ANNE COBBETT

THE ENGLISH HOUSEKEEPER: OR, MANUAL OF DOMESTIC MANAGEMENT

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The English Housekeeper: Or, Manual of Domestic Management

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INTRODUCTION.

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"She looketh well to the ways of her *Household*, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed: her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."—Proverbs, Chap. xxxi., vs. 27, 28, & 29.

I have taken so much pains to make the following work deserving of the title it bears, that I could not, without affectation, pretend to undervalue my own performance, by anticipating doubts of its utility, or by expressing any fear lest my friends should be disappointed when they look into it. Every publication of this description is necessarily calculated to be of some essential service; for it must not only be practical in its descriptions and directions, but must relate to matters touching the daily and hourly wants of all mankind; and it will, of course, be approved according as it may happen to meet those wants.

As a mere Cookery-book, mine must submit to be placed in a lower rank than some others, because I do not profess to bring to light discoveries in the culinary art, neither do I design to favour epicurism. I have no pretension beyond that of advising young ladies who are their own housekeepers; and the receipts which will be found in my selection, are such as appeared to me suitable to any family of moderate style in living, and such as may be easily comprehended and put in practice. These have been

carefully revised and amended in the present edition, and some others added.

While I am offering advice with respect to the manner of conducting domestic affairs, I cannot refrain from expressing my regret that so large a proportion of the young ladies of England are sadly deficient in that information, and in those practices of economy which are the most essentially necessary to their welfare as persons of influence and authority in a house. I am by no means singular in lamenting that the advantages of a knowledge of housekeeping seem to be so entirely lost sight of by those who have the responsibility of bringing up either their own or other people's daughters; and I find it frequently the subject of remark that the ladies of the present day have become incapable of being so skilful in the discharge of their domestic duties as the ladies of a former period were, in proportion as they have become more cultivated and more accomplished. But is it so? Are there now a greater proportion of women whose minds are really cultivated than there were formerly? Is there not rather a greater pretence of learning with less of it in reality? It is erroneous to suppose that persons of real learning look upon the minor duties of life with contempt, because of their learning; for, though learning does not, perhaps, give sense, it surely does not destroy it, and there is not only a want of sense, but a positive folly, in that affectation of refinement, and that assumption of superiority, which has led to the result now complained of. But the system of education which has prevailed of late years is certainly in fault; a system which assigns the same species of learning, indiscriminately, to

young persons of every rank and degree, without distinction even as to ability. Such a method of bringing up has unavoidably been productive of very injurious effects; for, while it withdraws the daughters of farmers and tradespeople, and others, during a great part of their youth, from the practice of those homely arts which belong to their stations, it leaves them, in nine cases out of ten, without anything more than the mere fancy that they possess acquirements of a higher order.

The desire which many persons feel to give their children a better education than has been bestowed upon themselves is laudable, because it proceeds from sincere affection: but how often is the success equal to the motive which actuates? How often is the manner of attempting at all calculated for attaining the object so earnestly sought? An ambition to promote the welfare of children reconciles parents to part with them at that tender age when they ought to command more constant care than they generally need at a more advanced time of life; and this ambition is so strong that it will even cause little girls to be consigned to the blighting atmosphere of a crowded schoolroom, there to bewail the loss of the warm hearth, or the airy room of their own homes, and all the comforts which depend upon a mother's solicitude. With a view to their being educated, that is to say, fitted for the world, and for the discharge of their respective duties in it, girls are sent to school, and are there condemned to a dull course of lessons, before their minds have sufficient strength to imbibe any kind of learning that requires mental labour, and before their understandings are equal to any greater exertion than that

of perceiving the difference between a roasted apple and a sugar-plum.

A knowledge of housekeeping is not difficult to attain. It needs no natural superiority of talent, and no painful application. It is rather a habit than a science, and, like the neatness so characteristic of English women, this knowledge rarely comes to perfection at all, unless it be partly formed in early life, and by means of our very earliest associations. Little girls are always prone to imitate the ways of older persons, particularly in housekeeping matters. They very soon begin to find amusement in learning to make preserves, pastry, and such things. Those children, therefore, who are brought up at home, and have the daily and hourly practice of domestic duties before their eyes, will naturally fall into habits of usefulness, and acquire, by degrees and imperceptibly, a knowledge of what belongs to home, which should constitute the elementary education of every woman who is not born to rank and to luxury. But the unhappy little creatures who drag through seven or more years of continuous monotony within the walls of a school, their minds taking little or no part in the tasks which their memories are racked upon, have but little chance of learning any thing which will benefit their after lives; for, those whose mothers knead the bread, churn the butter, and help to cook the dinner, have not the benefit of that sort of society that would teach them to apply their learning, that would call forth their acquirements, or that would be able to appreciate those acquirements when displayed. During the period which these children spend at school, their mother continues her old-fashioned

