

HOUSES.

English and American Contented. Without Much Flattery to the Former. From an exceedingly readable article in Tinsley's Magazine we make the following selections:—

A MODEL AMERICAN HOUSE. There is an excellent chance for some speculative showman—a British Baronet—to realize a moderate fortune by importing to this country, erecting and exhibiting, an American house. I do not mean a specimen of the log cabins in which a large proportion of my countrymen are supposed to reside, nor a model of the modest White House, at Washington, which is made to serve as a poor substitute for a Presidential palace; but I mean an average American house, such as those which are erected in all the cities of the United States for the residences of the middle-class population. Compared with a dwelling of this kind, the middle-class houses in England seem destitute equally of comfort and conveniences, although those who have never been accustomed to anything different or better consider them quite comfortable and convenient enough for all practical purposes. But then different people have different minds. An Englishman absolutely believes that he can make a room by building a grate fire at one end of it. An American visiting this country is in a continual shiver, his face being scorched and his back cold, or vice versa, until he becomes thoroughly acclimated, and learns that the most healthy warmth is that which exercises in the open air imparts to the blood.

A MODEL ENGLISH FIRE. The parade, labor, skill, and paraphernalia required to maintain and manage an English fire are bewildering to a foreigner. There are the grate, and the ornamented fender, and the rug before the hearth; the steel shovel, tongs, and poker that are kept for beauty, not for use; and the steel poker, tongs, and shovel that are to be used. Need I say that the foreigner always undertakes to employ the wrong poker, and is detested accordingly? Then there is the handsome coal-box that stands by the fireside, and the ugly coal-scuttle which the maid carries in and out to replenish the former. Matches, waste-paper, bundles of kindling-wood ad libitum, and the first issue thereof is smoke. Presently there comes flame, and then, after many hours of manipulation, heat is generated. Not much heat, but still enough to make one wish for more. Meanwhile, the fire consumes the coals with a fendish disregard of their price per sack. By way of revenge, it presumes, every body who enters the room gives the fire a savage poke. But, like "Stephano's" fish in the Tempest, it is a most delicate monster. Let but a foreign hand touch the poker, and the fire grows sulen and dies out. Every man thinks he can dress a salad; every man thinks he can poke a fire; these are the two least venial of human errors. When the fire dies, either naturally, or by some unskillful touch, it strews the whole floor with its ashes. Then one of the maid-servants produces a boxful of black lead and brushes, takes away the ashes and sifts them, and by dint of much hard work, polishes the grate again. There is no other institution in England so troublesome, vexatious, unsatisfactory, and ungrateful, as an English fire; but the people love it, and praise it, and shiver round it, as if it were a fire from heaven, like that which lit the altars of the gods.

ENGLISH AND AMERICAN SERVANTS. It is evident that the origin of the numerous labor-saving contrivances in America is the lack of good servants; but in London the inhabitants have been complaining for years of the lack of good servants, and are yet very slow to introduce servant-saving machines. Americans, who what the horrors of servanthood really are, cannot but regard these complaints as ill-founded. Everywhere in England, not excepting London, the servants seem astonishingly docile, civil, willing, and well trained. The worst London maid-of-all-work who ever transformed a lodging-house into a purgatory shines like an angel by contrast with her Irish drunker in New York. The most stupid, drunken, negligent coachman in England is a perfect master of his business by contrast with his brother, the independent fellow-freeman who knows no masters your horses in the United States. Perhaps the best servants we have had in America during the past twenty years were the black slaves in the South; but they were exceedingly lazy, wasteful, and expensive, so that I have often heard a Southern planter declare that he was the real slave forced to work for his negroes. But thirty or forty years ago there was a set of servants, mostly blacks, attached to Knickerbocker families in New York and New Jersey, who were as near perfection as men and women can become. Those were the days of Dutch kitchens, Dutch dishes, Dutch neatness, and Dutch housewifery, now long past and never to return. With them faded away the old faithful race of servants, who honored and respected their employers, and were honored and respected by all. Occasionally one happens upon a descendant of this race, with all the virtues of the good old stock; but the accident is very rare. I remember one of them now—a negro named Diana—with whose culinary art no French cook could compete, and with whose merits as a woman few whiter women could compare. She lived only to show us what treasures we had lost. But the English servants, at their best, are precisely like these Knickerbocker marvels. At their worst, they are so much better than the present race of servants in America, that any American who values his comfort more than his democracy would do well to exchange countries for this reason alone. Never in the history of the world have we ourselves that we have no good servants because of our democracy. It is not pleasant to think of thousands of young men and women who grow up as servants in private houses, with no ambition beyond exchanging their domestic servitude for the public servitude of a little landlording and landladyship in a minor tavern. In America a coachman may win his way into Congress, and a servant may marry a future President. If we must have either discomfort or feudalism, let us choose discomfort. But sometimes when I watch the English servants at their work it occurs to me that, as there is nothing degrading in household service, and as Americans pay very dearly for it, surely it ought to be more honestly and ably performed even by embryo Congressmen and the possible wives of Presidents. If any remaining fragment of this sentiment as unrepentant, I'll make it stronger by suggesting that we should have in America stricter laws to compel our future rulers to give us fair work for our fair wages.

