

The Head of the Department

By Ellis Parker Butler

HENRY WALTERS waited until the door of his private office closed behind the figure of Raymond Longley before he ventured to smile. He had done a good bit of business and he felt that he could afford to smile. He had just taken Longley into the firm.

Henry Walters was one of those forceful modern American business men who have been called our captains of industry, and he knew the value of men. The heads of his departments represented the best brains and talent in the business, and he believed that success lay in surrounding himself with men of the greatest obtainable capacity. He was famous for the great salaries he paid; but none knew so well as he that the high-priced man is frequently the most economical investment.

He had been troubled to keep Raymond Longley. As general manager, Longley's merits were apparent to all Walter's competitors, and Walters had been anticipating all possible bidders by increasing Longley's salary from time to time, until it had reached a sum beyond which he could not afford to go. By taking him into the firm Walters forestalled those competitors who needed Longley.

As Walters turned to his desk again his telephone bell rang, and he answered with his usual curt "Well?"

"That you, Walters?" came the reply. "This is Dr. Millward. I wish you would come home, immediately. Your wife has had another attack, and her condition is very serious. Come, immediately."

Walters hung up the receiver and turned to the door. His face was white, and as he hurried through the outer office the clerks looked after him curiously. He called the nearest cab and urged the driver to make the greatest haste. He knew that on the speed of the horse, perhaps, depended his chances of seeing his wife alive. Without knowing why, he felt guilty.

Mary Walters had been poor when her husband was poor. She had grown as he had grown, and as he had become wealthy and famous in business she had, month by month, fitted herself for the increasingly difficult management of the home. She had given him the place his wealth and position deserved in the social world; had kept the household running with such smooth wheels that he was entirely unaware of its manifold and complex machinery; and had risen from the ability to manage one servant and a small house in a country town to the place of mistress of a city house of eighteen rooms, with its servants of all degrees. In the meanwhile, she had found time to bear him six healthy children, and to superintend their training, without permitting any loss of the reputation of his house as one of the best managed in the city. In return, he had liked her—he was too busy for love—and occasionally showed himself at the opera with her. He paid the household bills and her own expenses for dress, without complaint.

When Henry Walters reached his home he was a widower. For several days he was almost ill; on the seventh day he telegraphed his sister to come, and went back to his office.

Miss Martha Walters took entire charge of the house, and assumed the duties of a mistress with a light heart. A little over forty, she came from a small Ohio town and fearlessly took up the burden where her sister-in-law had dropped it. A day spent over the household accounts appalled her; she frowned over the apparent extravagance of her brother's mode of living, and proposed that they should retrench.

"Very good," he told her. "Retrench, then. I have paid no attention to the house. Mary managed it. Probably she was not the best manager in the world. I have often thought the house cost too much to run, but I never complained, and I will not complain now. Mary always did her best. But, if you economize, do not do so by changing our mode of living. I consider the domestic department of my life just right. I want a good home; I want the social side kept

up. I can afford the one, and the other helps me commercially. Otherwise, you have a free hand. I make you the head of this department. All I want to see is the results."

The social side was immensely simplified by the year of mourning. There were no great dinners to give, and Miss Martha trusted that by the end of the year she would know better how to conduct such affairs. In the meantime, she went cheerfully to work to reform things.

She considered the number of servants sinful, and began by discharging three who seemed least necessary. Three more, who thus had increased duties to perform, left of their own accord, and she filled their places as best she could; but there began a constant series of "Please, ma'am, I wish to give notice," that filled her with despair. One-half her time was spent in securing help, and when she did secure a promising example she generally had to discharge it before its month was up.

In less than three or four months she was tired out and her face wore a look of anxiety. Her appearance affected Henry Walter's nerves, and the children, who are always quick to notice a changed domestic atmosphere, became cross and rebellious.

"Martha," her brother said one morning, "don't you think the cook you have now is just a little too careless? Burnt chops yesterday, and this coffee is not quite what it ought to be. There must be plenty of good cooks to be had in New York. Mary always seemed to have good breakfasts."

"Then I don't know where she got her cooks," said Martha. "I have had all the nations of Europe represented in the kitchen, and they are all degenerates in the art of cooking. Mary must have known some secret source. I cannot even keep my poor ones. I can't keep any of the servants. They come and go like phantoms, and only half do their work while they stay."

"That is your department," he replied. "I cannot interfere. I have enough to occupy me; but do get a good cook and keep her."

When he received that month's household account he whistled. It was

heavier than any of Mary's had been when they had been giving large dinners; but he would not have cared if things had retained their customary excellence. Preoccupied as he was, he began to notice the difference. Sometimes his hand gathered a ridge of dust from a table; occasionally, he had to wait half an hour for his breakfast, or Martha would come down late and untidy. His home, which had been so smooth in its movements before, developed a series of annoying roughness and halts that told of domestic machinery out of gear, and, with it all, the expense continued to increase.

By the end of a year the house had reached such a state that he no longer brought his business friends to dinner, and Martha was little more than a wreck. The first entertainment after the period of mourning decided him. Martha had failed utterly as a hostess. She lacked the wifely qualities that had served Mary so well as a hostess, and the dinner fell flat. In fact, it was a dismal failure—the sort of failure that in business would have meant financial ruin. Mr Walters knew that such another dinner would mean the social ruin of his house, and that he could not afford. More than all else, however, the slipshod housekeeping jarred upon his keen business sense. He liked things done well. At the office he had things done well; there were no broken cogs and creaking wheels there, and when the bills for the disastrous dinner came in he felt that a reformation was needed.

