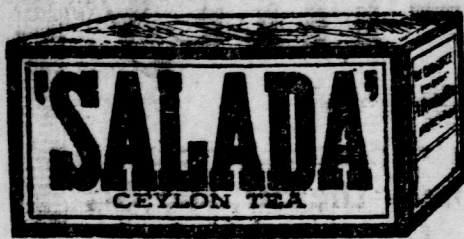


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THE QUEEN OF THE SEASON

"You need not fear any more annoyances," said Aymer, knitting his brows. "As soon as we stop, I will fetch your wraps from the carriage in which you have left them; in the meantime you must consent to make use of mine."

She hesitated, but he was too urgent to be refused; his sister, he declared, was more than sufficient for his own comfort, and he insisted on being permitted to tuck around her the costly fur rug that had been lying over his knees.

"It is very pleasant," she said, as she nestled in the fur, "very cozy, is not that your English word for such warmth and comfort as you are giving me? Shall we be a long time on our journey? I have been so many hours upon my way that I am much fatigued."

Aymer consulted his watch. "The train is not a fast one, and I heard a whisper of snow having fallen on the line, so I don't see much chance of our reaching Cornleigh before 11."

Mademoiselle shivered, and sighed. "So late? Is it far from there to Esselyn?"

"I am sorry to say, it is three miles of more. But why should that trouble you. Of course, you are expected, and your friends will be awaiting you with a conveyance."

"No," she answered, "I have no friends in the country; and as I have merely notified my intention of arriving in England at the earliest possible date, I cannot look to find anyone at the station for me."

"But you have left friends in France?" observed Aymer, seeing that she was not in mourning. "Pardon me if I say that they have been rather thoughtless to let you travel alone, and in such an inclement season."

"The rainy day was suddenly and sternly compressed."

"I have good reasons for what I have done," she said, speaking more to herself than to Lord Esselyn. "I could not sit down and fold my hands while—Ah! but it is growing colder; it was so mild when I started."

Off came Aymer's ulster directly. "You shall wear this, Nonnesse; I will not be refused! You are a delicate girl, unused to exposure, whilst I am as strong as a horse—I am, really."

"You are most kind," and in her gratitude she bestowed upon him such a bewildering smile that Aymer thought her more charming than ever. "But, no; I cannot let you suffer for me; and, indeed, it was but a nervous tremor that seized me at the thought of arriving at a strange place in darkness and the snow. For a moment I was poltroon—toward; but, va! it is gone. If monsieur will resume his overcoat, and give me some description of this my home that is to be, I shall thank him much."

"The village, do you mean? Is it there you intend residing?" and Aymer mentally ran over the names of the principal families in the neighborhood, trying to determine which of them she was going to visit; for he had by this time decided that she could not be related to the stout, florid, Norman widow, whom the Esselyn surgeon had met during a trip to Boulogne, and married.

She leaned her rounded chin on those slender white fingers, and considered. "The village? I do not know—I think not. It is to the Manor House I go. Where is it situated?"

On hearing her say this, Aymer was more perplexed than ever. Going to his own house? How was it, then, that he did not know her? Could this demoiselle be some protégée of his step-mother, whom she had known abroad, and invited to spend her Christmas in England? He hazarded a remark:

"Then you are acquainted with Lady Esselyn?"

"I have not seen her, nor the Lady Vivien St. Orme, her daughter. Tell me, monsieur, the count—the earl, should say—now at this chateau?"

Aymer was both embarrassed and amused; but he saw no harm in making an equivocal answer. "Yes, I see that you do not intimately, perhaps, but you must have seen him often. Describe him to me. I do not mean that I would have you tell me the color of his eyes, the contour of his features; such things are immaterial; but speak of him as

he is in temper, in character; of what repute is he?"

"The question is such a perplexing one," was the reply. "Frustrating! Aymer, in what I really cannot attempt, while, on the other hand, to abuse the owner of the house to which you are bound would be to prejudice you against him."

"I comprehend," she said, nodding her head. "You can say but little good of him."

"Very little," the young nobleman echoed, gravely. "And so you would rather be silent. I am sufficiently answered. It is as I expected."

She drew the furs around her, closed her eyes, and appeared to be sinking into a pensive reverie. But Aymer, who preferred to hear her talk, and was in a fever of impatience to guess the riddle of her presence here, and interest in himself—not very favorably expressed, by-the-by—broke in upon her meditation.

"From what you have said, I infer that you are not acquainted with either member of the Esselyn family."

"I have not seen them; no."

"And yet you are going to their house? I hope you will forgive me if I own that this apparent anomaly rather puzzles me."

