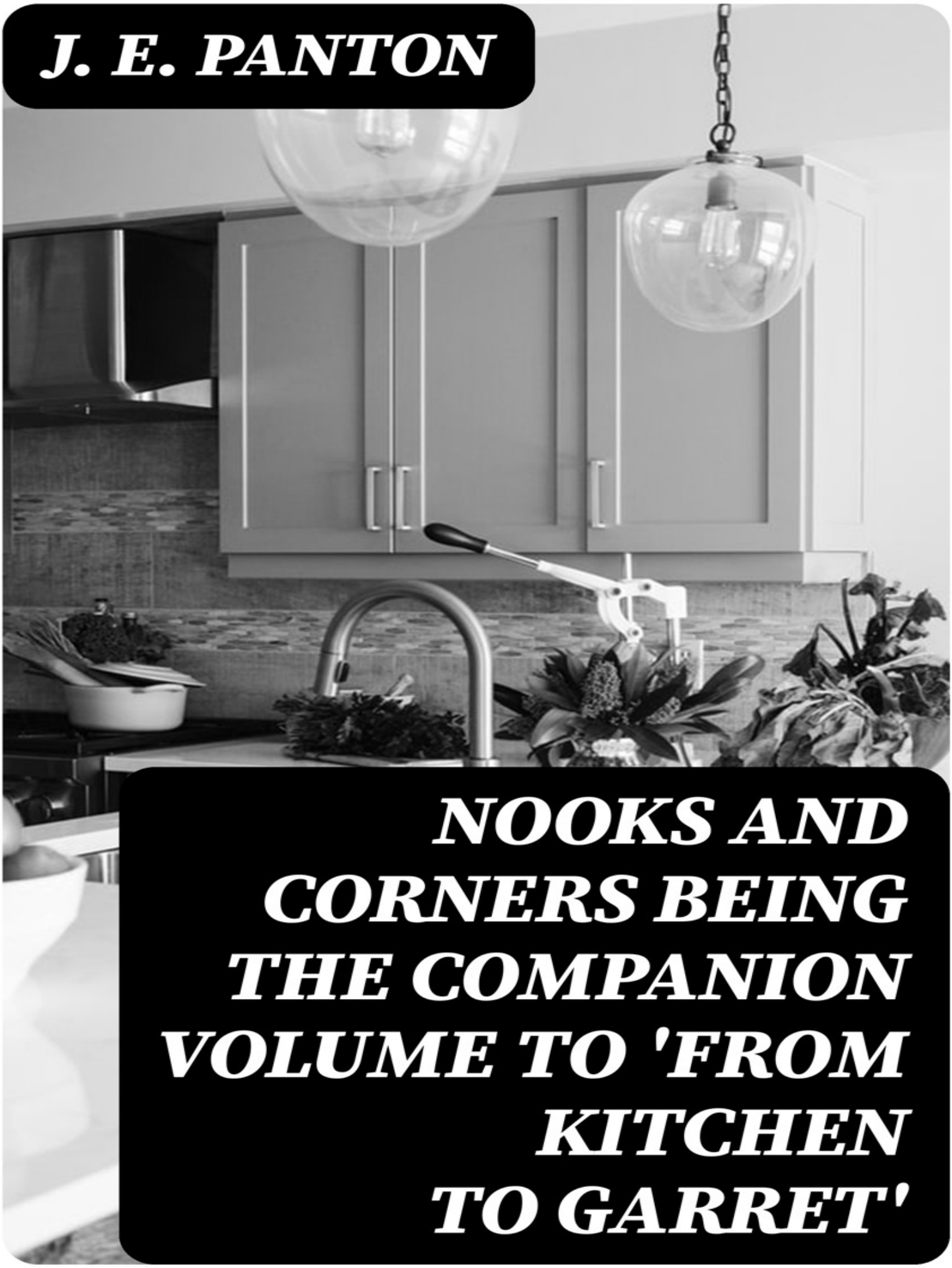
J. E. PANTON



NOOKS AND CORNERS BEING THE COMPANION VOLUME TO 'FROM KITCHEN TO GARRET'

J. E. Panton

Nooks and Corners being the companion volume to 'From Kitchen to Garret'

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NOOKS AND CORNERS.

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CHAPTER I.

MOVING HOUSE.

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I HAVE been asked by a great many readers of ‘From Kitchen to Garret’ to produce another book on the ever fascinating subject of household management and house decoration; and I have been furthermore requested to consider Edwin and Angelina from another standpoint, and to regard them as having increased their borders in more ways than one, and, having become richer and at the same time more numerous, as now beginning to move from their small house, furnished so joyfully and hopefully in the early flush of their married happiness, to one larger in every way, and more suited to their present income and growing family.

