

TO LIVE—OR TO BOARD?

IF HOUSEKEEPING IS A FAILURE,
BOARDING IS WORSE.

We Must Have Homes to be Born In and to Die In—House Management Not to be Taught in Schools, but Learned by Practice—Two Bright Women Talk.

[North American Review.]

Yes and no. Often within the limits of income proposed, housekeeping is kept up at exaggerated expense. Comfort clashes with petty economies and inefficient service, and it is a mere question of time whether health breaks down in the process. Pretension must answer for much of this wreckage of life and life's hopes, for the unwritten spirit of the genteel housekeeping of today is, "Give us the elegancies of life, and we will do without the necessities." Too much is attempted in the way of decoration, elaborate service, expensive in time and effort more than money, and a general scale of living exhaustive to the last dollar of income and energy of nerves. People all try to be alike, and one cannot tell by any lack of elegancies or appointments whether his friend's income is twenty-five hundred or ten thousand dollars. All houses of this class have more or less cathedral glass, painted dinner services, niello tripod lamps and apostle spoons. King George found roast mutton and apple pie a dinner fit for royalty every day, an example to which ordinary republican families cleave with great steadiness, but they contrive it shall be set upon French ingrain damask and plate fit for a court table in looks, and sixpence worth of wafers for supper will be tied with satin ribbon, on a laced napkin with ten dollars worth of orchids and adiantum to lend their countenance. Orchids, it seems, are positively economical flowers, as they keep in condition for weeks, which is their recommendation to the housekeeper of thrifty elegance.

One would sometimes rather have more broiled bird than so much wafer napkin, and must regret that he cannot eat ribbons. In the estimates of the polite housekeeper, food eaten makes no show at the end of the year, while painted lamp shades and embroidered cushions are things of substantial credit. Wherefore, she spends as little on marketing and as much on furnishings as consists with existence. A steady eye is kept laundryward, and bath towels and fresh linen are as strictly limited as the school fund. Cleaning of carpets, draperies and toilet covers is put off as long as possible, instead of keeping perennial freshness. You do not think of pulling a flower out of the vases, or of asking for a cup of coffee out of hours, however late you work nights, or how much nerves long for it. There is apt to be a sad monotony in the fare, which is not always "tousjours perdrix" by any means. The cox-cook, who married the coachman, will have salmon and asparagus for her Sunday dinner in her cosy Eighth avenue flat, two weeks before "the family" think of affording it. She and Michael do not find good living lost as long as they must work by it, and they have no hands to pay for that bit of dinner, incomparably cooked, save their own. The legend remains of the rich young New Yorker, patron of clubs and well boarding hotels, who decided to keep house himself, and was reported to all inquiring friends as "gone to keeping nigger boarding house on Fifth avenue." The story is too true to die.

There is gnashing of teeth and gnawing of moustaches as the American family man reads the standard English advice, to estimate the rent not over one-tenth of the income. One-tenth! When no one this side the water dreams of sharing less than one-fourth his income with his landlord. Is it any wonder that literary men and others on modest salaries of \$3,000 to \$5,000 feel compelled to keep their wives and children in Canada or the Genesee country, where living is cheap, while they themselves fare as bachelors in the city? But high rents and pretentious habits are not so prohibitory of housekeeping as the desolating plague of servants. I do not say poor servants, for like certain brands of cheap wines, all that can be said of them is that some of them are not as poor as others. The first-class servant from an intelligence office may be set down as an expense of not less than \$10 a week, ordinary waste and breakage included. The trouble is not so much that she is high priced, as that she will not work at any price at all. The frowns she quickly spreads through a house, the chipped china, ragged damask, careless vestibule, giving a bad name to the rest of the house, not belied by fluffy chambers and smoky-scented parlors, takes away all attraction from the idea of home. It is a roost rather than a nest, and the family learn to feel never so much at home as when abroad. Inefficient servants have nearly broken up the home life of America.

But if housekeeping seems a failure, boarding is no less so. It is existence on its lowest terms. Whether the subject is a young man on a salary, condemned to his crevice of a hall bedroom, or a family in a luxurious suite of an apartment hotel, with name of distinction, one has a sense of being kept in a portfolio, under lock and key, or else of being always at the wings, waiting the cue to come before the public. The expensive suites seem like upholstered sepulchres. Boarding tends neither to health nor long life. The halls and unventilated parlors, stuffy with the presence of crowded humanity; the flavor of the food kept in unsavory refrigerators; the fish and meat gone stale in the hot, rancid kitchen while waiting to be cooked; the aphides swarming on the lettuce; the rust on the celery, hourly make war with digestion, lower the vitality and charge the system with malaria. The hostess is in the hands of her servants, and cannot compel careful attendance when she would.

