the bridal outfit and baby *layette* that, when the poor young wife comes out of her chamber after her nurse has left her, and, weakened and embarrassed with the demands of the newcomer, begins to look once more into the affairs of her little world, she is ready to sink with vexation and discouragement. Poor little princess! Her clothes are made as princesses wear them, her baby's clothes like a young duke's, her house furnished like a lord's, and only Bridget and Biddy and Polly to do the work of cook, scullery-maid, butler, footman, laundress, nursery-maid, housemaid, and lady's maid. Such is the array that in the Old Country would be deemed necessary to take care of an establishment got up like hers. Everything in it is too fine, – not too fine to be pretty, not in bad taste in itself, but too fine for the situation, too fine for comfort or liberty.

What ensues in a house so furnished? Too often, ceaseless

fretting of the nerves, in the wife's despairing, conscientious efforts to keep things as they should be. There is no freedom in a house where things are too expensive and choice to be freely handled and easily replaced. Life becomes a series of petty embarrassments and restrictions, something is always going wrong, and the man finds his fireside oppressive, – the various articles of his parlor and table seem like so many temper-traps and spring-guns, menacing explosion and disaster.

There may be, indeed, the most perfect home-feeling, the utmost cosiness and restfulness, in apartments crusted with gilding, carpeted with velvet, and upholstered with satin. I have seen such, where the home-like look and air of free use was as genuine as in a Western log cabin; but this was in a range of princely income that made all these things as easy to be obtained or replaced as the most ordinary of our domestic furniture. But so long as articles must be shrouded from use, or used with fear and trembling, because their cost is above the general level of our means, we had better be without them, even though the most lucky of accidents may put their possession in our power.

But it is not merely by the effort to maintain too much elegance that the sense of home liberty is banished from a house. It is sometimes expelled in another way, with all painstaking and conscientious strictness, by the worthiest and best of human beings, the blessed followers of Saint Martha. Have we not known them, the deaf, worthy creatures, up before daylight, causing most scrupulous lustrations of every pane of glass and

inch of paint in our parlors, in consequence whereof every shutter and blind must be kept closed for days to come, lest the flies should speck the freshly washed windows and wainscoting? Dear shade of Aunt Mehitabel, forgive our boldness! Have we not been driven for days, in our youth, to read our newspaper in the front veranda, in the kitchen, out in the barn, – anywhere, in fact, where sunshine could be found, – because there was not a room in the house that was not cleaned, shut up, and darkened? Have we not shivered with cold, all the glowering, gloomy month of May, because, the august front parlor having undergone the spring cleaning, the andirons were snugly tied up in the tissue-paper, and an elegant frill of the same material was trembling before the mouth of the once glowing fireplace? Even so, dear soul, full of loving-kindness and hospitality as thou wast, yet ever making our house seem like a tomb! And with what patience wouldst thou sit sewing by a crack in the shutters an inch wide, rejoicing in thy immaculate paint and clear glass! But was there ever a thing of thy spotless and unsullied belongings which a boy might use? How I trembled to touch thy scoured tins, that hung in appalling brightness! with what awe I asked for a basket to pick strawberries! and where in the house could I find a place to eat a piece of gingerbread? How like a ruffian, a Tartar, a pirate, I always felt when I entered thy domains! and how, from day to day, I wondered at the immeasurable depths of depravity which were always leading me to upset something, or break or tear or derange something, in thy exquisitely kept premises!

Somehow the impression was burned with overpowering force into my mind that houses and furniture, scrubbed floors, white curtains, bright tins and brasses, were the great, awful, permanent facts of existence; and that men and women, and particularly children, were the meddlesome intruders upon this divine order, every trace of whose intermeddling must be scrubbed out and obliterated in the quickest way possible. It seemed evident to me that houses would be far more perfect if nobody lived in them at all, but that, as men had really and absurdly taken to living in them, they must live as little as possible. My only idea of a house was a place full of traps and pitfalls for boys, a deadly temptation to sins which beset one every moment; and when I read about a sailor's free life on the ocean, I felt an untold longing to go forth and be free in like manner.

But a truce to these fancies, and back again to our essay.

If liberty in a house is a comfort to a husband, it is a necessity to children. When we say liberty, we do not mean license. We do not mean that Master Johnny be allowed to handle elegant volumes with bread-and-butter fingers, or that little Miss be suffered to drum on the piano, or practice line-drawing with a pin on varnished furniture. Still it is essential that the family parlors be not too fine for the family to sit in, – too fine for the ordinary accidents, haps and mishaps of reasonably well-trained children. The elegance of the parlor where papa and mamma sit and receive their friends should wear an inviting, not a hostile and bristling, aspect to little people. Its beauty and its order

gradually form in the little mind a love of beauty and order, and the insensible carefulness of regard.

Nothing is worse for a child than to shut him up in a room which he understands is his, *because* he is disorderly, – where he is expected, of course, to maintain and keep disorder. We have sometimes pitied the poor little victims who show their faces longingly at the doors of elegant parlors, and are forthwith collared by the domestic police and consigned to some attic apartment, called a playroom, where chaos continually reigns. It is a mistake to suppose, because children derange a well-furnished apartment, that they like confusion. Order and beauty are always pleasant to them as to grown people, and disorder and defacement are painful; but they know neither how to create the one nor to prevent the other, – their little lives are a series of experiments, often making disorder by aiming at some new form of order. Yet, for all this, I am not one of those who feel that in a family everything should bend to the sway of these little people. They are the worst of tyrants in such houses: still, where children are, though the fact must not appear to them, *nothing must be done without a wise thought of them*.

Here, as in all high art, the old motto is in force, "*Ars est celare artem*." Children who are taught too plainly, by every anxious look and word of their parents, by every family arrangement, by the impressment of every chance guest into the service, that their parents consider their education as the one important matter in creation, are apt to grow up fantastical, artificial, and hopelessly

self-conscious. The stars cannot stop in their courses, even for our personal improvement, and the sooner children learn this the better. The great art is to organize a home which shall move on with a strong, wide, generous movement, where the little people shall act themselves out as freely and impulsively as can consist with the comfort of the whole, and where the anxious watching and planning for them shall be kept as secret from them as possible.

It is well that one of the sunniest and airiest rooms in the house be the children's nursery. It is good philosophy, too, to furnish it attractively, even if the sum expended lower the standard of parlor luxuries. It is well that the children's chamber, which is to act constantly on their impressible natures for years, should command a better prospect, a sunnier aspect, than one which serves for a day's occupancy of the transient guest. It is well that journeys should be made or put off in view of the interests of the children; that guests should be invited with a view to their improvement; that some intimacies should be chosen and some rejected on their account. But it is not well that all this should, from infancy, be daily talked out before the child, and he grow up in egotism from moving in a sphere where everything from first to last is calculated and arranged with reference to himself. A little appearance of wholesome neglect combined with real care and never ceasing watchfulness has often seemed to do wonders in this work of setting human beings on their own feet for the life journey.

Education is the highest object of home, but education in the widest sense, – education of the parents no less than of the children. In a true home the man and the woman receive, through their cares, their watchings, their hospitality, their charity, the last and highest finish that earth can put upon them. From that they must pass upward, for earth can teach them no more.

The home education is incomplete unless it include the idea of hospitality and charity. Hospitality is a Biblical and apostolic virtue, and not so often recommended in Holy Writ without reason. Hospitality is much neglected in America for the very reasons touched upon above. We have received our ideas of propriety and elegance of living from old countries, where labor is cheap, where domestic service is a well-understood, permanent occupation, adopted cheerfully for life, and where of course there is such a subdivision of labor as insures great thoroughness in all its branches. We are ashamed or afraid to conform honestly and hardily to a state of things purely American. We have not yet accomplished what our friend the Doctor calls "our weaning," and learned that dinners with circuitous courses and divers other Continental and English refinements, well enough in their way, cannot be accomplished in families with two or three untrained servants, without an expense of care and anxiety which makes them heart-withering to the delicate wife, and too severe a trial to occur often. America is the land of subdivided fortunes, of a general average of wealth and comfort, and there ought to be, therefore, an understanding in the social basis far more simple

than in the Old World.

Many families of small fortunes know this, – they are quietly living so, – but they have not the steadiness to share their daily average living with a friend, a traveler, or guest, just as the Arab shares his tent and the Indian his bowl of succotash. They cannot have company, they say. Why? Because it is such a fuss to get out the best things, and then to put them back again. But why get out the best things! Why not give your friend what he would like a thousand times better, – a bit of your average home life, a seat at any time at your board, a seat at your fire? If he sees that there is a handle off your teacup, and that there is a crack across one of your plates, he only thinks, with a sigh of relief, "Well, mine aren't the only things that meet with accidents," and he feels nearer to you ever after; he will let you come to his table and see the cracks in his teacups, and you will condole with each other on the transient nature of earthly possessions. If it become apparent in these entirely undressed rehearsals that your children are sometimes disorderly, and that your cook sometimes overdoes the meat, and that your second girl sometimes is awkward in waiting, or has forgotten a table propriety, your friend only feels, "Ah, well, other people have trials as well as I," and he thinks, if you come to see him, he shall feel easy with you.

"Having company" is an expense that may always be felt; but easy daily hospitality, the plate always on your table for a friend, is an expense that appears on no accounts book, and a pleasure that is daily and constant.

Under this head of hospitality, let us suppose a case. A traveler comes from England; he comes in good faith and good feeling to see how Americans live. He merely wants to penetrate into the interior of domestic life, to see what there is genuinely and peculiarly American about it. Now here is Smilax, who is living, in a small, neat way, on his salary from the daily press. He remembers hospitalities received from our traveler in England, and wants to return them. He remembers, too, with dismay, a well-kept establishment, the well-served table, the punctilious, orderly servants. Smilax keeps two, a cook and chambermaid, who divide the functions of his establishment between them. What shall he do? Let him say, in a fair, manly way, "My dear fellow, I'm delighted to see you. I live in a small way, but I'll do my best for you, and Mrs. Smilax will be delighted. Come and dine with us, so and so, and we'll bring in one or two friends." So the man comes, and Mrs. Smilax serves up such a dinner as lies within the limits of her knowledge and the capacities of her servants. All plain, good of its kind, unpretending, without an attempt to do anything English or French, – to do anything more than if she were furnishing a gala dinner for her father or returned brother. Show him your house freely, just as it is, talk to him freely of it, just as he in England showed you his larger house and talked to you of his finer things. If the man is a true man, he will thank you for such unpretending, sincere welcome; if he is a man of straw, then he is not worth wasting Mrs. Smilax's health and spirits for, in unavailing efforts to get up a foreign dinner-party.

A man who has any heart in him values a genuine, little bit of home more than anything else you can give him. He can get French cooking at a restaurant; he can buy expensive wines at first-class hotels, if he wants them; but the traveler, though ever so rich and ever so well-served at home, is, after all, nothing but a man as you are, and he is craving something that doesn't seem like an hotel, – some bit of real, genuine heart life. Perhaps he would like better than anything to show you the last photograph of his wife, or to read to you the great, round-hand letter of his ten-year-old which he has got to-day. He is ready to cry when he thinks of it. In this mood he goes to see you, hoping for something like, home, and you first receive him in a parlor opened only on state occasions, and that has been circumstantially and exactly furnished, as the upholsterer assures you, as every other parlor of the kind in the city is furnished. You treat him to a dinner got up for the occasion, with hired waiters, – a dinner which it has taken Mrs. Smilax a week to prepare for, and will take her a week to recover from, – for which the baby has been snubbed and turned off, to his loud indignation, and your young four-year-old sent to his aunts. Your traveler eats your dinner, and finds it inferior, as a work of art, to other dinners, – a poor imitation. He goes away and criticises; you hear of it, and resolve never to invite a foreigner again. But if you had given him a little of your heart, a little home warmth and feeling, – if you had shown him your baby, and let him romp with your four-year-old, and eat a genuine dinner with you, – would he have been false

to that? Not so likely. He wanted something real and human, – you gave him a bad dress rehearsal, and dress rehearsals always provoke criticism.

Besides hospitality, there is, in a true home, a mission of charity. It is a just law which regulates the possession of great or beautiful works of art in the Old World, that they shall in some sense be considered the property of all who can appreciate. Fine grounds have hours when the public may be admitted; pictures and statues may be shown to visitors: and this is a noble charity. In the same manner the fortunate individuals who have achieved the greatest of all human works of art should employ it as a sacred charity. How many, morally wearied, wandering, disabled, are healed and comforted by the warmth of a true home! When a mother has sent her son to the temptations of a distant city, what news is so glad to her heart as that he has found some quiet family where he visits often and is made to feel at home? How many young men have good women saved from temptation and shipwreck by drawing them often to the sheltered corner by the fireside! The poor artist; the wandering genius who has lost his way in this world, and stumbles like a child among hard realities; the many men and women who, while they have houses, have no homes, see from afar, in their distant, bleak life journey, the light of a true home fire, and, if made welcome there, warm their stiffened limbs, and go forth stronger to their pilgrimage. Let those who have accomplished this beautiful and perfect work of divine art be liberal of its influence. Let them not seek to

bolt the doors and draw the curtains; for they know not, and will never know till the future life, of the good they may do by the ministration of this great charity of home.

