

WOMAN and HER WORK.

The problem of domestic service, otherwise "the servant girl question," bids fair to be one of the very live issues both of the present and the future, not only in the land of the free and the home of the brave, the free and democratic United States, but also in our own beautiful Canada, and the haughty, conservative and aristocratic mother country. Day by day and year by year the difficulty of getting and keeping a good girl to preside over the kitchen and keep an eye on the rest of the house, has been increasing, until now many women who are well able to afford two servants are doing their own housework with the aid of "a woman to come in and help by the day." In other words, a washerwoman, who scrubs, washes windows and sweeps. And this is by no means from choice, or because the housewife is unwilling to put up with the carelessness and incompetence of such girls as she can get, but for the still better reason that she cannot get one of any kind or description, and is left to lament the fact that girls seem to prefer any kind of work to domestic service. They certainly do, and therein they show their sense, because the only wonder to me is that any girl can be found who is willing to live out at all! We hear so much about the laziness, impertinence and general depravity of the modern servant girl that I often wonder if those who entertain their visitors with the evil doings of Mary Jane, her sauciness, untidiness and shittleness, and who chuckle over the "servant-galisms" in the daily papers, ever thought of looking at the matter from Mary Jane's point of view, and finding out what she thinks about it. You see she is human, and she has both thoughts and feelings, though no one seems to imagine she possesses such attributes; and the trouble is that she very seldom has an opportunity of expressing her feelings except on those occasions when outraged nature triumphs, and she gives the Missus "a bit of her mind" across the kitchen table.

Mary Jane has decided opinions of her own and usually the most pronounced of them is an excellent one of herself and the rooted conviction that she is just as good as anybody else, only she has to work for her living; but yet she labors under disadvantages and is to a certain extent as voiceless in her own defence as the animals since she is generally uneducated, and even when she has a fair amount of education she is not likely to have the gift of expressing her sentiments in faultless English, properly punctuated for the compositor's hand, and sparkling with epigrammatic wit and clear cut sarcasm, so as to catch the public eye and tickle the public fancy. In other words Mary Jane is not a popular journalist nor a writer of acknowledged ability, all of whose contributions are eagerly accepted by the foremost journals of the day, and for whose graphic descriptions of domestic life and servant girl enormity the editors of various publications devoted to the interests of women, are ready to outbid each other. No, the servant-girl has no channel through which to make her side of the story public, and thus bring it home to thoughtful people, so she is obliged to bear her grievances in a silence which surely is in itself a protest in its very helplessness.

I have often thought of this, and of the injustice it is to condemn anyone unheard, so as those whose lips are sealed in their own defence are always permitted benefit of counsel, I intend to constitute myself Mary Jane's counsel for the time being, and plead her case as it appears to me.

Mrs. Supperen folds her white hands in her bosom and pours out her woes to her bosom friend with a pathos that is truly touching. "I cannot understand it," she says, "how any girl in her senses can be so blind to her own interests as to pass up the opportunity of just imagine the silly geese preferring a hot stuffy ink smelling factory to your house, or mine my dear! cool, airy, and comfortable with every modern appliance for saving labor, good and substantial food, a comfortable home and excellent wages, all because of a mistaken idea of independence! why if I were a girl again and obliged to earn my living, I don't know how of any way I should choose so soon as that of living out in a respectable family!"

"Don't you, my lady? Well then I do, I would rather 'take in houses to scrub,' as a witty girl once said, and failing that, I would declare for the factory every time, so I am in touch with Mary Jane there, as in many other things. No doubt you are surprised at my extraordinary taste but if you give a little thought you will understand it, I am sure.

The reason is, that we, in common with the rest of the animal world, are all born with a love of liberty, freedom first, than food and raiment, and lots of other things of less importance. Every man and woman born into the world is entitled to this one boon as a birthright, and humanity at large realized this when the movement for the liberation of slaves was first inaugurated, each member of human family, black or white should be master, or mistress of his or her own body. After a certain number of hours spent in work for her employer the worker's time should be absolutely his own for rest or play, and I think we all realize this fully, when we take time to think about it.