He pulled out the drawer in his desk labeled "Domestic Affairs," and ran over the accounts his wife had rendered, and compared them with those of his sister. He saw that he was paying more for an inferior service in the domestic department than his wife's regime had cost him for first-class service. Similar results in any department of his business would have meant the instant discharge of the head of the department.

He leaned back in his chair and thought the matter out from a cold business point of view. Clearly, he must have a housekeeper. It occurred to him for the first time that the management of a home was a business quite as important

as any other business; in short, the most important. He, and all other men, worked for what, if not to establish and keep a home? And if that home was a failure, did not all his work end in a fiasco? Was not the home, after all, the prime object of human endeavor, and the proper management of the home a high form of specialized labor?

"Well," he said at length, "labor can be bought in the market, be it one kind or another. I have got to get a head for my domestic department, and I want the best. I want a manager as good as Longley is in his department—or as Mary was."

He began to realize the value of Mary as he had never realized it during her life.

To Martha he merely said that he had decided that she was working too hard, and that he had concluded she deserved an assistant, and Martha was profoundly grateful.

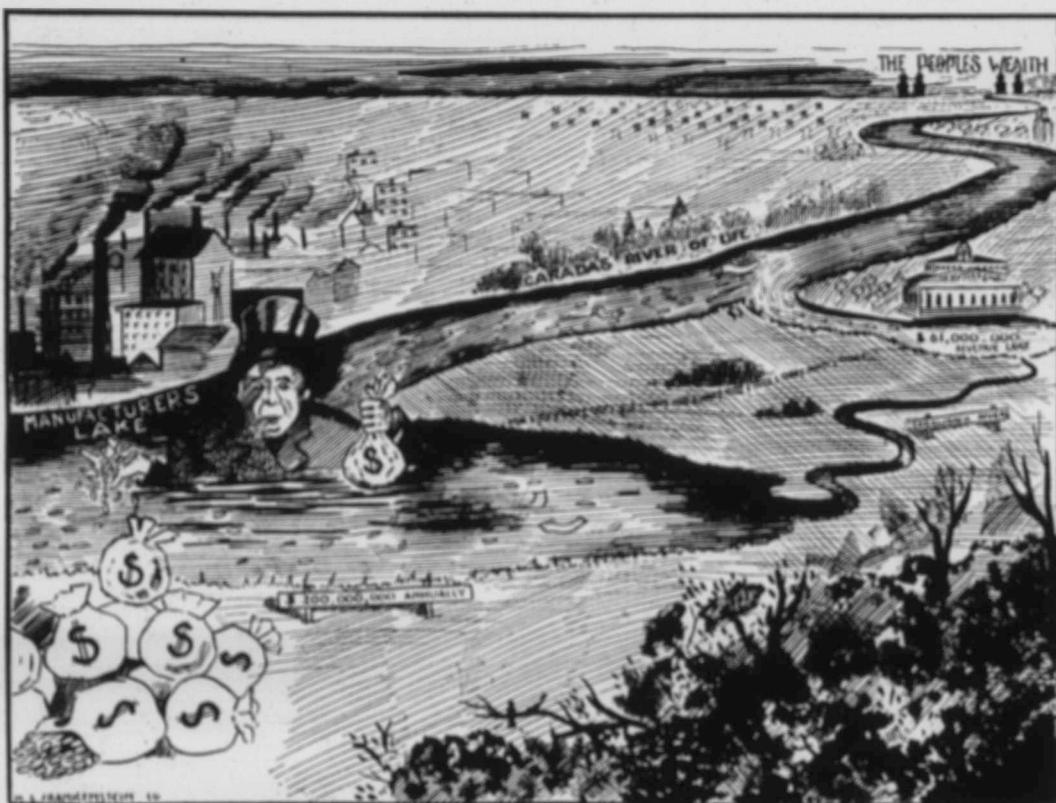
The advertisement which he put in the Herald was concise:

WANTED—A HOUSEKEEPER. Must be able to manage the entire domestic arrangements of a gentleman's home, and superintend the care and education of his children. Must be competent to maintain the social status of the family. Compensation adequate.

Twenty-three women replied in person, and he interviewed them all—and dismissed them. He discovered that there are professional housekeepers, just as there are cooks and parlor maids, and he was surprised by their idea of "compensation adequate." He had thought, rather mistily, that perhaps board, lodging and about thirty dollars a month would be fair. The lowest any of these asked him was one hundred dollars a month, and he could see at a glance that none of them was "competent to maintain the social status of the house." They were merely housekeepers. Proficient as they might be in their own department, it was clear that they regarded the social duties as quite distant from those of a housekeeper. His next advertisement kept this in view:

A GENTLEMAN OF MEANS, desirous of maintaining the social status of his house, and wishing to assure the proper management of his domestic affairs and the proper education and training of his children, wishes to secure the services of a lady of refinement and ability. Write.

In reply to this he received three



FOR EVERY DOLLAR OF TARIFF REVENUE THAT GOES INTO THE GOVERNMENT TREASURY, THREE OR FOUR DOLLARS GO TO THE MANUFACTURERS