We have heard much lately of the restricted sphere of woman. We have been told how many spirits among women are of a wider, stronger, more heroic mould than befits the mere routine of housekeeping. It may be true that there are many women far too great, too wise, too high, for mere housekeeping. But where is the woman in any way too great, or too high, or too wise, to spend herself in creating a home? What can any woman make diviner, higher, better? From such homes go forth all heroisms, all inspirations, all great deeds. Such mothers and such homes have made the heroes and martyrs, faithful unto death, who have given their precious lives to us during these three years of our agony!

Homes are the work of art peculiar to the genius of woman. Man helps in this work, but woman leads; the hive is always in confusion without the queen bee. But what a woman must she be who does this work perfectly! She comprehends all, she balances and arranges all; all different tastes and temperaments find in her their rest, and she can unite at one hearthstone the most discordant elements. In her is order, yet an order ever veiled and concealed by indulgence. None are checked, reproved, abridged of privileges by her love of system; for she knows that order was made for the family, and not the family for order. Quietly she takes on herself what all others refuse or overlook. What

the unwary disarrange she silently rectifies. Everybody in her sphere breathes easy, feels free; and the driest twig begins in her sunshine to put out buds and blossoms. So quiet are her operations and movements that none sees that it is she who holds all things in harmony; only, alas, when she is gone, how many things suddenly appear disordered, inharmonious, neglected! All these threads have been smilingly held in her weak hand. Alas, if that is no longer there!

Can any woman be such a housekeeper without inspiration? No. In the words of the old church service, "her soul must ever have affiance in God." The New Jerusalem of a perfect home cometh down from God out of heaven. But to make such a home is ambition high and worthy enough for any woman, be she what she may.

One thing more. Right on the threshold of all perfection lies the cross to be taken up. No one can go over or around that cross in science or in art. Without labor and self-denial neither Raphael nor Michel Angelo nor Newton was made perfect. Nor can man or woman create a true home who is not willing in the outset to embrace life heroically to encounter labor and sacrifice. Only to such shall this divinest power be given to create on earth that which is the nearest image of heaven.

IV
THE ECONOMY OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Talking to you in this way once a month, O my confidential reader, there seems to be danger, as in all intervals of friendship, that we shall not readily be able to take up our strain of conversation just where we left off. Suffer me, therefore, to remind you that the month past left us seated at the fireside, just as we had finished reading of what a home was, and how to make one.

The fire had burned low, and great, solid hickory coals were winking dreamily at us from out their fluffy coats of white ashes, – just as if some household sprite there were opening now one eye and then the other, and looking in a sleepy, comfortable way at us.

The close of my piece about the good house mother had seemed to tell on my little audience. Marianne had nestled close to her mother, and laid her head on her knee; and though Jenny sat up straight as a pin, yet her ever busy knitting was dropped in her lap, and I saw the glint of a tear in her quick, sparkling eye, – yes, actually a little bright bead fell upon her work; whereupon she started up actively, and declared that the fire wanted just one more stick to make a blaze before bedtime; and then there was such a raking among the coals, such an adjusting of the andirons, such vigorous arrangement of the wood, and such a

brisk whisking of the hearth-brush, that it was evident Jenny had something on her mind. When all was done, she sat down again and looked straight into the blaze, which went dancing and crackling up, casting glances and flecks of light on our pictures and books, and making all the old, familiar furniture seem full of life and motion.

"I think that's a good piece," she said decisively. "I think those are things that should be thought about."

Now Jenny was the youngest of our flock, and therefore, in a certain way, regarded by my wife and me as perennially "the baby;" and these little, old-fashioned, decisive ways of announcing her opinions seemed so much a part of her nature, so peculiarly "Jennyish," as I used to say, that my wife and I only exchanged amused glances over her head when they occurred.

In a general way, Jenny, standing in the full orb of her feminine instincts like Diana in the moon, rather looked down on all masculine views of women's matters as *tolerabiles ineptiæ*; but towards her papa she had gracious turns of being patronizing to the last degree; and one of these turns was evidently at its flood-tide, as she proceeded to say, —

"*I* think papa is right, – that keeping house and having a home, and all that, is a very serious thing, and that people go into it with very little thought about it. I really think those things papa has been saying there ought to be thought about."

"Papa," said Marianne, "I wish you would tell me exactly how you would spend that money you gave me for house-furnishing.

I should like just your views."

"Precisely," said Jenny with eagerness; "because it is just as papa says, – a sensible man, who has thought and had experience, can't help having some ideas, even about women's affairs, that are worth attending to. I think so, decidedly."

I acknowledged the compliment for my sex and myself with my best bow.

"But then, papa," said Marianne, "I can't help feeling sorry that one can't live in such a way as to have beautiful things around one. I'm sorry they must cost so much, and take so much care, for I am made so that I really want them. I do so like to see pretty things! I do like rich carpets and elegant carved furniture, and fine china and cut-glass and silver. I can't bear mean, common-looking rooms. I should so like to have my house look beautiful!"

"Your house ought not to look mean and common, – your house ought to look beautiful," I replied. "It would be a sin and a shame to have it otherwise. No house ought to be fitted up for a future home without a strong and a leading reference to beauty in all its arrangements. If I were a Greek, I should say that the first household libation should be made to beauty; but, being an old-fashioned Christian, I would say that he who prepares a home with no eye to beauty neglects the example of the great Father who has filled our earth home with such elaborate ornament."

"But then, papa, there's the money!" said Jenny, shaking her little head wisely. "You men don't think of that. You want us girls, for instance, to be patterns of economy, but we must always

be wearing fresh, nice things; you abhor soiled gloves and worn shoes; and yet how is all this to be done without money? And it's just so in housekeeping. You sit in your armchairs, and conjure up visions of all sorts of impossible things to be done; but when mamma there takes out that little account-book, and figures away on the cost of things, where do the visions go?"

"You are mistaken, my little dear, and you talk just like a woman," – this was my only way of revenging myself; "that is to say, you jump to conclusions, without sufficient knowledge. I maintain that in house-furnishing, as well as woman-furnishing, there's nothing so economical as beauty."

"There's one of papa's paradoxes!" said Jenny.

"Yes," said I, "that is my thesis, which I shall nail up over the mantelpiece there, as Luther nailed his to the church door. It is time to rake up the fire now; but to-morrow night I will give you a paper on the Economy of the Beautiful."

"Come, now we are to have papa's paradox," said Jenny, as soon as the tea-things had been carried out.

Entre nous, I must tell you that insensibly we had fallen into the habit of taking our tea by my study fire. Tea, you know, is a mere nothing in itself, its only merit being its social and poetic associations, its warmth and fragrance; and the more socially and informally it can be dispensed, the more in keeping with its airy and cheerful nature.

Our circle was enlightened this evening by the cheery visage of Bob Stephens, seated, as of right, close to Marianne's work-

basket.

"You see, Bob," said Jenny, "papa has undertaken to prove that the most beautiful things are always the cheapest."

"I'm glad to hear that," said Bob; "for there's a carved antique bookcase and study-table that I have my eye on, and if this can in any way be made to appear" —

"Oh, it won't be made to appear," said Jenny, settling herself at her knitting, "only in some transcendental, poetic sense, such as papa can always make out. Papa is more than half a poet, and his truths turn out to be figures of rhetoric when one comes to apply them to matters of fact."

"Now, Miss Jenny, please remember my subject and thesis," I replied, – "that in house-furnishing there is nothing so economical as beauty; and I will make it good against all comers, not by figures of rhetoric, but by figures of arithmetic. I am going to be very matter-of-fact and commonplace in my details, and keep ever in view the addition table. I will instance a case which has occurred under my own observation."

THE ECONOMY OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Two of the houses lately built on the new land in Boston were bought by two friends, Philip and John. Philip had plenty of money, and paid the cash down for his house, without feeling the slightest vacancy in his pocket. John, who was an active, rising young man, just entering on a flourishing business, had expended

all his moderate savings for years in the purchase of his dwelling, and still had a mortgage remaining, which he hoped to clear off by his future successes. Philip begins the work of furnishing as people do with whom money is abundant, and who have simply to go from shop to shop and order all that suits their fancy and is considered "the thing" in good society. John begins to furnish with very little money. He has a wife and two little ones, and he wisely deems that to insure to them a well-built house, in an open, airy situation, with conveniences for warming, bathing, and healthy living, is a wise beginning in life; but it leaves him little or nothing beyond.

Behold, then, Philip and his wife, well pleased, going the rounds of shops and stores in fitting up their new dwelling, and let us follow step by step. To begin with the wall-paper. Imagine a front and back parlor, with folding-doors, with two south windows on the front, and two looking on a back court, after the general manner of city houses. We will suppose they require about thirty rolls of wall-paper. Philip buys the heaviest French velvet, with gildings and traceries, at four dollars a roll. This, by the time it has been put on, with gold mouldings, according to the most established taste of the best paper-hangers, will bring the wall-paper of the two rooms to a figure something like two hundred dollars. Now they proceed to the carpet stores, and there are thrown at their feet by obsequious clerks velvets and Axminsters, with flowery convolutions and medallion centres, as if the flower gardens of the tropics were whirling in waltzes,

with graceful lines of arabesque, – roses, callas, lilies, knotted, wreathed, twined, with blue and crimson and golden ribbons, dazzling marvels of color and tracery. There is no restraint in price, – four or six dollars a yard, it is all the same to them, – and soon a magic flower garden blooms on the floors, at a cost of five hundred dollars. A pair of elegant rugs, at fifty dollars apiece, complete the inventory, and bring our rooms to the mark of eight hundred dollars for papering and carpeting alone. Now come the great mantel-mirrors for four hundred more, and our rooms progress. Then comes the upholsterer, and measures our four windows, that he may skillfully barricade them from air and sunshine. The fortifications against heaven, thus prepared, cost, in the shape of damask, cord, tassels, shades, laces, and cornices, about two hundred dollars per window. To be sure, they make the rooms close and sombre as the grave, but they are of the most splendid stuffs; and if the sun would only reflect, he would see, himself, how foolish it was for him to try to force himself into a window guarded by his betters. If there is anything cheap and plebeian, it is sunshine and fresh air! Behold us, then, with our two rooms papered, carpeted, and curtained for two thousand dollars; and now are to be put in them sofas, lounges, étagères, centre-tables, screens, chairs of every pattern and device, for which it is but moderate to allow a thousand more. We have now two parlors furnished at an outlay of three thousand dollars, without a single picture, a single article of statuary, a single object of art of any kind, and without any light to see them by

if they were there. We must say for our Boston upholsterers and furniture-makers that such good taste generally reigns in their establishments that rooms furnished at haphazard from them cannot fail of a certain air of good taste, so far as the individual things are concerned. But the different articles we have supposed, having been ordered without reference to one another or the rooms, have, when brought together, no unity of effect, and the general result is scattering and confused. If asked how Philip's parlors look, your reply is, "Oh, the usual way of such parlors, – everything that such people usually get, – medallion carpets, carved furniture, great mirrors, bronze mantel ornaments, and so on." The only impression a stranger receives, while waiting in the dim twilight of these rooms, is that their owner is rich, and able to get good, handsome things, such as all other rich people get.

Now our friend John, as often happens in America, is moving in the same social circle with Philip, visiting the same people, – his house is the twin of the one Philip has been furnishing, – and how shall he, with a few hundred dollars, make his rooms even presentable beside those which Philip has fitted up elegantly at three thousand?

Now for the economy of beauty. Our friend must make his prayer to the Graces, – for, if they cannot save him, nobody can. One thing John has to begin with, that rare gift to man, a wife with the magic cestus of Venus, – not around her waist, but, if such a thing could be, in her finger-ends. All that she touches falls at once into harmony and proportion. Her eye for color and

form is intuitive: let her arrange a garret, with nothing but boxes, barrels, and cast-off furniture in it, and ten to one she makes it seem the most attractive place in the house. It is a veritable "gift of good faërie," this tact of beautifying and arranging, that some women have; and, on the present occasion, it has a real, material value, that can be estimated in dollars and cents. Come with us and you can see the pair taking their survey of the yet unfurnished parlors, as busy and happy as a couple of bluebirds picking up the first sticks and straws for their nest.

"There are two sunny windows to begin with," says the good fairy, with an appreciative glance. "That insures flowers all winter."

"Yes," says John; "I never would look at a house without a good sunny exposure. Sunshine is the best ornament of a house, and worth an extra thousand a year."

"Now for our wall-paper," says she. "Have you looked at wall-papers, John?"

"Yes; we shall get very pretty ones for thirty-seven cents a roll; all you want of a paper, you know, is to make a ground-tint to throw out your pictures and other matters, and to reflect a pleasant tone of light."

"Well, John, you know Uncle James says that a stone color is the best, but I can't bear those cold blue grays."

"Nor I," says John. "If we must have gray, let it at least be a gray suffused with gold or rose color, such as you see at evening in the clouds."

"So I think," responds she; "but, better, I should like a paper with a tone of buff, – something that produces warm yellowish reflections, and will almost make you think the sun is shining in cold gray weather; and then there is nothing that lights up so cheerfully in the evening. In short, John, I think the color of a *zafferano* rose will be just about the shade we want."

"Well, I can find that, in good American paper, as I said before, at from thirty-seven to forty cents a roll. Then our bordering: there's an important question, for that must determine the carpet, the chairs, and everything else. Now what shall be the ground-tint of our rooms?"

