

**Woman and Her Work**

"The sweet-scented garden violet is now being put to a new use. The society girl takes her violets, which she counts by the thousand this year, and at the close of the day's wearing, while yet fresh, pours boiling milk over them, and lets it stand till cold. This is the latest fad for keeping the skin soft and free from wrinkles."

This excellent bit of advice about a new use for the violet will scarcely cause a ripple of excitement in the mind of the Canadian girl, who does not count her violets by the hundred, at this time of year; but all the same it is well to know that a bunch of violets can be put to such good use after it has faded, and milk of violets would be a most delightful application for the skin.

Speaking of violets, it is strange that these lovely little flowers never seem to go out of fashion. One reads that the Parisian hats which are being prepared for early spring are simply covered with violets. One of these merits description, and will serve to give quite an idea of the coming hat.

"A red felt, of modified sailor shape is bound with black velvet an inch wide, a scarf of black velvet is laid around the crown, and twisted into a tall aigrette at one side, violets are massed at the base of the aigrette, and under the brim, and the result is very chic indeed, violets being simply the rage at present." Nothing could possibly be more simple than such a hat, and yet one can tell that it is stylish just by reading about it.

It will be good news to many women who love fresh, pretty summer dresses, but cannot afford to indulge in the more expensive materials to hear that a great deal of nun's veiling is to be worn next summer. This soft thin wool drapes prettily, comes in dainty colors, and makes up into pretty costumes for theatre, and simple evening wear besides possessing the great advantage of washing. The skirts of these simple little gowns are often plaited while the bodice is draped in surplus fashion, and the pointed neck filled in with a guimpe of white lace over white satin. A very pretty example is of grey veiling made up as I have described with a belt of amethyst velvet, and the same velvet at the top of the white neckband. There is a cuff of white satin covered with lace to match the guimpe and a turn over cuff of the velvet.

Another stylish grey costume is of zebeline cloth, trimmed with black braid, made with a velvet bolero. The skirt shows the hip trimmings which had such a short vogue a few years ago, and is now being revived, the upper part of the skirt being trimmed from the waist to the hips with a cluster of parallel rows of the braid. The sleeves are covered with the same braid running in rows from the shoulder to the wrist, while the bolero which is double breasted is trimmed with parallel rows of the braid set half their own width apart; the high flaring collar is bordered with braid, and a high belt of black taffeta extends up under the bolero. Velvet gowns are trimmed in this manner with braid, or with stitched bands of bias silk in place of the braid.

Other gowns for early spring are made of the mixed black and white cheviot that has the effect of small checks. These are trimmed either with black velvet ribbon or braid, and are very fresh looking and trim. An inexpensive costume for between seasons is composed of a skirt of this grey cheviot trimmed with black braid, and a blouse of black velvet, or velveteen. The blouse has a high jacket collar and is trimmed with braid or left perfectly plain, as the wearer's fancy dictates; the braid should always be stitched down on both edges. Some of the newest cloth dresses are made with a fitted jacket cut very open in front over a blouse of the same cloth.

Skirts of silk and satin are cut to fit quite closely around the top, and then break out suddenly into a great many godets; there are no gathers at all in the back, but two flat plaits that fold under and meet. Some of these skirts are trimmed at the top, as I have described, but this is far more of a caprice than a rule, as quite a large number are trimmed at the foot, while still another contingent bobs up serenely with a trimming that is entirely confined to the middle, but such decorations are clearly efforts in the direction of novelty, the perfectly plain skirt still having decidedly the preference amongst the best dressed women.

The chief point about the most fashionable sleeves is their simplicity in shape and the really perfect model is cut out of one piece. The inclination towards elaborate decoration of sleeves is very noticeable, but the trimming always takes the form of flat bands stretched on, so as not to interrupt the simplicity of outline. The exaggerated length over the hand, is a

thing of the past, and the sleeve of the season ends at the wrist, which has either a ruffle, a cuff, or both, while it sometimes ends merely with a cord, as a finish. Of the making of many and various belts there seems to be no end! Sometimes they are very low in front, and very high up in the back, carried still higher by a long and slender bow the donkey ears of which run almost up to the neck. Again they are wide in front, and cut down to a mere knot behind, while others are the same width all around. In fact they rival the stock collars in variety and eccentricity of design.