She flashed a roguish look at him. "Ah! you are curious, monsieur. Yes, to yourself. Who is this petite fille, whom I have been honoring with such chivalrous attentions?"

"You are not translating my thoughts into the words I should myself have used," retorted Aymer, slyly. "You should have said: 'Will not the young lady, to whom I have had the happiness of being useful, tell me her name, that I may know how to address her when I have the pleasure of seeing her again?' which," he mentally added, "will be sooner than she appears to think."

She looked at him so keenly that he was disconcerted. Did she guess at last from whom she had been receiving a description of himself? Apparently not, for slowly, and with a little bitterness audible in her voice, she made answer.

"Monsieur flatters me when he hints that he would be pleased to meet again the young person whom the rudeness of his compatriots has driven into the carriage he occupies."

"Do you think I regret a circumstance that has given me such a charming companion?" asked Aymer, boldly; but he repented his temerity when the mobile face grew cold and scornful.

"No More Hips."

The hips must be suppressed. Upon this point fashion is very emphatic. Petticoats and under-garments are fastened to the lower edge of the corset. If there are hip pads they are put in most cleverly, and no one can guess from the downward slope that all the pretty sloping curves are not nature's own.

There is no doubt that double skirts are going to much more than make up for the sign of bunchiness about the hips in these. There is no sign of flaring until the knee is reached. A new Paris gown of the double skirt style is described thus: "The material of this exquisite gown was perverche blue taffeta; you will remember that this color is half-way between mauve and blue, and partakes of the character of both. The front of the skirt formed an original tablier in pointed, shawl-fashion, edged with a deep similar colored silk fringe from beneath; small flounces ornamented the skirt in a circular manner, which were hidden again at the back by another pointed panel. The corsage was arranged with a yoke of apple-green velvet, on which appeared three points of the perverche silk, edged with fringe. The waistband was composed of the same pretty green velvet."

Underskirts of silk or satin brocade are topped by a skirt, cut in deep points or scallops, of cloth.

There is nothing newer or more fetching for winter house-wear than the little blouses of tulle and lace. These often have yokes and collars and cuffs covered with a lattice of black velvet ribbon, a jet bead being fixed where the ribbons cross each other.

This blouse is by no means a thing of the past, and very light and bright of color, and will be worn this winter. One pretty thing of wide striped blue and white taffeta, with a fine black line running through it, too, is made with a bias yoke at the back, with the blouse below the yoke with a yoke of stripes to run across instead of up and down. In front the stripes go up and down, and they are tucked very finely down for about half the length of a short yoke. The sleeves are very scanty, with a narrow cuff, closing with cuff-buttons.

There are also white and red, white and blue and other colors in crisp little taffeta blouses, ranging in price from \$5 to \$10, according to the quality of the fabric. These simple blouses are handy, and are looked upon as almost indispensable by the woman who dotes on comfortable but becoming gowning. The silk blouse is suitable for any but dress occasions, and for home wear it is especially designed. With the silk blouses linen collars and ties may be worn, though the ribbon and lace stocks are preferred, and are better suited to accompany such bodices. The plain black satin blouse seems to have gone entirely out of favor, while the one of black peau de soie, with finely tucked yoke, has just come in, and is regarded as something very desirable and smart.

The Value of Silence.

The youngest-looking woman for her age that I have ever seen, said an observant man of the world, is a woman of 52, who once each month remains in bed for two nights and one day without speaking. The servants know her rule, and with noiseless tread they take her meals to her room, and deposit them by the side of her bed. They remain entirely mute, so does she, and at the end of 36 hours she feels perfectly refreshed. She says every day, "My body has had complete rest." She eats little, reads no letters, and amuses herself with the lightest and pleasantest literature. At all times she is a temperate eater. Takes regular, though moderate exercise, tepid baths daily, with a Turkish bath occasionally for her complexion, and cultivated a contented spirit. The consequence is that with her full brown hair, bright blue eyes and smooth skin, she does credit to Dr. Wm. Mitchell, the originator of the rest cure. The treatment that has proved so beneficial to thousands of people suffering from nerve exhaustion, found out long ago the value of silence. His patients suffering from nervous exhaustion are forbidden to speak at all the first day. And all through the cure, if mental amusement is required, a reader with a gentle-toned voice is employed, but no conversation is allowed.

And he was addressed in a manner that proved her determination. "I hear, no more such speeches from him."

"Have we much further to go? I am excessively fatigued, and sleepy. Does monsieur know whether the family at the Manor House keep early?"

