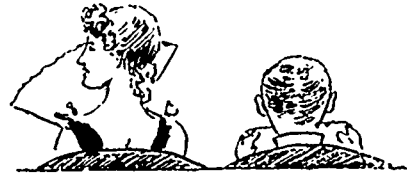


There is no manner in which the policy of not seeing more than you must is of more general and time-honored acceptance than in that of our dealings with our servants, or rather their dealings with us. It was recognized even in the days of absolute authority of master over servant, that abiding obedience, in sight and out of sight, is more than one human being ever got from another; such obedience being only conceivable as from Divinity to Divinity, and that frankness and fidelity, the virtues of an exalted education, cannot, in either justice or common sense, be accepted as the habit of an uneducated class. The merits demanded of a servant, the zeal, the energy, the integrity, the courtesy, the unselfish loyalty, amount to the perfection of a noble character; but the demand was a make believe; nobody hoped for such perfection; the standard of servatorial virtue was kept high on the principle that "Aim at the moon and you hit the clouds," but masters and mistresses could never afford to know all the faults of the faulty servants and not take the good servants for better than they were. If it were insisted on that soldiers should be six feet high, we should be forced to allow six feet to go by the only available measurement or we should have no army, and for generations this was the sort of compromise about servants. The demand for too much was counted fulfilled by enough or a little less than enough, and prudent people did not always know too closely how great the "little less" might be. And so long as on either side servants accepted the idea of having something to "put up" with, even in a good place, and as one of their own blinkers has it, the more distasteful but indispensable duties of their employment, domestic service went on, like to her home affairs, more or less smoothly according to the times or persons, with a good deal of imperfection in its working, both by employers and employed but with no signs of anything vitally wrong in the system. The relations between master and servant—and more especially, because of the frequent contact, between mistress and servant—must have many moments of difficulty,

A MATTER OF TASTE.



A LOVE SCENE,



ENTRANCE OF THE BALLET.



THE DANCE.



THE PAS-DE-QUATRE.

many opportunities for mistakes in conduct, not to speak of faults on either side; but so have many other relations which are not found incompatible with mutual trust and good will. But in this relation the mutual trust and good will are gone, at least, fast going, and it is too late now for blinkers; if they had not been already torn off our eyes we must have laid them aside, for the road we are on is becoming impracticable, and it is time to look about us and see where we have got to and if there is any getting back or finding a better road.

There is a saying—once not meaningless—"Good mistresses make good servants" which is the munificence of cheap wisdom. Is with comments to the rude text, bestowed on inquirers into the reason for this uncomfortable state of things, and on the troubled housewife, weary of her life because of changes of servants from worse to worse—bestowed chiefly by persons of lively judgment, whose experience of

servants is—to have had none. In days when the mistress was overseer of the "maids," the saying was a wise lesson; and if she was sensible and firm, and above all considerate, a servant with any head and heart to speak of, would get good training, and would profit by it in a kindly spirit; but this supervision by the mistress is worse than absolute. The mildest approach to its revival nowadays is resented as tyranny and espionage. Servants do not understand it; the mistress having read with contrition that all the troublesomeness of the household comes from neglect of her, and such as issue from their ignorance of the details of housework, —from their want of active interest in its execution, their keeping their hands from the cooking, their limited personal intercourse with the servants, resolves to become an expert in the duties of all of her staff, to win as it were, their respect by her practical knowledge; and their affection by her friendly interest in the way they do their work and in their conversation and affairs in general.

But such a mistress the servants look upon as an unwarrantable intruder; they consider themselves watched, and complain of her for prying and meanness; in all probability one of them at least breaks out on her in her wrath, gives her a "piece of her mind" and says she "never was in a place where any lady (with emphasis on the word "lady") thought of coming after the servants at their work or of walking into the kitchen." And the mistress who perseveres in practical knowledge and friendly interest will never have order in her house again as long as she lives; she will always be in a revolution or on the brink of one; for one change of servants in her neglectful days she will have a dozen; and her personal influence will resolve itself in her being treated as an enemy by all in her service and all their guests. The very last mode, for the virtuous woman, who wished her servants as well as her children and husband to call her blessed and to praise her, is the virtuous woman of the Book of Proverbs, to which we need scarcely direct the attention of our readers.