

THE HOUSEHOLD.

"FIXING" FOR COMPANY.

"Wife," said John as he laid aside his napkin after dinner, "here is a note for you. Will C. gave it to me day before yesterday, and, upon my word, I forgot to give it to you."

I glanced over the note anxiously. It was from Will's sister, and informed me that she and another lady from a distance would be at our house the following day.

"Oh, Mr. B. ! how could you be so careless!" I exclaimed. "The girls will be here to-morrow, and the house will be in no condition to receive them. I don't see how in the world I am to get ready to receive them now," and I gave him a look which I fear was far from a loving one. "This breaks into all my arrangements, too. I can't go home now." "But," I continued, as conscience gave me a thrust for my selfishness, and I leaned over to kiss the baby and hide the tears of disappointment that would flow. "I shall be delighted to see the girls. I haven't seen them for years."

"Oh, yes," said John, looking very much relieved. "You can fix up something, and the house looks well enough, I am sure."

"Humph!" I retorted. "You never know when the house is clean or otherwise. Sallie, tell Mag to bring in the dishwater, put some water on to heat, and be quick."

"Girls," said I, turning to the two older girls, "you must make two extra nice cakes this afternoon, and Mag must clean the spare chamber."

"What for?" said Mag, who at that moment entered the room, dish pan in hand.

"Oh," answered one of the younger children, "Ma's going to have company, ladies from town."

"Whoee!" whistled Mag, "den ebery thing 'bout dis house is got to shine 'cept Miss Betsey's face, dat isn't gwine to shine till de company comes."

"Do hush your foolishness, Mag," said I, "hurry, there are a hundred things to be done this afternoon."

The table was cleared as expeditiously as possible, and by two o'clock the dining room and kitchen were in order.

"Mag," said I, "take a pail of hot water, some soap and the washing cloths up stairs and go to work. I will be up there just as soon as I can get the baby to sleep."

"Miss Betsey," exclaimed Mag, "I declar' fore goodness I scrubbed ebery plank up thim stairs last Saturday, and I lay thar isn't a thimbleful of dirt up thar this blessed minit."

"Well, no matter if you did," I rejoined, "it must be cleaned again, so do make haste."

Mag is a character in her way. We took her out of the quarters when in her seventh year, a shy little ignorant thing, who had never more than peeped into her master's house. She came to me in the early years of married life, when all things were the color of the rose. She grew up with the children, and took liberties with us customary among old family servants. She rocked my first-born to sleep upon her dusky bosom, and had watched by his cradle night after night when life and death held fearful combat over him, and the angels whispered to him of a brighter and better home than earth can give, and all loved Mag. Although she has been free for years, she sometimes returns to her old home, and remains for months, falling into her old place in the household as naturally as though she had only been on a few days' visit to mammy's.

At last the baby slept. Two nice-looking cakes stood on the dining table awaiting a coat of icing. The girls were in the parlor. They had arranged every thing to their satisfaction, and called me to see the result.

"Ma," said one of them, "we washed the windows and paint, swept the carpet three times, and dusted every picture book and ornament in the room."

I gave them a few words of encouragement, told them to rub the furniture with linseed oil, and went up stairs to see how Mag's work was progressing. It was with conscious pride that I spread the lavender-scented sheets over the company beds, and smoothed the embroidered bolster cases and pillow shams over the snowy surface. I rubbed the windows and mirror until they shone like diamonds.

Mag was busy scrubbing the base board.

Suddenly she stopped. "Miss Betsey," said she, "I always knew the darkies was going to be free, dat is, if the Bible is true."

"Why, so?" I queried.

"Well, you see, the Bible says everybody has got to make their own living by the sweat of their brow, and precious little sweating of dis kind did you and Mars John do before the war."

I made no answer, and Mag continued: "There is another thing I want to ax you about. What makes some white folks talk so much about the Freedman's bureau? It appears to me that if a nigger has the money to buy a bureau, and the clothes to put in it, white folks ought not say a word agin it."

I turned my face aside to conceal a smile, and replied, "I am perfectly willing and satisfied for the darkies to be free if it was God's will, and hope that every thrifty darkey in the land will soon be able to own a bureau, rosewood if they like, but do let us get along with the work. Take some clean hot water and wash the front door and transom. Make it bright."

"Well, um."

I swept the upper passages and stairways two or three times over. While thus employed, I heard Mag groan as if in awful distress of mind or body.

"Oh! Oh! Mercy! Mercy!" moaned Mag.

