

CHAPTER XII.

HOME À LA POMPADOUR.

Well, Lillie came back at last; and John conducted her over the transformed Seymour mansion, where literally old things had passed away, and all things become new.

There was not a relic of the past. The house was furbished and resplendent--it was gilded--it was frescoed--it was à la Pompadour, and à la Louis Quinze and Louis Quatorze, and à la every thing Frenchy and pretty, and gay and glistening. For, though the parlors at first were the only apartments contemplated in this renaissance, yet it came to pass that the parlors, when all tricked out, cast such invidious reflections on the chambers that the chambers felt themselves old and rubbishy, and prayed and stretched out hands of imploration to have something done for them!

So the spare chamber was first included in the glorification programme; but, when the spare chamber was once made into a Pompadour pavilion, it so flouted and despised the other old-fashioned Yankee chambers, that they were ready to die with envy; and, in short, there was no way to produce a sense of artistic unity, peace, and quietness, but to do the whole thing over, which was done triumphantly.

The French Emperor, Louis Napoleon, who was a shrewd sort of a man in his day and way, used to talk a great deal about the "logic of events;" which language, being interpreted, my dear gentlemen, means a good deal in domestic life. It means, for instance, that when you drive the first nail, or tear down the first board, in the way of alteration of an old house, you will have to make over every room and corner in it, and pay as much again for it as if you built a new one.

John was able to sympathize with Lillie in her childish delight in the new house, because he loved her, and was able to put himself and his own wishes out of the question for her sake; but, when all the bills connected with this change came in, he had emotions with which Lillie could not sympathize: first, because she knew nothing about figures, and was resolved never to know any thing; and, like all people who know nothing about them, she cared nothing;--and, second, because she did not love John.

Now, the truth is, Lillie would have been quite astonished to have been told this. She, and many other women, suppose that they love their husbands, when, unfortunately, they have not the beginning of an idea what love is. Let me explain it to you, my dear lady. Loving to be admired by a man, loving to be petted by him, loving to be caressed by him, and loving to be praised by him, is not loving a man. All these may be when a woman has no power of loving at all,--they may all be simply because she loves herself, and loves to be flattered, praised, caressed, coaxed; as a cat likes to be coaxed and stroked,

and fed with cream, and have a warm corner.

But all this is not love. It may exist, to be sure, where there is love; it generally does. But it may also exist where there is no love. Love, my dear ladies, is self-sacrifice; it is a life out of self and in another. Its very essence is the preferring of the comfort, the ease, the wishes of another to one's own, for the love we bear them. Love is giving, and not receiving. Love is not a sheet of blotting-paper or a sponge, sucking in every thing to itself; it is an out-springing fountain, giving from itself. Love's motto has been dropped in this world as a chance gem of great price by the loveliest, the fairest, the purest, the strongest of Lovers that ever trod this mortal earth, of whom it is recorded that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Now, in love, there are ten receivers to one giver. There are ten persons in this world who like to be loved and love love, where there is one who knows how to love. That, O my dear ladies, is a nobler attainment than all your French and music and dancing. You may lose the very power of it by smothering it under a load of early self-indulgence. By living just as you are all wanting to live,--living to be petted, to be flattered, to be admired, to be praised, to have your own way, and to do only that which is easy and agreeable,--you may lose the power of self-denial and self-sacrifice; you may lose the power of loving nobly and worthily, and become a mere sheet of blotting-paper all your life.

You will please to observe that, in all the married life of these two,

as thus far told, all the accommodations, compliances, changes, have been made by John for Lillie.

He has been, step by step, giving up to her his ideal of life, and trying, as far as so different a nature can, to accommodate his to hers; and she accepts all this as her right and due.

She sees no particular cause of gratitude in it,--it is what she expected when she married. Her own specialty, the thing which she has always cultivated, is to get that sort of power over man, by which she can carry her own points and purposes, and make him flexible to her will; nor does a suspicion of the utter worthlessness and selfishness of such a life ever darken the horizon of her thoughts.

John's bills were graver than he expected. It is true he was rich; but riches is a relative term. As related to the style of living hitherto practised in his establishment, John's income was princely, and left a large balance to be devoted to works of general benevolence; but he perceived that, in this year, that balance would be all absorbed; and this troubled him.

Then, again, his establishment being now given up by his sister must be reorganized, with Lillie at its head; and Lillie declared in the outset that she could not, and would not, take any trouble about any thing.

"John would have to get servants; and the servants would have to see to things:" she "was resolved, for one thing, that she wasn't going to be a slave to house-keeping."

By great pains and importunity, and an offer of high wages, Grace and John retained Bridget in the establishment, and secured from New York a seamstress and a waitress, and other members to make out a domestic staff.

This sisterhood were from the isle of Erin, and not an unfavorable specimen of that important portion of our domestic life. They were quick-witted, well-versed in a certain degree of household and domestic skill, guided in well-doing more by impulsive good feeling than by any very enlightened principle. The dominant idea with them all appeared to be, that they were living in the house of a millionaire, where money flowed through the establishment in a golden stream, out of which all might drink freely and rejoicingly, with no questions asked. Mrs. Lillie concerned herself only with results, and paid no attention to ways and means. She wanted a dainty and generous table to be spread for her, at all proper hours, with every pleasing and agreeable variety; to which she should come as she would to the table of a boarding-house, without troubling her head where any thing came from or went to. Bridget, having been for some years under the training and surveillance of Grace Seymour, was more than usually competent as cook and provider; but Bridget had abundance of the Irish astuteness, which led her to feel the genius of circumstances, and to

shape her course accordingly.