I confess that I begin my task with just a little diffidence, and a little misgiving, too, and feel just a wee bit as sad over the beginning of this little volume as I know my young couples must feel when, no longer quite as young as they were, they turn their backs on that dear little first home, and take up their abode in the newer, far more convenient habitation, welcomed so joyfully by the children, who declare that now, and now only, they will have room in which to breathe!

For, successful as ‘From Kitchen to Garret’ is, and many as are the friends I have made through its pages, I am rather doubtful about another book on the same lines; still, I can but do my best, and so, without any more forewords on the matter, I will at once plunge into my subject, and will

trust that all those who have made their little houses pretty by either following or improving on the hints given in my first book will not disdain to follow me once more into those Nooks and Corners of house-furnishing and house-keeping, which were deemed too ambitious for my young couple, or were forgotten in the first essay on the subject.

Besides which, as life goes on, I am thankful to say that decoration becomes more and more a fine art.

Formerly people rather scorned the idea of being ‘house-proud’ in the same manner in which all are nowadays. Their house-pride was merely expressed in the amount of gilding compressed into a single room; in the thickness of their carpets, the heaviness of their draperies, and the general costliness of the plenishing, and the amount of money these things had cost was far more often spoken of than anything else; while the name of the upholsterer was mentioned, not as a guarantee that taste and skill had been called into action, but as a proof that money in this case had not been an object. Formerly, did I say? Alas! cases still exist of this heavy and depressing style of thing! Money is poured out like water on carpets that are nightmares, and on papers that are as absolutely meaningless as they are ugly, and the despair of anyone who is called in, as I am constantly, to mitigate the horrors of some gigantic monument of bad taste and lavish expenditure.

And then, too, people are still, as a rule, far too timid, and act far too much in a hurry; they believe far too much in the upholsterer, and far too little in themselves; and above all they cannot get out of the terrible English habit, carried through every single department in life, of buying a thing

because they admire it, and not because it suits what they already possess, thus marring at every step their chances of having a home which is always a pleasure to inhabit, and a restful refuge from the cares and toils of life.

But it is to assist the timid and those who lack confidence in their own tastes, and furthermore who may live in distant country places, where nothing new penetrates even in these days of parcel-posts and illustrated newspapers, that I am writing this book, and wrote ‘From Kitchen to Garret,’ and therefore I must not scold but rather encourage those who would add to the beauty of their surroundings, but do not quite know how to set about it: and I am most anxious that there may soon be no house anywhere in England that may not have some claim to be considered beautiful or interesting or pretty; for indeed there is no reason why the humblest among us may not have a charming home, as certainly, if he or she have taste, money nowadays is not a barrier between beauty and the public at large. Therefore when any among my readers makes up her mind that it is absolutely necessary that a move should be made, the first piece of advice I would give her is that she should determine on her future locality, if not on the abode itself, before she is driven from her first house by the lapsing of a lease or the necessity of deciding immediately because a tenant is forthcoming for house number one; for if not, she may find herself forced into an uncongenial neighbourhood or into a house that has every unpleasant quality under the sun. Above all she must be prepared for a certain amount of acute misery, mental, at any rate, if not physical, for there is something about one’s first married home that one can

never really replace, and that renders our fitting into our new locality only a little less torturing than inhabiting a new skin would be, were we suddenly forced into one.

Personally I am not one bit sentimental; I never cried over a faded flower, or lay awake weeping bitter tears over an unhappy love-affair: I never had one, I am thankful to say. Neither have I hoarded first shoes, snippings of baby curls, nor indeed anything save my wedding-dress, which is a most valuable ‘property’ for characters and private theatricals of all kinds; and therefore I am considered absolutely lacking in ‘fine feelings,’ and unhampered by ‘nonsense’; but I have never yet become reconciled to the moves we have had to make after our first twelve years of married life, and I much doubt now if I ever shall; I certainly shall not until I make move number three, and what is perhaps the most curious point in the whole business is that I did not like the house, nor the town, nor indeed anything much about it, and yet I can never see certain looks in the sky, scent certain odours, without being transported to dear dull Dorsetshire, and without longing in a curious home-sick way for the marvellously lovely range of the Purbeck hills, which haunts me like a dream, and for which I am convinced I should positively pine, had I the smallest touch of sentiment in my composition.