"There are only two to choose between," says the lady, – "green and maroon: which is the best for the picture?"

"I think," says John, looking above the mantelpiece, as if he saw a picture there, – "I think a border of maroon velvet, with maroon furniture, is the best for the picture."

"I think so, too," said she; "and then we will have that lovely maroon and crimson carpet that I saw at Lowe's; it is an ingrain, to be sure, but has a Brussels pattern, a mossy, mixed figure, of different shades of crimson; it has a good warm, strong color, and when I come to cover the lounges and our two old armchairs with maroon rep, it will make such a pretty effect."

"Yes," said John; "and then, you know, our picture is so bright, it will light up the whole. Everything depends on the picture."

Now as to "the picture," it has a story which must be told. John, having been all his life a worshiper and adorer of beauty

and beautiful things, had never passed to or from his business without stopping at the print-shop windows, and seeing a little of what was there.

On one of these occasions he was smitten to the heart with the beauty of an autumn landscape, where the red maples and sumachs, the purple and crimson oaks, all stood swathed and harmonized together in the hazy Indian summer atmosphere. There was a great yellow chestnut tree, on a distant hill, which stood out so naturally that John instinctively felt his fingers tingling for a basket, and his heels alive with a desire to bound over on to the rustling hillside and pick up the glossy brown nuts. Everything was there of autumn, even to the goldenrod and purple asters and scarlet creepers in the foreground.

John went in and inquired. It was by an unknown French artist, without name or patrons, who had just come to our shores to study our scenery, and this was the first picture he had exposed for sale. John had just been paid a quarter's salary; he bethought him of board-bill and washerwoman, sighed, and faintly offered fifty dollars.

To his surprise he was taken up at once, and the picture became his. John thought himself dreaming. He examined his treasure over and over, and felt sure that it was the work of no amateur beginner, but of a trained hand and a true artist soul. So he found his way to the studio of the stranger, and apologized for having got such a gem for so much less than its worth. "It was all I could give, though," he said; "and one who paid four times as

much could not value it more." And so John took one and another of his friends, with longer purses than his own, to the studio of the modest stranger; and now his pieces command their full worth in the market, and he works with orders far ahead of his ability to execute, giving to the canvas the trails of American scenery as appreciated and felt by the subtile delicacy of the French mind, – our rural summer views, our autumn glories, and the dreamy, misty delicacy of our snowy winter landscapes. Whoso would know the truth of the same, let him inquire for the modest studio of Morvillier, at Maiden, scarce a bowshot from our Boston.

This picture had always been the ruling star of John's house, his main dependence for brightening up his bachelor apartments; and when he came to the task of furbishing those same rooms for a fair occupant, the picture was still his mine of gold. For a picture painted by a real artist, who studies Nature minutely and conscientiously, has something of the charm of the good Mother herself, – something of her faculty of putting on different aspects under different lights. John and his wife had studied their picture at all hours of the day: they had seen how it looked when the morning sun came aslant the scarlet maples and made a golden shimmer over the blue mountains, how it looked toned down in the cool shadows of afternoon, and how it warmed up in the sunset and died off mysteriously into the twilight; and now, when larger parlors were to be furnished, the picture was still the tower of strength, the rallying-point of their hopes.

"Do you know, John," said the wife, hesitating, "I am really in

doubt whether we shall not have to get at least a few new chairs and a sofa for our parlors? They are putting in such splendid things at the other door that I am positively ashamed of ours; the fact is, they look almost disreputable, – like a heap of rubbish."

"Well," said John, laughing, "I don't suppose all together sent to an auction-room would bring us fifty dollars, and yet, such as they are, they answer the place of better things for us; and the fact is, Mary, the hard impassable barrier in the case is that there really is no money to get any more."

"Ah, well, then, if there isn't, we must see what we can do with these, and summon all the good fairies to our aid," said Mary. "There's your little cabinet-maker, John, will look over the things and furbish them up; there's that broken arm of the chair must be mended, and everything re-varnished; then I have found such a lovely rep, of just the richest shade of maroon, inclining to crimson, and when we come to cover the lounges and armchairs and sofas and ottomans all alike, you know they will be quite another thing."

"Trust you for that, Mary! By the bye, I've found a nice little woman, who has worked on upholstery, who will come in by the day, and be the hands that shall execute the decrees of your taste."

"Yes, I am sure we shall get on capitally. Do you know that I'm almost glad we can't get new things? It's a sort of enterprise to see what we can do with old ones."

"Now, you see, Mary," said John, seating himself on a lime-cask which the plasterers had left, and taking out his

memorandum-book, – "you see, I've calculated this thing all over; I've found a way by which I can make our rooms beautiful and attractive without a cent expended on new furniture."

"Well, let's hear."

"Well, my way is short and simple. We must put things into our rooms that people will look at, so that they will forget to look at the furniture, and never once trouble their heads about it. People never look at furniture so long as there is anything else to look at; just as Napoleon, when away on one of his expeditions, being told that the French populace were getting disaffected, wrote back, 'Gild the *dome des Invalides*,' and so they gilded it, and the people, looking at that, forgot everything else."

"But I'm not clear yet," said Mary, "what is coming of this rhetoric."

"Well, then, Mary, I'll tell you. A suit of new carved black-walnut furniture, severe in taste and perfect in style, such as I should choose at David & Saul's, could not be got under three hundred dollars, and I haven't the three hundred to give. What, then, shall we do? We must fall back on our resources; we must look over our treasures. We have our proof cast of the great glorious head of the Venus di Milo; we have those six beautiful photographs of Rome, that Brown brought to us; we have the great German lithograph of the San Sisto Mother and Child, and we have the two angel heads, from the same; we have that lovely golden twilight sketch of Heade's; we have some sea photographs of Bradford's; we have an original pen-and-ink

sketch by Billings; and then, as before, we have 'our picture.' What has been the use of our watching at the gates and waiting at the doors of Beauty all our lives, if she hasn't thrown us out a crust now and then, so that we might have it for time of need? Now, you see, Mary, we must make the toilet of our rooms just as a pretty woman makes hers when money runs low, and she sorts and freshens her ribbons, and matches them to her hair and eyes, and, with a bow here and a bit of fringe there, and a button somewhere else, dazzles us into thinking that she has an infinity of beautiful attire. Our rooms are new and pretty of themselves, to begin with; the tint of the paper, and the rich coloring of the border, corresponding with the furniture and carpets, will make them seem prettier. And now for arrangement. Take this front room. I propose to fill those two recesses each side of the fireplace with my books, in their plain pine cases, just breast-high from the floor: they are stained a good dark color, and nobody need stick a pin in them to find out that they are not rosewood. The top of these shelves on either side to be covered with the same stuff as the furniture, finished with a crimson fringe. On top of the shelves on one side of the fireplace I shall set our noble Venus di Milo, and I shall buy at Cicci's the lovely Clytie, and put it the other side. Then I shall get of Williams & Everett two of their chromo lithographs, which give you all the style and charm of the best English watercolor school. I will have the lovely Bay of Amalfi over my Venus, because she came from those suns and skies of southern Italy, and I will

hang Lake Como over my Clytie. Then, in the middle, over the fireplace, shall be 'our picture.' Over each door shall hang one of the lithographed angel heads of the San Sisto, to watch our going out and coming in; and the glorious Mother and Child shall hang opposite the Venus di Milo, to show how Greek and Christian unite in giving the noblest type to womanhood. And then, when we have all our sketches and lithographs framed and hung here and there, and your flowers blooming as they always do, and your ivies wandering and rambling as they used to, and hanging in the most graceful ways and places, and all those little shells and ferns and vases, which you are always conjuring with, tastefully arranged, I'll venture to say that our rooms will be not only pleasant, but beautiful, and that people will oftener say, 'How beautiful!' when they enter, than if we spent three times the money on new furniture."

In the course of a year after this conversation, one and another of my acquaintances were often heard speaking of John Morton's house. "Such beautiful rooms, – so charmingly furnished, – you must go and see them. What does make them so much pleasanter than those rooms in the other house, which have everything in them that money can buy?" So said the folk; for nine people out of ten only feel the effect of a room, and never analyze the causes from which it flows: they know that certain rooms seem dull and heavy and confused, but they don't know why; that certain others seem cheerful, airy, and beautiful, but they know not why. The first exclamation, on entering John's parlors, was so often

"How beautiful!" that it became rather a byword in the family. Estimated by their mere money value, the articles in the rooms were of very trifling worth; but, as they stood arranged and combined, they had all the effect of a lovely picture. Although the statuary was only plaster, and the photographs and lithographs such as were all within the compass of limited means, yet every one of them was a good thing of its own kind, or a good reminder of some of the greatest works of art. A good plaster cast is a daguerreotype, so to speak, of a great statue, though it may be bought for five or six dollars, while its original is not to be had for any namable sum. A chromo lithograph of the best sort gives all the style and manner and effect of Turner or Stanfield, or any of the best of modern artists, though you buy it for five or ten dollars, and though the original would command a thousand guineas. The lithographs from Raphael's immortal picture give you the results of a whole age of artistic culture, in a form within the compass of very humble means. There is now selling for five dollars at Williams & Everett's a photograph of Cheney's crayon drawing of the San Sisto Madonna and Child, which has the very spirit of the glorious original. Such a picture, hung against the wall of a child's room, would train its eye from infancy; and yet how many will freely spend five dollars in embroidery on its dress, that say they cannot afford works of art!

There was one advantage which John and his wife found, in the way in which they furnished their house, that I have hinted at before: it gave freedom to their children. Though their

rooms were beautiful, it was not with the tantalizing beauty of expensive and frail knick-knacks. Pictures hung against the wall, and statuary safely lodged on brackets, speak constantly to the childish eye, but are out of the reach of childish fingers, and are not upset by childish romps. They are not, like china and crystal, liable to be used and abused by servants; they do not wear out; they are not spoiled by dust, nor consumed by moths. The beauty once there is always there; though the mother be ill and in her chamber, she has no fears that she shall find it all wrecked and shattered. And this style of beauty, inexpensive as it is, compared with luxurious furniture, is a means of cultivation. No child is ever stimulated to draw or to read by an Axminster carpet or a carved centre-table; but a room surrounded with photographs and pictures and fine casts suggests a thousand inquiries, stimulates the little eye and hand. The child is found with its pencil, drawing, or he asks for a book on Venice, or wants to hear the history of the Roman Forum.

But I have made my article too long. I will write another on the moral and intellectual effects of house-furnishing.

"I have proved my point, Miss Jenny, have I not? *In house-furnishing nothing is more economical than beauty.*"

"Yes, papa," said Jenny; "I give it up."

V
RAKING UP THE FIRE

We have a custom at our house which we call *raking up the fire*. That is to say, the last half hour before bedtime, we draw in, shoulder to shoulder, around the last brands and embers of our hearth, which we prick up and brighten, and dispose for a few farewell flickers and glimmers. This is a grand time for discussion. Then we talk over parties, if the young people have been out of an evening, – a book, if we have been reading one; we discuss and analyze characters, – give our views on all subjects, æsthetic, theological, and scientific, in a way most wonderful to hear; and, in fact, we sometimes get so engaged in our discussions that every spark of the fire burns out, and we begin to feel ourselves shivering around the shoulders, before we can remember that it is bedtime.

So, after the reading of my last article, we had a "raking-up talk," – to wit, Jenny, Marianne, and I, with Bob Stephens: my wife, still busy at her work-basket, sat at the table a little behind us. Jenny, of course, opened the ball in her usual incisive manner.

"But now, papa, after all you say in your piece there, I cannot help feeling that, if I had the taste and the money too, it would be better than the taste alone with no money. I like the nice arrangements and the books and the drawings, but I think all these would appear better still with really elegant furniture."

"Who doubts that?" said I. "Give me a large tub of gold coin to dip into, and the furnishing and beautifying of a house is a simple affair. The same taste that could make beauty out of cents and dimes could make it more abundantly out of dollars and eagles. But I have been speaking for those who have not and cannot get riches, and who wish to have agreeable houses; and I begin in the outset by saying that beauty is a thing to be respected, reverenced, and devoutly cared for, and then I say that BEAUTY IS CHEAP, – nay, to put it so that the shrewdest Yankee will understand it, – BEAUTY IS THE CHEAPEST THING YOU CAN HAVE, because in many ways it is a substitute for expense. A few vases of flowers in a room, a few blooming, well-kept plants, a few prints framed in fanciful frames of cheap domestic fabric, a statuette, a bracket, an engraving, a pencil-sketch, – above all, a few choice books, – all these arranged by a woman who has the gift in her finger-ends, often produce such an illusion on the mind's eye that one goes away without once having noticed that the cushion of the armchair was worn out, and that some veneering had fallen off the centre-table.

"I have a friend, a schoolmistress, who lives in a poor little cottage enough, which, let alone of the Graces, might seem mean and sordid, but a few flower-seeds and a little weeding in the spring make it, all summer, an object which everybody stops to look at. Her æsthetic soul was at first greatly tried with the water-barrel which stood under the eaves spout, – a most necessary evil, since only thus could her scanty supply of soft water for domestic

purposes be secured. One of the Graces, however, suggested to her a happy thought. She planted a row of morning-glories round the bottom of her barrel, and drove a row of tacks around the top, and strung her water-butt with twine, like a great harpsichord. A few weeks covered the twine with blossoming plants, which every morning were a mass of many-colored airy blooms, waving in graceful sprays, and looking at themselves in the water. The water-barrel, in fact, became a celebrated stroke of ornamental gardening, which the neighbors came to look at."