Blouses are still very much worn; indeed it seems doubtful if these convenient garments will go entirely "out" again. They fit down quite closely in the back, and are slightly "pouched" in front. Yoke effects in trimming them are still popular, but a newer mode is to make the front double-breasted with a ruffle; set down the edge on the left side. This ruffle is about four inches wide and is closely plaited, made double, and even triple, and falls very full, and fluffly, when it is of chiffon, as is often the case.

ASTRA.

**POINTS ABOUT HOMING PIGEONS.**

**How the Racers Are Bred and Trained—Their Intelligence.**

The peculiar faculty that enables a pigeon to return to its home from great distances is a point about which authorities disagree. The theory which is most widely accepted is that the bird is gifted with remarkable eyesight and with a memory for landmarks superior to that of any other creature. The former theory that the birds were guided exclusively by instinct seems disproved by the frequency with which even the best trained and highest bred homers have been lost in fogs. During the recent Poultry Show, when several of the pigeon fanciers were interviewed on the rearing and training of homing pigeons, one of varied experience said:

"Instinct is unerring, and the fact that the homing pigeon not only frequently errs but at times shows great indecision as to the route it will take proves conclusively that it is not governed entirely by instinct. There is no doubt that the birds possess a high order of intelligence, which is often shown when they become lost in a race by their return to the room in which they have been kept at the starting point.

"The color of a pigeon does not signify, but the rule in breeding is to cross the colors when practicable. In selecting homers for racing even the best fanciers are often mistaken and select birds that cannot fly twenty-five miles without being lost. Often the meanest looking bird, apparently without a good point, leaves his handsome rival behind. Still there is four points always considered in selecting and breeding home pigeons for racing purposes. These points are the eyes, the size of the head, the width of the chest, and the length of the tail and wings."

In speaking of the eye, one successful fancier has this to say: "The white eye may mean cumulet, and it so indicates that the bird will fly high, have great endurance and wing power. If the eye is dark, the head round, and the beak short and close fitting, there will be a preponderance of the owl type, and this bird will in all probability fly later at night than any other type. But, whatever the color, the ball must extend beyond the line of the head and be so placed that the bird should have a view of what is behind it as well as what is before. When a bird returns from a journey over much new territory, this protrusion of the eyeball is greatly increased, indicating to what a great strain the powers of vision have been subjected."

To the second point, the size and shape of the head, very little attention is paid by American fanciers, though the Europeans look upon it as of prime importance. It is generally conceded by Americans that the shape makes very little difference. The skull may be flat, long, and narrow or high, short, and wide, but it must have room for the brain, and for a large brain at that, otherwise the bird is not considered for racing honors. Particular stress is laid on this feature in Belgium and Holland. The shape and size of the chest are of great importance. It should be full and broad. A narrow-chested bird can fly no great distance without exerting the muscles which give fullness to the breast beyond

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their endurance. The wings and tail should be exceptionally long as the tail acts as a rudder, and the shorter wings require much added exertion for the same amount of flying. There are some fanciers who contend that the first hatching of the season are not to be preferred for racing, but the majority pay no attention to that.

But even the best-bred homers have to be trained carefully and intelligently before they are entered in races. While the physique of the average bird is well developed at the age of ten weeks, it is generally considered best to give a much longer time for the bird to develop before the bird is trained for work. Usually at the age of four months the first trial trip is made. He is then flown from distances between two and seventy miles at intervals of two or three days. Many excellent birds are lost in these trial trips, and those who return after a reasonable time are considered fit to be entered in the young bird's races. The shortest of these races is one hundred miles, and birds are not supposed to have been flown more than ninety miles before taking part in these speed trials.

This system of training is supposed to accomplish two widely different results for the young bird. In the first place it teaches them to return to their lofts, and in the second they develop the muscles and prepare them for the hard work which the races will require of them. For the old birds these training trips are made with the sole view of getting their muscles limbered up again and toughened for the longer races.—N. Y. Sun.

