

Woman and Her Work

I have always been quite a good friend of the travelling agent, and never missed an opportunity of saying a good word for him when I could. In fact I have met some very interesting members of the fraternity and have exchanged some pleasant chat across the threshold, with the genial knights of the road. To be sure I have generally come off second best in any dealings I have had with these agreeable gentlemen, two of whom succeeded in selling me scissor sharpeners which neither myself or anyone else I have met with so far, ever found out the secret of using. Another sold me a contrivance for lifting a pie out of the oven when it was done without the customary burnt fingers which I had always considered a necessary part of the performance, but as the pie litter never lifted the pie beyond a certain point, and then invariably dropped it on the floor, I have since gone back to the oven cloth, about which there are some chances of success instead of the certainty of defeat. Two other agents sold me packages of needles with points which resemble something between a scotch joke and a crowbar; while yet another imposed on my trusting nature with a bottle of cement which has proved as insoluble as the problem of squaring the circle. It is a good article I am sure because once it was melted and allowed to harden, nothing could ever part the fragments it united. But as it has resisted alcohol, and boiling water, I do not know how the melting is to be accomplished. The very last agent to whose smiles I fell a victim succeeded in selling me a bottle of furniture polish which proved so effective on the piano that we are thinking of having it sandpapered and varnished, as no less heroic treatment will ever obliterate the traces of that infallible polish "warranted to produce a mirror like lustre to any article of furniture to which it is applied—especially pianos."

I have bought black lead which no one but the vendor himself could produce a polish with—and he never sold the box he was using at the time—paste for extracting spots from the most delicately tinted carpets, but which I found harder to extract than the spots, and glove cleaning liquid which removed every trace of color from the gloves, along with the soil. So I consider that I have had some little experience of the "gentleman who travels" but for all his little faults I like him still, and am willing to do more than justice usually. But I have just met a specimen of the brotherhood who has done more to bring his order into disrepute in two minutes than the whole fraternity can undo in a year.

He was travelling in the interests of a stamped linen house—if it were not positively sacrilegious to use such an expression in connection with so magnificent a being, I should say he was engaged in peddling d'oyley's and tray cloths of stamped linen, and his stock in trade, besides a valise full of linen, consisted of a pair of abnormally large and bold light blue eyes, a suit of fashionable clothes, and the most insolent manner I ever encountered.

I was immersed in the study of different goods as regarded their effects upon the female complexion, one morning last week and from this important problem I was called to answer an imperative ring at the door. The butler was cleaning the plate, and the footman was reading the morning paper, so I had to answer the door myself, and on the step I found the vision I have described. He said "Good morning" with a world of patronage in his manner, and I responded politely. Then we looked at each other for a space—"It is a beautiful morning!" he announced coming very close to the door. I agreed with him and smiled a smile of gentle inquiry. By this time he was so close to me that there were scarcely four inches between our noses; he pressed forward and I retained my balance with an effort and we both gazed steadily into each other's eyes he with a stare of insolent determination, I with a glance of interrogation that grew colder and more indignant every moment. I don't think I ever encountered so impertinent and so determined a look. At last it dawned upon him that I did not intend to ask him in, and was waiting for him to state his business, so he took refuge in sarcasm, "Is the lady of the house in?" he asked with an emphasis on the word "lady" that was intended to crush me to the earth, and give me the impression that he took me for the servant. I said she was, and waited again to hear what he wanted, but with one look of concentrated fury, he turned, rushed down the steps, banged the gate and disappeared.

Now while I try to be courteous to every one who comes to our door, I am not in the habit of inviting perfectly strange men who refuse to state their business, into

the drawing room for half an hour's chat, especially when their manner happens to be as much against them as this youth's, and if the poor fellow is lamentably ignorant of the manners and customs of respectable people as to expect an entree into a house by merely calling at the door and trying to push his way in; then it is high time some one instructed him in such matters. It is also a pity that his employees do not inform themselves as to his manner of soliciting orders, for he is quite sure to injure their business greatly, and unless he is paid by commission, I should imagine he would be a source of serious financial loss. But for the honor of the knights of the road, be it said that such specimens of the guild are the exception not the rule at least if they are not I have been fortunate enough to encounter only the better class, heretofore.

I think I mentioned before that gray was decidedly the most fashionable color this season. Perhaps the prevalence of gray linen gowns in the natural tint of the flax, may partly account for this, but still the fancy is carried out in wool costumes also, the tint being like that of the homespun linens, so pale that almost any becoming color may be used to brighten them up. A lining of pink silk is charming under a thin barege of palest gray, and a full bodice of pink chiffon covered with creamy lace gives the finishing touch to the costume. Another pretty gray gown also of barege has a draped skirt caught up slightly at each side, and a bodice of white silk covered with cream studded with steel beads and finished at the neck and belt with coral pink satin. The sleeves of this dress are tucked the entire length, and quite innocent of either puffs or frills at the top.