"Well, but," said Jenny, "everybody hasn't mamma's faculty with flowers. Flowers will grow for some people, and for some they won't. Nobody can see what mamma does so very much, but her plants always look fresh and thriving and healthy, – her things blossom just when she wants them, and do anything else she wishes them to; and there are other people that fume and fuss and try, and their things won't do anything at all. There's Aunt Easygo has plant after plant brought from the greenhouse, and hanging-baskets, and all sorts of things; but her plants grow yellow and drop their leaves, and her hanging-baskets get dusty and poverty-stricken, while mamma's go on flourishing as heart could desire."

"I can tell you what your mother puts into her plants," said I, – "just what she has put into her children, and all her other home-things, – her *heart*. She loves them; she lives in them; she has in herself a plant-life and a plant-sympathy. She feels for them as if she herself were a plant; she anticipates their wants, – always

remembers them without an effort, and so the care flows to them daily and hourly. She hardly knows when she does the things that make them grow, but she gives them a minute a hundred times a day. She moves this nearer the glass, – draws that back, – detects some thief of a worm on one, – digs at the root of another, to see why it droops, – washes these leaves and sprinkles those, – waters, and refrains from watering, all with the habitual care of love. Your mother herself doesn't know why her plants grow; it takes a philosopher and a writer for the 'Atlantic' to tell her what the cause is."

Here I saw my wife laughing over her work-basket as she answered, —

"Girls, one of these days *I* will write an article for the 'Atlantic,' that your papa need not have *all* the say to himself; however, I believe he has hit the nail on the head this time."

"Of course he has," said Marianne. "But, mamma, I am afraid to begin to depend much on plants for the beauty of my rooms, for fear I should not have your gift, – and, of all forlorn and hopeless things in a room, ill-kept plants are the most so."

"I would not recommend," said I, "a young housekeeper, just beginning, to rest much for her home ornament on plant-keeping, unless she has an experience of her own love and talent in this line which makes her sure of success; for plants will not thrive if they are forgotten or overlooked, and only tended in occasional intervals; and, as Marianne says, neglected plants are the most forlorn of all things."

"But, papa," said Marianne anxiously, "there, in those patent parlors of John's that you wrote of, flowers acted a great part."

"The charm of those parlors of John's may be chemically analyzed," I said. "In the first place, there is sunshine, a thing that always affects the human nerves of happiness. Why else is it that people are always so glad to see the sun after a long storm? why are bright days matters of such congratulation? Sunshine fills a house with a thousand beautiful and fanciful effects of light and shade, – with soft, luminous, reflected radiances, that give picturesque effects to the pictures, books, statuettes of an interior. John, happily, had no money to buy brocatelle curtains, and, besides this, he loved sunshine too much to buy them, if he could. He had been enough with artists to know that heavy damask curtains darken precisely that part of the window where the light proper for pictures and statuary should come in, namely, the upper part. The fashionable system of curtains lights only the legs of the chairs and the carpets, and leaves all the upper portion of the room in shadow. John's windows have shades which can at pleasure be drawn down from the top or up from the bottom, so that the best light to be had may always be arranged for his little interior."

"Well, papa," said Marianne, "in your chemical analysis of John's rooms, what is the next thing to the sunshine?"

"The next," said I, "is harmony of color. The wall-paper, the furniture, the carpets, are of tints that harmonize with one another. This is a grace in rooms always, and one often neglected.

The French have an expressive phrase with reference to articles which are out of accord, – they say that they swear at each other, I have been in rooms where I seemed to hear the wall-paper swearing at the carpet, and the carpet swearing back at the wall-paper, and each article of furniture swearing at the rest. These appointments may all of them be of the most expensive kind, but with such dis-harmony no arrangement can ever produce anything but a vulgar and disagreeable effect. On the other hand, I have been in rooms where all the material was cheap and the furniture poor, but where, from some instinctive knowledge of the reciprocal effect of colors, everything was harmonious, and produced a sense of elegance.

"I recollect once traveling on a Western canal through a long stretch of wilderness, and stopping to spend the night at an obscure settlement of a dozen houses. We were directed to lodgings in a common frame house at a little distance, where, it seemed, the only hotel was kept. When we entered the parlor, we were struck with utter amazement at its prettiness, which affected us before we began to ask ourselves how it came to be pretty. It was, in fact, only one of the miracles of harmonious color working with very simple materials. Some woman had been busy there, who had both eyes and fingers. The sofa, the common wooden rocking-chairs, and some ottomans, probably made of old soap-boxes, were all covered with American nankeen of a soft yellowish-brown, with a bordering of blue print. The window-shades, the table-cover, and the piano-cloth all repeated

the same colors, in the same cheap material. A simple straw matting was laid over the floor, and, with a few books, a vase of flowers, and one or two prints, the room had a home-like and even elegant air, that struck us all the more forcibly from its contrast with the usual tawdry, slovenly style of such parlors.

"The means used for getting up this effect were the most inexpensive possible, – simply the following out, in cheap material, a law of uniformity and harmony, which always will produce beauty. In the same manner, I have seen a room furnished, whose effect was really gorgeous in color, where the only materials used were Turkey-red cotton and a simple ingrain carpet of corresponding color.

"Now, you girls have been busy lately in schemes for buying a velvet carpet for the new parlor that is to be, and the only points that have seemed to weigh in the council were that it was velvet, that it was cheaper than velvets usually are, and that it was a genteel pattern."

"Now, papa," said Jenny, "what ears you have! We thought you were reading all the time!"

"I see what you are going to say," said Marianne. "You think that we have not once mentioned the consideration which should determine the carpet, whether it will harmonize with our other things. But you see, papa, we don't really know what our other things are to be."

"Yes," said Jenny, "and Aunt Easygo said it was an unusually good chance to get a velvet carpet."

"Yet, good as the chance is, it costs just twice as much as an ingrain."

"Yes, papa, it does."

"And you are not sure that the effect of it, after you get it down, will be as good as a well-chosen ingrain one."

"That's true," said Marianne reflectively.

"But then, papa," said Jenny, "Aunt Easygo said she never heard of such a bargain; only think, two dollars a yard for a *velvet*!"

"And why is it two dollars a yard? Is the man a personal friend, that he wishes to make you a present of a dollar on the yard, or is there some reason why it is undesirable?" said I.

"Well, you know, papa, he said those large patterns were not so salable."

"To tell the truth," said Marianne, "I never did like the pattern exactly; as to uniformity of tint, it might match with anything, for there's every color of the rainbow in it."

"You see, papa, it's a gorgeous flower-pattern," said Jenny.

"Well, Marianne, how many yards of this wonderfully cheap carpet do you want?"

"We want sixty yards for both rooms," said Jenny, always primed with statistics.

"That will be a hundred and twenty dollars," I said.

"Yes," said Jenny; "and we went over the figures together, and thought we could make it out by economizing in other things. Aunt Easygo said that the carpet was half the battle, – that it gave

the air to everything else."

"Well, Marianne, if you want a man's advice in the case, mine is at your service."

"That is just what I want, papa."

"Well, then, my dear, choose your wall-papers and borderings, and, when they are up, choose an ingrain carpet to harmonize with them, and adapt your furniture to the same idea. The sixty dollars that you save on your carpet spend on engravings, chromo lithographs, or photographs of some good works of art, to adorn your walls."

"Papa, I'll do it," said Marianne.

"My little dear," said I, "your papa may seem to be a sleepy old book-worm, yet he has his eyes open. Do you think I don't know why my girls have the credit of being the best-dressed girls on the street?"

"Oh papa!" cried out both girls in a breath.

"Fact, that!" said Bob, with energy, pulling at his mustache. "Everybody talks about your dress, and wonders how you make it out."

"Well," said I, "I presume you do not go into a shop and buy a yard of ribbon because it is selling at half price, and put it on without considering complexion, eyes, hair, and shade of the dress, do you?"

"Of course we don't!" chimed in the duo with energy.

"Of course you don't. Haven't I seen you mincing downstairs, with all your colors harmonized, even to your gloves and gaiters?

Now, a room must be dressed as carefully as a lady."

"Well, I'm convinced," said Jenny, "that papa knows how to make rooms prettier than Aunt Easygo; but then she said this was cheap, because it would outlast two common carpets."

"But, as you pay double price," said I, "I don't see that. Besides, I would rather, in the course of twenty years, have two nice, fresh ingrain carpets, of just the color and pattern that suited my rooms, than labor along with one ill-chosen velvet that harmonized with nothing."

"I give it up," said Jenny; "I give it up."

"Now, understand me," said I; "I am not traducing velvet or Brussels or Axminster. I admit that more beautiful effects can be found in those goods than in the humbler fabrics of the carpet rooms. Nothing would delight me more than to put an unlimited credit to Marianne's account, and let her work out the problems of harmonious color in velvet and damask. All I have to say is, that certain unities of color, certain general arrangements, will secure very nearly as good general effects in either material. A library with a neat, mossy green carpet on the floor, harmonizing with wall-paper and furniture, looks generally as well, whether the mossy green is made in Brussels or in ingrain. In the carpet stores, these two materials stand side by side in the very same pattern, and one is often as good for the purpose as the other. A lady of my acquaintance, some years since, employed an artist to decorate her parlors. The walls being frescoed and tinted to suit his ideal, he immediately issued his decree that her splendid

velvet carpets must be sent to auction, and others bought of certain colors harmonizing with the walls. Unable to find exactly the color and pattern he wanted, he at last had the carpets woven in a neighboring factory, where, as yet, they had only the art of weaving ingrains. Thus was the material sacrificed at once to the harmony."

I remarked, in passing, that this was before Bigelow's mechanical genius had unlocked for America the higher secrets of carpet-weaving, and made it possible to have one's desires accomplished in Brussels or velvet. In those days, English carpet-weavers did not send to America for their looms, as they now do.

"But now to return to my analysis of John's rooms.

"Another thing which goes a great way towards giving them their agreeable air is the books in them. Some people are fond of treating books as others do children. One room in the house is selected, and every book driven into it and kept there. Yet nothing makes a room so home-like, so companionable, and gives it such an air of refinement, as the presence of books. They change the aspect of a parlor from that of a mere reception-room, where visitors perch for a transient call, and give it the air of a room where one feels like taking off one's things to stay. It gives the appearance of permanence and repose and quiet fellowship; and, next to pictures on the walls, the many-colored bindings and gildings of books are the most agreeable adornment of a room."

"Then, Marianne," said Bob, "we have something to start with, at all events. There are my English Classics and English

Poets, and my uniform editions of Scott and Thackeray and Macaulay and Prescott and Irving and Longfellow and Lowell and Hawthorne and Holmes and a host more. We really have something pretty there."

"You are a lucky girl," I said, "to have so much secured. A girl brought up in a house full of books, always able to turn to this or that author and look for any passage or poem when she thinks of it, doesn't know what a blank a house without books might be."

"Well," said Marianne, "mamma and I were counting over my treasures the other day. Do you know, I have one really fine old engraving, that Bob says is quite a genuine thing; and then there is that pencil-sketch that poor Schöne made for me the month before he died, – it is truly artistic."

"And I have a couple of capital things of Landseer's," said Bob.

"There's no danger that your rooms will not be pretty," said I, "now you are fairly on the right track."

"But, papa," said Marianne, "I am troubled about one thing. My love of beauty runs into everything. I want pretty things for my table; and yet, as you say, servants are so careless, one cannot use such things freely without great waste."

"For my part," said my wife, "I believe in best china, to be kept carefully on an upper shelf, and taken down for high-days and holidays; it may be a superstition, but I believe in it. It must never be taken out except when the mistress herself can see that it is safely cared for. My mother always washed her china herself;

and it was a very pretty social ceremony, after tea was over, while she sat among us washing her pretty cups, and wiping them on a fine damask towel."

"With all my heart," said I; "have your best china and venerate it, – it is one of the loveliest of domestic superstitions; only do not make it a bar to hospitality, and shrink from having a friend to tea with you, unless you feel equal to getting up to the high shelf where you keep it, getting it down, washing, and putting it up again.

"But in serving a table, I say, as I said of a house, beauty is a necessity, and beauty is cheap. Because you cannot afford beauty in one form, it does not follow that you cannot have it in another. Because one cannot afford to keep up a perennial supply of delicate china and crystal, subject to the accidents of raw, untrained servants, it does not follow that the every-day table need present a sordid assortment of articles chosen simply for cheapness, while the whole capacity of the purse is given to the set forever locked away for state occasions.

"A table-service all of simple white, of graceful forms, even though not of china, if arranged with care, with snowy, well-kept table-linen, clear glasses, and bright American plate in place of solid silver, may be made to look inviting; add a glass of flowers every day, and your table may look pretty: and it is far more important that it should look pretty for the family every day than for company once in two weeks."

"I tell my girls," said my wife, "as the result of my experience,

you may have your pretty china and your lovely fanciful articles for the table only so long as you can take all the care of them yourselves. As soon as you get tired of doing this, and put them into the hands of the trustiest servants, some good, well-meaning creature is sure to break her heart and your own and your very pet darling china pitcher all in one and the same minute, and then her frantic despair leaves you not even the relief of scolding."

