



Down in our hearts we women all love home, home-making and house-keeping. We chafe at the burdens sometimes. We cry out that it is a dreary round of trifling duties. We are hurt often because the men who have loved their way into our lives, do not comprehend the difficulties, make allowance for the short-earnings or see the little self-sacrifices. But we feel this way only when we are dispirited. When our mental barometer shows fair weather, we laugh to ourselves and say over softly that old, old story about the rose that grows on a thorny bush and flings its perfume and flaunts its gay petals just above the sharp little spikes.

I don't think homes would be half so nice, if they grew ready-made in the shops. They don't you know. You can buy all the furnishings, and set them in place, but you must burn something beside coal and wood on the hearth. You must lay hearts there, sacrifice them for somebody's sake, and then you have a real home with all the devotion and strength and warmth of humanity, and the spirit of the Eternal over it all.

It has become the fashion to rather despise the old-fashioned home-life with its sweet sanctity, its simple pleasures and its house-mistress, spreading "wings of brooding shelter o'er its peace." The distinctly modern woman prefers it sometimes because the labor of house-work or the inefficiency and expense of servants wear her past the caring to live. Sometimes she wishes to escape all work—to live in idleness, or a sham of luxury, and keep her hands white and her finger nails rosy. Usually she is outwitted by her spouse, who, being an outside judge, is more competent to figure finances and pit comforts against discomforts than the woman of his heart is. Very often the wise husband saves the homelife, when a discouraged, ailing wife would wreck it by taking a couple of rooms in a second-rate boarding-house, and being sorry forever afterwards.

It seems given to men, in some especial manner, to love a simple home-life, and the knowledge of their appreciation keeps women at home-making which is their best life-work. It encourages them when they are weary, strengthens them when they are weak, and keeps them faithful to the best there is in them day in and day out. When a man declares he does not like home, watch him. When a woman says it, enquire if her health is good, and whether or no, her kitchen is going on well.

And while we are thinking of homes I wonder how many women are falling into that old error of closing up the front rooms for drawing-rooms and keeping their families huddled around the dining-room table in the evenings. The old excuse is "the carpet wears, the furniture fades, everything gets dusty and mussed up and out of place." In my heart I believe this is only a trumped up reason. The real trouble is that some of us want to appear much better than we are, that our drawing rooms are too expensively furnished for us to use. It is such a mistake. The truth will out, and earth holds no more unhappy woman than one who struggles to be what she is not. We can have no guests who are more to us than our own dear ones. Why should we furnish and keep a room for casual comers. Our real friends, we welcome into our family circles—into the rooms we live in. They appreciate such welcoming, do we appreciate them. . . Even the veriest stranger who crosses our thresholds finds himself more quickly thawed if he is ushered into a room where the comforts of our leisure are,—where the bird sings, where the plants grow, where shaded lamps and firelights, perhaps, give soft light and cheeriness, where books and music and needlework attest the tastes and indicate the recreations of the house-inmates.

And it is not expensive—for the bugbear