occupations, and, as time passes on, she looks forward, perhaps, with cheering anticipations to the *help* which her daughters are to afford her. But alas! how often do these daughters return from school with false notions of the lives they are to lead, and with mistaken ideas of their own consequence, such as lead them to despise the humble occupations of their home, although their "education" may not have given them one single idea to justify any pretension of the kind. It is generally acknowledged, that girls educated at schools are seldom far advanced in learning. Where history and geography, and other sciences, are learnt by rote, "a page of Greece on Monday," a "page of Rome on Tuesday," a "page of Universal Biography on Wednesday," with occasional readings of the middle ages, of modern times, and application being made to maps, globes, charts, &c., to fill up the time which is not devoted to the fine arts (for it all goes on at once), the stock of real solid information which is gained by the end of the year, will be very scanty, or will probably have resolved itself into such a confused mass of imperfect information that all practical benefit may be despaired of. No wonder, if, after having undergone a course like this, a young girl is often found to have gained less from books than others have gained from vulgar report, and be puzzled to say whether it was Scipio or Washington who was the first President of the United States of America. They learn lessons, but they do not reason or think about what they are getting by heart; and many girls, whose education has cost a large sum of money, are unable to answer a question of name, place, or date, in their geography or history, without first running over a certain

portion of one whole lesson, the sound of which has left a deeper impression on the ear, than its sense has left on the understanding. Just as, when wanting to ascertain the number of days in a particular month, we repeat the words, "Thirty days hath September," &c., thus recalling by means of the jingle of words, what of itself had slipped our memories.

Girls so educated are very much to be commiserated. They live, through that part of their lives in which the mind is most open to receive impressions, without any opportunity for exercising their powers of observation, till, at last, those powers fall into a state of inertness; and their education is finished without their having gained the least knowledge of what the world really is, or of the part which they are to be called upon to act in it. Having had no intimate association with persons really well informed, it is no matter of surprise, if they become conceited of their supposed attainments, or if they remain in ignorance of the fact, that a little music, a little drawing, and a very little French and Italian, are not sufficient to make an accomplished woman, and that merely going the round of primers will not, of itself, constitute what is looked for in a "good education." Nor is it, indeed, to be wondered at, if the home, which has been so cherished in recollection from one holiday time to another, fail to realise all the anticipations of pleasure and of happiness which the thought of it has excited. Its simple occupations are not of a kind to make them, as novelties, attractive to one who is *only* a fine lady; the want of capacity to fill domestic duties will, of course, render them rather disagreeable than otherwise; and it is

but natural that young women who, during all the early part of their lives, have been unaccustomed to think of household cares, should entertain some degree of aversion to them, and feel dissatisfied when called upon to take a part in them. Many a father has repented that he did not rather lay up for his daughter, the money which has been expended to no better purpose than to cause her to repine at the condition in life in which he must leave her. And many a mother's pride, in the fancied superiority of her daughter, has been saddened by the recollection, not only that her daughter was incapable of helping her, but that the time must come when that incompetent daughter would be left to take care of herself.

My readers may imagine that I forget my proper theme: they may wish me to remember that this book professes only to aid those young ladies who are uninformed on this subject, *how to keep house*, and that I am diverging from that subject, and raising objections to a very common way of bringing up children. But when it is generally acknowledged that there is, in the ladies of the present day, a great want of skill as regards the affairs of their household, an ignorance, in fact, of some of their first duties, it cannot be impertinent for me to inquire, whether this want of skill, and this ignorance, be not properly ascribable to a defective, or even to a mischievous, course of education. I certainly do think that habits of usefulness, and the cultivation of talents, may be combined, but then the acquiring of the useful, and the cultivating of the finer accomplishments must proceed hand in hand. There are, doubtless, many who do not think it beneath them to be

