

WOMAN and HER WORK.

I believe there are people in this world who in their souls share the belief of those benighted tribes of Africans who load their dead with all the available spoil they can command, in preparing them for burial, under the impression that the departed will thus be enabled to buy his way into pastures of eternal happiness, and that in the next world, even as in this, every obstacle will melt away at the magic touch of gold! They must cherish some such delusion or they would never go to the lengths they do in the hope of saving a few cents.

I suppose after a time the habit of saving, becomes so confirmed that it is second nature, and the victim of this peculiar form of insanity finds it much easier to save a cent than spend one, but I have known persons quite rational on all other points who have a capacity for self denial in the noble cause of saving five cents might well arouse the envy of a Trappist monk. And, all without any object, beyond the pure love of adding cent to cent, and dollar to dollar, not for use in this world; because the confirmed lover of saving never breaks loose from his self-imposed bonds: not to leave to some idolized son or daughter, because the really mean man or woman is generally childless, but simply from some naturally sordid bent of mind which makes him willing to sacrifice everything rather than spend the fraction of a cent more than is necessary. And the strangest part of it all is, that an economist of this type seems to regard the saving habit as a peculiar virtue for which he is entitled to special credit.

I have known people who make it the entire object of their lives to get things a few cents cheaper than anyone else, and who wasted more time, physical energy, and shoe leather, in the attempt than would have outbalanced the amount saved, ten times over. "A penny saved, is a penny gained" may be true enough, but it is scarcely a safe motto to depend upon entirely, because the inveterate economist frequently out-reaches himself, on account of his very narrow range of vision, he is so eagerly engaged in saving his cent that he loses a good opportunity of making a dollar. The woman who travels from one end of the town to the other to save half a cent a yard on her new print gown, "just as a matter of principle" and not because she is too poor to afford the extra price, is far more extravagant than she has any idea of, and is blindly wearing out her physical forces, saving her pocket at the expense of her health, and coming home really poorer than it she had made her purchase at the most expensive shop in the place, provided it was close at hand. She is tired, cross, out of spirits, with a tired body and an aching head, and if she would confess the truth she hates the sight of her bargain with a bitter hatred, born of the too high price she has paid for it.

There is a certain pleasure in necessary economy, which has a sort of "virtue-is-its-own-reward," flavor, very comforting to those who are obliged to practice it, and the girl who is strong and healthy, but poor, and who resolves to walk in and out of town in order that she may conscientiously spend the ten cents car fare on caramels, gets more real satisfaction out of the hard earned feast than her richer neighbors would derive from the choicest box of French chocolates.

What woman has not felt an absolute triumph in making over last year's bonnet, so that all her friends thought it was perfectly new; or in getting another summer out of her black lace dress, by sponging and ironing it, when such economies were really necessary? When the parlor needed a new carpet, or she had set her heart on that lovely sideboard for the dining-room, and Jim or Charlie had told her regretfully that he was very sorry, but he really could not afford it this year, because business was so dull, surely no other carpet or sideboard ever brought such satisfaction with it, as the one purchased with many a small self-denial, and the little woman who so earns a coveted luxury deserves an approving pat on the back for her perseverance. But the well to do woman who spends hours in bargain hunting, who cheapens a tradesman's wares, until he takes off a few cents, for the sake of getting rid of her, and who spends a whole morning watching an old garment which is scarcely worth offering to a self respecting tramp, is really beneath contempt, because her sordid nature prompts her to live as far as possible at the expense of others. Take what you can get and give as little as possible in return, is the principal on which she moulds her life, and her worst enemy cannot accuse her of not living up to her principles.

I have known men who made a boast of never paying for anything they bought at the time of purchase, although perfectly able to do so, the argument being that they instead of the shop keeper had the use of the money for from three to six months after the article was bought, and then when the bill was sent in they insisted on having five per cent taken off! Praise-worthy thrift of course, but if that shop-keeper was not up to our economical friend's little game sufficiently to charge him at least ten per cent more than anyone else, he deserved to lose his money, that is all!

I am afraid the gentler sex are not far behind their lords in saving grace, because I have known a woman cherish her fruit cake so very tenderly that the weevils ate it up before she could use it, and save up stores of worn out clothes, which she considered too good to give away, until the moths thought it a pity so much good material should go to waste and obligingly devoured the treasured garments which might have clothed some poor person, and so helped their owner in a small way to a shelter in one of those mansions where both moths and rust are unknown.