THE MODERN ENGLISH SERVANTS. One pregnant advantage that the English have over their servants are their own countryfolk. A native-born American servant is almost an impossibility. In old times we used to find them in some of the Eastern States, but they were chiefly farmers' daughters sent out as "helps" to neighbors, in order that they might learn housekeeping, and so fit themselves for becoming industrious wives. This is the reason why they were called

"helps," and not servants; for being of the same social rank as their employers, there was nothing servile in their occupations. Naturally the same term came in time to be applied to all servants; but it is now very seldom used. The servants in America, then, are all foreigners—Irish in the East, Germans in the West. English and Scotch are more scarce, and are always sure of commanding better places and higher wages. Germans are preferred to the Irish, because they know more about domestic duties and are generally neater in appearance. They have, however, propensities for larger beer, lovers, and wagers on horse-races, which test the temper of the most patient mistress very severely. The Irish go to the emigrant ships to the "intelligence offices," or servants' agencies; and often they have places—that is to say, are hired—the next day after they leave ship-board. Poor girls! The wonder is, not that they know so little, but that they learn so quickly. Coming from homes destitute of every comfort—from straw-thatched cabins, where the only housekeeping consists in piling peat upon the fire—from hovels where all the meals are cooked in the same pot, and gaudy poverty casts its curse upon the scanty fare—they are transferred in a moment from the horrors of the steerage to what seem to them palaces, and are transformed in a twinkling from emigrants to "ordinary artists," or "first-class general servants." They have never had any money before, but they are too shrewd to squander their large wages. With a generosity to which one cannot do too ample justice, their first thoughts are for their poor relatives in Ireland; their first savings are sent to help these wretched sufferers to the promised land.

These Irish servant girls, whose devotion to their religion shames many a Christian in higher stations, subscribe immense sums of money for the Roman Catholic Church, for the support of priests and for charity. They have always a trifle left, too, for Fenianism or any other "ism" that assumes the garb of their sacrifices, their faults appear trivial. They have most vexatious faults. Their social bear their independence; they respect the form of unbridled insolence; they are, almost without exception, virtuous while in service, but they are very fond of drink; they assume unservantlike finery, despise those caps which English maids wear so jauntily, and make frequent drafts upon their mistresses' wardrobes. Cousins are always coming to see them; and as every Irishman is their cousin, a thief or burglar often turns up in a well-regulated household. Fenians are their delight; and as they are invited to every wake, a considerable portion of their time is devoted to the dead rather than to the living. They domineer over the real mistress of the house, order her out of the kitchen, and give her the full benefit of a temper spoiled by early brutality. They reserve all their attention for their own country-people, and never have the slightest attachment to the families with whom they live. Regarded philosophically, they are excellent patriots; but regarded politically, they are very bad servants. In every way inferior to those of England and America.

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING. The English have too many servants. The labor is divided into very small portions, and there must be a maid in every position. Butler, housekeeper, cook, housemaid, parlor-maid, nurse, nurse-maid, laundry-maid, lady's-maid, footman, valet, scullery-maid, and page, or "butlers," they muster in a diversified but formidable array, and each one is pledged by some secret bond of the fraternity never to do anything that is assigned by custom to the departments of his coadjutors. At least three or four servants must be attached to a moderate household in London.

In the country I have known fifteen servants engaged to wait upon a family of four persons. I do not speak of noblemen's families, for these maintain an immense retinue of dependants and underlings, but of a quiet country-house, with no game-preserves to look after, and no stud of hunters to require extra stablemen. English ladies are, as a rule, better housewives than American women, and they have need to be so. To manage so many employes satisfactorily demands talents, labor, and experience enough to fit a man for the rank of drill-sergeant, or even that of general. In many English houses the servants form a household within a household. They must have a separate table, not furnished forth with the funeral baked meats from their masters' feasts, but with everything cooked especially. Even in the plainest houses there is a fixed extra allowance for the servants' beer. In great houses the upper servants have a third table in the housekeeper's room. All this draws heavily upon the income of the head of the family. Wages are not very dear, but not much cheaper than in America. Perquisites are about the same in both countries. Vails, or gifts from visitors to servants, are not thought of in America; but in many parts of England the custom is continued in all its ancient force. During the dull season last summer, there was a determined attack upon it in the newspapers, but very little effect was produced. Gentlemen furnished statistics to show that it would have cost them less than to buy their own shooting-grounds than to accept of visitations from friends, and pay pounds to the gamblers. Other gentlemen ciphered up the amount of money of which they had been mulcted by the understrappers at houses which they had honored with visits. The journals, in long, logical, and learned leaders, protested against such impositions upon guests. But when the servants, aggravated beyond endurance, at last rushed into print, and with homely pathos but bad grammar, recorded how much extra work the visitors made for them, almost everybody felt that the servants had the best of the discussion. At any rate, to tip English servants is the custom, and Americans should not venture upon an exception. It is impossible to offend any Englishman of what are called here "the lower orders" by offering him a shilling. From the policeman who points out your way to the page who ushers you into a drawing-room, they all have itching palms. In any other country you can ask a question of a street loafer without being solicited for "the price of a pint of beer;" but not in this. Nor is it in poverty so very hard and so utterly shameless, as in Spain and Italy the beggars are too proud to ask for alms if you address them politely.

AMERICAN AND ENGLISH BILLS OF FARE. When all has been considered, the fact remains that the Americans have by far the best, most varied, and most extensive bill of fare. I am aware that this, in a great measure, is a matter of individual opinion, and therefore in all I have said of English dishes I have endeavored to condense the results of a long series of references to other Americans who have visited England. It is sufficient for me to endorse the verdict of this national jury. I am afraid, however, that the verdict of a jury of Englishmen who have visited the United States

might be very much on the other side. Until recently I supposed that it was admitted that American fruits were much more juicy and luscious than the English, with, perhaps, the single exception of the plum. But the other day a party of Englishmen, all of whom had been twice to the United States, gravely asserted the contrary, and were surprised at my extraordinary lack of discrimination when I could not agree with them. Their English fruit must have ripened upon the annual walls—may it ever be so!—and their American fruit must have been so before it was made a part of the banquet for the favored few of Englishmen, all of whom had been twice to the United States, gravely asserted the contrary, and were surprised at my extraordinary lack of discrimination when I could not agree with them. 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