With Grace, she had been accurate, saving, and economical; for Miss Grace was so. Bridget had felt, under her sway, the beauty of that economy which saves because saving is in itself so fitting and so respectable; and because, in this way, a power for a wise generosity is accumulated. She was sympathetic with the ruling spirit of the establishment.

But, under the new mistress, Bridget declined in virtue. The announcement that the mistress of a family isn't going to give herself any trouble, nor bother her head with care about any thing, is one the influence of which is felt downward in every department. Why should Bridget give herself any trouble to save and economize for a mistress who took none for herself? She had worked hard all her life, why not take it easy? And it was so much easier to send daily a basket of cold victuals to her cousin on Vine Street than to contrive ways of making the most of things, that Bridget felt perfectly justified in doing it. If, once in a while, a little tea and a paper of sugar found their way into the same basket, who would ever miss it?

The seamstress was an elegant lady. She kept all Lillie's dresses and laces and wardrobe, and had something ready for her to put on when she changed her toilet every day. If this very fine lady wore her mistress's skirts and sashes, and laces and jewelry, on the sly, to evening parties among the upper servant circles of Springdale, who

was to know it? Mrs. John Seymour knew nothing about where her things were, nor what was their condition, and never wanted to trouble herself to inquire.

It may therefore be inferred that when John began to settle up accounts, and look into financial matters, they seemed to him not to be going exactly in the most promising way.

He thought he would give Lillie a little practical insight into his business,--show her exactly what his income was, and make some estimates of his expenses, just that she might have some little idea how things were going.

So John, with great care, prepared a nice little account-book, prefaced by a table of figures, showing the income of the Spindlewood property, and the income of his law business, and his income from other sources. Against this, he placed the necessary out-goes of his business, and showed what balance might be left. Then he showed what had hitherto been spent for various benevolent purposes connected with the schools and his establishments at Spindlewood. He showed what had been the bills for the refitting of the house, and what were now the running current expenses of the family.

He hoped that he had made all these so plain and simple, that Lillie might easily be made to understand them, and that thus some clear financial boundaries might appear in her mind. Then he seized a

favorable hour, and produced his book.

"Lillie," he said, "I want to make you understand a little about our expenditures and income."

"Oh, dreadful, John! don't, pray! I never had any head for things of that kind."

"But, Lillie, please let me show you," persisted John. "I've made it just as simple as can be."

"O John! now--I just--can't--there now! Don't bring that book now; it'll just make me low-spirited and cross. I never had the least head for figures; mamma always said so; and if there is any thing that seems to me perfectly dreadful, it is accounts. I don't think it's any of a woman's business--it's all man's work, and men have got to see to it. Now, please don't," she added, coming to him coaxingly, and putting her arm round his neck.

"But, you see, Lillie," John persevered, in a pleading tone,--"you see, all these alterations that have been made in the house have involved very serious expenses; and then, too, we are living at a very different rate of expense from what we ever lived before"--

"There it is, John! Now, you oughtn't to reproach me with it; for you know it was your own idea. I didn't want the alterations made; but you

would insist on it. I didn't think it was best; but you would have them."

"But, Lillie, it was all because you wanted them."

"Well, I dare say; but I shouldn't have wanted them if I thought it was going to bring in all this bother and trouble, and make me have to look over old accounts, and all such things. I'd rather never have had any thing!" And here Lillie began to cry.

"Come, now, my darling, do be a sensible woman, and not act like a baby."

"There, John! it's just as I knew it would be; I always said you wanted a different sort of a woman for a wife. Now, you knew when you took me that I wasn't in the least strong-minded or sensible, but a poor little helpless thing; and you are beginning to get tired of me already. You wish you had married a woman like Grace, I know you do."

"Lillie, how silly! Please do listen, now. You have no idea how simple and easy what I want to explain to you is."

"Well, John, I can't to-night, anyhow, because I have a headache. Just this talk has got my head to thumping so,--it's really dreadful! and I'm so low-spirited! I do wish you had a wife that would suit you better." And forthwith Mrs. Lillie dissolved in tears; and John

stroked her head, and petted her, and called her a nice little pussy, and begged her pardon for being so rough with her, and, in short, acted like a fool generally.

"If that woman was my wife now," I fancy I hear some youth with a promising moustache remark, "I'd make her behave!"

Well, sir, supposing she was your wife, what are you going to do about it?

What are you going to do when accounts give your wife a sick headache, so that she cannot possibly attend to them? Are you going to enact the Blue Beard, and rage and storm, and threaten to cut her head off? What good would that do? Cutting off a wrong little head would not turn it into a right one. An ancient proverb significantly remarks, "You can't have more of a cat than her skin,"--and no amount of fuming and storming can make any thing more of a woman than she is. Such as your wife is, sir, you must take her, and make the best of it. Perhaps you want your own way. Don't you wish you could get it?

But didn't she promise to obey? Didn't she? Of course. Then why is it that I must be all the while yielding points, and she never? Well, sir, that is for you to settle. The marriage service gives you authority; so does the law of the land. John could lock up Mrs. Lillie till she learned her lessons; he could do any of twenty other things that no gentleman would ever think of doing, and the law would support

him in it. But, because John is a gentleman, and not Paddy from Cork, he strokes his wife's head, and submits.

We understand that our brethren, the Methodists, have recently decided to leave the word "obey" out of the marriage-service. Our friends are, as all the world knows, a most wise and prudent denomination, and guided by a very practical sense in their arrangements. If they have left the word "obey" out, it is because they have concluded that it does no good to put it in,--a decision that John's experience would go a long way to justify.