I knew a girl once who was not naturally mean herself, but who had suffered much from the extreme closeness of those in authority over her all her life, and after a while she became engaged to the man of her choice and was very happy. A friend of hers with whom economy was at once a religion and a pleasure, congratulated the prospective bride upon her engagement, and asked just one question about the bridegroom elect. She did not ask "Is he handsome?" "Is he rich?" or "Is he good?" Oh no! none of those characteristics mattered particularly, so she just summoned all the virtues up in one word and asked "Is he saving?" and his lady-love heaved a long sigh of utter content and answered with devout earnestness, "No, thank heaven, he is not!" She had had enough saving in her life, and longed for a change. Thrift, my friends, is all very well in its way, but it is too apt to grow upon one, and in its more virulent forms, it causes a sort of blindness which sometimes prevents its victims from being able to distinguish the fine dividing line between extreme closeness and that anxiety to get the better of one's neighbors, which is nothing short of absolute dishonesty.

A kind friend of this column, and I hope I may say of mine, has sent me some excellent recipes for home made wines, and as all of them are strictly non-alcoholic, I do not think that anyone could object to them as a beverage.

Rhubarb Wine.

Take any desired quantity of rhubarb and pound it, a few sticks at a time, with a wooden mallet, or old fashioned potato pounder against the side of a wooden pail or clean butter tub. When all the stalks are pounded, place them in a coarse towel or cloth and wring all the remaining juice out of them. To every pint of juice add same quantity of water and to each quart of this liquid put one pound of coarsest brown sugar, the sugar cannot be too coarse and dark. Set away in an earthenware jar or crock and keep closely covered for three weeks, occasionally removing the scum until the mixture is quite clear. Bottle and cork tightly for six months or a year, the longer the better. The rhubarb is best in the middle of July, but if it can be got tender and juicy after that time it may still be used.

Raspberry Wine.

Four quarts of raspberries squeezed through a coarse towel, add two quarts of cold water, and one pound of coarsest brown sugar to each quart of this liquid, the same as in the rhubarb wine. Set away in an earthenware jar for three weeks, skimming when needed. The crock must have a close fitting cover. Bottle, or jug it, corking tightly, and do not use for a year.

Blueberry Wine.

This is made exactly as raspberry wine, except that any quantity of berries may be used, but the juice must be measured as in rhubarb wine—one pint of juice, to one pint cold water, and one pound of coarsest brown sugar to each quart of the liquid. Rhubarb wine looks, and tastes like sherry, raspberry wine like claret, and blueberry wine, like port.

DOLLY VARDEN—No, my dear, not at all. I never "wonder who is writing to me now." Receiving letters from people who are utterly unknown to me, is too common an occurrence to excite the least curiosity in my mind. But I am always glad to know that my columns interest everyone especially the girls, in whose interest it has first started, and I am pleased to hear from them, and to do anything in my power to help them. As I have often said there is always room for one more, and a warm welcome for all new comers. About jealousy I answered your questions last week, no I need not repeat them. I think it most unladylike for any girl to smoke at all; and so do all men for though they may encourage her at the time she would be surprised if she could hear the remarks they make when she is not present.

Of course, it would depend entirely on circumstances. People are often obliged to break an engagement through no fault of their own; but they should lose no time in explaining the reason of their neglect. I cannot tell you the author of the lines—"Nelly, Nelly, listen love, to me" from "Nelly Bly" is the nearest to you me quotation that I can come. But I will have another book, and let you know the result. Your writing is rather odd but very legible, as I don't know your age, I cannot say whether it is unformed still, or not. No, I always write on Sunday myself. Your questions were no trouble at all.

A LITTLE IGNORAMUS, ST. JOHN.—You signed yourself that, so I am obliged to use the name you gave, but your letter is not at all that of an ignoramus, rather that of a wise little girl who has sense enough to ask for information.

If you find the hostess at home it is not necessary to leave a card at all, unless it is your first call, in which case take out your cards quietly just before you say good-bye, and leave them on the parlor table, one for each of the ladies of the family. If there is no one home to take your card, slip it under the door. Ask only for the lady of the house and if she is not at home and has neither grown up daughters or sisters living with her, leave only one card, no young girl ever leaves a card for a gentleman.