The house itself was most wretchedly inconvenient, the furniture of over twenty years ago—aye, and some of it over fifty years ago—does not bear thinking about in these æsthetic days. I endured dullness such as only a London girl, plunged suddenly into an atmosphere she could not comprehend, much less assimilate, could experience: we

had three years of unspeakable worries; and yet, with it all—with its hideous rooms and its cold and ugly passages, its out-of-the-worldness, and its unpleasant associations—there is something about it that no other house can ever hold, and that causes me often and often to dream I am there again, or that makes me hear sometimes on a quiet night the old sound of the sudden clash of the china closet door, the opening of the door at the top of the kitchen stairs—which, I believe, has been taken away now by desecrating hands, and which had a sound all its own—or that causes me to wake suddenly from sleep to wonder at the late return of phantom waggons and ghostly horses over stones that are hundreds of miles away from our present uncongenial abode, and which caused sounds inseparable from thoughts of those dear dead days—days I would have back this moment if I could, if only to live them over once more in a manner a thousand times better than an inexperienced girl could ever do, and use then the experience one buys at such an enormous cost because one will not listen to words of wisdom from those who have lived so very much longer in the world than we had then, and which is useless now, because one sees all too late what one might have done for others.

These experiences and reminiscences of mine may seem out of place here, but they really are not. I shall in this book, as in my last, speak only of what I have experienced; and I am so convinced that when house-moving is done heartbreak must ensue that I dwell upon this aspect of the case in order that the first house may not be left

capriciously, but only because it is absolutely necessary to go elsewhere.

I have always felt myself, unsentimental creature though I am, that a house absorbs some of one's own personality: that the very walls we warm with our breathing, living selves, and among which we spend our lives, and allow ourselves to be ourselves without any company veneer, must in some measure become impregnated by our vitality. You may, for example, re-paper and re-furnish your room, but in a very short time that room looks exactly like you once more, and becomes again in a week or two—a month, at most—part and parcel of your own individuality. But leave your house, and, if you can muster sufficient courage to do so, go and call on the next inhabitant, and you will see in one moment what I mean. The very room is altered. Your successors may have kept your decorations, taken off your 'fixtures,' and gone on the very same lines as regards furnishing and arrangement as you did, but it will not look in the very least like you, and you will not believe you are in the same room in which you have spent so many happy and unhappy hours. At first, therefore, in any new house you have not only to adapt yourself and your furniture to it, but you have by your individuality to imprint yourself on the very fabric itself.

The last owner's individuality fades at once; I have seen few empty houses that do not look precisely like something dead: the body is there, but the spirit is absent. And there is a blank awful chill about such a house that penetrates one's very soul and depresses one in an extraordinary way; but it takes some time to reanimate the body, and, indeed, in an

unloved atmosphere I question if it is ever done. Some folk the house won’t have at any price, and there are one or two places I wot of that are blank still, because uncongenial people have them and are incapable of living up to them properly; they put just the wrong draperies in the windows, wrench the doors round into the wrong places, and finally have hung the very worst colours on the walls, and, indeed, have treated it in such an inconsiderate way that it never responds, and remains silent, angular, unsatisfied, dead, as long as those people remain within its shelter.

Angelina, when she really must move therefore, must remember to think over all these details.

I envy everyone myself who has a really inherited house—a house which has absorbed the family atmosphere for centuries, that has never been passed from hand to hand and from family to family until it has no recollection of who built it or what it was built for; a house for which it is an intense and real pleasure to plan improvements, to deck as one would deck a child of one’s own, knowing that what we spent on it or did for it would benefit and please not only ourselves but those who are to come after us. Yes; hopeless Radical as I am in everything else, I am Conservative indeed in the house I would have if I could; but in these days of progress, when most people grow rich, and many only use their dwelling-place as a shelter, and don’t think of it as a home, I am constantly being pained to see retired city men and lawyers—the two classes which become really wealthy, taking over the delightful places which once owned ‘county families,’ and ruining the society round with their ostentation and the ridiculous airs only found in suburban

places where ‘society’ so-called consists of ‘twopence three-farthings looking down on twopence,’ while the poor houses themselves are ruined too by utterly inappropriate furnishing and by decorations suitable only for an ordinary ‘mansion,’ furnished by giving *carte blanche* to some enterprising and advertising tradesman.

Should Angelina have made her first home in the family dwelling-place, she will never have to learn what moving house really means. She can allow her roots to sink as deeply as she likes into the kindly soil, and she can make it all as charming as she will, because she will know that all she does will only benefit her own; but as there are indeed few nowadays who can contemplate this (for even the absorbers of the old places round London never think of the generation behind them, and often and often cut up the land for eligible building sites, with as little compunction as one cuts up a cake at a school-feast: only taking care it shall go as far as it can), we need not dwell on this aspect of the case, but on the one that should be the motive of this chapter, namely, moving house.