My heart gave one great throb and then seemed to stand still. The baby! I knew she was awake, I had heard but a moment before the merry patter of her little feet in the room above. What if she had fallen out of the window! I leaned out of the window, and asked in as strong a voice as I could command "What is the matter Mag?"

"Oh, Miss Betsey, I do believe I done broke that machine that you tell when the weather gets cold by." (The thermometer.)

"Well, never mind," I said, "let the thermometer go, we can get another one when fortune favors us. If you are through there, take the broom and dust pan, go down cellar and sweep the walls and floor as clean as hands can make them."

"Why, Miss Betsey! you aren't going to take the company down there, is you?"

"Yes, I am going to take them there, and everywhere about the house and garden."

Mag showed the whites of her eyes all round in astonishment, but said nothing.

Never before did my house undergo such furious renovation. I carried a pail of hot water into the pantry, and went to work so vigorously upon the window that I broke two panes of glass, and in washing the upper shelves, I upset and broke a glass jar which contained the prince of all preserves, quinces. I could have cried with vexation.

When at last the pantry was in order it was so dark that I could scarcely see my way into the cheerful dining room where the family was gathered about the supper table. When I was seated, John, seeing that I ate nothing said kindly, "Wife, if I were you, I would not go to all this trouble."

"I hardly think you would," I replied tartly.

He gave me a look from beneath his dark lashes which seemed to ask, "Are you keeping your heart with all diligence to-day, dear wife?"

The clock was striking eleven before I could listen to the wooings of the drowsy god Somnus. John had been sleeping the sleep of industry and of a clear conscience for two hours. How tired and weary I felt! Too tired and excited to sleep. Oh, why, I wondered, must we go to all this toil and trouble to entertain our friends? But it is customary among all my acquaintances, and "when in Rome, we must do as the Romans." At last I fell into a troubled slumber, broken by dreams of the company coming, the house in confusion, and no dinner prepared.

Five o'clock found me engaged for another day's conflict. The chickens were dressed, vegetables prepared, ham boiling, and pies baking, and I, with flushed face and weary limbs, was hurrying here and there, seeing to a dozen things at once.

"Mag," said I, "Take the broom and sweep before the kitchen door, the hen house and meat house doors, and take the litter off into the orchard."

Mag complied with a bad grace. I heard her mutter as she went out of the door, "Miss Betsey's done lost her seven senses, I do believe, but I'll jest let her know I am not gwine to work my fingers to de bone for nobody."

I pretended deafness, and went into the house to take a last survey of everything before the company came.

It was in June. Two delicious bouquets filled the parlor vases, and fragrance of woodbine and roses greeted me as I opened the bed room door, and the wide, old-fashioned fire-place in the sitting room had been transformed into a bower of beauty. Several children in company clothes and manners were looking out of the window expectantly, while two small children were disobediently swinging on the front gate.

I had just put the finishing touches to my toilet, when one of the children exclaimed, "They are coming, I see the carriage!"

I hastened out to meet them, and welcomed them with sincere pleasure, feeling that for once in my history, I was ready to receive company.

They remained some time and frequently expressed pleasure at seeing me in my comfortable home, surrounded by my merry children. I did all in my power to render their visit pleasant, and when at leisure would escort them over the house and grounds, feeling a secret complacency that every thing was in exquisite order. On the last day of their visit, as I was in a closet which opened near the parlor door, I heard Miss P. say to Josie C., "Mrs. B. is a good housekeeper, but do you suppose she ever takes time to read any of those books there?"

I was ashamed to listen but unconsciously held my breath while Josie replied:

"Well, I really don't know, but if she does, her conversation does not betray it, for her constant theme is the housework and the babies."

How crestfallen and mean I felt! I had labored so hard to make one good impression, and at the same time had destroyed another of which I was by no means careless. They think me a perfect Martha, thought I, with a mind free from intellectual aspirations, and as empty as last year's bird's nests, and I determined from that time forward, to never, never, go to so much extra trouble to entertain my friends, but would endeavor to keep the house presentable, a ready plate and a hearty welcome for all guests, expected or otherwise, and practice the golden rule for all etiquette. *The Household.*

COMPANY MANNERS.

"Sit down, will you, please, and wait a moment till mother comes?" said a little girl to two ladies who came to see her mother.

"And will you give me a glass of water. Martha?" asked one of the ladies. "I am very thirsty."

"With pleasure," answered Martha; and she presently came back with two goblets of water on a small waiter, which she passed to both ladies.

"Oh, thank you," said the other lady; "you are very thoughtful."