"I have become perfectly sure," said I "that there are spiteful little brownies, intent on seducing good women to sin, who mount guard over the special idols of the china closet. If you hear a crash, and a loud Irish wail from the inner depths, you never think of its being a yellow pie-plate, or that dreadful one-handled tureen that you have been wishing were broken these five years; no, indeed, – it is sure to be the lovely painted china bowl, wreathed with morning-glories and sweet-peas, or the engraved glass goblet, with quaint Old English initials. China sacrificed must be a great means of saintship to women. Pope, I think, puts it as the crowning grace of his perfect woman that she is

"'Mistress of herself though china fall.'"

"I ought to be a saint by this time, then," said mamma; "for in the course of my days I have lost so many idols by breakage, and peculiar accidents that seemed by a special fatality to befall my prettiest and most irreplaceable things, that in fact it has come to be a superstitious feeling now with which I regard anything particularly pretty of a breakable nature."

"Well," said Marianne, "unless one has a great deal of money,

it seems to me that the investment in these pretty fragilities is rather a poor one."

"Yet," said I, "the principle of beauty is never so captivating as when it presides over the hour of daily meals. I would have the room where they are served one of the pleasantest and sunniest in the house. I would have its coloring cheerful, and there should be companionable pictures and engravings on the walls. Of all things, I dislike a room that seems to be kept, like a restaurant, merely to eat in. I like to see in a dining-room something that betokens a pleasant sitting-room at other hours. I like there some books, a comfortable sofa or lounge, and all that should make it cosy and inviting. The custom in some families, of adopting for the daily meals one of the two parlors which a city house furnishes, has often seemed to me a particularly happy one. You take your meals, then, in an agreeable place, surrounded by the little pleasant arrangements of your daily sitting-room; and after the meal, if the lady of the house does the honors of her own pretty china herself, the office may be a pleasant and social one.

"But in regard to your table-service I have my advice at hand. Invest in pretty table-linen, in delicate napkins, have your vase of flowers, and be guided by the eye of taste in the choice and arrangement of even the every-day table articles, and have no ugly things when you can have pretty ones by taking a little thought. If you are sore tempted with lovely china and crystal, too fragile to last, too expensive to be renewed, turn away to a print-shop and comfort yourself by hanging around the walls of your

dining-room beauty that will not break or fade, that will meet your eye from year to year, though plates, tumblers, and teasets successively vanish. There is my advice for you, Marianne."

At the same time let me say, in parenthesis, that my wife, whose weakness is china, informed me that night, when we were by ourselves, that she was ordering secretly a teaset as a bridal gift for Marianne every cup of which was to be exquisitely painted with the wild flowers of America, from designs of her own, – a thing, by the by, that can now be very nicely executed in our country, as one may find by looking in at our friend Briggs's on School Street. "It will last her all her life," she said, "and always be such a pleasure to look at; and a pretty tea-table is such a pretty sight!" So spoke Mrs. Crowfield, "unweaned from china by a thousand falls." She spoke even with tears in her eyes. Verily these women are harps of a thousand strings!

But to return to my subject.

"Finally and lastly," I said, "in my analysis and explication of the agreeableness of those same parlors, comes the growing grace, – their *homeliness*. By 'homeliness' I mean not ugliness, as the word is apt to be used, but the air that is given to a room by being really at home in it. Not the most skillful arrangement can impart this charm.

"It is said that a king of France once remarked, 'My son, you must seem to love your people.'

"'Father, how shall I *seem* to love them?'

"'My son, you *must* love them.'

"So, to make rooms seem home-like, you must be at home in them. Human light and warmth are so wanting in some rooms, it is so evident that they are never used, that you can never be at ease there. In vain the housemaid is taught to wheel the sofa and turn chair toward chair; in vain it is attempted to imitate a negligent arrangement of the centre-table.

"Books that have really been read and laid down, chairs that have really been moved here and there in the animation of social contact, have a sort of human vitality in them; and a room in which people really live and enjoy is as different from a shut-up apartment as a live woman from a wax image.

"Even rooms furnished without taste often become charming from this one grace, that they seem to let you into the home life and home current. You seem to understand in a moment that you are taken into the family, and are moving in its inner circles, and not revolving at a distance in some outer court of the gentiles.

"How many people do we call on from year to year and know no more of their feelings, habits, tastes, family ideas and ways, than if they lived in Kamtschatka! And why? Because the room which they call a front parlor is made expressly so that you never shall know. They sit in a back room, – work, talk, read, perhaps. After the servant has let you in and opened a crack of the shutters, and while you sit waiting for them to change their dress and come in, you speculate as to what they may be doing. From some distant region, the laugh of a child, the song of a canary-bird reaches you, and then a door claps hastily to. Do they love

plants? Do they write letters, sew, embroider, crochet? Do they ever romp and frolic? What books do they read? Do they sketch or paint? Of all these possibilities the mute and muffled room says nothing. A sofa and six chairs, two ottomans fresh from the upholsterer's, a Brussels carpet, a centre-table with four gilt Books of Beauty on it, a mantel-clock from Paris, and two bronze vases, – all those tell you only in frigid tones, 'This is the best room,' – only that, and nothing more, – and soon *she* trips in in her best clothes, and apologizes for keeping you waiting, asks how your mother is, and you remark that it is a pleasant day, and thus the acquaintance progresses from year to year. One hour in the back room, where the plants and canary-bird and children are, might have made you fast friends for life; but, little as it is, you care no more for them than for the gilt clock on the mantel.

"And now, girls," said I, pulling a paper out of my pocket, "you must know that your father is getting to be famous by means of these 'House and Home Papers.' Here is a letter I have just received: —

> "Most Excellent Mr. Crowfield, – Your thoughts have lighted into our family circle and echoed from our fireside. We all feel the force of them, and are delighted with the felicity of your treatment of the topic you have chosen. You have taken hold of a subject that lies deep in our hearts, in a genial, temperate, and convincing spirit. All must acknowledge the power of your sentiments upon their imaginations; if they could only trust to them in actual life! There is the rub.

"Omitting further upon these points, there is a special feature of your articles upon which we wish to address you. You seem as yet (we do not know, of course, what you may hereafter do) to speak only of homes whose conduct depends upon the help of servants. Now your principles apply, as some of us well conceive, to nearly all classes of society; yet most people, to take an impressive hint, must have their portraits drawn out more exactly. We therefore hope that you will give a reasonable share of your attention to us who do not employ servants, so that you may ease us of some of our burdens, which, in spite of common sense, we dare not throw off. For instance, we have company, – a friend from afar (perhaps wealthy), or a minister, or some other man of note. What do we do? Sit down and receive our visitor with all good will and the freedom of a home? No; we (the lady of the house) flutter about to clear up things, apologizing about this, that, and the other condition of unpreparedness, and, having settled the visitor in the parlor, set about marshaling the elements of a grand dinner or supper, such as no person but a gourmand wants to sit down to, when at home and comfortable; and in getting up this meal, clearing away and washing the dishes, we use up a good half of the time which our guest spends with us. We have spread ourselves, and shown him what we could do; but what a paltry, heart-sickening achievement! Now, good Mr. Crowfield, thou friend of the robbed and despairing, wilt thou not descend into our purgatorial circle, and tell the world what thou hast seen there of doleful remembrance? Tell us how we, who must do and desire to do our own

work, can show forth in our homes a homely yet genial hospitality, and entertain our guests without making a fuss and hurlyburly, and seeming to be anxious for their sake about many things, and spending too much time getting meals, as if eating were the chief social pleasure. Won't you do this, Mr. Crowfield?

"Yours beseechingly,

"R. H. A."

"That's a good letter," said Jenny.

"To be sure it is," said I.

"And shall you answer it, papa?"

"In the very next 'Atlantic,' you may be sure I shall. The class that do their own work are the strongest, the most numerous, and, taking one thing with another, quite as well cultivated a class as any other. They are the anomaly of our country, – the distinctive feature of the new society that we are building up here; and, if we are to accomplish our national destiny, that class must increase rather than diminish. I shall certainly do my best to answer the very sensible and pregnant questions of that letter."

Here Marianne shivered and drew up a shawl, and Jenny gaped; my wife folded up the garment in which she had set the last stitch, and the clock struck twelve.

Bob gave a low whistle. "Who knew it was so late?"

"We have talked the fire fairly out," said Jenny.

VI
THE LADY WHO DOES HER OWN WORK

"My dear Chris," said my wife, "isn't it time to be writing the next 'House and Home Paper'?"

I was lying back in my study-chair, with my heels luxuriously propped on an ottoman, reading for the two-hundredth time Hawthorne's "Mosses from an Old Manse," or his "Twice-Told Tales," I forget which, – I only know that these books constitute my cloud-land, where I love to sail away in dreamy quietude, forgetting the war, the price of coal and flour, the rates of exchange, and the rise and fall of gold. What do all these things matter, as seen from those enchanted gardens in Padua where the weird Rappaccini tends his enchanted plants, and his gorgeous daughter fills us with the light and magic of her presence, and saddens us with the shadowy allegoric mystery of her preternatural destiny? But my wife represents the positive forces of time, place, and number in our family, and, having also a chronological head, she knows the day of the month, and therefore gently reminded me that by inevitable dates the time drew near for preparing my – which is it, now, May or June number?

"Well, my dear, you are right," I said, as by an exertion I came

head-uppermost, and laid down the fascinating volume. “Let me see, what was I to write about?”

“Why, you remember you were to answer that letter from the lady who does her own work.”

“Enough!” said I, seizing the pen with alacrity; “you have hit the exact phrase: —

“‘The *lady* who *does her own work*.’”

America is the only country where such a title is possible, – the only country where there is a class of women who may be described as *ladies* who do their own work. By a lady we mean a woman of education, cultivation, and refinement, of liberal tastes and ideas, who, without any very material additions or changes, would be recognized as a lady in any circle of the Old World or the New.

What I have said is, that the existence of such a class is a fact peculiar to American society, a clear, plain result of the new principles involved in the doctrine of universal equality.

When the colonists first came to this country, of however mixed ingredients their ranks might have been composed, and however imbued with the spirit of feudal and aristocratic ideas, the discipline of the wilderness soon brought them to a democratic level; the gentleman felled the wood for his log-cabin side by side with the ploughman, and thews and sinews rose in the market. “A man was deemed honorable in proportion as he lifted his hand upon the high trees of the forest.” So in the interior domestic circle. Mistress and maid, living in a log-

cabin together, became companions, and sometimes the maid, as the more accomplished and stronger, took precedence of the mistress. It became natural and unavoidable that children should begin to work as early as they were capable of it. The result was a generation of intelligent people brought up to labor from necessity, but turning on the problem of labor the acuteness of a disciplined brain. The mistress, outdone in sinews and muscles by her maid, kept her superiority by skill and contrivance. If she could not lift a pail of water she could invent methods which made lifting the pail unnecessary; if she could not take a hundred steps without weariness, she could make twenty answer the purpose of a hundred.

Slavery, it is true, was to some extent introduced into New England, but it never suited the genius of the people, never struck deep root, or spread so as to choke the good seed of self-helpfulness. Many were opposed to it from conscientious principle, – many from far-sighted thrift, and from a love of thoroughness and well-doing which despised the rude, unskilled work of barbarians. People, having once felt the thorough neatness and beauty of execution which came of free, educated, and thoughtful labor, could not tolerate the clumsiness of slavery. Thus it came to pass that for many years the rural population of New England, as a general rule, did their own work, both out doors and in. If there were a black man or black woman or bound girl, they were emphatically only the *helps*, following humbly the steps of master and mistress, and used by them as instruments of

lightening certain portions of their toil. The master and mistress with their children were the head workers.

Great merriment has been excited in the Old Country because years ago the first English travelers found that the class of persons by them denominated servants were in America denominated help or helpers. But the term was the very best exponent of the state of society. There were few servants in the European sense of the word; there was a society of educated workers, where all were practically equal, and where, if there was a deficiency in one family and an excess in another, a *helper*, not a servant, was hired. Mrs. Brown, who has six sons and no daughters, enters into agreement with Mrs. Jones, who has six daughters and no sons. She borrows a daughter, and pays her good wages to help in her domestic toil, and sends a son to help the labors of Mr. Jones. These two young people go into the families in which they are to be employed in all respects as equals and companions, and so the work of the community is equalized. Hence arose, and for many years continued, a state of society more nearly solving than any other ever did the problem of combining the highest culture of the mind with the highest culture of the muscles and the physical faculties.

Then were to be seen families of daughters, handsome, strong females, rising each day to their indoor work with cheerful alertness, – one to sweep the room, another to make the fire, while a third prepared the breakfast for the father and brothers who were going out to manly labor; and they chatted meanwhile

of books, studies, embroidery, discussed the last new poem, or some historical topic started by graver reading, or perhaps a rural ball that was to come off the next week. They spun with the book tied to the distaff; they wove; they did all manner of fine needlework; they made lace, painted flowers, and, in short, in the boundless consciousness of activity, invention, and perfect health, set themselves to any work they had ever read or thought of. A bride in those days was married with sheets and tablecloths of her own weaving, with counterpanes and toilet-covers wrought in divers embroidery by her own and her sisters' hands. The amount of fancy work done in our days by girls who have nothing else to do will not equal what was done by these, who performed besides, among them, the whole work of the family.