The young girl belonging to the working classes realizes it very soon, and she knows that although the life of a factory girl is hard, the moment the five o'clock bell rings her working day is over, and she is free to do as she likes, without being questioned by anyone. As soon as she gets home "cleans herself up," and has her tea, she is a free woman till bedtime. She can spend the evening out with her friends, or she can sit at home, and fashion the bit of finery which is to dazzle her admirers on Sunday. If she goes out she has no need to fear that the side door will be locked at ten o'clock, and a solemn "talking to," or worse scolding be her portion in the morning, she can enjoy herself with her friends until twelve o'clock, if she is so minded, and provided she is at her place in the factory next morning at the usual time, nobody can say a word to her. Very likely she has a terrible time to make both ends meet in the humblest fashion imaginable, and if she does not live at home, she probably boards, together with a number of other girls in some boarding house where the food is wretched, the rooms worse, and anything like home comfort unknown, but if you try to reason with her, she always gives you the same answer, "It is hard, I know, and there is not much comfort in the life, but, then you know I can do as I like, and if I lived out I could not."

That last clause is always the stumbling block, and it is too true! The girl who enters any family as a servant, virtually gives up her liberty, her entire time, and her very self and individuality, in return for her board and lodging, and so many dollars a month. She must, as far as she is able, sink her own identity in that of her employers, and have no interests but theirs. She has no stated hours of work, she must simply keep at it until it is done, and if she rebels against the long hours, or grows irritable or a trifle impatient from worry and fatigue, she is "impertinent" and "ill-tempered."

I don't believe for one moment that the average woman intends to be exacting or unjust, to her servants, but she has grown so into the habit of expecting them, to be always on hand to render any service she may require of them at any hour of the day, and until a late hour at night, that it seems a matter of course to her, that they should always be ready to obey her behests cheerfully and willingly; she pays them for their time, and she never reflects how hard it is, especially for a young, healthy girl, full of life, and loving pleasure as every girl should, to be condemned to spend her whole time waiting on others, and ministering to their enjoyment, instead of thinking of her own.

I have been in houses where only one girl was kept, a strong healthy country girl, to be sure, but still subject to fatigue like the rest of us; and I have known that girl to get up at six o'clock in the morning, get breakfast, sweep, dust, make the beds and put the bedrooms in order, bake bread, get the dinner, wash all the dishes and attend to the numerous duties required in the management of a house; then when the last pot and pan were put away, make up the fire, put on the irons and cheerfully attack a basket of clothes, starched and unstarched, the size of which might well have made the boldest quail. All the afternoon was devoted to that, the most tiresome of all work, and the irons were finally taken off just in time to put the kettle on for tea; after which Mary washed her burning face at the kitchen tap and trotted pleasantly up to her hot little den over the kitchen, to brush her hair and put on a clean apron before setting the tea table. This was on a broiling July day, when I, who love heat, was almost worn out with the exertion of trying to keep cool. It was merely a specimen day of Mary's life, she had done a large washing the day before, and would sweep and wash windows the next day. She had no idea of complaining, she was used to it and expected to continue in the same path until she got married and worked for herself; but I could not help thinking how little she got in return for her unceasing labor, and how hardly she earned her seven dollars a month. After her work was finished what spirit or energy had she left for enjoyment? She must have been too tired even to stroll down town and do any of her small shopping, or run up the street to see a friend, and it she remained at home what chance of rest had she? No sofa to rest her weary limbs upon, as the tired mistress always has, no cool parlor to lounge in, but a choice between the stifling kitchen in which she has worked all day, and the still hotter "kitchen bedroom" which has been storing up heat all day long and generously gives it out again, all night. There is nothing mean about a kitchen bedroom, it displays more generosity in disseminating heat in summer and cold in winter, than a rich relative does in the matter of giving free advice.

So Mary's choice is narrowed down to the kitchen doorstep, and there she sits until her room is cool enough to insure her against suffocation, and then she goes to bed.

A cheerful life surely and one to recommend itself to all sensible girls, in preference to working in a factory, a hot, stuffy, factory where the work is constant and too

hard for any girl to stand long. It would be a unique factory which was warmer than a kitchen on either baking or ironing day, or any other day in the year when cooking was going on, and if there is any establishment of the kind where the working hours extend from half past five in the morning, until eight or nine at night, I have yet to hear of it. Why, I have had a cultivated and christian woman say to me, "The trouble with girls now-a-days is that they have too much liberty, I never allow mine out in the evening except once a week and then they must be in by nine o'clock. I always keep them employed! I don't believe in idleness, so I make them hem all my kitchen towels, and sheets and pillow cases after their work is done, it keeps them out of mischief and saves my putting my sewing out. There is nothing like knowing how to manage girls, and I think I can manage mine."

I happened to know that this same "manager's" servants were paying for having their underclothes made out, and one of them paid three dollars for having a print dress made, which, with a little assistance, she could easily have manufactured herself in the evenings.

Now is it any wonder that girls prefer their freedom to such slavery as this, and that in conservative England, a "Maid-servants Union" has been recently started?