"If so, I shall prefer to remain at the hotel at Cornleigh. If the hostess will take me under her charge, it is certain that amidst the countless, will not be pleased to have her household disturbed by the shockingly late advent of her daughter's new maid."

"Mademoiselle!" ejaculated Aymer, losing all his presence of mind. "Could this graceful little creature be on her way to Esselyn, to wait a visit, to make her dresses, brush her hair, and associate with the portly old butler, and fussy housekeeper? Impossible! He must be dreaming, or else he had misunderstood her."

From under her long black eyelashes she peered at him, divined his perplexity, and, with provoking deliberation, proceeded to say:

"Apparently, monsieur did not hear me. Shall I still further explain myself? I am sure I shall be able to do so. I am the Parisian milliner she employs, Madame la Comtesse condescends to engage as attendant, soubrette, or whatever you do call it, to the Lady Vivien St. Orme, her daughter."

CHAPTER XI.

Aymer was greatly disconcerted. In spite of his efforts to make some plausible comment on this information, he could not utter a coherent word. He had known, ay, and jested with, a score of my lady's maids, for the countess was continually changing her servants; but her ladyship's direct and have pretty faces about her, and as she insisted on choosing Vivien's attendants, the result was that they were generally middle-aged spinsters with vinegary aspects, who were more apt to resent Aymer's compliments than smile at them.

At last his natural frankness came to the van.

"It's no use beating about the bush, or attempting to deny it, and very much surprised at what you tell me. That you can be going to Esselyn Manor House to fill such a position as you mention is incredible."

"Is the position a disgraceful one?" she inquired coolly.

"Well, no, no, certainly not; that it wouldn't be for anyone else, but for you—"

[To be Continued.]

Bicycle Skirts in the Wind.

An observant woman, who rides the bicycle in all kinds of weather, has this to say about the tendency of skirts to blow about and distress their owners:

"I have been noticing skirts a great deal lately, and trying to discover why some even when they are narrow still blow out so much, while others, which are often wider, sit so well. I believe I have made a discovery. I don't think the width has nearly so much to do with it as the position of the rider's knees."

"One must keep her knees quite close together, or the skirt, instead of falling straight down, first will blow out and make no end of drapery for the wind to frolic with. This is rather a difficult thing to explain, and seems hardly correct, but to prove it a girl should notice the different skirts on the road, and try herself some time when she is riding and see at once what a difference the position of the knees makes."

Bread and Butter Crisps.

For this a loaf baked so as to give a square slice will be needed. With a sharp knife cut off all the crust; butter one end of the loaf, and shave off in the thinnest slices possible. Roll each slice up tightly and fasten with a wooden toothpick. Lay on a flat pan and place in a quick oven until crisp and lightly browned. Remove the toothpicks and serve hot or cold; they are especially good with a salad.

If a woman walked bare-footed on the sharp edge of a sword, she would not undergo one-tenth the pain of the daily borne by thousands of women without complaint. They suffer greatly from the daily pain that could be inflicted by all the professional torturers that the world ever knew. Day and night they suffer from headaches, dragging down and burning sensations, pains in the sides and back, hot and cold flushes, tones and builds up the nerves, and trembling sensations and physical lassitude and mental despondency. The whole body is tortured with pain, and the entire nervous system is racked. If they consult the average obscure physician, he will attribute their bad feelings to stomach, liver, kidney, heart or nervous trouble. If, by accident, they upon the right course, he will insist upon the disgusting examinations and local treatment so embarrassing to a sensitive, modest woman.

The real trouble is weakness or disease of the delicate and important organs that bear the burdens of maternity. There is no necessity for examinations or local treatment. Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription cures all the ills that afflict the female in the privacy of the home. It acts directly on the sensitive organs concerned, making them strong and well. It allays inflammation, heals ulceration, soothes pain, and restores the healthy vitality lost through long months or years of pain and suffering. Thousands of women have testified to its marvelous merits. Actual medicine stamps. Avoid substitutes.

For him to send his servant with his knife, fork and spoon, or if he had no servant he carried them with him in his breeches pocket.

GLIMPSE OF ITALY

Strange Ways of Doing Things in That Sunny Land.

A Peculiar Custom Which Would Bother an American—A Roman Funeral Is a Strange and Startling Sight to a Stranger.

An old adage says, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," but it is a question whether the average American tourist ever learns the customs of the Romans. Even people who have lived in the Eternal City fail to observe many of the traits and ways of the Romans in their daily life. An Englishman who was an old resident of Rome was put to shame by an American schoolteacher of 25 who asked him if he knew why they chopped so little wood in Italy. He had taken upon himself the office of general dispenser of information among the guests, and, not being willing to confess ignorance, he blurted out:

"Ah, yes; I fancy it must be the want of wood and the smallness of the hax."