Not to dwell on these uninviting realities, the fact is that one wants a home to have life worth living. Individuality has its sacredness about it, that by being good to ourselves we learn to be better to others. Each person has his special tastes and needs, only ministered to in the space and privilege of home. One wants a place where he can blow eggs for his cabinet, or make a scrap-book without imposing on somebody's good humor for the paste, or have a mustard plaster nights without knocking up two or three sets of persons to get it. One wants a place of his own for the great crises of life. We must have homes to be born in, and to die in. Boarding-houses are as prompt in dismissing prospective natives as they are in getting rid of small-pox.

One can hardly cavil at their decision, but it is hard upon inexperienced women, and not a few young husbands face the most perplexing question of their lives in providing for such a flight into Egypt. Who rears a family should have a home.

If life has one dreary episode, indescribable and inconsolable, it is illness and mortality under a roof not one's own. The grisly summons is hard to bear at best, but to see the slender chances of life lost one by one for want of the commonest cares, a cup of broth at the right moment, a fire for a collapsed sufferer, delicate food for supply of strength, or quiet for a fevered patient wild-eyed at every clamorous bell and careless foot, distills a slow anguish drop by drop that any mortal is wise to spare himself and his friends.

A hundred notable instances prove that even in our hot-bed society it is possible for men and women who understand themselves to make bright, enjoyable homes, where life goes on velvet by comparison with the clipped comfort of hired homes. It needs study, shrewdness, much observation and device. To live in human society requires the principles of a gentleman and the keenness of a pettifogger. One must be prompt and careful enough to extort the consideration of cool landlords, able to cope with plumbers, and provision dealers, quite hardened to decline paying dishonest charges, and to return goods which are not what they pretend to be. Servants, even in the present bumptiousness of labor, can be coolly and steadily dealt with till they perform learn their duty; and the whole essence of the trouble with servants is, not that they are not well paid and well treated generally, but that mistresses have not the tact and decision to demand what belongs to them, or decline imperfect attendance. Women are apt to be either tyrannical mistresses or abject ones; to impose upon servants, or endure the worst imposition from them. House management is not to be taught in schools, like frying cutlets, but it is an art to be learned by practice, and is the pleasantest alternative to literary, social and charitable pursuits, and no woman who ever learns it can ever bear to hear house-keeping pronounced a failure.

The item of expense remains, which is the marrow of the matter to many families. If they will put pretension and imitation of other people aside, and be content to live prettily in fresh surroundings, and wholesome, comfortable, cheery ways, they can do so for less money than it takes to board in a second-rate way. More than this, it is not safe to profess. Perhaps it is enough to ask, unless one would live like the elder Trollopes, keeping a footman, with wine daily on the table, while the children never knew what it was to have a penny in their pockets. But this hardly suits Americans as yet.

SHIRLEY DARE.

It seems strange to a person who has had a long experience of both these methods of life that there should be any hesitation in choosing between them; yet there are thousands of people in our country, of moderate means, who spend their lives in houses not their own, who certainly have reasons, such as they are, for so doing.

They allege as the most urgent argument that boarding is cheaper than keeping house. This idea is not the result of investigation, or experience, but springs chiefly from the fact that it is always more satisfactory to pay a fixed sum at fixed periods than to be always liable to a demand as the need arises, or to be encountered twice a year with numerous and various bills which the masculine head of the family cannot always comprehend. And it is true, to a certain extent, that boarding, as far as mere board and lodging go, is cheaper than a house of one's own, because it costs less per capita to provide food for ten people than for two; there is less waste in large joints of meat than in small ones, and there is always a certain discount made to the wholesale buyer of supplies which is never made to the small buyer. But against this should be set off the unwholesomeness of air and food in boarding. No one who has lived in such a place can forget the closeness of its atmosphere; the odor of cooking that permeates the house and saturates even its upholstery; the vitiated air in its halls and parlors that comes from the open transoms of bed-rooms whose occupants dare not open their windows, not understanding that "night air" is, as Florence Nightingale says, the only air there is at night, and infinitely better than that which is exhausted by rebreathing over and over.