I have not the least doubt that the number of saucy, incompetent and lazy girls who live out is large, else the complaints of useless servants would not be so numerous, and in writing what I have, I do not refer to the servant girls of the United States, of whom I know little, but if they are at all like our own they are by no means as black as they are painted. I speak of what I have observed of the average Canadian serving maid, no better and no worse than the rest of her class; whom I have sometimes seen scrubbing the kitchen floor after ten o'clock at night, whose hours of labor have no clearly defined limit, and whose calling is somehow looked down upon, even by those she serves.

It seems to me that the question of how we shall be served, is gaining in importance every day, since the number of girls who are leaving service to go into canning factories, cotton mills, and tailor shops is increasing so rapidly; and a recent writer in an English paper strikes very near the root of the matter, when he says that the time has come when the need of definite hours of work for domestic servants is clearly felt; and the solution he suggests, of this difficulty seems plausible enough. It is that servants shall no longer sleep under their employers roof, but come at a stated hour in the morning, as charwomen do now, perform the amount of work specified, and then go home at whatever hour is agreed upon.

It may be a little hard at first, for the housewife who is accustomed to be served at all hours, but she will grow accustomed to it in time, and plan her work accordingly. Of course all reform movements take time, and it will doubtless be some time before the hiring of servant girls by the hour becomes general. In the meantime if the mistress would put herself in the maid's place occasionally and try to realize how hard that place often is, I think it would simplify the "Servant Girl Question" to a very remarkable degree.

As this is the pineapple season, and as it does not last forever I must give my readers the benefit of two excellent recipes for preparing that spring dainty.

Pineapple Trifle.
Select a ripe sweet pineapple, pare carefully, and chop into dice, cover it with two small cupsful of sugar, and set it aside. Cover a package of gelatine with cold water, let it stand two hours, and then dissolve with a cupful of boiling water. Add the pineapple, with the juice of one lemon, and stir the mixture on ice. When it begins to stiffen, turn in the well beaten whites of six eggs and beat until creamy. Serve with custard. I should recommend a larger amount of sugar, but then I have a very sweet tooth, indeed they are all sweet.

Fine Apple With Wine.
Peel the fruit carefully, slice them or cut into dice—some authorities say, tear it under with forks, but I have tried this, and found it just as easy as it would be to carve a tough goose with one's fingers—Put a layer in a glass dish, sugar well, and wet with a few spoonfuls of sherry, continue the alternate layers of fruit, sugar and wine until the dish is full, then set on ice, and eat within a hour after it is prepared, as the wine will toughen the fruit, which is none to tender at the best of times.

BUTTER CUP, St. John—The lead pencil was all right my dear, because your letter was well written, and perfectly distinct, and of course your writing on only one side of the paper counted largely in your favor. My dear girl, I never heard that for two people to see a shooting star at the same moment had any special significance; the only two superstitions connected with falling stars, that I ever heard of, first that a falling star to immortalize, in other words a from life to immortality, in other words a death, and the other, that if anyone succeeds in making a wish while the star is still in sight, he will be sure to obtain his desire. That is all I know about it, and I am sorry, for your sake that my knowledge is so limited.

CINDERELLA, St. John—You do not say whether the dress is of white muslin, or serge veiling, or any woolen material, and that would make a great difference; but in any case, you would be safe in wearing any pale shade, such as grey, very pale lavender, or very light tan. Silk gloves are prettiest with muslin or lawn dresses, and they are quite correct with other costumes in the hot weather; do not wear white gloves on any consideration; the veil may either match the gloves or be white. Your writing is very distinct and pretty, but not what is called a fashionable hand. I will hunt up the verses for you when I

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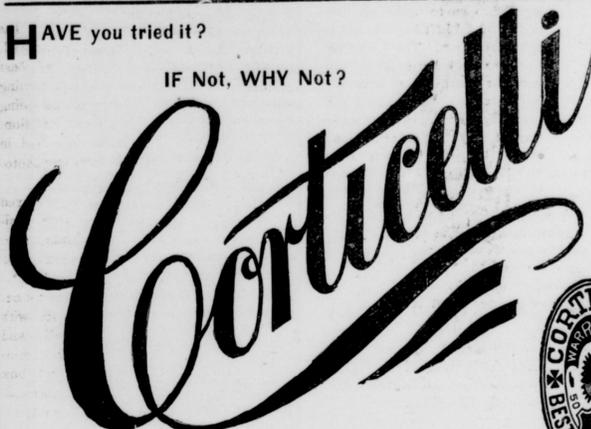
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