If you are tolerably happy in the neighbourhood you know, pray take my advice and remain there; there are sure to be discomforts of some kind or other in any locality. I have never yet come across anyone who was perfectly satisfied with his or her belongings; certainly I have never met anyone who had not bitter complaint to make about the special locality he or she inhabited, and yet who did not ruffle up their feathers the moment any stranger found fault with it. But a neighbourhood is like a house, and requires

locally knowing; and if we are for ever changing our neighbourhood, we can never feel at home anywhere.

No doubt it is an unfashionable idea nowadays, this clinging to one place; but I think, if more consideration were given to the subject, life would be much better than it is at present, for far more good can be done by those who are able to help their poorer neighbours, should they remain year after year in the same place; for they are thus enabled to know them thoroughly, to sift the deserving from the hopeless, and finally to interest themselves in such a way in the real life around them that the place in which fate has placed them is in some measure better for their having made their home there. And this cannot be done satisfactorily by mere birds of passage, who have no ‘vested interests’ in the place, and are ready to be off at a minute’s notice, just because they think a change would be nice.

And once having made up your minds that a change of house is imperative, I advise you to ponder seriously and at great length over the pros and cons of a residence in the same neighbourhood, before finally determining to plant your roots elsewhere. I think what makes a residence in the suburbs almost unendurable is this mania for change, for we no sooner begin to know people there and like them than we find they are becoming uneasy; they fancy the place is unhealthy, someone has been rude, the nicest people have not called—as if the nicest people ever did rush to call without introductions of some sort or other—and they are off impatiently before they have entered into the life of a place they condemn ruthlessly because they do not really know what it is like.

How long does it take to know a place? Well, if you are lucky enough to go there with really good introductions, I should think six months; if you know no one, and are dependent on chance, or the vicar of the parish, you may never know it at all; but, in ordinary cases, and where people have had their edges clipped by really good society, you ought to know quite as many people as you wish to in about three years.

Therefore, if you have begun your residence in the suburbs, and have a nice church, a nice doctor, and nice friends, stay there; you don’t know how deeply your roots are planted until you begin to drag them up. If you are a Londoner, on no account be persuaded by artistic accounts of country delights to leave your beloved pavements and the exquisite freedom of a town life and surroundings: and if you are born and have lived among cabbages and roses—if you love the country, and can interest yourself mildly in the continual changes that are going on around you in your neighbours’ houses and the cottages round about—remain there; and be thankful for tastes which are innocent if they are circumscribed, and often result in a far nobler life than that made up mostly from excitement and dissipation; because anyone who can and will live cheerfully in the country, making work for the labourer, and employing folk in pure air, and in decent habitations, does much more for the human race than he wots of, and should be encouraged to do so in any manner that one possibly can.

I am often being told that the country is a far cheaper place to live in than London; but I have tried both, and I know better. In the first place, in London you can do

precisely what you like, and, provided your likes are not openly eccentric, no one will interfere with you. You can have ten friends or ten thousand acquaintances. You may wear one dress as long as it will hold together, and no one will doubt your capabilities of being respectable because of your shabby attire. You may get up when you like, go to bed when you like, need not give to any charity if you are not charitably disposed, need not keep a carriage, because you can at any moment hail any vehicle, and go anywhere you like; and, above all, can be so easily amused, and at so cheap a rate, that one need hardly put down ‘amusements’ in our schedule at all.

Now in the country we must have some sort of a carriage if we wish to get outside our own immediate neighbourhood and mix with our fellow-creatures; from the humble ‘four-wheel’ of the farmer’s wife, and the curate’s donkey-cart, to the landau, waggonette, or smart little victoria of the other richer folk: all must have some other means of progression than would be afforded by one’s own legs. Our incomes are common property, and, should we have two new dresses in the course of the year, are a prey for all those dear creatures who spend their time in being charitable on other folk’s money. We must have a garden, and we obtain a scant supply of worm-eaten fruit, inferior flowers, and out-of-season vegetables, at a price for which we could have obtained the very best stores of Covent Garden—for by out-of-season I don’t mean that our pears and asparagus come before their time, but considerably after the period when they have become cheap in the market in London; and, finally, we cannot be amused without half ruining ourselves

by constant rushes to town, by subscribing largely to Mudie, and by taking in every newspaper we can lay our hands on if we are readers, and if we are fond of finery, by sending for constant new garments, not because we want them, but because we really want to see what is being worn. Of course rates, rents, and taxes are much less in the country; but rent in London is less than it used to be, and in unfashionable neighbourhoods is not too exorbitant; but even with the rent considered, I still maintain one can live more cheaply in London than elsewhere, and can most certainly live longer there and far more pleasantly.