And while the food, as a general thing, may be fairly good, it is impossible to accommodate it to the varying needs of so many consumers. People cannot all eat the same things; there are certain kinds of viands absolutely deleterious to some constitutions; some that are needful to the health of others; there are delicate people, particularly women, everywhere, and in a hotel or a boarding-house they must either eat the ill-cooked morsels set before them, or satisfy their hunger, which is not real hunger but exhaustion, in their own rooms, on such substitutes as crackers, candy, or the wholesomer refreshment of fruit. Bad air and improper food entail illness, a doctor, perhaps death; none of them economic but the last.

Again, in a boarding-house, women are obliged to dress better than in their homes, or, rather, to dress more. This is not a real necessity except in their own eyes, but becomes so to them. The plain and neat attire in which a woman may prettily and properly appear at her own breakfast table, the average woman would consider quite beneath her when she has to meet twelve or fifteen people who will criticize her aspect, and condemn or admire it; herein is another and not a trivial occasion of expense. The superior social life of a boarding house is sometimes alleged in its favor, but a moment's candid examination of that plea shows its futility; indeed it is one of the great objections to such a life that it becomes impossible therein to choose your own society.

It cannot be asked of those who take people to board in order to make their own living that they should exercise any power of selection among those who apply to them, except so far as their social respectability and financial solvency are secured; nor can the ordinary boarder always confine herself to her chamber in order to avoid others of the incongruous family whom she does not approve or like. In this, as in most other things, the burden of life falls more heavily on women than on men; for a man is absent all day at his business, and the evening offers to him a thousand amusements which are never open to single women, nor to the married unless their husbands choose to indulge them in such recreations.

Another argument in favor of boarding is that it allows women more leisure and relieves them from the cares of house-keeping. But is leisure the best thing for women? How do they employ it in such a life? I know there are many and honorable exceptions, but the average woman of the period has nothing to do but to dress, gossip, visit, or devote herself to that trivial amusement called shopping, which too often means wasting the time and destroying the patience of employees in shops by looking at goods these quasi customers never mean to buy, and inspecting bric-a-brac they cannot purchase, merely as a pastime.

And are not the cares and duties of a home the legitimate business of a married woman? Where is her life more full, more appropriate, more contented, if she be a genuine woman, than when, like the Shunamite, she "dwells among her own people"? Then comes the most vital question of all, is a home-life or the life of boarding-houses and hotels best for children? Who does not recall with horror the pert, ill-bred, noisy children they have too often encountered at such places, with nothing modest, gentle or child-like about them? They have been deprived of all the sweet securities of home, the training of family life, the tenderness and strength of family associations; they have been unwelcome to their birth, tolerated instead of cherished, nay, how often the ranks of coming infancy have been more than decimated that the wives who evade motherhood may enjoy their languor and leisure, and "take their ease in their inn!"

Is not the character of too many of our modern women, who spend their lives in a homeless condition, an unanswerable argument against a life of boarding? If there is a sadder thing than "a man without a country," it is a woman without a home; and the fact that it is so frequent a spectacle is due greatly to the indolence and false pride of our women. If only they would be content to live according to their incomes, to avoid fashion and society, whose extravagance they cannot copy or compete with, and live simply, frugally, humbly, while they can afford nothing further; if they would learn and practice those homely virtues that make home what it should be, the centre of life, and light, and blessedness in living; if they would bear their children with joyful acceptance as gifts of God, and train them in their families to obedience, unselfishness, and true service to their kind, what a social revolution would begin among us! What a generation of strong men and good women would rebuild our deteriorating country!

The family is an institution of God, the archetype and foundation of all human government; out of the family as it should be come good citizens, noble women, patriots, and saints; they do not spring from the social hot-beds of hotels and boarding-houses; they grow in the fair fresh gardens of home, the only trace left us of that beautiful and fruitful field wherein the first family of earth were set "to dress and to keep it." Now, even as then, we want to taste forbidden fruit, that is as tempting today as ever, and turn ourselves out into the wilderness of this world to herd with the tribes of folly and idleness. It may be said, and said reasonably, that there are thousands of single women who are obliged to board, because they are wage-workers, and must spend their time elsewhere at their several occupations; but why is it not possible for a few of these women to hire a small tenement, and take turns at keeping house in it? I think it would be more economic, more wholesome, more agreeable far, than occupying garrets or hall-bedrooms in third rate boarding-houses; and I think with a little energy and enterprise, a little economy in feathers, candy, thin shoes, kid gloves, and gallery theatre tickets, it could be done. Who will be the reformer here?