Feather stitching as a trimming has been revived this summer, and appears on some of the most fashionable dresses as a finish for the wide hems and narrow ruffles which trim the skirts. It is a simple, and most effective decoration, and should be very popular, requiring so little skill in working and so much show for the amount of labor. Black, white, and colored satin ribbon half an inch wide and gathered in the middle, is another novelty in dress trimming, and is used as an edging for ruffles, revers and collars, as well as a finish for some of the bodice trimmings.

The sleeves of all the thin dresses are more or less trimmed with tucks, insertions and shirrings from the wrist to the puff at the top; but the very latest sleeve of all has neither puffs nor frills, but is simply an easy fitting close sleeve increasing a little in size towards the arm-hole. It is trimmed the entire length to redeem the plain effect, and it contains a good prophecy of the style of sleeve we shall be wearing with our autumn gowns. Some of the newest evening dresses have long transparent sleeves of chiffon, or net slightly shirred, and close at the top not a trace of a puff, frill or drapery relieving them, the flat effect being counteracted only by bows of ribbon on the shoulders. Tinted muslins in pale green, pale yellow, cornflower blue, and ecru, dotted either with another color or with white, are very much worn, and exceedingly dressy when properly made up; which means when they are almost covered with tucks and insertions of lace, and that the bodice overhangs the belt all around in true blouse fashion. Pale ecru muslins trimmed lavishly with yellow lace insertion is one of the latest fancies; and a pretty imported model has three rows of wide lace insertion around the skirt; a tucked bodice with a round yoke of white muslin finely tucked, from which falls a collar finished on the edge with a hem of the ecru muslin, and a belt of green and white and black plaid silk. The combination sounds odd in the extreme, but it was probably stylish which is always the first consideration.

Batiste in lace effects and embroidered designs, figures largely in combination with foulard silks, being used for collars, revers and sometimes a part of the bodice itself. One pretty dress of brown and ecru foulard has an entire bodice of ecru batiste with a lace stripe and the effect is charming.

A novelty in trimming is the substitution of satin and grosgrain ribbon, with a corded edge, both in very narrow widths, for

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brail, the ribbon being used much as braid would be, except that of course it only lends itself to angular designs, and is impracticable for curves, or circles. Sometimes the ribbon matches the material of the dress in color, but more often it is in some contrasting color. Some of the new tailor gowns are trimmed in this manner, and made with very smart monjik blouses, which are well covered with the ribbon design both back and front. The monjik blouse, be it known, is but the latest name for the old and once familiar Russian blouse.

Ruches of taffeta silk fringed out on the edge have come back again from the oblivion of the past, and one new model in black silk canvas, made up over a bright colored lining has a ruche of the same silk around the skirt oddly placed just at the knee, and narrower rushes across the bodice form a yoke.

Jewelled embroidery seems to have reached the very zenith of its popularity, and fashion authorities predict its speedy retirement in favor of plain, but rich silk embroidery which is more durable, and quite as expensive if less showy.

ASTRA.

MARCHESE'S METHODS.

Instructions in Singing from Her Not Altogether an Agreeable Ordeal.

In the musical world of Europe no teacher stands higher than Mme. Marchesi, and yet a first interview with her is an ordeal to be dreaded. She may tell you with almost brutal frankness that your cherished vocal projects are thin as air bubbles, and that you had better turn your attention to cooking. Or, with one unusual gleam of her gray eyes and one sudden withdrawn breath, making her thin lips still thinner, she may tell you that you are destined to lift the heart of the world in immortal song and wear the laurels of a great lyric career. Again she may tell you with the same blunt severity that you have no looks at all for the stage, and after you have been accepted as a pupil you are still subjected to her merciless severity.