So I do most strongly advise country mice to remain country mice, unless they make the change very young; and I implore town mice to cling to their pavements, for nothing short of a residence for generations in the country can teach one how to live under the microscope which is put over one the moment a stranger goes into the country to live, and nothing save being born to it could ever reconcile one to having one's most intimate personal concerns discussed at the bar of every public house, over every shop counter, in every parlour, as they are discussed in an ordinary rural place, or to having one's most innocent speeches repeated until one would certainly not recognise them, did they return to us after their last repetition.

I declare that twenty years of residence in and about the country have never reconciled me to all this, or caused me to take the profound interest in my turn in my neighbours, in the way that aborigines do to reconcile and repay themselves for their own sojourn under the microscope, and which a country born and bred individual takes as naturally

as he does his absence from the theatres, and his utter lack of interest on any other topic than the ever-absorbing one of ‘who is going to marry whom,’ or who is not, and what the curate’s last baby was called, and why that special name was selected; and, therefore, I never lose an opportunity of warning the ducks to remain in the pond, and the hens in the farmyard where they were hatched, for I am quite sure my experience is not a solitary one by any means, and has often been the fate of those who went into the country because no one warned them that the delights thereof were mere snares and delusions, and who would give anything to return, only they cannot afford another move.

And I have no doubt that the country mice are as miserable in the town in their turn: they miss the intimate conversations, the familiarity of their friendships; they pine for fresh air, and weep over ‘smuts;’ the noise and bustle we love so dearly bewilders and distresses them; they object to putting on gloves and a bonnet whenever they go out, resent being unable to ‘run in’ at any moment to their acquaintances, dread the streets, see disease lurking at every corner, in every glass of milk, in each vestment fresh from the laundress, and, pining away, become pale, ill, and wretched, and put it down to London, when really the misery lies entirely in themselves.

Have I said enough to show my readers that when they are contemplating a move they should do their utmost to remain in the same neighbourhood, or at all events in one with the main workings of which they are in a measure familiar? I think so; and if at the same time I tell them to remember the church where their children were christened,

the doctor who helped them over so many hours of pain and trouble, and finally the friends they made—and old friends should never be given up on any account whatever—I believe they will see that a change even for the better has always its trials, and that a great many things should be considered before up-rooting takes place, and a family is landed in an entirely new locality, that, be it as nice as it may be, has its own interests, in which the new-comer has neither part nor parcel, and its unwritten laws and small rules of etiquette, which are as rigid as they are incomprehensible to an outsider.

I think in every neighbourhood there should be also some agent to send out lists of all the pros and cons, the ins and outs of a neighbourhood, which should show you at once the number and styles of the different churches, the state of society (it could be ‘young,’ ‘army,’ ‘lawyers,’ or anything almost), the schools, the advantages and disadvantages, and, in fact, all the particulars one wants to know. They should truthfully and in confidence give one all the required information, and then one would not run the risk of making mistakes. But as this seems impossible, a residence for a short time in a furnished house (one’s own house could in turn be let to some one who wants to investigate our neighbourhood) should be indulged in. A very few weeks would inform us of all we want to know; for even if we did not become acquainted with one soul personally, we should have looked at the people and taken stock of their windows, from which I think one can always learn so much, and can quietly make our own inquiries about schools, churches, and the rest of the vital points of interest about a new residence,

and come as quietly to the conclusion as to whether the neighbourhood will suit us or not, before going to the expense of moving and decorating to suit ourselves and our belongings—an expense which once incurred often binds us hard and fast to a place from which we would give our ears to remove.

Then comes the question of the house. This should be large enough to take all the family and allow for any possible additions; but at the same time Angelina will have to remember that when the boys are at school there will always be a room for a friend, and therefore the question of spare rooms is not such a vital one as it was. She will also have to legislate for the girls' own room—probably a room for a governess, though a resident governess should be avoided unless the house is a good size, and unless she is an absolute necessity. There is the schoolroom to think of, and she must contemplate—perhaps ruefully—the nurseries, with an eye to adapting them to another purpose, when that saddest of all days comes when we cannot deceive ourselves into believing a nursery is any longer necessary, and we have to turn our backs on our youth and the dear small child-inhabitants at the same time. A house without a nursery is never as joyous or lively as one that possesses such a room, and it's no use trying to believe this to be the case. Still it is equally of no use to set apart the best room in the house for that most pleasant of all chambers, if there is no chance of nursery children, and if all are merged into the young gentlemen and ladies, who are fast growing up and eagerly longing to launch their boats on the sea of life for a cruise of their own.

