

Original in GOOD HOUSEKEEPING.

THE DOMESTIC SERVICE DIFFICULTY.

FROM A WOMAN'S STANDPOINT.



AVING read the very unique solution of "The Domestic Service Difficulty" from the masculine standpoint, I beg leave to reply to the author of that article from a woman's point of view. He asserts that "the problem of domestic service in America would be solved if the women of America would treat their hired girls in the same manner that men treat their hired help." Are the cases analogous? Let us see: The banker or the merchant has his bookkeeper, cashier, and clerks,

selected from among those of a social grade equal to his own—a grade which represents a certain standard of education, culture, and cultivated taste. Their habits of life are similar; frequently they have mutual friends, and hence can be congenial companions outside of their business relations. The service these employés render is generally brain service, than which nothing is higher. *These* are the "hired help" who are invited to a social dinner at the home of the banker or the merchant. These may be the escorts of his daughters, and possibly their husbands. Indeed, it frequently happens that the employé is of a higher social position than his employer, so that there really is no opportunity for condescension. The service of a clerk, bookkeeper, or cashier is not a menial one. These employés are the future proprietors, and the sons of the *present* ones. But the banker and the merchant have another class of "hired help," including a janitor, a porter, a drayman, and a coachman. Does he treat *these* without distinction of social position? Does he invite *them* to share with his other friends the hospitality of his exclusive home? Does his accomplished daughter entertain the janitor, the porter, drayman, or even the handsome and clever coachman, with her father's consent? No; the father would allow no intercourse between his janitor, porter, drayman, or coachman and his refined daughter, for exactly the *same* reason that his wife, as well as himself, would object to their *son* paying his addresses to the *kitchen maid*. We see, then, that men *do* recognize a social distinction between themselves and their hired help, who are beneath them in worldly advantages.

The superiority of knowledge over ignorance is the fundamental cause of social distinction. The employer—be he a man of culture and progression, full of interest in the things of a higher plane—has, and can have, nothing in common with those of his employé, whose ideas of and interest in life are so widely divergent. Just so with the lady who finds no congeniality with her maid.

There is no use denying that hired girls, with few exceptions, have little ambition to be better educated or more refined than at present. There has always been a caste, even in democratic America, and there always will be. The majority of girls who engage in domestic service are not capable of filling a higher sphere. The kitchen is their destination and drudgery their lot. Should the mistresses do as your contributor suggests and become the companions of their servants, the undue intimacy would destroy the maid's respect for them more quickly and surely than any other means.

Women should, of course, treat their hired girls kindly and make them comfortable at all times; but they can do this without bringing them into the social circles, where they would be as much out of place as they would be thoroughly ill at ease. It is a fallacy to claim that those women who

have been used to all the luxuries and refinements of life would, under adverse circumstances, seek domestic servitude as a means of support were not the doors of society thus barred against them. No woman of accomplishments would prefer menial work to lighter and more congenial duties of an intellectual or even mercantile life. Not until that great lever—education—raises them above the kitchen will the mistress find pleasure in the society of her maid.

Mind has dominated over matter since the world began, and the tendency of the nineteenth century is in the same direction. Hence it is likely that there will always be a marked distinction between the mistress and the hired girl; but no greater, indeed, than that between men and their hired help of the same grade. Therefore the Utopian theory for the solution of the "domestic service difficulty" proposed by your contributor does not meet the requirements of the case.

—Hester Crawford Dorsey.

Original in GOOD HOUSEKEEPING.

WINTER WOODS.

The woods that summer beautified
With verdure sweet and colors fair,
And filled with music's joyous tide
Were all dismantled, brown and bare.
When silently an unseen hand
Transformed them by its magic power,
And robed and radiant now they stand,—
Each aisle, and glade, and sightless bower.

The pines aloft, in plumes of snow,
Like sentinels defend the way,
And sturdy hemlocks droop below
With jewels decking every spray,
Around the oak, whose russet leaves
Bravely defy the wintry storm,
The woodbine's glistening tendrils weave
An arabesque of curious form.

Through leafless arches here and there,
Statues appear of purest white,
Of hermit old, or wood nymph fair,
Or birds, with wings just plumed for flight.
The brown ferns bend with crystal beads
That fall and gem the marble floor,
Each tangled clump of briery weeds
With diamond dust is powdered o'er.

Oh wondrous frost! we soon shall see
Naught of this frail creation fair,
For spring with spirit blithe and free
Will reign triumphant everywhere.
Though from thy rude embrace we turn
To meet her smile, without regret
Though for her sweet caress we yearn
Thy lovely forms we'll ne'er forget.

—Marion Rayburne.

Original in GOOD HOUSEKEEPING.

ALUM PURIFIES WATER.

Alum is said to have power to purify water and even to deprive it of most of the bacteria that it sometimes contains. That muddy water can be cleared by alum has long been known; but it is a comparatively recent discovery that a very small quantity of alum, so small that it is not injurious to drink the water that contains it, will rid water of nearly all its bacteria. A Pennsylvania physician found that the water that was drawn by the people of a village where typhoid fever was epidemic, was swarming with bacteria. Fifteen drops of it, when spread upon a suitable surface, were capable of forming 8,100 colonies of these microscopic vegetal germs. He added alum, in the proportion of half a grain to a gallon and found that not only was the earthy and vegetable matters precipitated, but that the colonies of bacteria were reduced from 8,100 to 80, and that these were of large size.