able to make a pudding, merely because they can execute a difficult piece of music, or sing with good taste; who do not regard these as things absolutely incongruous; and who do not consider, when they receive applause for excelling in fashionable powers to charm, that the offering carries with it an excuse for their being inefficient and helpless mistresses of families. There are, however, not a few, who do think that qualifications of a refined nature render it unbecoming in their possessors to give that personal superintendence to the affairs of the kitchen, of the store-room, and of all the other branches of household arrangement, which is so necessary, that, for the want of it, moderate fortunes often prove inadequate to the support of families in the middle rank. Young persons cannot be expected to entertain a proper estimation of the value of useful habits, as compared with the value of ornamental acquirements, unless they have grown up in the exercise of those habits. The idea that capability in the domestic, is incompatible with taste in the elegant accomplishments, is so deeply rooted in the minds of most persons who aspire to be fashionable, that I despair of the power to do much towards eradicating the fatal error. And yet, I would fain represent to parents, the wrong which is done to children by suffering this idea to plant itself in their minds; for it not only reduces young women to a standard of comparatively little consequence, by making them helpless in all the ordinary business of life, but it produces incidentally, a variety of injurious effects on the health, on the spirits, and even on the temper. It is proverbial, that the largest portion of happiness belongs not to the higher ranks of society; and the reason is, not that

the rich and luxurious are, as a matter of course, unworthy and consequently unhappy; but that their minds are not diverted by necessary cares, that their amusements are easily obtained, and that the enjoyment of them is never interrupted by their having duties to perform. Pleasures fail to excite and interest the mind, unless they come in the way of relaxation. Therefore it is, that even in youth, something by way of employment is necessary to keep gaiety from subsiding into dulness; and in mature life nothing is more salutary than occupation. To have *something to do*, to be obliged to *be doing*, withdraws the mind from the contemplation of fancied sorrows, and prevents its being subdued by the recurrence of unavailing regrets. Women who have been accustomed, in their youth, to be industriously engaged and to contribute to the daily happiness of others, are sure to enjoy the greatest share of tranquillity and satisfaction in a review of days gone by, to show the most courage in adversity, the most patience in sickness, and to be the most cheerful and resigned under the infirmities of age; and those parents, therefore, who instil into the minds of their daughters the principle of *making themselves useful*, will confer upon them one of the greatest of blessings.

Let it not be supposed, however, that by *useful*, I mean that a woman should be a mere household drudge, that all her ideas should be confined within the limits of her domestic offices, or that her guests as well as her family, should be entertained by nothing better than details of the household. Ladies who have houses and servants to look after, should be capable of superintending the whole in a

manner so systematic, as that they may have a due portion of their time, and of their thoughts, to give to other, and, if they deem them such, higher matters. I by no means recommend, as patterns, the fussy people, who are always busy and have never done, who let you know every thing that they have to do, and who, sometimes, do very little after all. Neither is it advisable to imitate, too closely, that class of housewives who are distinguished by the phrase —"very *particular*:" for even the virtue of neatness, when incessantly exercised, or manifested too much in matters of little moment, becomes an intruder upon comfort, and, consequently, offensive. What I recommend is, that quiet and orderly method of conducting the business of a house, which tends rather to conceal than to make an appearance of much to do, which puts all that part of the family, who are not immediately engaged in it, as little as possible out of the way, and which may enable strangers to remain under the roof without being constantly reminded of the trouble they occasion. Every woman who presides over a home, and who wishes to preserve its attraction, should bear in mind the many minute cares which all contribute to give to that home, not only the semblance, but the substance of enjoyment; and I earnestly impress upon my youthful readers the important fact, that, as far as mere fortune is concerned, those often prove to be the most poor in reality, who may have been thought to be the most rich. Competence and ease may be changed for narrowed circumstances, and a struggle may ensue, to stem a torrent of difficulties which follow in succession, and threaten to destroy the home which has been hitherto considered

secure. Then she who has passed her life in total listlessness, possessing no acquirements but of a showy kind, and ignorant of what is wanted to preserve the foundation of a family's happiness; then such a woman will prove as unfitted to lighten sorrow, as she has been careless to avert it: for herself, she can but quail as difficulties assail her; for others, she can only seek for protection where, if she were capable, she might be of assistance; and, instead of aiding to alleviate distress, she will become the main cause of rendering the common burden intolerable.