"You are quite welcome," said Martha, very sweetly.

When Martha went out of the room one of the ladies said: "This little girl is one of the loveliest children I ever met. How sweet and obliging her manners are!"

Let us go into the next room and see. Martha took the waiter back to the dining-room.

"Me drink! me drink!" cried little Bobby, catching hold of his sister's dress and screwing up his rosy lips.

"Get out, Bob!" cried Martha; "go to Bridget."

"Don't speak so to your little brother," said Bridget.

"It is none of your business what I say," cried Martha, tossing back her head.

"Martha!" that is grandmother calling from the top of the stairs.

"What!" screamed Martha back.

"Please come here, dear," said grandma.

"I don't want to," muttered Martha.

She, however, dragged herself up stairs. Unwilling feet, you know, find it hard to climb.

"Martha," said grandma, "will you try to find my specs? I am pretty sure I left them in the dining-room."

"No, you didn't!" cried Martha in a cross, contradictory tone; "you always lose them up here." And she rummaged round the chamber, tumbling things over like the north wind.

"No, matter," said the dear old lady,

seeing she would have much to do to put things to rights again, "no matter Martha; they will come to hand," and she quietly put down the newspaper for by-and-by. Martha left her and went down stairs with a pout.

Oh, dear! where are Martha's civil, obliging manners! Why, those are her company manners. She puts them on in the parlor, and puts them off when she leaves the parlor. She wears them before visitors, and hangs them up when they are gone. You see she has no manners at home. She is cross and disobliging, and rude and selfish. She forgets that home is the first place to be polite in—in the kitchen as well as in the parlor. There is no spot in the house where good manners can be dispensed with.—*Early Dawn.*

A PAPER CHIMNEY.

Paper spokes for wheels are among the latest appliances for that ever-increasing article. The paper pulp is forced into iron moulds under heavy pressure, where it dries and hardens; and the spokes thus produced are said to be much superior to wood. Paper is fast supplanting wood in many useful ways.

A paper chimney fifty feet high has lately been put up at Breslau in Germany. Compressed paper pulp is stated to be one of the least inflammable of substances, and to make an excellent material for fire-proof doors.

PUZZLES.

ENIGMATIC TREES.

1. Nice, trim.
2. A garden-plant of an Eastern mountain.
3. A chest.
4. An article of trimming.
5. A tree which reminds of Socrates' fate.
6. A state, and the call of an animal.
7. A color, and a boy's name.
8. A body of water, and a fruit.
9. A mineral.
10. A month, and a small fruit.
11. Calcareous earth.
12. A girl's name.
13. A beautiful kind of cloth.
14. A garden-flower.
15. To sorrow, or to long for.
16. A carpenter's tool.
17. A domestic animal.
18. A tree which reminds one of the rivers of Babylon.
19. A geographical name and a fruit.
20. An acid plant.
21. A tropical fruit.

CHARADE.

My first is a circle that aids in great work; My second is a fact we oftentimes shirk. While my whole is useful to a hospital clerk.

ENIGMA: 33 LETTERS.

- My 1, 5, 17, 24, 25, 3, 25, one of the plagues brought upon Egypt.
 My 2, 4, 13, 17, 20, one of the patriarchs.
 My 6, 10, 8, 14, 7, 19, 20, a place noted as the abode of Samson's bride.
 My 9, 12, 11, 28, 15, 21, 14, a mineral substance for which the Dead Sea is famous.
 My 17, 16, 17, 18, 7, 19, 23, 22, 17, 26, one of the deadly reptiles of Scripture.
 My 27, 29, 24, 30, 26, a musical instrument.
 My 33, 32, 31, 4, a quadruped.
 My whole is a line form "Gray's Elegy."

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES.

BEHEADED RHYMES.

If you get wet from that old spout
 Blame no one near with such a pout,
 You must for your own self look out.

You are, I reckon, pretty smart;
 Now take your paintings to the mart,
 Where you can sell your works of art.

Pray do not be just like a snail,
 But bind the wound made by that nail.
 If not at once, you long may all

BEHEADINGS AND CURTAILINGS.—A-bat-e, B-ell-e, S-war-m, S-cob-s, B-ran-d.

JUMBLE.

Boys of spirit, boys of will,
 Boys of muscle, brain and power;
 Fit to cope with anything—
 These are wanted every hour.

Not the weak and whining drones
 That all trouble magnify;
 Not the watchword of "I can't,"
 But the nobler one "I'll try."

ENIGMA—Queen Victoria.