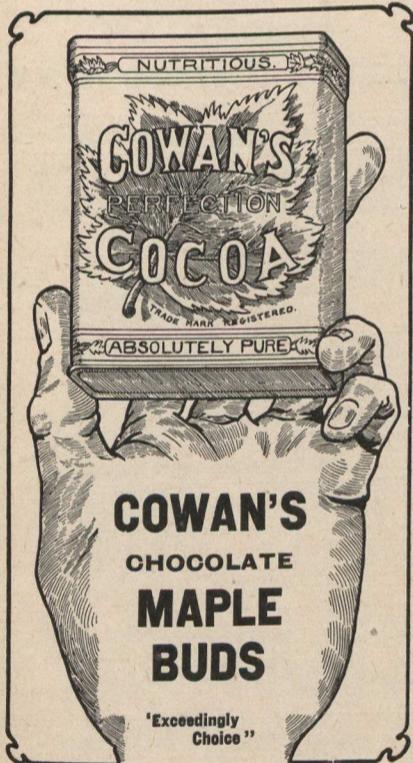


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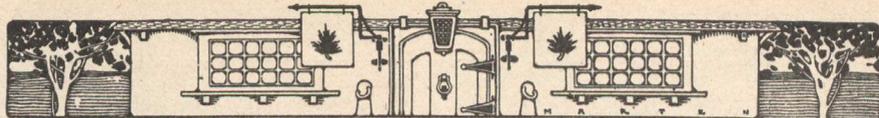
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AT THE SIGN OF THE MAPLE

IT must have been Solomon who said that it is desirable to keep Distress, Diseases and Domestic out of polite conversation. There is a certain kind of woman who absolutely revels in horrors and who would have rejoiced when that doleful Richard wanted to sit on the ground and tell sad stories of the death of kings. Emily Bliss is a creature of that class. She is a widow and it is my impression that her husband was glad to die and that if he ever sees Emily coming towards him in heavenly guise he will take to his wings and seek a nice, cheerful angel to sing to. Emily takes a perfect delight in telling you of the final illness and death of "poor dear William" and of how she held his hand to the last.

It was my ill-luck to meet this mourner on one of those mornings when it was 'steen below zero and you felt that you didn't want to talk to anyone about anything. But Emily seated herself with a jerk and hardly waited to pay her car fare before she said:

"Isn't this weather perfectly dreadful? And aren't you sorry for all the hungry people in Shacktown? I declare it's something terrible about all those babies being frozen—or was it starved? Did you read about the twins who had their feet frost-bitten and had nothing to eat but raw potatoes? And wasn't it too sad about those two young Englishmen who committed suicide in Hamilton by turning on the gas—or did they blow it out? Really, there seems to be ever so much more suffering than there used to be. I could hardly eat more than a few pieces of toast and some bacon for breakfast for thinking of all the poor people. And the crimes are something awful. Did you read about the man who shot his wife and son and then jumped out of a fourth-storey window? I think it must be the race for wealth which sets people off like that. Insanity's an awful fate and I always hope I'll die suddenly. In fact, sudden death rather runs in our family although my father's sister, who died two weeks ago, had cancer of the liver and suffered just dreadfully. Aunt Maria was telling me all about it yesterday and—"

"I get off here," I said in desperation, although I was blocks away from my destination, and I alighted from that car wishing I might meet Mr. James L. Hughes or any other apostle of cheerfulness who would take the wails of Emily out of my ears. There are too many doleful sisters like her who are eternally talking about the sad and the sinful but who, if the truth were known, are doing little to make the world brighter. This is a jolly old planet most of the year and when it isn't, why, let us imitate the poet and wear our troubles inside out to show the silver lining. You will generally find that the smiling woman is doing the most to alleviate distress—only she does not find it necessary to advertise the fact, nor to shout to the left hand what the right hand is doing.

* * *

CHICAGO is in a chronic state of advice. It is eternally offering suggestions as to what the rest of the continent should eat, drink and wear, while the rest of America smiles in its sleeve and wishes that the second city of the Western Hemisphere would cultivate a sweeter voice and more repose. The latest adviser (strange to say) is not a university professor but a medical authority who criticises woman's dress adversely, declaring that she wears too little about her neck and ankles and too much about her waist. Some men are tiresomely fussy about what women wear, although they would fiercely resent any feminine criticism of their coats and ties. Suppose a woman were to dress in absolutely sensible fashion, as to shoes, gown, gloves and hat. Man would arise in absolute wrath at such a spectacle and preach at her, write about her, and even legislate concerning her until the sensible woman returned to ridiculous garb once more. Folly, frills and femininity are associated in the masculine mind.

* * *

AN English writer, who really comes from Ireland and who is called by the Scottish name of James Douglas, has many piquant paragraphs on the subject of international marriages. One of his latest "cheese and celery" reflections declares: "The difference between an English and an American husband is this: The one gives himself a good time and his wife a bad one; the other gives himself a bad time and his wife a good one." This sounds quite sagacious and trustworthy; but Mr. Douglas does not see that, to an American man, working hard is not giving himself a bad time. In fact, the American enjoys his business absorption immensely and grudges the time spent away from his beloved desk or warehouse. He has not yet learned how much time to devote to luncheon nor how to be happy on a holiday. But there can be no doubt that the American (perhaps this includes Canada) delights in seeing the women of the household have "a good time." He likes to see his wife and daughters well-dressed and smiling and never dreams of their standing in awe of him in the old-fashioned way. It is rather amusing to the women of this land to hear of their crushed and oppressed sex; for the Canadian daughter can usually wind her paternal parent around her smallest digit, while he rather enjoys the process.

* * *

ENVOY.

My songs were once of the sunrise;
They shouted it over the bar;
First-footing the downs, they flourished,
And flamed with the morning star.

My songs are now of the sunset:
Their brows are touched with light,
But their feet are lost in the shadows
And wet with the dews of night.

Yet for the joy in their making
Take them, O fond and true,
And for his sake who made them
Let them be dear to you.

—W. E. Henley.

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