Oh! had I a thousand girls to educate, poor or rich, I would teach them cooking and content, instead of French and the piano; I would say to them every day and everywhere, "Make for yourselves a home; no matter how poor, how small, how limited; if it be only two rooms on a fifth story, have a home." It is a woman's sole refuge and rest, her poor crown and kingdom, perhaps, but still a kingdom and a crown. It is the one way to live that has "the blessing of the Lord which maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow to it." His sorrows come of our own faults and follies; but even then we have the sacred seclusion of a home to suffer in; the charity, the comfort, the shelter of a home to die in; and those who have fed on the husks of boarding, but come out at last into the Father's house of home, re-echo with all their hearts and minds the refrain of the old and justly popular song.

"There's no place like home!"

ROSE TERRY COOKE.

Literary Chicago.

Mr. Gotham—Might I inquire what you are reading, Miss Leafard?

Miss Leafard (of Chicago)—I am not reading, Mr. Gotham; I am merely trying to find something in Pope's works.

Mr. Gotham—What do you wish to find? Perhaps I can assist you, for I flatter myself that I am well acquainted with Pope.

Miss Leafard—I am trying to find his celebrated bull against the comet that the papers refer to so often.—*Drake's Magazine.*

"A FRIEND, LADS, A FRIEND."

Of all the good gifts that in royal measure Drop down to the earth from the beautiful skies, A friend, lads, a friend, is the fittest to treasure— A friend with a soul in his straight-looking eyes; A near one, a dear one, a sterling and sound one, Scarce twice is he found in our life's working day; Thank God with rejoicing if only you've found one, And love him and keep him for ever and aye.

Ah, comrades know (he it said with decorum, You'll get for the asking in hamlets and towns, Who gaily will empty the glasses you pour 'em, And laugh at your sallies and borrow your own.

But these jolly birds are of volatile feather; They fly with the autumn and come with the spring; If clouds are presaging a change in the weather, They'll bid you good-bye with a flick of the wing.

A friend, lads, God bless him! warm-hearted, stout-hearted, He's loving and loyal and always the same; But still to your follies he's open and candid— You prize his approval, you shrink from his blame.

He'll laugh at your side when the Maytime is shining, But closer he'll draw on the storm-beaten way; He's like the old cat with the honest warm lining— You find out his worth in the winterly day.

—*Frederick Langbridge.*

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LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE.

Hello! Central!

The telephone girl sat in her chair
Weary, and worn, and sad;
She drooped her head with the resigned air
Of one who was never glad.

A new subscriber was coming that day
And her heart was filled with dread—
"Another to growl and hard things to say
And Central to blame," she said.

So she sat and waited in mortal fear
Of the roast she was sure to get,
For a gentle subscriber (of this I'm clear)
Has never existed yet.

And all at once his bell did sound,
She must the ordeal meet;
So, as usual, she was ready found
To listen and answer sweet.

"Good morning, Central!"—the girl turned white,
"A beautiful day!"—he said;
"To hear your voice makes me happy quite!"—
But, alas! the girl was dead.

And as they bear her in their arms,
These are the words that they say:
"Twas the pleasant voice caused her alarms
And killed her in this way."

So all people who have telephones
This warning I give to you:
Never speak to Central in gentle tones—
She'll die with fright if you do.

St. John, Feb. 6.

S. T. P.

"The Paper for the Absent One."

TO THE EDITORS OF PROGRESS: I want to tell you how much pleasure PROGRESS' arrival brings to me in my mountain home, away down in the sunny south. True, the news in your bright sheets is a whole week old ere it reaches me, yet I enjoy it, nevertheless. I have not missed a single copy since your first appearance. I have now in my possession all of the photo. copies of our distinguished and popular New Brunswick citizens found in your columns. I often entertain my southern friends with a description of each one as they turn over the leaves of my PROGRESS Album. Then your holiday edition—what a treat that was for me! How near it seemed to bring dear old St. John—the familiar buildings, and the glimpses of the well-known streets! That copy I have carefully laid away. I would advise every one about to leave St. John to arrange to have PROGRESS sent to them each week. It is surely the paper for the absent one to receive. All that is worth knowing is to be found in your columns. Is there a wedding, a new engagement, a party, a concert? PROGRESS will tell you all about it. Is there a wrong to be righted? PROGRESS leads the reform. Long live PROGRESS!

