

cumstance, to bring our work up to our standard instead of girding peevishly under the burden; to count as earth's best good, the Blessedness of giving, rather than the Happiness of receiving.

In her wonderful "Story of Avis," Elizabeth Stuart Phelps tells how the young artist was sent to Alta Mura "to ask what he wants done with you."

"Are you ready, young lady," he had said, "to spend two days copying a carrot that hangs twenty feet away from you against the wall?"

"Two hundred, if I must!" said Avis.

"She stooped to her task with a stern, ungirlish doggedness, * * * abandoned herself to the drudgeries involved in mastering the *technique* of art with a passion which added to the fire of the artist something of feminine self-abnegation."

Do we dignify home-making or painting by the illustration and suggested application ?

MARION HARLAND.

THE conviction that well-to-do American families find house-keeping a failure, would seem the natural result of a close observation of the boarding-house system of our large cities. In many of the finest blocks the boarding-houses outnumber the homes, and of the cheaper neighborhoods this is equally true. When it is remembered that as a rule a private house contains but one family, while the boarding-house may contain two or three, it would seem that a far larger number of people are boarding than keeping house. People with incomes varying from one to four thousand dollars a year, who have been accustomed to the smaller luxuries of city life, have very little choice in the matter; from many of them, the reply to the question, "Is housekeeping a failure?" would be, "No, but an impossibility." The low-priced but respectable boarding-houses that accommodate vast numbers of families whose income is from a thousand to fifteen hundred a year, afford a semblance of luxury, in place of the undignified struggle to keep house in such cheap rooms as they could pay for. For very little more than would hire very simple lodgings and pay for food, they obtain a share of several advantages which, borne by one family alone, would take a very much larger income to support.

They have servants, live in a house of more pretension and

in a better location than they otherwise could, and have much more variety of food. Although these advantages may be little more than nominal, there is a great deal in a name, and many people would rather be uncomfortable with certain surroundings, than comfortable in confessed poverty.

But it is not lack of means to keep house that drives people to board in the expensive neighborhoods. There we find young married people, and, unfortunately, old married people, who have kept house, and taken to boarding, people who pay for confined quarters and meals at a general table as much as would maintain a small house and necessary service comfortably, and in cases where a private table is enjoyed, the prices paid are so high that it would certainly seem to answer in the affirmative the question, is housekeeping a failure?—when the known discomforts of boarding are preferred to it and so dearly paid for.

But very rarely do we meet with boarders who prefer boarding. In all large cities there are gay and frivolous women who shirk the cares of housekeeping as they do of motherhood, and to them the fashionable boarding-house or hotel offer an escape from all duties, and leave unlimited time for the pursuit of pleasure. The far greater number of boarders, however, are not of this class. We find good housekeeping mothers bringing up children in boarding-houses; but, as they will tell you, not from choice. Ill health is sometimes her reason, but far more frequently we are told that the house-mother could not bear the burden of servants any longer; worn out in patience and in all hope of better things, she and her family deprive themselves of home and its pleasures, and are enduring a life full of discomfort, but free from care, rather than struggle further with the question of domestics.

To all but the few pleasure-loving women before alluded to, boarding offers no advantages compared with home.

The man with an income of from seven to ten thousand a year—and with less than this it would be impossible to board with elbow-room in a fashionable location—can provide his family with a good house, good furniture, good food, good clothes. But it too frequently happens that the help necessary to make all these blessings enjoyable is not to be purchased for money; that the housewife becomes worn out in her efforts to take care of her house, tormented, not aided by the servants she pays to assist

her, and, weary of the struggle, often to save tottering health, the dear home is broken up, and the care-free refuge of a boarding-house sought as a poor makeshift. But it must be remembered that before we pronounce housekeeping a failure, it must be given up from choice, and the boarding-house accepted as a better and pleasanter way of living, not as now, as a disagreeable necessity.

But city life is not necessarily American life, nor is the life of citizens confined to cities, and such are the high rents in many of them that a very large part of their business population reside in the suburbs, the well-to-do in the fashionable, flourishing suburban towns, and those whose incomes are very small, but who prefer a humble home to boarding, choose the growing-villages, where cottages rent for two to three hundred dollars.

Here we see the happy home life of America; not, perhaps, happier than that of cities, but much easier of observation.

The doors of a city home close on its inmates and we know no more. In the pleasant suburban life we see the busy man at home after the day's business is over, enjoying his flowers and his shady lawn, or driving his family in the pleasant summer evenings. Everywhere there are evidences of the happy home life. In the smaller villages it is the same. One sees the clerk or book-keeper enjoying his smoke on his own porch, surrounded by his children. Contrast this free and wholesome life with the cribbed and confined one of a couple of rooms in a boarding-house, and it will not surprise you to know that a very large majority would say that housekeeping for them was very far from a failure.

The families who live in larger houses, and are dependent on servants for cleanliness and comfort, may be less enthusiastic; the house-mother may tell of vexations and over-wrought nerves, and speak of flying to the hotel or boarding-house to escape the necessity of employing servants; or, if her experience has been fortunate, she may indignantly deny the possibility of comparing the two states of housekeeping and boarding, the last being to her motherly mind only a means of shirking responsibilities on the part of idly disposed women.

But the families who look on the possibility of breaking up home at some future date, the date is generally very remote, and only in case the last straw should be added to the burden, will rarely speak of it as a pleasant change, but as of some terrible misfortune, to be avoided if possible.

It is very difficult to generalize from the limited experience of any one person ; but so far as the writer's observation goes house-keeping is never a failure. To a very few married people the boarding-house offers advantages over housekeeping. To professional people where wife as well as husband have their time remuneratively employed, the ready meals and absence of all care as to house or rooms is a boon, and a homelike abiding place worthy of appreciation.

To the entirely incapable girl-wife, married soon after she leaves school, who after a few short months of difficulties and wasteful effort, or no effort, boarding may offer a refuge from worse discomfort, and as has been said, to those married people of very small income who shun living in the cheap neighborhoods that must be their choice if they wish to keep house, boarding is an economy, and so far an advantage over housekeeping, to which, however, nearly every such family looks forward as the goal of their hopes, when circumstances improve.

CATHERINE OWEN.

No ; emphatically, no. This is the way in which I would briefly answer the question, "Is housekeeping a failure?" Of course, hundreds of housekeepers fall by the wayside and are glad to take refuge in boarding-houses ; yet what of that ? Because there are many failures in the iron business shall we pronounce the entire trade a failure ? There are failures on the stage ; but shall we say the dramatic art is not worth preserving ? Failure follows failure in literature ; yet who would ask all authors to throw away their pens for that reason ? In all these cases there is a bright side as well as a dark one. So also in housekeeping.

What does boarding do for men and women ? It makes them selfish, and narrow-minded, and petty fault-finders. It is inconceivable that a person can, after some years, come out of such a life in possession of the same admirable qualities that are likely to develop in one's own home. Men may not be affected to the same extent as women, because they come more in contact with the world in their business, but nobody can estimate how much the growth of a woman's character is retarded by the aimless life in a boarding-house. Lovely traits that would be fostered in the home are nipped in the bud elsewhere. Throughout the land there are hundreds of thousands of homes where all that is noble