

Woman's Page

Household Hints, Well-tried Recipes
and Useful Helps to Homekeepers

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THE ART OF SINGING

This is the third of a series of articles on singing written by Mrs. Mary Cotton Wisdom, for COTTON'S WEEKLY.

Mrs. Wisdom has studied singing under some of the best teachers of voice culture in the world, and is herself an authority on the subject.

These articles will prove interesting for all music lovers.

ARTICLE III

Singing does not, as many people suppose, depend upon the voice and throat alone. Good singing depends upon the whole body; one tense muscle will effect the quality of the entire voice. I have known vocalists who could not sing if they were handicapped, even to the small degree of a tight pair of gloves, or a snugly fitting pair of shoes; did they do so, the impairment in the quality of their tones would be quite noticeable.

A bird could not sing with happy freedom, if its wing or feet were bandaged; neither can a human song bird sing with constricting clothing.

A clever teacher once told me that if a voice student cared more for the dictates of fashion than she did for her art, the sooner she dropped the study of singing the better. The divine fire will never touch this girl, she stands as much chance of shining in the firmament of song, as does a wax figure in a shop window.

Realizing this the singer should avoid tight clothing, high collars, high heels, anything and everything that will interfere with the perfect freedom of her body.

A few lessons in gymnastics or physical culture would be of great help in acquiring a correct carriage. If this is impossible the student should bring her own intelligence to bear on the subject. She must stand erect with the chest held high; the head should be thrown well back with the chin slightly drawn in.

Walking or standing, the weight of the body should be thrown forward on the balls of the feet; especially is this true while singing.

It is very difficult to control the breath with the weight of the body resting on the heels.

A graceful carriage and a good stage appearance are necessary if the singer wishes for success in her career. Much depends upon first impression. When singing at a concert the vocalist should walk with ease and grace to the front of the stage, she should stand directly facing the audience; she must walk on to the platform with a happy smile, conveying to her listeners the pleasure she feels in singing to them.

The young vocalist should compare herself to a general. Before she takes up the serious study of her voice, she should reconnoitre, as it were, all her outposts. She should see that she stands and walks correctly. She should master to some extent her breathing, for without breath control a singer is about as helpless as is a ship without a rudder. She should see to it that her speaking voice is well modulated and that her pronunciation is distinct, with the vowel sounds slightly accentuated.

This gathering together of her forces will help her more than she knows.

A large mirror before which to practice is a help. Fifteen minutes practice, each night and morning, before a large mirror, in walking, standing holding her music, bowing and smiling pleasantly to her imaginary audience, will in a few months do much to change an awkward girl into a graceful woman, which is a thing greatly to be desired in itself.

We have the authority of Holy Writ that "a gracious woman retaineth honor."

When once the student has arrived at this preliminary stage of her studies, she has gained much that will be of help all her life. She is now ready to take up the actual study of the voice itself. In my next paper, I will give some ideas about how to practice.

MARY COTTON WISDOM

STYLES

When speaking about styles, on all sides one hears of nothing but Directoire and Directoire that and Directoire the other thing, till one quite wearies of the subject.

The fact cannot be denied that there

has been a radical change in the style of women's gowns in the last few months. The wonderful bargains one saw in the large department stores of beautiful waists with short sleeves, the full flounce under skirt and long kid gloves were but a forerunner of the present styles, styles of dressing which make those articles of the bargain counter hopelessly out-of-date.

Everything in the new style of dress goes under the name of Directoire; but this is not correct. The real Directoire gown, which was heralded in by the past spring, was a little too radical for even those among us, who wished to pose as fashionable. Most of the present styles are really patterned after those of the days of the Empress Eugenie, considerably more than half a century later than the Directoire period of French history.

HATS

The fashionable large hat, so popular and so extreme as to be joke for caricaturists of two continents, is quickly becoming a thing of the past. The smaller hat is taking its place.

As might be expected the reaction seems to be in the direction of the small hat. Toques are becoming the more exclusive style for head dress.

