

Society Notes.

The first of May recalls many recollections. Some are entering upon the troubles of housekeeping, little knowing—poor souls!—what these troubles are. Others—and their name is legion—are going to ‘board’!—these are they who have trodden the rough and thorny road, those who *know*, who have tried their best, and determined at last to give it up while yet there is a little life left to enjoy. From one of them, a man, too—comes the following true and veracious history, which those who run may read.

“It is two years,” says our correspondent, “since I took the large and comfortable house which I am now—heaven be praised—relinquishing for ever. At intervals before the 1st of May 1889 I had endeavoured to live as a gentleman should, but only for a few months at a time, and always in a small house. My first experience of Halifax servants was long, long ago, and terminated somewhat suddenly when I happened to return home early from church on Sunday evening and found the cook comfortably tucked up in my favourite chair in the drawing room, and the housemaid on the sofa, both sound asleep. There were certain details also that led me to suspect that my spirit decanters had not been untouched through the evening. Being an Englishman, and not quite understanding how these things are managed on this side, I terminated my connection with the two young ladies next day: which rash action I had never ceased to regret. If the same thing happened again now, it is open to doubt, with my views mellowed by experience, I would not offer the sweet creatures my biscuit-tin, and lend them my arm to their respective bedrooms.

For the rest, these early years of trial and suffering must remain a blank. It is of the near present I have to speak. On May 1st, 1889, I started off with a big house and an excellent staff of servants—a cook whom I forget entirely, and a couple of highly respectable housemaids. At the end of a month there was a slight misunderstanding between the maids and constant disputes as to the division of work. Cook could not stand it and left. The day after there was bad language, pulling of hair, and even blows in the pantry, and the upper housemaid appeared in a dishevelled and excited condition to give notice that either she or the other one must quit at once. As she was really a valuable servant the other was dismissed and quietness reigned supreme for a time. Jane did wonders and kept things in very fair order till the following week, when the staff was recruited by a French cook. Now of all the servants I ever knew, Louise (mad Louise we called her afterwards) was the most wonderful. Her cooking was superb, and her kitchen like a new pin at all times of day. When Jane was obliged to leave to spend a few weeks with her friends and relations, our Louise ran the house single handed. Then, whether it was the heat of the kitchen or hereditary madness, I know not, but all at once there was a wonderful and portentous change. No breakfast, no dinner, and sounds from the lower regions. I pulled myself together and descended, to ask in my quiet way, whether we were to expect anything to eat in the future. The question was never asked. There was Louise, pale with fury, shouting to herself at a fearful pace, gesticulating wildly and using many naughty words. My appearance turned the torrent of her wrath, and she burst out into frenzied denunciations of all in the house, the only intelligible words being “cats,” “dogs,” “beasts.” After several vain efforts to get in a word, I seized a chopper and banged violently on the table. This violent action was followed by a short silence, just long enough for me to request the lady to leave the house, and retreat gracefully. The storm of gesticulations burst forth again before I got to the top of the kitchen stairs, and continued unbroken till late at night, when the prolonged silence told us that the lady had left.

The staff was then reorganized. We started a man and wife—of impeccable character—who occupied premises of their own apart from the rest of the household. Also an aged but very capable cook, and a buxom housemaid, whom I always considered rather shady. The staff worked well—for three weeks. Then the housemaid caused a little unpleasant excitement by attempting to blackmail a gentleman staying at the house. An interview with Detective Power, however, revealed the fact that the police had known her before, and she was glad enough to resign her position to depart in peace.

At the same time things began to disappear from the pantry in a mysterious fashion; a barrel of flour was found to last little more than a week, and the last quarter of a chest of tea evaporated in about the same time. Yet the weather was by no means bracing, and our appe-

tite did not seem to have increased perceptibly. Then the Sunday cake took unto itself wings and fled and we contented ourselves with bread and butter, though not without marmoring.

In the interval of doubt, conjecture and suspicion that followed, cook's monthly wages were duly paid and the same day we had no dinner till 9 p. m. It happened in this wise: At seven o'clock the family assembled in the dining room and waited, hungry and expectant. No sign from the kitchen, however, till at last one of the juniors volunteered to investigate, and returned after a short absence with a face denoting suppressed merriment. He beckoned, and we followed, *en masse* to the kitchen door. A sound of steady snoring greeted us, but, alas, no smell of dinner. There was poor old cook stretched full length before the fire enjoying sweet oblivion. Arguments proving useless we moved her gently, but firmly, to a distant corner, and I kept guard over her senseless form while the ladies did their best to wrestle with the mutton chops. And so we had dinner at 9 p. m.

In the morning there was an interview—entreaties, tears and promises, and—tell it not in Gath—final forgiveness and complete reconciliation. I was beginning to become charitable towards human failings.

And here we must break off. The subject is a fascinating one, and the story does not by any means fall off in interest. But we have other things to talk about, so will reserve the rest of this harrowing tale for a future time, when topics are low and the social tide is at its ebb. Perhaps, in the meantime, others there are plenty of them—will give us some of their little experiences.

We quite agree with our respected friend “Wrangler” when he says that people are much at fault in their surmises as to the identity of the various society writers: we even venture to doubt very much whether he is right in saying, “We all know him” of the writer of a certain paragraph in *Our Society*. It would imply very careful reading and no little critical ability to distinguish the writer of the various paragraphs in these columns. The variety of noms-de-plume is so great already that we almost invariably erase those attached to stray jottings, which would only tend to produce a feeling of bewilderment. This method in some cases leads to unpleasantness: correspondents have before now retired in dudgeon because we refused them any personality; and we on our part have been called upon to father some statements which we had by carelessness overlooked, and of which we could not by any means approve. However, *chacun a son goût*,—we prefer the existing method; and feel gratified that any one should take the trouble to work out the identity of our correspondents.

As to calling the *Wrangler* cynical, in the approved philological sense of “misanthropical,” we certainly should not dream of such a thing. But it is an extraordinary fact that people now-a-days do not talk—or write—dictionary English. Our dictionaries are things of the past—dead, and never revised up to date, to keep pace with the living language. A man who attempted to write according to Webster's unabridged, would be voted stilted, and hardly intelligible. We have known first-rate English writers talk about “good-natured cynics,” but a “good-natured misanthrope” would hardly be admitted. What sort of a cynic our correspondent meant to call the *Wrangler* it is impossible to say, but he is certainly one of the most powerful of the society writers, and no one could call him bad-natured, though he is sometimes a little—ahem—*caustic*.

Everybody who is the happy possessor of a yacht is having his craft “fixed up” now, and in the course of a few weeks we may expect to see the harbour dotted with the white wings of the trim squadron, belonging to the members of the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Club. Owners of row boats, from the humble canoe to the huge family barge, are deep in consideration of sprung timber and painting.

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