**MADAGASCAR'S FAUNA.**

**The Rich Results of Two Years' Collections Are Brought to England.**

Dr. Forsyth-Major, a British naturalist and paleontologist, has just enriched the British Natural History Museum by an immense collection illustrating the fauna of Madagascar. He landed there in August, 1894, and was engaged in making his collection till July last year. The London Standard says that seventy-four boxes have arrived in England, which are now on the ground floor of the great building at South Kensington. The number of specimens is really enormous. There are skins and skeletons, and not seldom, in the case of living animals, both have been brought from the same individual. Every specimen is carefully labelled and marked, so as to be exactly identified. The living birds are numerous, but, perhaps, the most remarkable part of the collection represents the extinct Epyornis. Besides this there are fifteen hundred specimens of mammals. Dr. Forsyth-Major collected principally in the forests, but he also explored one cave and systematically excavated in a lacustrine deposit near Sirabe, on the Central Plateau, not very far from the middle of the island. The species of mammals known prior to his visit numbered about sixty-six; to these he has added some twenty new species, and some of them are exceptionally interesting. One new lemur

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has been discovered, but the chief augmentation is among the rodents and insectivores, among the latter being a singular aquatic form which is web-footed. Part of Dr. Forsyth-Major's collection shows the transitions between a hairy and a spiny condition in closely allied animals, and suggests that the prickly state—reminding us of the British hedgehog—has been gradually assumed, no doubt for purposes of defence. Nor have the birds been neglected. Many skins and about 200 skeletons have been obtained, and the latter, notwithstanding Milne-Edward's classic work will be an almost inestimable aid in working out the semi-fossil bones and in distinguishing extinct from recent forms.

Among the many remains of animals which Dr. Forsyth-Major found in the cave were well preserved hippopotamus bones. The hippopotamus does not now exist in Madagascar; but there is a tradition, which Dr. Forsyth-Major is disposed to credit, that it once lived there, and that hunting it was a special privilege of the chiefs. But its disappearance cannot be at all a recent event. The fossil hippopotamus of Madagascar, however, is not identical with that which is familiar to travellers on the great African rivers. It is a comparatively small animal, and more closely resembles the species called Liberianensis, found in the western tropical region of that Continent. No monkey now exists in the island though it is the home of the lemurs, the humblest of the order—the ape's "poor relations;" but Dr. Forsyth-Major claims to have found a true monkey, though it has some lemurian affinities.

The most important result of Dr. Forsyth-Major's discoveries is the light which they are likely to throw on the geographical distribution of animals. At the present time Madagascar, an island about 1,000 miles in length, is separated from Africa by a channel which at its narrowest part, is 250 miles broad, and is nowhere, as far as is known, less than 1,100 fathoms deep. As might be expected, its fauna differs very considerably from that of the main land; only the genera of mammals are common to both, though a few species of reptiles and batrachians also found. Of these mammals, one may have been introduced by man; the other, a kind of pig, might have managed to swim across, though this could only have been done when the channel was not so wide as the Straits of Dover. At the same time, the number and character of the mammals of Madagascar is such as to make it possible that the two countries were once united, while those on the island have such special characters as to render it highly probable that the separation took place rather early in the history of mammals.

"But let it be agreed, then, that a week from this afternoon the one that's best suited, be it you or me, shall give t'other two bushels of wheat."

The week passed, the day came, and as luck would have it, Mr. A. and Mr. S. met on the road midway between their respective homes.

"Where to, John?" cried Mr. A., as they stopped a moment to chat.

"To your house with the two bushels of wheat," replied Mr. S.

"Well, now, that's good," remarked Mr. A., "for I was on my way to your house on the same errand. This horse you let me have can't be beat."

"Just what I think of this nag," retorted Mr. S., and then they had a hearty laugh, and separated after exchanging wheat.

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Two gentlemen of Marshalon, Va., whom for convenience we will call Mr. A. and Mr. S., met one day and agreed to swap horses.

"I'll tell you what, John," said Mr. A., "if you get the best of the trade, you shall bring me two bushels of wheat to bind the bargain, and if I come out best, I'll do the same by you, eh?"

"That's a go," said Mr. S., "and I 'low you'll bring me the wheat."

"That's as it may be," retorted Mr. A.

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