This is an age when fashion dictates seem to mean simply a wild scramble after something new and novel. The good old days of our grandmothers are ended, those days, when one's best dress was in style until it was worn out. Today, it is nothing unusual to see a very popular style, become hopelessly out-of-date in a few weeks. It needs a good deal of thought for the average woman to dress so that she will be able to wear her clothes a reasonable length of time. Those of us who have neither the time, nor the money to spend in a continual change of clothing, and yet who do not wish the style of our gowns to savor of the dark, must use great discrimination and always choose moderate styles.

The Divided Skirt or the Hoop? Which?

The popularity of style has ever been its death blow. Dame Fashion, when the mass of her followers has adapted any one particular style, always demands that the inner devotees seek something new.

A new style is generally a complete change from the prevailing mode, first adopted by the ultra-fashionable dame and debutante, then followed more or less quickly by the rest of us, as soon as our tastes and purses will allow.

The practical woman of moderate means always thinks twice before adopting an extreme style. She conforms to the extent of remodelling her old gowns. She debates wisely before buying the costume which must last her two seasons. Most of us are in the same boat as this practical woman. At this moment we are debating the advisability of purchasing a directoire street costume, with its entire absence of fullness and its draperies clinging to one's limbs.

We have all conformed to the extent of discarding our underskirts, but here we hesitate, for it is a question occupying more minds than our own whether the directoire is the forerunner of the divided skirt or the hoop.

The Directoire Umbrella.

The rage for things directoire, grows apace. Directoire gowns, bonnets, coats, belts, wraps, corsets, underwear, slippers and the newest addition, umbrellas. The Directoire umbrella is distinctive, with its long delicate handle and its old-fashioned looking top. In a few weeks, we will perhaps feel as hopelessly out-of-date shielding ourselves from the elements with our present umbrellas as we do now when wearing our last season's frock.

WELL TRIED RECIPES

Cream Cake

Mix a cup-cake without flavoring, bake in jelly tins, and when cold, spread between the layers this filling.

One egg, one cup of milk, one half cup of sugar, two rounded teaspoonsful of cornstarch, one teaspoonful of vanilla or other essence.

Scald the milk, wet the cornstarch

with a little cold milk and stir that over the fire until it thickens. Have the egg whipped light into a bowl; beat in the sugar, pour the thick hot milk upon this gradually, stirring fast; return to the kettle and boil (still stirring) to a custard. Let it cool before serving.

Frost the top of the cake, or put soft powdered sugar over it.

Jelly Cake

Is made by mixing as for cup cake, leaving out the flavoring and baking it in "jelly cake tins," turning these out, when almost cold, by running a knife around the edges, and spreading all but that intended for the top, with a thick coating of fruit jelly, sift white sugar over the top, or frost it.

Cocoanut Cake

Mix and bake as for jelly cake, flavoring with rose water. Whip the whites of three eggs to a stiff froth. Add one cup of powdered sugar, and two-thirds of a grated cocoanut. When the cakes are cold, spread between the layers. To the remaining third of the cocoanut add four tablespoonfuls of powdered sugar, and cover the top of the cake with it.

A Good Cup Cake

One cup of butter, two cups of sugar, powdered, four eggs, one cup of sweet milk, one teaspoon of vanilla, one half teaspoon of mace, three cups of prepared flour, or the same quantity of family flour, with one even teaspoon of soda and two of cream of tartar, sifted twice with it.

Two teaspoons of baking powder will serve the same end, mix well and bake in small tins.

Apple Cake

Mix and bake as for jelly cake, flavoring the dough with essence of bitter almonds. Beat one egg light in a bowl and beat into it one cup of sugar. Add to this the strained juice and grated rind of one lemon. Peel and grate three fine large-sized apples, directly into this mixture, stirring each well in, before adding another. When all are in put in a double boiler, and stir over the fire until the apple custard is boiling hot and quite thick. Cool and spread between the cakes. A nice and simple cake. Eat the day it is baked.

Afternoon Tea Scones

The following is a receipt for afternoon tea scones, received and tried with good success in the old country.

Materials: One pound of flour, one small teaspoon of baking soda, the same of cream of tartar, half a teaspoonful of salt, one tablespoonful of syrup, a piece of butter as large as a good sized thimble.