For many years these habits of life characterized the majority of our rural towns. They still exist among a class respectable in numbers and position, though perhaps not as happy in perfect self-satisfaction and a conviction of the dignity and desirableness of its lot as in former days. Human nature is above all things – lazy. Every one confesses in the abstract that exertion which brings out all the powers of body and mind is the best thing for us all; but practically most people do all they can to get rid of it, and as a general rule nobody does much more than circumstances drive him to do. Even I would not write this article were not the publication-day hard on my heels. I should read Hawthorne and Emerson and Holmes, and dream in my armchair, and project in the clouds those lovely unwritten stories that curl and veer and

change like mist-wreaths in the sun. So also, however dignified, however invigorating, however really desirable, are habits of life involving daily physical toil, there is a constant evil demon at every one's elbow, seducing him to evade it, or to bear its weight with sullen, discontented murmurs.

I will venture to say that there are at least, to speak very moderately, a hundred houses where these humble lines will be read and discussed, where there are no servants except the ladies of the household. I will venture to say, also, that these households, many of them, are not inferior in the air of cultivation and refined elegance to many which are conducted by the ministration of domestics. I will venture to assert furthermore that these same ladies who live thus find quite as much time for reading, letter-writing, drawing, embroidery, and fancy work as the women of families otherwise arranged. I am quite certain that they would be found on an average to be in the enjoyment of better health, and more of that sense of capability and vitality which gives one confidence in one's ability to look into life and meet it with cheerful courage, than three quarters of the women who keep servants; and that, on the whole, their domestic establishment is regulated more exactly to their mind, their food prepared and served more to their taste. And yet, with all this, I will *not* venture to assert that they are satisfied with this way of living, and that they would not change it forthwith if they could. They have a secret feeling all the while that they are being abused, that they are working harder than they ought to, and that

women who live in their houses like boarders, who have only to speak and it is done, are the truly enviable ones. One after another of their associates, as opportunity offers and means increase, deserts the ranks, and commits her domestic affairs to the hands of hired servants. Self-respect takes the alarm. Is it altogether genteel to live as we do? To be sure, we are accustomed to it; we have it all systematized and arranged; the work of our own hands suits us better than any we can hire; in fact, when we do hire, we are discontented and uncomfortable, for who will do for us what we will do for ourselves? But when we have company! there's the rub, to get out all our best things and put them back, – to cook the meals and wash the dishes ingloriously, – and to make all appear as if we didn't do it, and had servants like other people.

There, after all, is the rub. A want of hardy self-respect, an unwillingness to face with dignity the actual facts and necessities of our situation in life, – this, after all, is the worst and most dangerous feature of the case. It is the same sort of pride which makes Smilax think he must hire a waiter in white gloves, and get up a circuitous dinner party on English principles, to entertain a friend from England. Because the friend in England lives in such and such a style, he must make believe for a day that he lives so, too, when in fact it is a whirlwind in his domestic establishment equal to a removal or a fire, and threatens the total extinction of Mrs. Smilax. Now there are two principles of hospitality that people are very apt to overlook. One is, that their guests like to be made at home, and treated with confidence; and another is, that

people are always interested in the details of a way of life that is new to them. The Englishman comes to America as weary of his old, easy, family-coach life as you can be of yours: he wants to see something new under the sun, – something American; and forthwith we all bestir ourselves to give him something as near as we can fancy exactly like what he is already tired of. So city people come to the country, not to sit in the best parlor and to see the nearest imitation of city life, but to lie on the haymow, to swing in the barn, to form intimacy with the pigs, chickens, and ducks, and to eat baked potatoes, exactly on the critical moment when they are done, from the oven of the cooking-stove, – and we remark, *en passant*, that nobody has ever truly eaten a baked potato unless he has seized it at that precise and fortunate moment.

I fancy you now, my friends, whom I have in my eye. You are three happy women together. You are all so well that you know not how it feels to be sick. You are used to early rising, and would not lie in bed if you could. Long years of practice have made you familiar with the shortest, neatest, most expeditious method of doing every household office, so that really, for the greater part of the time in your house, there seems to a looker-on to be nothing to do. You rise in the morning and dispatch your husband, father, and brothers to the farm or wood-lot; you go sociably about chatting with each other, while you skim the milk, make the butter, turn the cheeses. The forenoon is long; it's ten to one that all the so-called morning work is over, and you

have leisure for an hour's sewing or reading before it is time to start the dinner preparations. By two o'clock your housework is done, and you have the long afternoon for books, needlework, or drawing, – for perhaps there is among you one with a gift at her pencil. Perhaps one of you reads aloud while the others sew, and you manage in that way to keep up with a great deal of reading. I see on your bookshelves Prescott, Macaulay, Irving, besides the lighter fry of poems and novels, and, if I mistake not, the friendly covers of the "Atlantic." When you have company, you invite Mrs. Smith or Brown or Jones to tea: you have no trouble – they come early, with their knitting or sewing; your particular crony sits with you by your polished stove while you watch the baking of those light biscuits and tea rusks for which you are so famous, and Mrs. Somebodyelse chats with your sister, who is spreading the table with your best china in the best room. When tea is over, there is plenty of volunteering to help you wash your pretty India teacups, and get them back into the cupboard. There is no special fatigue or exertion in all this, though you have taken down the best things and put them back, because you have done all without anxiety or effort, among those who would do precisely the same if you were their visitors.

But now comes down pretty Mrs. Simmons and her pretty daughter to spend a week with you, and forthwith you are troubled. Your youngest, Fanny, visited them in New York last fall, and tells you of their cook and chambermaid, and the servant in white gloves that waits on the table. You say in your soul,

"What shall we do? they never can be contented to live as we do; how shall we manage?" And now you long for servants.

This is the very time that you should know that Mrs. Simmons is tired to death of her fine establishment, and weighed down with the task of keeping the peace among her servants. She is a quiet soul, dearly loving her ease and hating strife; and yet last week she had five quarrels to settle between her invaluable cook and the other members of her staff, because invaluable cook, on the strength of knowing how to get up state dinners and to manage all sorts of mysteries which her mistress knows nothing about, asserts the usual right of spoiled favorites to insult all her neighbors with impunity, and rule with a rod of iron over the whole house. Anything that is not in the least like her own home and ways of living will be a blessed relief and change to Mrs. Simmons. Your clean, quiet house, your delicate cookery, your cheerful morning tasks, if you will let her follow you about, and sit and talk with you while you are at your work, will all seem a pleasant contrast to her own life. Of course, if it came to the case of offering to change lots in life, she would not do it; but very likely she *thinks* she would, and sighs over and pities herself, and thinks sentimentally how fortunate you are, how snugly and securely you live, and wishes she were as untrammeled and independent as you. And she is more than half right; for, with her helpless habits, her utter ignorance of the simplest facts concerning the reciprocal relations of milk, eggs, butter, saleratus, soda, and yeast, she is completely the victim

and slave of the person she pretends to rule.

Only imagine some of the frequent scenes and rehearsals in her family. After many trials, she at last engages a seamstress who promises to prove a perfect treasure, – neat, dapper, nimble, skillful, and spirited. The very soul of Mrs. Simmons rejoices in heaven. Illusive bliss! The newcomer proves to be no favorite with Madam Cook, and the domestic fates evolve the catastrophe, as follows. First, low murmur of distant thunder in the kitchen; then a day or two of sulky silence, in which the atmosphere seems heavy with an approaching storm. At last comes the climax. The parlor door flies open during breakfast. Enter seamstress in tears, followed by Mrs. Cook, with a face swollen and red with wrath, who tersely introduces the subject-matter of the drama in a voice trembling with rage.

"Would you be plased, ma'am, to suit yerself with another cook? Me week will be up next Tuesday, and I want to be going."

"Why, Bridget, what's the matter?"

"Matter enough, ma'am! I niver could live with them Cork girls in a house, nor I won't; them as likes the Cork girls is welcome for all me; but it's not for the likes of me to live with them, and she been in the kitchen a-upsettin' of me gravies with her flatirons and things."

Here bursts in the seamstress with a whirlwind of denial, and the altercation wages fast and furious, and poor, little, delicate Mrs. Simmons stands like a kitten in a thunderstorm in the midst of a regular Irish row.

Cook, of course, is sure of her victory. She knows that a great dinner is to come off Wednesday, and that her mistress has not the smallest idea how to manage it, and that therefore, whatever happens, she must be conciliated.

Swelling with secret indignation at the tyrant, poor Mrs. Simmons dismisses her seamstress with longing looks. She suited her mistress exactly, but she didn't suit cook!

Now, if Mrs. Simmons had been brought up in early life with the experience that you have, she would be mistress in her own house. She would quietly say to Madam Cook, "If my family arrangements do not suit you, you can leave. I can see to the dinner myself." And she could do it. Her well-trained muscles would not break down under a little extra work; her skill, adroitness, and perfect familiarity with everything that is to be done would enable her at once to make cooks of any bright girls of good capacity who might still be in her establishment; and, above all, she would feel herself mistress in her own house. This is what would come of an experience in doing her own work as you do. She who can at once put her own trained hand to the machine in any spot where a hand is needed never comes to be the slave of a coarse, vulgar Irishwoman.

So, also, in forming a judgment of what is to be expected of servants in a given time, and what ought to be expected of a given amount of provisions, poor Mrs. Simmons is absolutely at sea. If even for one six months in her life she had been a practical cook, and had really had the charge of the larder, she would not now

be haunted, as she constantly is, by an indefinite apprehension of an immense wastefulness, perhaps of the disappearance of provisions through secret channels of relationship and favoritism. She certainly could not be made to believe in the absolute necessity of so many pounds of sugar, quarts of milk, and dozens of eggs, not to mention spices and wine, as are daily required for the accomplishment of Madam Cook's purposes. But though now she does suspect and apprehend, she cannot speak with certainty. She cannot say, "*I* have made these things. I know exactly what they require. I have done this and that myself, and know it can be done, and done well, in a certain time." It is said that women who have been accustomed to doing their own work become hard mistresses. They are certainly more sure of the ground they stand on, – they are less open to imposition, – they can speak and act in their own houses more as those "having authority," and therefore are less afraid to exact what is justly their due, and less willing to endure impertinence and unfaithfulness. Their general error lies in expecting that any servant ever will do as well for them as they will do for themselves, and that an untrained, undisciplined human being ever *can* do housework, or any other work, with the neatness and perfection that a person of trained intelligence can. It has been remarked in our armies that the men of cultivation, though bred in delicate and refined spheres, can bear up under the hardships of camp-life better and longer than rough laborers. The reason is, that an educated mind knows how to use and save its body, to

work it and spare it, as an uneducated mind cannot; and so the college-bred youth brings himself safely through fatigues which kill the unreflective laborer. Cultivated, intelligent women, who are brought up to do the work of their own families, are labor-saving institutions. They make the head save the wear of the muscles. By forethought, contrivance, system, and arrangement, they lessen the amount to be done, and do it with less expense of time and strength than others. The old New England motto, *Get your work done up in the forenoon*, applied to an amount of work which would keep a common Irish servant toiling from daylight to sunset.

A lady living in one of our obscure New England towns, where there were no servants to be hired, at last by sending to a distant city succeeded in procuring a raw Irish maid of all work, a creature of immense bone and muscle, but of heavy, unawakened brain. In one fortnight she established such a reign of Chaos and old Night in the kitchen and through the house that her mistress, a delicate woman, incumbered with the care of young children, began seriously to think that she made more work each day than she performed, and dismissed her. What was now to be done? Fortunately, the daughter of a neighboring farmer was going to be married in six months, and wanted a little ready money for her trousseau. The lady was informed that Miss So-and-so would come to her, not as a servant, but as hired "help." She was fain to accept any help with gladness. Forthwith came into the family circle a tall, well-dressed young person, grave,

unobtrusive, self-respecting, yet not in the least presuming, who sat at the family table and observed all its decorums with the modest self-possession of a lady. The newcomer took a survey of the labors of a family of ten members, including four or five young children, and, looking, seemed at once to throw them into system, matured her plans, arranged her hours of washing, ironing, baking, cleaning, rose early, moved deftly, and in a single day the slatternly and littered kitchen assumed that neat, orderly appearance that so often strikes one in New England farmhouses. The work seemed to be all gone. Everything was nicely washed, brightened, put in place, and stayed in place: the floors, when cleaned, remained clean; the work was always done, and not doing; and every afternoon the young lady sat neatly dressed in her own apartment, either writing letters to her betrothed, or sewing on her bridal outfit. Such is the result of employing those who have been brought up to do their own work. That tall, fine-looking girl, for aught we know, may yet be mistress of a fine house on Fifth Avenue; and, if she is, she will, we fear, prove rather an exacting mistress to Irish Biddy and Bridget; but she will never be threatened by her cook and chambermaid, after the first one or two have tried the experiment.

Having written thus far on my article I laid it aside till evening, when, as usual, I was saluted by the inquiry, "Has papa been writing anything to-day?" and then followed loud petitions to hear it; and so I read as far, reader, as you have.