When the house is positively and actually selected and the move imminent, when the lease is signed and the decorations are in train, the first step to take is to get several estimates from firms who are accustomed to do nothing else save move furniture. In nothing does price fluctuate so much as it does in these estimates, and when we moved from Dorsetshire to Shortlands there was actually and positively a difference of 100*l.* in the highest and lowest of the many estimates we had, the person selected being just 100*l.* lower in his price than the man who made us our first offer.

To move luxuriously we should have taken house number two for a quarter before we are obliged to leave our own. Of course if we could persuade the landlord to let us have it for six weeks it would be better; but not many landlords are as accommodating as this, and unfortunately many of us cannot afford a double rent even for such a short space of time. Still an effort should be made, as undoubtedly much is wasted in a hurried move—in an enforced turning out on quarter day into another house on the same date.

It is only people in very straitened circumstances who accept in these artistic days of ours the landlord’s scheme of decoration. Formerly there were no ideas in the head of an ordinary paterfamilias on the subject of paint and paper, and as long as all was clean and in good condition he did not agitate himself in the least about his surroundings as far as mere colour and ‘decoration’ were concerned, and he cheerfully spread his Turkey carpet and placed his heavy sideboard and mahogany table and chairs in position, regardless of the fact that the ‘good’ flock paper and vulgar

graining made up a *tout ensemble* as utterly depressing as it was tasteless and absolutely without character.

But now, I am glad to think, what is already in one's possession governs in some measure what alterations are to be made, and as fate never yet was so propitious as to put one down straight from one house into another which was exactly decorated to our taste, we may be quite sure that there are many things to do to any place to which we may contemplate moving; therefore I say if possible let the two leases, *i.e.* of your present and your future house, run side by side for six weeks at least: so shall you move comfortably, and be able to make those alterations that are perfectly sure to be necessary.

A new house should never by any chance be entered in the September quarter; it is astonishing what an amount of coal and reckless expenditure of gas is required to obtain even moderate warmth in a new house; and furthermore most appalling discoveries are apt to be made, as soon as the fires are lighted, of the manner in which floors, doors, and window-frames are capable of shrinking the moment warmth penetrates the place; these we can circumvent in summer, but the winter is not a time to run any risks of discovering that the more we try to warm the house the wider open gape the cracks in all the woodwork, and that nothing we can do will really warm a place, more and more exposed as days go by to the four winds of heaven. Therefore, if the future house has never been lived in, enter it in June, or even in March; there will then be ample time to find out all faults in the structure before the winter arrives with all its concomitant miseries.

Delightful Mr. Aspinall, for whose existence I can never be sufficiently thankful, has made house decoration mere child's play compared to what it used to be; and, armed with his paints and a written description of what each room is to be like when done, the foreman can be left to his own devices, and the old house can be returned to with a safe conscience; for if careful selection has been made of each paper and its own particular paint, no risks are run of finding, as I found when I made my last move, that owing to the peculiar freaks of the painter there were seven shades of blue in my hall, and another separate shade of the same colour in a bed-room that was designed for a gem, and was becoming under the wretch's brush the exact shade of a butcher's apron, which was his own idea of a complete match to the 'Berry' paper—really a good hedge-sparrow egg blue-green! If only he had had Aspinall's neat little tins, I should not have had to stand over him all the time he mixed his paint, and most of the time he was applying it, and could not see at the last that he was wrong and I was absolutely right. So if those about to move will leave their decorators instructions to use Aspinall and nothing else, they can be absolutely sure that their paint will be right, and not a perpetual eyesore, as it almost invariably is when left to the tender mercies of the ordinary decorator, who considers he has an eye for colour, and is as obstinate as half-educated people invariably are.

Briefly, then, the first thing we have to do when we contemplate moving is to really make up our minds that such a step is absolutely necessary, because no one who has never moved can understand the mental misery caused

by tearing up one’s roots even from an uncongenial soil; secondly, to carefully select a house likely to be our home for the rest of our lives; thirdly, to still more carefully choose and put in train a scheme of decoration that will harmonise in some measure with our cherished possessions; and fourthly, to endeavour not to be forced at the last to move hurriedly or into a new house in the winter. Once these details are remembered and enforced, the real process of moving may begin, and be got over as soon as the new house is ready for the inmates.

The mere move itself should be left entirely in the hands of the people employed. Personally, I recommend for any one in the suburbs Bachelar, of Croydon, who moved our furniture most successfully in the south of England. Peace, of Bridgewater and Bournemouth, is equally to be commended. Unfortunately, I know no one in the north, but I have no doubt there are many firms there; but in any case all should be written to, and estimates should be carefully considered before definitely selecting any one from among their number; but all one’s belongings should be in covered furniture vans: open vans or railway trucks are ruination, and should never for one moment be used; and no estimate which includes moving any of the ‘goods and chattels’ in open trucks should be considered seriously, as even the roughest furniture suffers considerably by being carted about in this primitive manner, and is spoiled to a far greater extent than the mere difference between the two kinds of conveyances would pay for.