Directions:—Put the butter and syrup into a bowl, and allow it to melt. Put into a basin all the dry ingredients. When the butter and syrup are melted, pour into it two teaspoonfuls of butter milk, and stir well, then pour it into the basin of flour and stir till all is well mixed. Have a floured board ready, and turn the mixture out on it, but do not knead it very much. Roll out till about one inch thick and either cook on a hot griddle or in the oven. These are delightful the second day.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS

How to Lay a Fire

When laying a fire, place half a sheet of newspaper, torn in four lightly in the grate, and take a third of a bundle of dry wood and place each stick in an upright position, dividing them as much as possible with a few cinders. A shovelful of coal placed on top will always insure a bright looking fire.

Black Varnish for Iron

A good black varnish for cast iron and forgings can be made of half a pound of lampblack, half a pound of resin, one pound of asphaltum, one quart turpentine spirits and a small quantity of linseed oil. The lampblack is first mixed with the linseed oil, no more oil being used than necessary for this purpose. The other ingredients are then mixed with it thoroughly.

Care of Paint

The kitchen paint will soon acquire a shabby look from the frequent cleaning that is necessary in this apartment. The use of soap only increases the difficulty, especially if the paint is varnished. The best plan is to boil one pound of bran in a gallon of water for an hour, then wash the paint with the bran water, and it will not only be kept clean, but bright and glossy.

Economy in Soap

To be careful of soap, never leave it standing in water, because it wastes it. Never throw your shells of soap away,

but put them in a jar, fill up with water, put it in the oven and let the contents boil well, with a lid over the top. When the soap is all dissolved, take it out, put it to cool, and you will be able to cut it out; therefore, you can use it again. It is useful for washing flannels.

Simple Method for Dishes

New earthenware dishes are always rendered less brittle by the simple method of boiling them before they are used. To do this put a large fish kettle or preserve pan on the fire, fill it with cold water, and place the new ware at the bottom, taking care that the water completely covers it. Bring slowly to a boil, and then remove the pan from the fire, leaving the dishes to cool in the water before taking out. In the case of brown glazed ware, it is a good plan to add a handful of rye or wheat bran when the water boils. This will be found to give an extra hardness to the glazing, so that neither acid nor salt will have any effect on it.

To The Wives of Workingmen

As long as woman takes no interest in affairs that touch and often control her method of living and her children's living, things that determine whether her children shall be educated or go to work under a false affidavit, she need not expect much change in those conditions.

The conditions under which the father of the family labors do very vitally interest the wife, because dangerous conditions—and they are many—may render her children fatherless and herself a widow with no means of feeding her hungry family.

Again loss of employment may bring them to starvation. So it very nearly concerns the woman what the political conditions of the country may be. Nor is it hard for her to understand the political situation. She needs to apply but one test. Will the party asking support benefit the home and the children and keep the father at work at a wage sufficient to support the family well and educate the children? A woman is quick to understand and apply the principles of domestic economy, and if she will but consider that political is simply domestic economy on a larger scale and with a wider scope she should be eager to join her husband in his investigation of political situations and help him to decide what is best for the fortunes of their own family.

Time was when the wife had sufficient to occupy her spinning and weaving, cooking and making for the entire family; but different times, different methods; now she has had all that taken from her by the irresistible march of an all-conquering machine, and she sees her husband confronted with the hard problem of keeping himself employed.

It is time for the wife to realize that she needs now to bring her mind, trained in domestic economy and grown adept in expedients, to bear upon the situation and help her husband to understand for themselves and their children what is the matter with the political situation.

The enemies of the family are growing just as powerful and just as blood-thirsty—but quite in a legal way, oh, yes, quite in and entirely legal—as were ever the red Indians in the old pioneer days. It is therefore just as needful that the wife should stand shoulder to shoulder with her husband in his effort to beat back the enemy that threatens extinction as ever it was in the old days.

And the women of the country have in them the stuff to do it. In the past they have been a little heedless of their duty in this respect, a little inclined to be influenced by the old, conservative idea that the men could run the affairs of the country, but that was when the shadow of hunger and destitution seemed far off.

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and it is time for the women of the working class, and all women who sell their labor power, anyhow, anywhere, or are supported by sold labor power anyhow, anywhere, to rally to the sides of their fathers, of their brothers, of their husbands, and say:

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