A. L. COTHER.

Crossville, Cumberland county, Tenn.,
Feb. 2.

He Likes the Lunatics Best.

TO THE EDITORS OF PROGRESS:—I can tell you how to make St. John and Portland united the fourth largest city in Canada or the state of Maine:

(1.) Build a handsome passenger and foot bridge at the railway depot, so that the Straight Shore road, when repaired, will be one of the main thoroughfares to the city, along with the Douglas road.

(2.) Let the gate that formerly barred traffic over the Suspension bridge no longer bar traffic between Portland and Carleton.

(3.) Let that large hotel called the Lunatic asylum, and the village called Fairville be incorporated into the city.

(4.) Make the ferry between Carleton and St. John free, and if one ferry is not sufficient to supply the increased demands of traffic, build another one to run alternately with it.

By doing this you would shorten the walk from the Carleton to the St. John post office by nearly a mile—and till this is done, there would be no use to unite the two cities into one.

In conclusion, let me say this (Let has two meanings, i. e., to allow to and to hinder from; I use the former meaning). To find fault is one thing; to prescribe a remedy is another. The former is necessary in order to move people out of old ruts, (into which anyone, who is not very watchful, is liable to fall); the latter is necessary in order to form a clear new pathway.

There would be no need to call the new city, St. John; there is already a St. Johns and St. John's in Canada.

There is something in a man's name; take, for example, Pierce and Blunt, we instinctively look for those qualities in persons of those names.

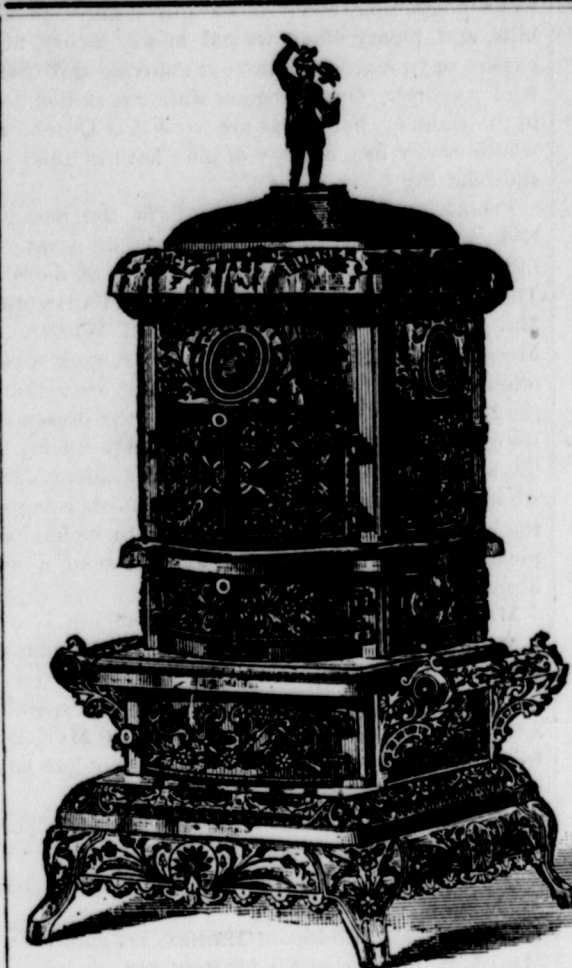
The originality of thought—what I write is not altogether original. It is the outcome of association with lunatics and sane people, for I associate with both classes, and like the lunatics the best.

J. H. F.

Provincial Lunatic Asylum,
Fairville, Feb. 9.

Just Beginning to Find It Out.

"I never realized what a hold PROGRESS has upon the public until last Saturday," said a prominent hotel-keeper of Fredericton. "When the boy came down town just after breakfast, he got rid of 15 copies in this office. Every man present bought one."



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BECAUSE every book-buyer, musician, theatre-goer, and

sportsman reads it. Its motto is, "Criticism by the Competent," and every department is conducted by a specialist.

BECAUSE everybody who receives it reads every word.

PROGRESS spends more money for original contributions than all the other papers in the Lower Provinces combined; has printed 125 original engravings during the last eight months, and is always adding new features to keep the public interested.

BECAUSE it states its circulation in plain figures every

week, and guarantees them to be true.

BECAUSE, the paper being cut, and not more than three

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ST. JOHN, N. B.