The books and pictures should be packed first, and unpacked last; the carpets should be rolled up, after a good

shaking, with camphor-bags inside, even for the shortest transit; the straw, &c., used in packing them in the most carefully supervised vans having been proved a most comfortable home for small and teasing animals, which, discovering that carpets, pillows, and beds are warmer and more comfortable on the whole than straw, forsake their habitations for eligible residences among our properties if we have not made them unbearable with camphor and a good sprinkling of Keating’s insect powder before they leave our hands. Each room-full of furniture should be placed ready to be again put down in the special room for which it is intended. The carpets should remain rolled until the last of the movers is departed; then after the floors have been most thoroughly scrubbed with carbolic soap, the carpets should be well beaten, and should be relaid if possible by the hands of some ‘professional,’ for on the proper laying of a carpet depends far more of the wear than we quite realise. The best furniture mover cannot resist—please remember this!—the exquisite temptation to which he is exposed to stuff up odd corners, and to prevent shaking by making ‘buffers’ out of our pillows, cushions, and odds and ends generally; and as he furthermore has most excellent wrapping material in blankets, small rugs, and other similar trifles, the amateur must come to the rescue of her goods, or the professional packer will be much too strong for her.

In really well-organised and well-managed households each bed pillow and mattress should have its loose and washable cover sewn tightly over it of whitey-brown crash; these covers should be washed every year—if possible, every six months, and if these are arranged for they will in a

great measure protect our property from the dirt and certain amount of almost indispensable damage, which would accrue to them were they left to the tender mercies of the remover, who would at once use them as mentioned above, and would not disdain to walk upon them cheerfully, did they seem to require more pressing down than a mere arrangement with the hands would effect; but if they are not so defended before the move is actually in progress, these covers should be made, or else great sheets of coarse crash, such as is used for packing purposes, should be strongly sewn round them, or inevitably we shall have to send all the bedding to the upholsterers to be ‘re-done’—*i.e.* picked over and readjusted, and the ticks washed also. The blankets must be even more carefully protected. I have seen them wrapped round iron bedsteads, and large mirrors, and with boots and even knives inside their folds, and in any case they are ruthlessly annexed for packing purposes. Now to circumvent this I strongly advise that space should be left at the top of the box of each person inhabiting each separate room, and into this space the folded blankets should go, to be ready for use at once, and to be out of the way of the ‘ravagers.’ The clothes that should have occupied the space in the box can be most safely left in the chests of drawers and wardrobes, for ‘personal property’ of all kinds is invariably respected, and not the most ruthless of packers would dream of enfolding grimy objects in body linen or even among the folds of heavy winter dresses. These are invariably left exactly as one last placed them, and are emphatically respected, while even new blankets appear to have an irresistible attraction for them, and are annexed at

once, while venerable ones suffer in the most appalling way conceivable.

It is absolutely impossible to move in anything like comfort or peace unless the juvenile members of the family and their nurses are ‘boarded out.’

It is astonishing how very kind people are to each other when this trying work is proceeding, and there are few among us, if indeed there are any, who are not possessed of relatives, or at least dear friends, who will stretch their houses to the extent of taking in some of the children for the inside of a week; but if there are none on whom we can rely, the children should be sent to an hotel, or lodgings should be taken for them for a week; for if this is not done we should be quite sure to be driven mad by them, by the utter helplessness of their nurses, and by the certainty that we should have them all ill from the draughts, the scrappy meals, the uncertain hours, and the thousand and one absolutely unpreventable events that are familiar to every mother, and therefore need not be detailed here.

Let us suppose, therefore, that our move is to commence on a Tuesday, an excellent day, which leaves Monday for our private packings, for the men to pack the books, china, and ornaments (the number of my possessions in these several ways always eliciting most amusing comments), and for us to clear out the children and nurses; these latter, by the way, should have carefully packed all the children’s things the week before in boxes marked ‘Nursery’ in large chalk letters, and should take with them to their lodgings only what is absolutely necessary. We will then proceed up-stairs, put all the blankets away as suggested just now, see our

garments are so bestowed that they are safe, the silver and jewellery in the charge of the man-servant if there be one, in the charge of the parlour-maid if there be none, and then we should see placards are up in each room, inscribed with the name of the room into which the things are to go; and our task at the other end will be much simplified if we also attach labels to each very heavy piece of furniture, taking care similar labels are already placed in a prominent position in the rooms they are intended for.

