

Woman and Her Work

It seems strange that with the number of women who are forced to support themselves in these days, and are eagerly seeking means of earning a livelihood, so many fields which would seem to offer tempting possibilities in the shape of financial returns, should remain totally untapped, and apparently unthought of while less agreeable and much more arduous occupations are eagerly sought after. The middle-aged, or elderly woman who is suddenly confronted with the necessity of doing something towards her own support seems to turn towards the one resource of "taking a few boarders" as naturally as the needle turns towards the pole it is the only way she can keep her home and live, she says, and of course she does not want to go out into the world and buffet her way amongst others.

The young girl, on the contrary, always seems to look outside the home for employment. Type writing, short hand, book keeping, music and school teaching, even clerking in shops, all seem to offer attractions to the girl who has her living to earn, and the idea of looking for some occupation which will enable her to stay at home never seem to cross her mind. The discomforts of the cheap boarding house which is all that her means will allow, the loneliness, and homelessness—none of these considerations seem to weigh with her for a moment, and she appears to be quite contented with her lot; while the fact remains that work which is quite as well paid, and much easier and more congenial lies almost at her door if she would only look for.

For example—the manager of one of the most prominent employment bureaus in New York, announced recently that in the whole busy city of Gotham there was no such place as a bachelor's mending bureau, and that the luckless bachelors whose lives were spent in boarding houses and family hotels were compelled to depend upon the not-always-tender mercies of their landladies for the repairing of their clothes. What this means may be readily imagined when I say that a man told me, a short time ago that he had thirty pairs of socks in his wardrobe and had to go down town and buy a pair when he wanted a change, because there was not one sock in the collection which had not a hole in it somewhere; and he added pathetically that he could not wear them because the holes hurt his feet. The same man told me that he got some lady friend to buy him a box of safety pins once in a while, or his clothes would literally fall off, for want of buttons. Imagine the comfort of being able to have clothes properly repaired instead of being obliged to throw them aside before they are half worn out, and my new ones in self defence, and also imagine what a very satisfactory amount of money there would be in it for the mender. It would really open up quite an industry as sewing girls could be employed and a stated sum charged for keeping the clothes of each bachelor in order. In case of a mother with two or three daughters a very comfortable living could be earned with half the labor and none of the anxiety required in the keeping of boarders.

Another most desirable opening for a woman who lives in a city of any size is lunches especially in the vicinity of seminaries and colleges, and a really good living is to be made at it. There is little or no capital required, a few loaves of bread and cake, a roll of good butter, a ham, some pickles and fruit and a few dozen Japanese paper napkins and cardboard boxes. These are all that would be required at first, with an advertisement in one or two papers to the effect that wholesome home-made lunches could be procured at number 0 Blank street, for ten or twelve cents and the enterprise is fairly under way. Not even a shop is required as there are few people who could not devote one room in their house to such a purpose, when a living was to be made out of it. One woman in New York tried this plan, and made a really excellent living. She made a lunch consisting of two sandwiches, pickle, a slice of cake, and an apple, pear, peach, or couple of plums, just as they happened to be in season. Each lunch was placed in a neat cardboard box, with a Japanese napkin, and sold for ten cents. As her business increased she sold milk also, and always had plenty of customers.

Another great need in large cities, and one that there seems little prospect of filling, is that of "ladies companion" in a large hotel. In other words a woman who is a lady, and gifted with a reasonable allowance of brightness and intelligence, who would be willing to live in the hotel and make herself generally useful at so much an hour, or a day, to the lady guests. What I mean by

generally useful is this. If the guests are strangers in the city and need either a guide to show them about town and point out the various items of interest, or an assistant in shopping, the ladies companion can be called upon; if the guest is ill, or the weather so bad as to keep her indoors, so that she feels the need of companionship, the companion is notified, and is not only willing to make herself as agreeable as possible, but even to do a bit of shopping for the invalid when required. This would be an opening for either elderly or young women, and could be filled with perfect independence and dignity. I would not have the ladies' companion in any sense a hanger on, or free guest at the hotel; she should pay for her room and board like anyone else, leaving her cards in the office with the understanding that they should be circulated amongst the lady patrons, and she herself recommended, and called upon when needed.

Other branches of the same business are the hotel shopper, the woman who can direct and advise the guests at a hotel now, and where to do their shopping, accompany them on shopping trips, or, if necessary do it for them, and the hotel mender, who is always ready to attend to the mending both in connection with the hotel, and the guests.

Curiously enough there are openings in large cities for such unique occupations as the care of birds for rich women who like to see the little creatures about, but do not care for the trouble of looking after them, and feel that they cannot be trusted to servants, the care of house ferns, palms and rubber plants, and the decoration and artistic arrangement of drawing, and reception rooms.