"Well, papa," said Jenny, "what are you meaning to make out

there? Do you really think it would be best for us all to try to go back to that old style of living you describe? After all, you have shown only the dark side of an establishment with servants, and the bright side of the other way of living. Mamma does not have such trouble with her servants; matters have always gone smoothly in our family; and, if we are not such wonderful girls as those you describe, yet we may make pretty good housekeepers on the modern system, after all."

"You don't know all the troubles your mamma has had in your day," said my wife. "I have often, in the course of my family history, seen the day when I have heartily wished for the strength and ability to manage my household matters as my grandmother of notable memory managed hers. But I fear that those remarkable women of the olden times are like the ancient painted glass, – the art of making them is lost; my mother was less than her mother, and I am less than my mother."

"And Marianne and I come out entirely at the little end of the horn," said Jenny, laughing; "yet I wash the breakfast cups and dust the parlors, and have always fancied myself a notable housekeeper."

"It is just as I told you," I said. "Human nature is always the same. Nobody ever is or does more than circumstances force him to be and do. Those remarkable women of old were made by circumstances. There were, comparatively speaking, no servants to be had, and so children were trained to habits of industry and mechanical adroitness from the cradle, and every

household process was reduced to the very minimum of labor. Every step required in a process was counted, every movement calculated; and she who took ten steps, when one would do, lost her reputation for 'faculty.' Certainly such an early drill was of use in developing the health and the bodily powers, as well as in giving precision to the practical mental faculties. All household economies were arranged with equal niceness in those thoughtful minds. A trained housekeeper knew just how many sticks of hickory of a certain size were required to heat her oven, and how many of each different kind of wood. She knew by a sort of intuition just what kind of food would yield the most palatable nutriment with the least outlay of accessories in cooking. She knew to a minute the time when each article must go into and be withdrawn from her oven; and, if she could only lie in her chamber and direct, she could guide an intelligent child through the processes with mathematical certainty. It is impossible, however, that anything but early training and long experience can produce these results, and it is earnestly to be wished that the grandmothers of New England had only written down their experiences for our children; they would have been a mine of maxims and traditions, better than any other traditions of the elders which we know of."

"One thing I know," said Marianne, "and that is, I wish I had been brought up so, and knew all that I should, and had all the strength and adroitness that those women had. I should not dread to begin housekeeping, as I now do. I should feel myself

independent. I should feel that I knew how to direct my servants, and what it was reasonable and proper to expect of them; and then, as you say, I shouldn't be dependent on all their whims and caprices of temper. I dread those household storms, of all things."

Silently pondering these anxieties of the young expectant housekeeper, I resumed my pen, and concluded my paper as follows: —

In this country, our democratic institutions have removed the superincumbent pressure which in the Old World confines the servants to a regular orbit. They come here feeling that this is somehow a land of liberty, and with very dim and confused notions of what liberty is. They are for the most part the raw, untrained Irish peasantry, and the wonder is, that, with all the unreasoning heats and prejudices of the Celtic blood, all the necessary ignorance and rawness, there should be the measure of comfort and success there is in our domestic arrangements. But, so long as things are so, there will be constant changes and interruptions in every domestic establishment, and constantly recurring interregnums when the mistress must put her own hand to the work, whether the hand be a trained or an untrained one. As matters now are, the young housekeeper takes life at the hardest. She has very little strength, – no experience to teach her how to save her strength. She knows nothing experimentally of the simplest processes necessary to keep her family comfortably fed and clothed; and she has a way of looking at all these things

which makes them particularly hard and distasteful to her. She does not escape being obliged to do housework at intervals, but she does it in a weak, blundering, confused way, that makes it twice as hard and disagreeable as it need be.

Now what I have to say is, that, if every young woman learned to do housework and cultivated her practical faculties in early life, she would, in the first place, be much more likely to keep her servants, and, in the second place, if she lost them temporarily, would avoid all that wear and tear of the nervous system which comes from constant ill-success in those departments on which family health and temper mainly depend. This is one of the peculiarities of our American life which require a peculiar training. Why not face it sensibly?

The second thing I have to say is, that our land is now full of motorpathic institutions to which women are sent at great expense to have hired operators stretch and exercise their inactive muscles. They lie for hours to have their feet twigged, their arms flexed, and all the different muscles of the body worked for them, because they are so flaccid and torpid that the powers of life do not go on. Would it not be quite as cheerful and less expensive a process if young girls from early life developed the muscles in sweeping, dusting, ironing, rubbing furniture, and all the multiplied domestic processes which our grandmothers knew of? A woman who did all these, and diversified the intervals with spinning on the great and little wheel, never came to need the gymnastics of Dio Lewis or of the Swedish motorpathist, which

really are a necessity now. Does it not seem poor economy to pay servants for letting our muscles grow feeble, and then to pay operators to exercise them for us? I will venture to say that our grandmothers in a week went over every movement that any gymnast has invented, and went over them to some productive purpose, too.

Lastly, my paper will not have been in vain if those ladies who have learned and practice the invaluable accomplishment of doing their own work will know their own happiness and dignity, and properly value their great acquisition, even though it may have been forced upon them by circumstances.

VII
WHAT CAN BE GOT IN AMERICA

While I was preparing my article for the "Atlantic," our friend Bob Stephens burst in upon us, in some considerable heat, with a newspaper in his hand.

"Well, girls, your time is come now! You women have been preaching heroism and sacrifice to us, – 'so splendid to go forth and suffer and die for our country,' – and now comes the test of feminine patriotism."

"Why, what's the matter now?" said Jenny, running eagerly to look over his shoulder at the paper.

"No more foreign goods," said he, waving it aloft, – "no more gold shipped to Europe for silks, laces, jewels, kid gloves, and what not. Here it is, – great movement, headed by senators' and generals' wives, Mrs. General Butler, Mrs. John P. Hale, Mrs. Henry Wilson, and so on, a long string of them, to buy no more imported articles during the war."

"But I don't see how it *can* be done," said Jenny.

"Why," said I, "do you suppose that 'nothing to wear' is made in America?"

"But, dear Mr. Crowfield," said Miss Featherstone, a nice girl, who was just then one of our family circle, "there is not, positively, much that is really fit to use or wear made in America, – is there now? Just think: how is Marianne to furnish

her house here without French papers and English carpets? – those American papers are so very ordinary, and, as to American carpets, everybody knows their colors don't hold; and then, as to dress, a lady must have gloves, you know, – and everybody knows no such things are made in America as gloves."

"I think," I said, "that I have heard of certain fair ladies wishing that they were men, that they might show with what alacrity they would sacrifice everything on the altar of their country: life and limb would be nothing; they would glory in wounds and bruises, they would enjoy losing a right arm, they wouldn't mind limping about on a lame leg the rest of their lives, if they were John or Peter, if only they might serve their dear country."

"Yes," said Bob, "that's female patriotism! Girls are always ready to jump off from precipices, or throw themselves into abysses, but as to wearing an unfashionable hat or thread gloves, that they can't do, – not even for their dear country. No matter whether there's any money left to pay for the war or not, the dear souls must have twenty yards of silk in a dress, – it's the fashion, you know."

"Now, isn't he too bad?" said Marianne. "As if we'd ever been asked to make these sacrifices and refused! I think I have seen women ready to give up dress and fashion and everything else for a good cause."

"For that matter," said I, "the history of all wars has shown women ready to sacrifice what is most intimately feminine in

times of peril to their country. The women of Carthage not only gave up their jewels in the siege of their city, but, in the last extremity, cut off their hair for bowstrings. The women of Hungary and Poland, in their country's need, sold their jewels and plate and wore ornaments of iron and lead. In the time of our own Revolution, our women dressed in plain homespun and drank herb-tea, – and certainly nothing is more feminine than a cup of tea. And in this very struggle, the women of the Southern States have cut up their carpets for blankets, have borne the most humiliating retrenchments and privations of all kinds without a murmur. So let us exonerate the female sex of want of patriotism, at any rate."

"Certainly," said my wife; "and if our Northern women have not retrenched and made sacrifices, it has been because it has not been impressed on them that there is any particular call for it. Everything has seemed to be so prosperous and plentiful in the Northern States, money has been so abundant and easy to come by, that it has really been difficult to realize that a dreadful and destructive war was raging. Only occasionally, after a great battle, when the lists of the killed and wounded have been sent through the country, have we felt that we were making a sacrifice. The women who have spent such sums for laces and jewels and silks have not had it set clearly before them why they should not do so. The money has been placed freely in their hands, and the temptation before their eyes."

"Yes," said Jenny, "I am quite sure that there are hundreds who

have been buying foreign goods who would not do it if they could see any connection between their not doing it and the salvation of the country; but when I go to buy a pair of gloves, I naturally want the best pair I can find, the pair that will last the longest and look the best, and these always happen to be French gloves."

"Then," said Miss Featherstone, "I never could clearly see why people should confine their patronage and encouragement to works of their own country. I'm sure the poor manufacturers of England have shown the very noblest spirit with relation to our cause, and so have the silk weavers and artisans of France, – at least, so I have heard; why should we not give them a fair share of encouragement, particularly when they make things that we are not in circumstances to make, have not the means to make?"

"Those are certainly sensible questions," I replied, "and ought to meet a fair answer, and I should say that, were our country in a fair ordinary state of prosperity, there would be no reason why our wealth should not flow out for the encouragement of well-directed industry in any part of the world; from this point of view we might look on the whole world as our country, and cheerfully assist in developing its wealth and resources. But our country is now in the situation of a private family whose means are absorbed by an expensive sickness, involving the life of its head: just now it is all we can do to keep the family together; all our means are swallowed up by our own domestic wants; we have nothing to give for the encouragement of other families, we must exist ourselves; we must get through this crisis and hold our own, and,

that we may do it, all the family expenses must be kept within ourselves as far as possible. If we drain off all the gold of the country to send to Europe to encourage her worthy artisans, we produce high prices and distress among equally worthy ones at home, and we lessen the amount of our resources for maintaining the great struggle for national existence. The same amount of money which we pay for foreign luxuries, if passed into the hands of our own manufacturers and producers, becomes available for the increasing expenses of the war."

"But, papa," said Jenny, "I understood that a great part of our governmental income was derived from the duties on foreign goods, and so I inferred that the more foreign goods were imported the better it would be."

"Well, suppose," said I, "that for every hundred thousand dollars we send out of the country we pay the government ten thousand; that is about what our gain as a nation would be: we send our gold abroad in a great stream, and give our government a little driblet."

"Well, but," said Miss Featherstone, "what can be got in America? Hardly anything, I believe, except common calicoes."

"Begging your pardon, my dear lady," said I, "there is where you and multitudes of others are greatly mistaken. Your partiality for foreign things has kept you ignorant of what you have at home. Now I am not blaming the love of foreign things: it is not peculiar to us Americans; all nations have it. It is a part of the poetry of our nature to love what comes from afar, and reminds

us of lands distant and different from our own. The English belles seek after French laces; the French beauty enumerates English laces among her rarities; and the French dandy piques himself upon an English tailor. We Americans are great travelers, and few people travel, I fancy, with more real enjoyment than we; our domestic establishments, as compared with those of the Old World, are less cumbrous and stately, and so our money is commonly in hand as pocket-money, to be spent freely and gayly in our tours abroad.

"We have such bright and pleasant times in every country that we conceive a kindliness for its belongings. To send to Paris for our dresses and our shoes and our gloves may not be a mere bit of foppery, but a reminder of the bright, pleasant hours we have spent in that city of boulevards and fountains. Hence it comes, in a way not very blamable, that many people have been so engrossed with what can be got from abroad that they have neglected to inquire what can be found at home: they have supposed, of course, that to get a decent watch they must send to Geneva or to London; that to get thoroughly good carpets they must have the English manufacture; that a really tasteful wall-paper could be found only in Paris; and that flannels and broadcloths could come only from France, Great Britain, or Germany."

"Well, isn't it so?" said Miss Featherstone. "I certainly have always thought so; I never heard of American watches, I'm sure."

"Then," said I, "I'm sure you can't have read an article that

you should have read on the Waltham watches, written by our friend George W. Curtis, in the 'Atlantic' for January of last year. I must refer you to that to learn that we make in America watches superior to those of Switzerland or England, bringing into the service machinery and modes of workmanship unequaled for delicacy and precision; as I said before, you must get the article and read it, and, if some sunny day you could make a trip to Waltham and see the establishment, it would greatly assist your comprehension."

"Then, as to men's clothing," said Bob, "I know to my entire satisfaction that many of the most popular cloths for men's wear are actually American fabrics baptized with French and English names to make them sell."

"Which shows," said I, "the use of a general community movement to employ American goods. It will change the fashion. The demand will create the supply. When the leaders of fashion are inquiring for American instead of French and English fabrics, they will be surprised to find what nice American articles there are. The work of our own hands will no more be forced to skulk into the market under French and English names, and we shall see, what is really true, that an American gentleman need not look beyond his own country for a wardrobe befitting him. I am positive that we need not seek broadcloth or other woolen goods from foreign lands, – that *better* hats are made in America than in Europe, and better boots and shoes; and I should be glad to send an American gentleman to the World's Fair dressed from

top to toe in American manufactures, with an American watch in his pocket, and see if he would suffer in comparison with the gentlemen of any other country."

"Then, as to house-furnishing," began my wife, "American carpets are getting to be every way equal to the English."