The packing of a big house takes about two days, and on the evening of the first day two of the servants and one of the household, the eldest daughter if possible, should go on to the new house; if, however, there is a long journey before them they should start almost as soon as the vans come, as the first will arrive Wednesday morning at the new abode, and someone should be there to receive it. The mistress and master should remain until Wednesday night, when they too should go on to the new abode, travelling by night if necessary, and the oldest and trustworthiest servant should be left to see the house is cleaned down by a couple of charwomen, and to hand the keys to a representative of the landlord, who should go over the house with an agent on the side of the remover to see all was left properly and undamaged by the out-going tenant; then the maid or man could rest at a friend’s house or at the local inn, and join the rest of the party on Thursday morning.

It is absolutely necessary that a separate hamper of food ready cooked and sufficient to supply the household for three days should be sent on with the first batch of domestics, and the hamper should contain kettle, cups and

saucers, plates, and knives and forks, besides the actual food. The cook will not be able to be spared from putting her belongings in order to cook eatables, but an ample supply is necessary; for, as all will be working hard, all will require sustenance. This hamper should be at once put into the larder in the new house, the door locked, and the key kept by the servant herself.

The contents of the servants' bedrooms, the kitchen, and one sitting-room, and, if possible, one bedroom besides, should be despatched first, and as each article is brought in someone should seat herself on a camp-stool in the hall and should call out 'Dining-room,' 'Servants' bedroom,' 'Blue room,' or otherwise name its destination; so will the movers avoid the pleasing sight, that met my eyes when I moved last, of the complete contents of three rooms placed higgledy-piggledy in the centre of one chamber, heaped up like 'leaves in Vallombrosa,' where the wretched painters were dawdling over their work still; the painters who had caused this chaos by insisting that none of the other rooms were ready, though none were as absolutely unfinished as that in which they had arranged this pleasing reception for me.

Thank goodness, my rage was so extreme that I turned them out neck and crop, else, verily, I believe they would be here at this very moment; but I always determined to use my own sufferings as a warning to others, and I relate this experience in the hope that no one will attempt a move until the painters are out, and unless they will manage it on the lines here laid down for them.

The men who move are always supposed to lay carpets, hang pictures and curtains, and replace the books in cases. Whenever money is a very great object—and, in that case, no move should be contemplated unless it were a matter of health or the bread-winner's change of employment—I strongly advise that they should do nothing of the kind.

In the first place, the carpets should not be placed until the last man has departed; and in the second, it is infinitely better to have not only a regular carpet-layer, but a man accustomed to hang pictures and arrange brackets, mirrors, &c. I personally have a great many pictures and odds and ends, and I have twice had a most excellent man from Shoolbred's on these occasions, who came properly provided with nails, copper-wire, and all necessary tools, and who, for a little under 3*l.*, quietly, swiftly, and skilfully placed the pictures, &c., in their places, with just a very little supervision from me; for, like all those who have no regular art education, he had the usual mania for hanging everything ever so much higher than it ought to be—a mania I most successfully and promptly combated! But beyond this, and giving him a few directions as to the placing of the pictures in due order, I left matters to him; and in three days—for, like an angel, he remained his Saturday half-holiday at my urgent request—all the walls were decorated and finished properly, which they could not have been in double the time had I been forced to rely on the help of those in the house.

The china and books should be the last things arranged, and this cannot be completed, I fear, in the week; but, thanks to my plan of short curtains and no blinds, any

window can be arranged in exactly ten minutes. For, of course, the slight brass rods should be in place before the move begins; and the carpets being square are laid in about half an hour each, the carpet-layer going swiftly from room to room, and the maids replacing the furniture, with the help of a man, as he leaves the room; and as once curtains are up and carpets down the worst of the battle is over, we may, perhaps, even arrange the china and books before Sunday, and so spend in truth a real day of rest.

I have all the decorative china arranged on a tiny folding-table we call a choir-table, because it is brought into use for choir teas and other similar festivities, and from this are picked out quickly and easily the distinctive pieces devoted to each room: the book-shelves are up, and then the books, being packed in something like order, are arranged, and, in consequence, carefully done. A move need never take more than ten days; and it would be simply indefensible were not the house absolutely and completely straight in a fortnight; and, above all, let the servants' apartments and the nurseries be put in order first. Servants, as a rule, are far less able, both by temperament and education, than we are, to bear being 'put out of their ways,' and being over-worked and over-tired resent, as no really trained and well-disciplined nature resents, the small discomforts that we know will soon be entirely forgotten, but that are apt at the time to cause friction, and, if not properly legislated for, may even lose us a good and valuable servant.

And, inasmuch as we have had an education and advantages, and inherit in some cases the disciplined nature of forefathers and mothers equally disciplined and