Strangest of all there is at this present time a real need for a dogs' and cats' boarding house in the city of New York, and the woman who takes the tide at the flood, and opens one will be sure to make money. The employment bureaus all beset with inquiries from the owners of cats and dogs for persons who will board and care for them during their absences from the city. Rich women who are fond of their pets are loth to leave them in the care of servants during short absences, and when they go to the mountains or the seaside for the summer they are simply at their wits end for some safe place to leave the pet dog, cat or parrot and would be more than willing to pay a good price for the comfort of knowing that it is well cared for while they are away.

These are only a few of the many ways, out of the beaten track, which offer opportunities to women for earning a comfortable living; and if they would only take advantage of such gleanings in out of the way fields there would be fewer despairing letters written to the correspondence columns of newspapers asking for suggestions with regard to the earning of a living, by women who have had no technical training of any sort, and find themselves suddenly thrown upon their own resources without a special aptitude for any one thing.

I am aware that several of the occupations I have mentioned are only suitable for large and wealthy cities like New York, but surely the mending, and lunch industries would be quite practicable even in a new country like Canada.

There is no one in the world like a Frenchwoman for evolving something out of nothing, whether it be a palatable soup from one onion, a handful of herbs, some breadcrumbs, and a little water, a charming bonnet from a scrap of gauze, an artificial flower and a sudden inspiration; or a softly rounded form from a thing of bones, angles and hollows. In improving upon nature where that capricious dame has been niggardly to her daughters, the Frenchwoman is without a rival, and not only do her own countrywomen profit by her cleverness, but the women of other nations have cause to rise up and call her blessed for the good she does them. I am afraid the ladies of France cannot be very amply provided with charms in the shape of soft curves, because the Parisian modiste is so fertile in resources for improving the forms of her patrons. One of her latest devices in this direction is a clever arrangement of ruffles placed inside the bodices of their dresses and designed to conceal the absence of flesh where flesh, instead of ruffles should be. This consists of ruffles about three inches wide, and made of ribbon, muslin, lace, or any other material which will match the dress. These are sewed inside the bodice across the bust, and make a soft fullness over a flat chest; they look very pretty and possess a decided advantage over wadding, or any other so called "improver". These ruffles are now placed in all the new French gowns now being turned out, so that fat and thin alike may have the benefit of this newest wrinkle in artistic dressmaking and if they are not needed, nothing is easier than to

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remove them, for they slip out as easily as a shield.

The sash might almost be called the distinguishing feature of the summer costume for '97, and to the woman who wishes to look rather younger than her years, which of course is neither you, nor myself, gentle reader—it is simply the most valuable accessory which has yet appeared. There is something delightfully youthful and innocent about a sash, so girlish, and feminine, but at the same time so unpremeditated that it imparts an appearance of guileless youth to any woman on the right side of thirty five; and the beauty of the sash of today consists in its adaptability, it is the correct thing for the rosebud of fifteen, and it is equally good form for the matron of fifty, so as no one can accuse the mature belle of trying to make herself look youthful by adopting a fashion intended only for very young girls.

The difference between the sash of today, and the one which confined the white muslin gowns of our grandmothers, lies in the fact that ours are made with hands, while theirs reached them straight from the hand of the weaver, all ready to be tied and the only art connected with them lay in the ability to tie a pretty bow. Our bows are made, not tied, and the long ends are carefully hemmed and elaborately decorated either with tucks, hem stitching, insertion, or flounces. The girdle, or belt is usually made separately as it requires careful fitting, and the bow is also made, and attached to one end of the girdle, hooking securely to the unattached side, after it is in place. The three popular materials for sashes are silk, batiste, and chiffon, and to give an example of each, the silk one is usually made of taffata split down the middle, and hemmed. One pretty sash of this description has the ends rounded, and is finished all around with a tiny ruffle of inch-wide taffata ribbon with a fancy edge, gathered on one edge, and sewn on like a flounce. The girdle is of the silk, has a pointed front and is kept firm with five short whalebones. The one in front is about three inches deep, the two in the back two inches, and two at the sides one inch deep. The long ends are gathered at the top, and attached to the girdle which has no bow, but is finished with the two little frilled hems meeting in the back, which used to be seen on crush collars.

The batiste sash is cut about twelve or fifteen inches wide, hemmed, or better still hem-stitched, and attached to a belt of the same, either plain or folded. The ends are trimmed with insertion, or lace, or muslin, and tiny tucks; a big bow or a rosette as a finish is optional.

A lovely sash is of black chiffon made the entire width of the material, with the long ends drawn into large rosettes at the bottom, and finished with the same big rosettes at the belt, which consists of the chiffon folded.