Many people have their card receivers on a table in the parlor, and perhaps where there is either one servant, or perhaps none at all kept, that is the most convenient place, but the hall table is supposed to be the proper spot for it. Miss Smith, by all means, and then the Misses Susan Smith; Miss Mary Smith and Miss Susan Smith; but never under any circumstances leave out the Miss. It is quite correct for the eldest daughter during the first season she is out in society to have her name engraved or written on her mother's card if she wishes it, but after her first season she must have her own cards. Do not have them printed. If they are not engraved, write them yourself, it is much better style. Your writing is not exactly what is called a fashionable hand, but I think you could easily form it into one, and it is very clear and legible as it is. Write whenever you like and I shall be glad to give you any advice in my power.

ASTRA.

THE DRESSMAKER DEFENDED.

A Reader of "Astra" Differs From Her Critics.

It is our custom on Saturday evenings, when the last customer has come and gone, when clippings and thread ends have been swept up, lap boards and press boards put away and willow frames exiled to the remote depths of clothes presses, there to remain in seclusion until Monday, to enjoy what we call a holiday. Our room having been made as neat and homelike as possible—one would be very shrewd at such times to guess that it was a sewing room at all, unless enlightened by the letters "Miss Knox, Dressmaker" in the window—we put all thoughts of work aside and enjoy ourselves, each in her own way.

At such times PROGRESS is a welcome visitor, and Saturday evening seldom passes without some one of us "dodging around the corner" to the drug store, for a copy. We are particularly interested in the society items, because we know a good many of the dresses mentioned there from time to time.

But, to-night our indignation is aroused against our old favorite, for, in an article headed "A Man and his Tailor" we find sewing girls shown up in what we consider a wrong light. Moreover to make matters worse, the obnoxious sentiments are expressed by Astra, Astra! our, I may almost say—patron saint, Astra! whose two columns on love and jealousy we gloated over with delight only a few minutes ago. Now we do not want any one to think more meanly of us than we deserve; so, urged on by the other girls, I grasp my pen and beg to offer a few humble words in protest against the blame heaped upon us as a class.

It may be that women find it more difficult to get their clothes made to suit them, than do men, but, if so, surely this is not the fault of that patient toiler, the dress maker. I might suggest that women are more difficult to please than men, in every way, again, consider the endless variety of dresses worn by women, each dress requiring accurate knowledge concerning numerous details in order to be made perfectly. Contrast this with the comparatively simple way in which men's clothes are made. Think of the bretelle, the bas, the zouave jackets, trains, demi-trains etc., with which our modern ladies adorn their lovely persons; things which in the abstract strikes terror into the heart of man, and in the concrete (if I may so) use the hackneyed words) bring him a hopeless captive, to the test of the charming wearer. Surely the dressmaker, who takes the crude materials and converts them into those fairy like robes, deserves credit, verily, she must possess both patience and skill.

I think the lady whose sufferings Astra describes stands condemned by her own action. Why does she gossip about the weather, and waste the time of the dressmaker, by asking about the sick child, in whom she is not enough interested to know whether the little one has measles or chicken pox. Why should she not come to the point at once in a plain—I had almost written, manly way.

Miss Knox is our head dressmaker. Long experience in dealing with the ways of lovely women has made her "as wise" as a serpent; and as harmless as a dove—perhaps. There are ladies whom she treats well in every way, for whom we all like to work, and who seldom have cause to complain. These are not always the ones who pay the most for our work. There are others whom she treats, perhaps with "cold disfavor," but she generally has good reason for doing so.

Take Mrs. Gobbler, for instance, who comes each spring with her three daughters and consults Miss Knox as to the style, material, &c., which will set off the beauty of those three damsels to the best advantage; not to mention a chaste costume which is to grace Mrs. G.'s own portly person. Miss Knox spends, maybe two hours explaining, advising and showing her fashion plates, after which the ladies smilingly depart, and like the oft lamented bark "never return." The Gobblers do their own sewing, and this is one of their ways of getting points on style gratis. Mrs. G. excuses herself to her friends for doing her own sewing by saying:

"The dressmakers spoiled so many suits

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