"Yes," said I, "and, what is more, the Brussels carpets of England are woven on looms invented by an American, and bought of him. Our countryman, Bigelow, went to England to study carpet-weaving in the English looms, supposing that all arts were generously open for the instruction of learners. He was denied the opportunity of studying the machinery and watching the processes by a shortsighted jealousy. He immediately sat down with a yard of carpeting, and, patiently unraveling it thread by thread, combined and calculated till he invented the machinery on which the best carpets of the Old and the New World are woven. No pains which such ingenuity and energy can render effective are spared to make our fabrics equal those of the British market, and we need only to be disabused of the old prejudice, and to keep up with the movement of our own country, and find out our own resources. The fact is, every year improves our fabrics. Our mechanics, our manufacturers, are working with an energy, a zeal, and a skill that carry things forward faster than anybody dreams of; and nobody can predicate the character of American articles in any department now by their character even five years ago."

"Well, as to wall-papers," said Miss Featherstone, "there you

must confess the French are and must be unequaled."

"I do not confess any such thing," said I hardily. "I grant you that, in that department of paper-hangings which exhibits floral decoration, the French designs and execution are, and must be for some time to come, far ahead of all the world: their drawing of flowers, vines, and foliage has the accuracy of botanical studies and the grace of finished works of art, and we cannot as yet pretend in America to do anything equal to it. But for satin finish, and for a variety of exquisite tints of plain colors, American papers equal any in the world: our gilt papers even surpass in the heaviness and polish of the gilding those of foreign countries; and we have also gorgeous velvets. All I have to say is, let people who are furnishing houses inquire for articles of American manufacture, and they will be surprised at what they will see. We need go no farther than our Cambridge glassworks to see that the most dainty devices of cut-glass, crystal, ground and engraved glass of every color and pattern, may be had of American workmanship, every way equal to the best European make, and for half the price. And American painting on china is so well executed, both in Boston and New York, that deficiencies in the finest French or English sets can be made up in a style not distinguishable from the original, as one may easily see by calling on our worthy next neighbor, Briggs, who holds the opposite corner to our 'Atlantic Monthly.' No porcelain, it is true, is yet made in America, these decorative arts being exercised on articles imported from Europe. Our tables must, therefore,

perforce, be largely indebted to foreign lands for years to come. Exclusive of this item, however, I believe it would require very little self-denial to paper, carpet, and furnish a house entirely from the manufactures of America. I cannot help saying one word here in favor of the cabinet-makers of Boston. There is so much severity of taste, such a style and manner about the best-made Boston furniture, as raises it really quite into the region of the fine arts. Our artisans have studied foreign models with judicious eyes, and so transferred to our country the spirit of what is best worth imitating that one has no need to import furniture from Europe."

"Well," said Miss Featherstone, "there is one point you cannot make out, – gloves; certainly the French have the monopoly of that article."

"I am not going to ruin my cause by asserting too much," said I. "I haven't been with nicely dressed women so many years not to speak with proper respect of Alexander's gloves; and I confess honestly that to forego them must be a fair, square sacrifice to patriotism. But then, on the other hand, it is nevertheless true that gloves have long been made in America and surreptitiously brought into market as French. I have lately heard that very nice kid gloves are made at Watertown and in Philadelphia. I have only heard of them and not seen. A loud demand might bring forth an unexpected supply from these and other sources. If the women of America were bent on having gloves made in their own country, how long would it be before apparatus and factories

would spring into being? Look at the hoop-skirt factories; women wanted hoop-skirts, – would have them or die, – and forthwith factories arose, and hoop-skirts became as the dust of the earth for abundance."

"Yes," said Miss Featherstone, "and, to say the truth, the American hoop-skirts are the only ones fit to wear. When we were living on the Champs Élysées, I remember we searched high and low for something like them, and finally had to send home to America for some."

"Well," said I, "that shows what I said. Let there be only a hearty call for an article and it will come. These spirits of the vasty deep are not so very far off, after all, as we may imagine, and women's unions and leagues will lead to inquiries and demands which will as infallibly bring supplies as a vacuum will create a draught of air."

"But, at least, there are no ribbons made in America," said Miss Featherstone.

"Pardon, my lady, there is a ribbon factory now in operation in Boston, and ribbons of every color are made in New York; there is also in the vicinity of Boston a factory which makes Roman scarfs. This shows that the faculty of weaving ribbons is not wanting to us Americans, and a zealous patronage would increase the supply.

"Then, as for a thousand and one little feminine needs, I believe our manufacturers can supply them. The Portsmouth Steam Company makes white spool-cotton equal to any in

England, and colored spool-cotton, of every shade and variety, such as is not made either in England or France. Pins are well made in America; so are hooks and eyes, and a variety of buttons. Straw bonnets of American manufacture are also extensively in market, and quite as pretty ones as the double-priced ones which are imported.

"As to silks and satins, I am not going to pretend that they are to be found here. It is true, there are silk manufactories, like that of the Cheneys in Connecticut, where very pretty foulard dress-silks are made, together with sewing-silk enough to supply a large demand. Enough has been done to show that silks might be made in America; but at present, as compared with Europe, we claim neither silks nor thread laces among our manufactures.

"But what then? These are not necessaries of life. Ladies can be very tastefully dressed in other fabrics besides silks. There are many pretty American dress-goods which the leaders of fashion might make fashionable, and certainly no leader of fashion could wish to dress for a nobler object than to aid her country in deadly peril.

"It is not a life-pledge, not a total abstinence, that is asked, – only a temporary expedient to meet a stringent crisis. We only ask a preference for American goods where they can be found. Surely, women whose exertions in Sanitary Fairs have created an era in the history of the world will not shrink from so small a sacrifice for so obvious a good.

"Here is something in which every individual woman can

help. Every woman who goes into a shop and asks for American goods renders an appreciable aid to our cause. She expresses her opinion and her patriotism, and her voice forms a part of that demand which shall arouse and develop the resources of her country. We shall learn to know our own country. We shall learn to respect our own powers, and every branch of useful labor will spring and flourish under our well-directed efforts. We shall come out of our great contest, not bedraggled, ragged, and poverty-stricken, but developed, instructed, and rich. Then will we gladly join with other nations in the free interchange of manufactures, and gratify our eye and taste with what is foreign, while we can in turn send abroad our own productions in equal ratio."

"Upon my word," said Miss Featherstone, "I should think it was the Fourth of July; but I yield the point. I am convinced; and henceforth you will see me among the most stringent of the leaguers."

"Right!" said I.

And, fair lady reader, let me hope you will say the same. You can do something for your country, – it lies right in your hand. Go to the shops, determined on supplying your family and yourself with American goods. Insist on having them; raise the question of origin over every article shown to you. In the Revolutionary times, some of the leading matrons of New England gave parties where the ladies were dressed in homespun and drank sage tea. Fashion makes all things beautiful, and you, my charming and

accomplished friend, can create beauty by creating fashion. What makes the beauty of half the Cashmere shawls? Not anything in the shawls themselves, for they often look coarse and dingy and barbarous. It is the association with style and fashion. Fair lady, give style and fashion to the products of your own country, – resolve that the money in your hand shall go to your brave brothers, to your co-Americans, now straining every nerve to uphold the nation and cause it to stand high in the earth. What are you without your country? As Americans you can hope for no rank but the rank of your native land, no badge of nobility but her beautiful stars. It rests with this conflict to decide whether those stars shall be badges of nobility to you and your children in all lands. Women of America, your country expects every woman to do her duty!

VIII
ECONOMY

"The fact is," said Jenny, as she twirled a little hat on her hand, which she had been making over, with nobody knows what of bows and pompons, and other matters for which the women have curious names, – "the fact is, American women and girls must learn to economize; it isn't merely restricting one's self to American goods, it is general economy, that is required. Now here's this hat, – costs me only three dollars, all told; and Sophie Page bought an English one this morning at Madam Meyer's for which she gave fifteen. And I really don't think hers has more of an air than mine. I made this over, you see, with things I had in the house, bought nothing but the ribbon, and paid for altering and pressing, and there you see what a stylish hat I have!"

"Lovely! admirable!" said Miss Featherstone. "Upon my word, Jenny, you ought to marry a poor parson; you would be quite thrown away upon a rich man."

"Let me see," said I. "I want to admire intelligently. That isn't the hat you were wearing yesterday?"

"Oh no, papa! This is just done. The one I wore yesterday was my waterfall-hat, with the green feather; this, you see, is an oriole."

"A what?"

"An oriole. Papa, how can you expect to learn about these

things?"

"And that plain little black one, with the stiff crop of scarlet feathers sticking straight up?"

"That's my jockey, papa, with a plume *en militaire*."

"And did the waterfall and the jockey cost anything?"

"They were very, very cheap, papa, all things considered. Miss Featherstone will remember that the waterfall was a great bargain, and I had the feather from last year; and as to the jockey, that was made out of my last year's white one, dyed over. You know, papa, I always take care of my things, and they last from year to year."

"I do assure you, Mr. Crowfield," said Miss Featherstone, "I never saw such little economists as your daughters; it is perfectly wonderful what they contrive to dress on. How they manage to do it I'm sure I can't see. I never could, I'm convinced."

"Yes," said Jenny, "I've bought but just one new hat. I only wish you could sit in church where we do, and see those Miss Fielders. Marianne and I have counted six new hats apiece of those girls', —*new*, you know, just out of the milliner's shop; and last Sunday they came out in such lovely puffed tulle bonnets! Weren't they lovely, Marianne? And next Sunday, I don't doubt, there'll be something else."

"Yes," said Miss Featherstone, – "their father, they say, has made a million dollars lately on government contracts."

"For my part," said Jenny, "I think such extravagance, at such a time as this, is shameful."

"Do you know," said I, "that I'm quite sure the Misses Fielder think they are practicing rigorous economy?"

"Papa! Now there you are with your paradoxes! How can you say so?"

"I shouldn't be afraid to bet a pair of gloves, now," said I, "that Miss Fielder thinks herself half ready for translation, because she has bought only six new hats and a tulle bonnet so far in the season. If it were not for her dear bleeding country, she would have had thirty-six, like the Misses Sibthorpe. If we were admitted to the secret councils of the Fielders, doubtless we should perceive what temptations they daily resist; how perfectly rubbishy and dreadful they suffer themselves to be, because they feel it important now, in this crisis, to practice economy; how they abuse the Sibthorpes, who have a new hat every time they drive out, and never think of wearing one more than two or three times; how virtuous and self-denying they feel when they think of the puffed tulle, for which they only gave eighteen dollars, when Madame Caradori showed them those lovely ones, like the Misses Sibthorpe's, for forty-five; and how they go home descanting on virgin simplicity, and resolving that they will not allow themselves to be swept into the vortex of extravagance, whatever other people may do."

"Do you know," said Miss Featherstone, "I believe your papa is right? I was calling on the oldest Miss Fielder the other day, and she told me that she positively felt ashamed to go looking as she did, but that she really did feel the necessity of economy.

'Perhaps we might afford to spend more than some others,' she said; 'but it's so much better to give the money to the Sanitary Commission!'"

"Furthermore," said I, "I am going to put forth another paradox, and say that very likely there are some people looking on my girls, and commenting on them for extravagance in having three hats, even though made over, and contrived from last year's stock."

"They can't know anything about it, then," said Jenny decisively; "for, certainly, nobody can be decent and invest less in millinery than Marianne and I do."

"When I was a young lady," said my wife, "a well-dressed girl got her a new bonnet in the spring, and another in the fall; that was the extent of her purchases in this line. A second-best bonnet, left of last year, did duty to relieve and preserve the best one. My father was accounted well-to-do, but I had no more, and wanted no more. I also bought myself, every spring, two pair of gloves, a dark and a light pair, and wore them through the summer, and another two through the winter; one or two pair of white kids, carefully cleaned, carried me through all my parties. Hats had not been heard of, and the great necessity which requires two or three new ones every spring and fall had not arisen. Yet I was reckoned a well-appearing girl, who dressed liberally. Now, a young lady who has a waterfall-hat, an oriole-hat, and a jockey must still be troubled with anxious cares for her spring and fall and summer and winter bonnets, – all the variety will not take

the place of them. Gloves are bought by the dozen; and as to dresses, there seems to be no limit to the quantity of material and trimming that may be expended upon them. When I was a young lady, seventy-five dollars a year was considered by careful parents a liberal allowance for a daughter's wardrobe. I had a hundred, and was reckoned rich; and I sometimes used a part to make up the deficiencies in the allowance of Sarah Evans, my particular friend, whose father gave her only fifty. We all thought that a very scant allowance; yet she generally made a very pretty and genteel appearance, with the help of occasional presents from friends."

"How could a girl dress for fifty dollars?" said Marianne.

"She could get a white muslin and a white cambric, which, with different sortings of ribbons, served her for all dress occasions. A silk, in those days, took only ten yards in the making, and one dark silk was considered a reasonable allowance to a lady's wardrobe. Once made, it stood for something, – always worn carefully, it lasted for years. One or two calico morning-dresses, and a merino for winter wear, completed the list. Then, as to collars, capes, cuffs, etc., we all did our own embroidering, and very pretty things we wore, too. Girls looked as prettily then as they do now, when four or five hundred dollars a year is insufficient to clothe them."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.