But the young woman—and she came from New York city—explained to him that the real reason was that they saved most of the wood. She showed the guests how the Italians hold the saw between their heels and knees and draw the log across the teeth. These are little things, but they go to make up a people's personality and are curious facts for foreigners.

When one vehicle passes another in Italy, the driver keeps to the left. The pedestrians act in the same way. Some foreigners go through Italy from Naples to Milan, and at the end wonder why it was that the Italians persisted in getting into their way.

The native Roman eats two meals a day, one, the colazione, or breakfast, at noon; the other, the pranzo, or dinner, from 7 to 9 in the evening. Black coffee is a favorite drink among the women at the cafes, but tea is seldom used. It costs usually 10 cents a cup. Italian bread is made without salt, which is under a heavy tax and is classed with tobacco and stamps. Wherever one is sold, there also you may purchase the other two commodities.

As for the owners of bicycles, they have a hard time. Each rider must take out a license for himself. He can ride no other wheel but his own and should he permit his brother to use his wheel without a license the authorities would seize and retain the machine until a heavy fine was paid.

Another peculiar custom is the way in which an Italian will beckon with his hand. In America people wave the hand toward them when they desire a person's approach. In Italy it is just the opposite.

When an Italian waves a good-bye to you with his hand, you imagine he is calling you back, and if he wants you to approach he motions with his hand as Americans do in making a gesture of repulsion.

In New York there are morning and evening papers with a liberal outflow of extras between. In Italy the papers reach the public about 9 o'clock at night.

About every school door when classes for the day have been finished you will see a gathering of men and women. These are the parents, who come to carry home the books of their children.

When the family wash is ready, the mother carries the basketful of clothes on her head to the public washhouse, ready for action. Every one loves the queen. She is very devout and every now and then steals from her palace dressed in plain black and mingles with the worshippers in the churches. As for the king—well, that is another story.

Bananas and peanuts are never seen in Italy. As for hand organs and the festive monkey, they are seldom seen in the city streets. A peasant from the mountains bringing in vegetables to sell to the city folks must pay a tax at the gate before he can enter the walls. As the first sign of a Roman schoolboys have a holiday.

There are a great many suicides in Rome, and the favorite way is to throw oneself over the Pincian wall or to go to the Sublice bridge out on the Alban hills and leap from it on to the rocks 300 feet below. And when a person has thus ended his life the natives think it proper to cut a small cross on the spot where he or she plunged to death. As many as 11 crosses have been counted in as many feet, and the bridge is rather long.

To refuse a pinch of snuff is a grievous insult. To walk in the sunlight is to class yourself with dogs and barbarians. To enter a shop and to walk out without making a purchase is to call down upon your head the wrath of an Italian vendicatore, whose superlative curse would make a New York truckman green with envy.

The reason of this is that the windows of the store contain everything in stock with marked prices, and the shopkeeper hates to talk unless there is a sale in prospect at the end. He may have done nothing but sit and doze for an hour before you enter, and he may do nothing else after you leave, but should you fail to buy he considers himself the most abused man in the city, whose time is lost upon fools in general.

It is not always the native guide that is the best. One day at the Church of St. Peter in Rome a party of American schoolboys were watching the crowds come and go when a swarthy faced man approached and asked in the purest Italian if they wished a guide. On the spur of the moment one of them answered him in Greek. The fellow gave them a keen look; then, with a broad grin and a still broader brogue, said:

"Arrah! Now, phwat are ye givin' me? Sure, an I know ye are Americans, an it's mesel' that's Pat Bannigan." And that man could tell you more about Rome in five minutes than a native could in a month.

One grows careless in traveling, and many things slip the memory, but there is one thing that it takes months to get accustomed to—a Roman funeral. Of all sights a burial procession in Italy is the strangest. It startles a man to turn a corner and to come suddenly into a gloomy street where the yellow glare of funeral torches throws grotesque shadows along the house walls. There is a quick glitter of censers, a low wail from the mourners, a measured tread of white-robed, chanting priests, a small of incense hanging in the hot air, and behind it all rises a great high column in black, and along its top lies the coffin. Flowers are piled around the dead, and following the hearse is a crowd of mourners, jostling one another as they meet in the narrow passageways. It is a sight that is apt to come to a man in his sleep, and the dreams that follow it are not always the most pleasant.—New York Sun.

An Old French Custom.

Before the revolution in France it was customary when a gentleman was invited to dinner for him to send his servant with his knife, fork and spoon, or if he had no servant he carried them with him in his breeches pocket.

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