How often do we see families stricken to the very dust, by the first, and perhaps only a slight blow, of misfortune; and this, merely for the want of a little of that practical knowledge, and that experience, which would have enabled them to husband their diminished means so that they might still supply sufficient to meet all real wants, and still procure every material comfort. From a want of this experience, some of the very best intentioned persons will so misapply the resources left to them, at one time laying out money where they ought to refrain altogether, and at another parting with more than the occasion requires, that, by degrees, those resources dwindle away to nothing before they seem to be aware of the natural consequences, and not only poverty, but destitution and misery are let into an abode where comparative ease and contentment might still have remained. The great art of economy in domestic life, is comprised in the two very homely phrases, "*to turn every thing to account*," and "*to make the most of what you have*." But their meaning is often perverted, and the habit of *turning every thing to an account*, and of *making the most*

of every thing, is ascribed to those who are actuated, not by a laudable desire to produce as much comfort as their circumstances will admit, but by an inclination to indulge in a strong propensity to stinginess. But of this class of persons I am far from being the advocate; between extravagance and parsimony the widest possible interval exists; and that economy, that management and application of means, which I deem perfectly consistent with the most rigid virtue and the most generous impulse, is of too admirable a character to partake either of the spendthrift's criminality or of the miser's meanness.

If my censures upon the present system of educating young ladies should appear to be presumptuous, I greatly fear that any disapproval of that which is now so universally adopted with regard to *the poor* will be still more unpopular; but it does appear to me that *there*, there exists a mistake also, which, perhaps, in its consequences, will prove still more fatal. It appears to me that something better might be done, more advantageous to both rich and poor, by educating the latter to be useful members of society; and I think that ladies who live in the country may have ample opportunities of training up good servants, by attending to the education of poor neighbours of their own sex. By *education*, I do not mean that kind of teaching which merely qualifies them for reading letters and words. Small literary accomplishments, accompanied by idle habits, are already but too common, though the fact is more generally known than acknowledged. Nor do I mean that sort of education which creates expectations of gaining a livelihood by any other means than those of honest industry; or which tends

to raise the ideas of persons who are born to work above the duties which fortune has assigned to them. I mean such an education as shall better their condition, by making them better servants. In large establishments, where there are old and experienced persons in service, it is very much the custom to have younger ones as helpers, and thus the latter have the benefit of learning all the duties of the household; but these establishments are comparatively few in number. The fashion of the day is opposed to my opinion, and the same ladies who now condescend to teach poor children to read and write, because it is the fashion to do so, would, in many cases, think it beneath them to teach a little girl to make a pudding. It would, in a work of this nature, be a hopeless and presumptuous attempt, to argue against the all-powerful influence of fashion, against which the keenest shafts of invective and ridicule, and in short every weapon of satire, have been so often aimed in vain; but, all are not under the dominion of so senseless and so capricious a tyranny, and I have to regret my inability to set before my readers the benefits which mistresses of families would confer and receive, from bringing up young country girls to be good servants. There might always, in a country-house, be one or more young girls, according to the size of the establishment; to be placed under older servants, or be instructed by the mistress herself, in all household occupations, from the hardest work and most simple offices, to the more delicate arts of housekeeping, including needle-work. This practice would not only insure more good servants than there now are; but, young girls so trained would, by the force of hourly tuition and good example,

imbibe a right sense of duty, and acquire good habits, before they could have had time to become vicious or unmanageable.

When ladies take the trouble to teach the poor to read and write, they mean well, no doubt, and think they are doing the best they can for their pupils. But teaching industry is more to the purpose; for when learning has been found insufficient to preserve the morals of princes, nobles, and gentry, how can it be supposed that it will preserve those of their dependents? The supposition is, in fact, injurious to the cause of true learning, since the system founded upon it has been attended by no moral improvement. Our well-being is best secured by an early habit of earning our bread by honest labour; and

> "Not to know at large of things remote
> From use, obscure, and subtle, but to know
> That which before us lies in daily life,
> Is the prime wisdom; what is more, is fume.
> Or emptiness, or fond impertinence,
> And renders us in things that most concern,
> Unpractis'd, unprepar'd, and still to seek."