Another pretty chiffon sash is of green, also full width, but with the ends finished with tucks, and a large bow at the waist; it is very stylish and dainty but unfortunately very perishable also. The wedding sash is of white satin, with draped belt, and closes at the left side under a large bow below which is fastened a spray of orange blossoms.

Sashes for children are frequently made of ribbon tied at the side in a large bow, and with ends that reach just to the hem of the little dress. It is reported that the bandanna shirt waist is with us once more but as it comes in prettier colors than formerly, there seems to be a better chance for its popularity than during its last appearance. Baby blue and white, is the combination for the brunette, in these waists, royal rose, and white, and jonquil yellow coming next.

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'The Last Three Soldiers,' W. H. Shelton's story in St. Nicholas, contains many unusual situations that develop from the unique plot. Three Union soldiers, who are on a mountain top in the south, cut off from all communication with the rest of the world, lead a regular Crusoe existence.

On the evening of the fourth day the thaw was followed by a light rain, which froze as it fell, and developed into a regular ice storm during the night. When the three soldiers looked out on the morning of the nineteenth they found their house coated with ice, and the mountain top a scene of glittering enchantment. Every tree and bush was coated with a transparent armor of glass. The lithe limbs of the birches and young chestnuts were bent downward in graceful curves by the weight of the ice, which under the rays of the rising sun, glittered and scintillated with all the colors of the rainbow. Every nook and stone had its separate casing, and every weed and blade of grass was stiffened with a tiny shining overcoat. The stalks on the plantation stood up like a glittering field of pikas.

Despite the difficulty of walking over the uneven ground and the slippery rocks, they made their way, not without occasional falls, to the western side of the plateau to observe the effect in the Cove. Philip was in raptures over the prismatic variety of colors, picking out and naming the tints with a childish glee and with a subtle appreciation of color that far outran the limited vision of his comrades, and made them think that Sherman Territory had possibly defrauded the world below of a first-rate artist.

As they turned back toward the house Bromley remarked that it was strange they had not been awakened as usual by the crowing of the cocks. Indeed, the stillness of the hour was remarkable. It was strange that while they had lain in their bunks after day-break they had not heard the cocks answering one another from one end of the plateau to the other.

Usually they heard first the clear, ringing note of some knowing old bird burst loud and shrill from under the very window, and then the pert reply of some upstart youngster who had not yet learned to manage his crow, drifting faintly back from the rocks to the west; then straightway all the crows of all ages, and of every condition of shrillness and hoarseness, tried for five mortal minutes to crow one another down; and when one weak, far-away chick seemed to have had the last word, another would break the stillness, and the strident contest would begin again.

In leaving the house, they had been so enchanted by the hues of the ice-storm that they now remembered that they had not so much as turned their eyes in the direction of the mill. When they came upon the brow of the hill which overlooked the mill—which was a silver mill now—the limbs of the trees which stretched along the bank beyond were crowded with the fowls, at least four hundred of them, sitting still on their perches. Philip, who fell down in his eagerness, and rolled over on the ice, remarked as he got upon his feet that it was too knowing a flock of birds to leave the sure hold it had on the limbs to come down on to the slippery ground.

As the soldiers came nearer, however, they noticed that their fowls in the sunlight were quite the most brilliant objects they

had seen; for their red combs and parti-colored feathers made a rich showing through a transparent coating of ice which enveloped them like shells and held them fast to the limbs where they sat. Whether they had been frozen stiff, or smothered by the icy envelope, they were unable to determine; but they could see that all the fowls had met with a very beautiful death, except five or six of the toughest old roosters, who had managed to crack the icy winding sheet about their bills. One of these, who had more life in him than the others, made a dismal attempt to crow when he caught sight of the soldiers coming to the rescue.

Mechanical Hammer.

A German inventor has designed a hammering apparatus for forging horseshoes, stirrups, screws, bits, etc., in large quantities. A series of adjustable hammers were provided with removable dies which may be adapted to any class of work desired, these dies corresponding with other dies let into a common anvil. The first hammer is heavier than the others, which diminish in weight until the last one is reached, the rough outline forging being done by the first and the article passing from hammer to hammer until it emerges in finished shape. Any number of hammers may be used and the invention comprises mechanism for adjusting the material and operating and regulating the hammers, separately or together.

Spider's Thread.

The spider's threads are estimated to be 100,000th of a hair in thickness. Three kinds of thread are spun. One of great strength for the radiating or spoke lines of the web; the cross lines are finer and are tenacious—that is, they have upon them little specks or globules of a very sticky gum. The third kind of silk is that which the spider throws out in a mass of flood, by which it suddenly envelops any prey of which it is sometimes afraid—as for example, a wasp.

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