To be taught by Mme. Marchesi is not to have the luxury of an individual lesson, an hour's good, cozy, comfortable time all to yourself. By no means. That is not her plan. You are taught in class. You are thus introduced at once to an audience. You thus have an opportunity of conquering stage fright. You are thus submitted to the criticism of others. Not only your voice, but your manners, your gait, your way of holding your hands are studied. From head to foot you are scrutinized. A small platform is in the centre of Marchesi's salon, where the pupil stands and recites (or sings) her lesson. The class sit around the room and criticize. The pupil has to face not only the class, but the audience includes often the first musician of the world. How does a sensitive woman bear the gun-fire of Mme. Marchesi's criticism, her ridicule, her sarcasm and severity? One day one of the class was having her fifteen minutes of lesson before a crowded room. Marchesi was in a sardonic humor that morning. Her remarks were brilliant, but more cutting than a Damascus blade. The audience felt that a climax was coming. It came. The girl's lip began to tremble as Marchesi's commentary sparkled and cut and sparkled again. Her lip trembled more and more. The agitation gained upon her whole body, till she shook like a willow in the wind. Poor dear! the other pupils held their breath. The room was silent as a tomb. You could hear Marchesi's watch tick in her pocket. Still the pupil strove to bring out the tone that those severe lips of Marchesi had commanded. At last the voice rolled out. The tone gained upon the room. The voice stopped.

"You sing like a fool!" literally [hissed Marchesi, and the storm broke.

The girl burst into tears. Her sobs, coming upon the silence, were most painful. Not one of the pupils dared to rush forward with comfort or handkerchief. The girl threw the sheet of music on the floor and covered her face with her hands.

Then dashing the tears away from her face, stooped down, gathered up the scattered music, tore it into shreds, tossed it to every part of the room, and rushed from the platform stage. All felt it was over with her forever, so far as lessons with Marchesi were concerned, and more than one heart ached for her.

"Ah, ha!" laughed Marchesi, rising delightfully from the piano, rubbing her hands together, and walking, or rather stalking, majestically through the room, and up and down, and again seating herself at the piano. "Ah, ah! that girl will sing! She has the grand fire. She is dramatic. She has the fire passion of the devil." And the girl came back the next day and won Marchesi's bravos and hand-clapping.

Upon another occasion Marchesi sat in judgment upon a pupil's hands as she stood upon the platform.

"Now, don't put up your lip like a baby," she says, "if I tell you that I never saw such a booby! You're as awkward as a country clown. Look at your hands! Just look at them dangling down at your sides like a jumping jack, waiting to twitch on a pole! Mais, voila," she continued, "softening a little; if I do not tell you, ma chere, of these things now while you are in my salon, the reporters will do it for you later on,—they will say she 'sings divinely but holds her hands like a clown'; and then you will say 'why did not Marchesi tell me how to hold my hands, and how to walk and stand in her salon.'"

Let me show you, clasp your hands in front of you, your right over your left, the second and fore finger of the right hand between the thumb and fore finger of the left hand. Bon! Now, see what ease of position, what repose it gives to your whole figure as you stand there."

To look over the programme for the concert Mme. Marchesi gives from time to time is to read a strange collection of names. Here are pupils from Japan. Here is a name from Norway. Here is a lady from Finland. Here are sturdy Scotch names. Here are American names—girls from St. Louis, San Francisco, the Maine woods, the Galt States. New Zealand has representatives on the programme. To look over Marchesi's album is to see some of the portraits of the world's great singers and their signatures.

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PREVENTION OF HAILSTORMS.

Success of Aerial Explosions in Swiss Vineyards.

The American rainmaking experiments are sufficiently fresh in the memory to lend a peculiar interest to a report recently submitted to the state department by the consul at Zurich regarding a curious practice that has grown up among the grape growers of certain sections of Austria which is, in effect, the exact reverse of the rainmaking theory. It is none other than the prevention of storms by aerial explosions. The owner of extensive vineyards found that his profits were disappearing with the frequent destruction of his vines by hailstones. These storms are common and severe in Austria, especially on the southern slopes of the Bacher Mountains, and as the



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soil is peculiarly adapted to the growth of the grape the question arose whether some means of preventing the fall of hail could not be devised. The explosion experiment was tried, and to the date of the report it had met with unbroken success. The method is simple. On each of six of the most prominent summits surrounding the vineyards the owner erected a station, built of wood, for the shelter of a battery of heavy mortars, ten at each station. The neighboring peasantry, themselves small vineyard owners, have been trained to the duties of manning the batteries, and at the slightest sign of the approach of a storm the men assemble and at a given signal fire all the mortars simultaneously. Each mortar is loaded with about four and a half ounces of powder; the report makes no mention of a projectile. The bombardment of the clouds is continued until the moisture is scattered and the storm is prevented. At the first trial of the system last summer after a few moments' firing the cloud wall opened up in the form of a funnel, the mouth rising in consecutive rings, gradually expanding until the clouds scattered and disappeared. This process was accompanied by no hail or even rain. During the summer the firing was undertaken six times, and always with the same result. Thus it appears that while man may not be able to force nature to work at his bidding he may at least compel her to remain idle for a time.

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