A country girl, the daughter of a labourer, would, by making herself in some way practically useful to society, and gaining a respectable livelihood, be more profitably employed than in going through that long course of literary exercise which has, of late, been so generally bestowed on the children of poor people, but which, I fear, has not generally imparted to them much of what Milton styles "the prime wisdom." It should also be considered, that the

literary education of the poor, such as it is, cannot be much more than half completed at the age when the children cease to receive lessons from their charitable instructors. They are taught to read, to write a little, and perhaps something of the elements of arithmetic. The reading, however, is the principal attainment; and in this, they generally become well enough schooled before they are eleven, or, at most, twelve years of age. But alas! have they at that age, or at the age of thirteen or fourteen, been taught all that is necessary for girls so young to learn, with regard to the *choice of books*? With the use of *letters*, indeed, as the mere components of words, they have been made acquainted. But why have they been taught to read at all, unless there be some profit to be derived from their reading; and how can any profit be looked for from that reading, unless there be the same kind of pains taken to point out the proper objects of study as there have been to teach the little scholars to spell? Surely that advice which is required by all young persons in the pursuit of book-learning, is at least as necessary to those who can do no more than just read their own native language, as it is to those who are brought up in a superior way. The education of youth, among the higher and middle classes, does not terminate, or, at least, it never should, immediately on their leaving school. At that period, a fresh series of anxieties occur to the parent or the guardian, who is quite as sedulous as before, to finish that which has been, in fact, only begun at school. If this be not the case, how is it, that though the son may have been eight or ten years at the best schools, the father, after the schooling is ended, finds it

necessary to consult the most discreet and experienced advisers, concerning the right guidance of his child in the course of his future studies? The attention paid to the studies of young ladies, after they come from school, is, to be sure, not precisely the same as that which parents think requisite for their sons. But, while the daughter has generally the advantage of being with her mother, or with some female relative much older than herself; and while the success in life of our sex does not so frequently depend upon literary acquirements, and the proper employment of them; yet under such circumstances, favourable as they are, we all know that there is still much wanting, both in the way of counsel and attractive example, from the parent or guardian, to render the learning which a young girl has acquired at school, of substantial service to her in after years. If the daughters of the rich require to be taught, not merely to read, but, also, *what* to read, why should not this be the case with the daughters of the poor? in whose fate, it is too often proved, that "a little learning is a dangerous thing," owing to the want of that discretion which is necessary to prevent the little learning becoming worthless, and even mischievous, to its possessor.

In the way of practical education, there are many things of importance to the poor, which ought to be taught them in early youth. At the age of fifteen or sixteen, a girl should already have learned many of the duties of a servant; for if her education up to that age have been neglected, she must necessarily, for the next three or four years of her life, be comparatively useless and little worthy of trust. The poor do not, as some may suppose, inhale with the air they breathe

any of that knowledge which is necessary to make them useful in the houses of their parents or their employers. To learn cookery, in its various branches; making bread; milking, butter-making, and all the many things that belong to a dairy; household offices innumerable; besides the nice art of getting up fine linen, and plain work with the needle; not only requires considerable time, but, also, unless the learner be uncommonly quick and willing, great attention on the part of the person who undertakes to teach them. It is lamentable to see how deficient many female servants are in some things, the knowledge of which ought to be thought indispensable. Some are so ignorant of plain needle-work as to be incapable of making themselves a gown; and this, too, where they happen to be what the country-people call "scholars," from their ability to read a little, and to make an awkward use of the pen. A maid-servant who can assist her mistress in plain needle-work, is a really valuable person. Strange as it may seem, however, there are but few common servants who can do so, notwithstanding that superiority in learning by which the present generation of the labouring people are said to be distinguished from their predecessors.

With young servants, nothing has a better effect than *encouragement*. If they are, by nature, only good tempered, and blest with as much right principle as those who have not been spoiled generally possess, whatever you say or do in the way of encouraging them, can hardly fail to produce some good, though it may not always accomplish everything that you would desire. A cheerful tone in giving directions, a manner of address which conveys the idea of

confidence in the willingness, as well as the ability, of the person directed, has great influence upon the minds of all young persons whose tempers and inclinations have not been warped by ill-usage, or soured by disappointment. Very young servants frequently take pride in their work, though of the most laborious kind, and many a young girl might be proud to improve in the more refined departments of housewifery, and would regard a little congratulation upon the lightness of her pastry, or the excellence of her cakes, as worth ten times all the thought and care which she had bestowed upon them. There is no mistress who does not acknowledge the importance of a servant who can assist in preserving, pickling, wine-making, and other things of this description, which demand both skill and labour, and which must, where there is no one but the mistress herself sufficiently acquainted with them to be trusted, take up much of her time and give her considerable trouble.

