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HINTS FOR THE LADIES.

After all that has been written on the subject of Domestic servants, it is quite refreshing to find someone contending that in England at any rate, there never was a time when servants were better treated and better fed, and allowed more liberty than they are at present. The article in question is one by *Emily Faithfull* in the North American Review, and is really excellent, written by one who has studied the subject in Canada, and in the United States as well as in England. We would commend the following paragraphs to the notice both of servants and of mistresses:—

“One of the trials of the English housekeeper who has a large retinue under her command is the servant who is always on the defensive respecting her individual rights and place. “I keep to my bargain; let other people keep to theirs,” is her obstinate cry, and she refuses to lend a hand outside her “own work,” no matter who may suffer. The most obliging and civil servants I have ever met with are those employed by royalty and in aristocratic houses. While the “little middle-class snob” treats her servants with curtness, the well bred woman of rank accepts their services with courtesy and grace; although she knows she has a perfect right to command them, *noblesse oblige*, and she has the self-respect which naturally accords the respect due to dependents.

The relation between mistress and maid would be undoubtedly improved if the former had a more practical knowledge of household duties. Many of “our daughters” marry young and in utter ignorance of the management of a house: if middle class girls knew something about domestic economy, the pockets of struggling husbands would be spared and many a domestic quarrel avoided. I am now alluding to the mistresses who “run their own households”: the aristocracy know but little of their servants—save their personal attendants—and complain still less.

The monotony and restrictions which surround the life of the ordinary servant have given rise to most of the objections which have been raised against the occupation. “To clean herself,” after a hard day’s work and sit down to needlework, or to the more exciting recreation afforded by *The Family Herald*, is scarcely exhilarating enough for the modern servant, and the joy of the alternate “Sunday out” and the occasional holiday is spoilt by the hour fixed for the enforced return. The parlour-maid hears her young ladies talking at the dinner table of the delightful play they have seen the night before, and she is naturally inspired with a wish to see it herself; but this is impossible if the doors are to be barred at ten o’clock, especially as she has to find her way home in an omnibus, for which she probably has to wait half an hour when the play is over. The truth is, that mistresses, as a rule, have not yet accepted a condition to which men in command of others have long since bowed—that pleasure and personal liberty in moderation must be accorded when the day’s work is done. Servants are mostly young women in the prime of life, with all the instincts of youth full upon them, and it is cruel to ignore their social needs. Their followers and visitors are not welcome to those in authority, and therefore less objection should be raised to their occasional efforts to obtain the companionship of their own class outside the house when their work is done.

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I fear we must own to another fault in dealing with our servants: women scold and nag in a way which is unknown to men who are really fit to rule. They listen to the gossip of other servants, and almost lie in wait for the suspected delinquent. A wise master knows the value of sometimes shutting his eyes, and will certainly let a good employee have time to recover himself before he attempts any expostulation. The ordinary mistress unfortunately summons the servant before she has controlled her own temper, and the result is disastrous to both. If once “a hostile attitude” describes the relation between the drawing room and the kitchen, a state of constant friction must ensue.

I do not ignore the trials experienced by the mistresses of untrained servants: too often a succession of wasteful, ignorant girls pass, like phantasmagora, across the threshold, leaving, however, a very convincing proof of their reality in the wreck of kitchen utensils, china, and other household treasures. Where large establishments are kept, young servants are carefully taught their separate duties; but it is a deplorable fact that girls who have passed the fifth board school standard, are often incapable of lighting a fire, or of washing a wine glass without breaking it. They can read the “penny dreadful,” but they cannot darn their stockings or mend their clothes. The want of technical training is the disadvantage which has threatened to make servants a failure; but our board schools are now waking up to their responsibilities; they have begun to include needlework and cooking in their list of subjects, and I hope they will shortly add laundry and house work.”

There is an amusing story—amusing, that is, to the reader—of a guest at some Highland lodge, who overheard this dialogue between his ducal host and head waiter.

The Duke: “Donald, young Lord—will go on the hill to-day.”

Donald: “Well, your grace, is he to kill a stag, or have a shot or only see deer, or just go for a walk?”

Long and terrible was the pause, and painfully excited the interest of the listener, before, in grave, measured tones, the evidently well-weighed and thought-out decision hailed his ear:

“Well, Donald, you may just take him for a walk!”

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