To teach poor children to become useful servants, may, perhaps, be thought a serious task; but it surely cannot be said that this sort of instruction is at all more difficult than that which is necessary to give them even a tolerable proficiency in the lowest branches of literature. The learning here recommended, seems naturally more inviting, as well as more needful, than that which is taught in the ordinary course of school education; and it possesses this advantage, that while its benefits are equally lasting, they are immediately perceptible. It is sometimes said that the poor are ungrateful, and that after all the pains and trouble which may have been taken in making them good servants, it often happens, that instead of testifying a proper sense of

the obligation, they become restless, and desirous of leaving those who have had all the trouble of qualifying them for better places and higher wages. Servants cannot be prevented from bettering themselves, as they call it, but that constant changing of place which operates as one of the worst examples to young women who are at service, would become less frequent if their employments were occasionally varied by relaxation and amusement, and their services now and then rewarded by small presents. The influence of early habits is so universally felt and acknowledged, that it seems almost superfluous to ask why an early and industrious education of the poor, and the teaching of the youth of both sexes to look upon prosperity and right endeavour as inseparable, should not produce a taste, the reverse of that which leads to a discontented and unsettled existence.

It is equally the interest of the rich and of the poor, that the youthful inhabitants of the mansion and those of the cottage, should grow up with sentiments of mutual good will. If the poor are indebted to their opulent neighbours for the assistance which makes a hard lot tolerable, there exists a reciprocal obligation on the part of the rich, since they could not obtain the comforts and the luxuries which they enjoy, without the aid of those who are less fortunate than themselves. But there is another and superior motive, which ought to narrow the distance between the poor and the rich: the lady of the mansion, when she meets her washerwoman in the village church, must know that, in that place, she and the hard-working woman are equals. The lady of the mansion, when she beholds the ravages which but a few

years of toil have wrought in the once blooming and healthful country girl, is astonished, perhaps, that her own looks and health have not undergone a similar change; but, she forgets that the pitiable creature before her has been exposed to the damp floors and steams of a wash-house, to the chill of a cold drying-ground, and the oppressive heat of an ironing stove, in order to earn her miserable portion of the necessaries of life. No wonder that her beauty has vanished; that her countenance betrays the marks of premature age, and that her air of cheerfulness is exchanged for that of a saddened resignation. But the lady of the mansion should not, in the confidence of her own happier fate, lose sight of the fact, that this poor and destitute creature is a *woman* as well as herself; that her poor inferior is liable to all those delicacies and weaknesses of constitution of which she herself is sensible; and that, in the eyes of their Maker, the peeress and the washerwoman hold equal rank.

The ingratitude of the poor is often made a pretext for neglecting to relieve their wants. But are not their superiors ungrateful? Is "the ingratitude of the world," of which philosophers of the earliest ages have said so much, confined to the lowly and unrefined? By no means. High birth and refinement in breeding do not, alone, ensure feelings of honour and of kindness to the heart, any more than they ensure common sense and sound judgment to the head; for these qualities seem to be in the very nature of some, while it passes the power of all art to implant them in others. It is for those who have known what adversity is to say whether they have not met with instances of devoted

attachment, of generosity, and of every other good feeling, on the part of servants, at the very time when they have been depressed by the heart-sick sensation caused by the desertion of friends. Those have been unfortunate in their experience of human nature, who cannot bear testimony to the admirable conduct of servants in fulfilling that wearisome, and often most trying, but at the same time most imperative of all earthly duties, attendance upon a sick bed. Perhaps it has not occurred to most others, as it has to me, to witness such proofs of virtue in poor people. Among the truly charitable there are, no doubt, many in whom disgust has been excited by ingratitude; but has it been excited by the hard-working and the half-starving only? It is but a very limited acquaintance with this life, which can justify the unselfish and noble nature in denouncing the *poor*, for being ungrateful. Be this, however, as it may, one thing is certain, that no probability of disappointment, no apprehensions of an ungrateful return, ought to have any influence with the mind of a Christian, and that such obstacles were never yet a hinderance to any man or woman whose desire was to do good.

THE ENGLISH HOUSEKEEPER.

CHAPTER I.

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

It would be impossible to give rules for the management of a domestic establishment, because they would necessarily be subject to many and various exceptions, produced by various circumstances. But a few general observations, accompanied by remarks on the most important matters in domestic life, may not be unacceptable to young housekeepers.

In the young and thoughtless, a spirit of emulation, leading them to vie with those who are richer than themselves, is often the source of domestic unhappiness, by causing so much to be sacrificed to appearance, as to circumscribe the means of enjoying the substantial comforts of life. It sometimes manifests itself in houses, equipages, and retinues of servants; but amongst persons of moderate income, for whose use this work is principally intended, it is commonly displayed in costly furniture and expensive entertainments. Many young married women conceive the notion, that unless they have as fine a house, as expensive furniture, plate, china, and glass, as some others have, and give as fine entertainments as others give; in short, unless they make the appearance of living quite as well as their richer neighbours, they will not be held in equal estimation. It is not that they derive any real pleasure from the false appearance which they make; indeed, expensive furniture is but an annoyance to its possessor, if there be not a

sufficient number of good servants to keep it in order. Where the whole family concur in this sort of pride, no mortification arises from difference of opinion, but the unanimity tends only to accelerate the ruin.

The young housekeeper should consider the serious consequences that are likely to result from setting out in a style of lavish expenditure, and she should remember that, while it is easy to extend, it is extremely difficult to reduce, her establishment. One expensive article requires another to correspond with it, and one expensive entertainment imposes the necessity of other equally expensive entertainments; for it requires no small share of moral courage to risk the loss of consequence which may result by its being surmised that we are not so well off, as we have been supposed to be. And when the time comes, as sooner or later it assuredly must, when the means are not adequate to the demands, what sacrifices are made, and what unseemly contrivances are resorted to, in order to keep up, to the last, a poor remnant of "*appearance!*" and, when this can no longer be effected, then comes the humiliation, with all the bitter feelings attendant upon *retrenchment*; of all which feelings, the bitterest is, the dread of being degraded in the world's estimation. To endure privations with resignation, to feel the want of habitual comforts, yet be grateful for the blessings which are left to us, is the duty of every Christian, and is the less arduous when the reverse of fortune which has befallen us, has not been produced by any fault of our own. But if, in addition to the distresses of adversity, the wife and the mother be doomed to writhe under the pang of self-reproach, great indeed must be her

suffering, and one for which I can suggest no adequate relief. To the young and generous-minded, the hardest portion which accompanies reverses of fortune, is, the change which they sometimes produce in the behaviour of acquaintances. When we are become poorer than we were, and have lost the ability to entertain guests in the accustomed manner, it is painful to perceive some of those very people who have been the most hospitably entertained, and who, in our prosperity, have appeared the most attached to us, turn from us and our difficulties, while they banish from their minds the recollection of past kindness. To meet with indifference in those whose smiles have courted ours; to feel that we have thrown away sincere friendship upon mere heartlessness, is hard to be endured, even by the faultless, but how intolerable must it be, when aggravated by the consciousness that we have incurred it by our own misconduct. To the experienced, this is one of the severest vicissitudes of life; what, then, must it be to us, before we have acquired that equanimity of mind, which falls only to the lot of those who have passed through the ordeal of the world, and who have been amply compensated for the desertion of the many, by the sincerity, the warmth of heart, and the steadfastness of the few.

Houses and furniture properly belong to the extraordinary expenses of the household. When a young woman is called upon to exercise her judgment in the choice of a house, she must pause before she rejects one which, though she may consider it rather too small, might, nevertheless, be made to accommodate the family *well enough*, and might be fitted up at a less cost than a larger

one. Such a house would require fewer servants, and would certainly present a better appearance, than one that is rather too large for the quantity, or for the style of its furniture, and is, perhaps, larger than is actually required for the number of its inhabitants. It is easier to remove from a small to a large house, when circumstances require it, than it is to remove from a large to a small one. It is so easy to increase our wants, and so difficult to reduce them, that young persons should begin the world with caution, and not multiply their wants, lest, in time, they lack the means of gratifying them.

In fitting up a house, the young housekeeper, who sets out with a determination to choose furniture suitable to her circumstances and station in life, will be content with that which is just *good enough*, rather than be induced to exceed her previous good intentions, and gratify her fancy at the expense of her comforts. She must never yield to the seductive reflection, that "*only* five pounds more cannot make much difference;" for, the same argument may be equally applied to the sofa, the tables, the carpet, the curtains, the grate, the fire-irons and fender; all of which are necessary to furnish a dining room; to say nothing of the lamps, the mirrors, and other articles of ornament, which fashion in some cases makes of absolute necessity. If "*only five pounds*" be given for some of these, and two, or even one pound, for others, more than is necessary, she will find that the "difference" is very great by the time that she has fitted up only one room.

The rage for vying with our superiors shows itself in the bad taste which encumbers houses with unsuitable