

## WOMAN and HER WORK.

The following letter which I received last week seems to me to contain so much good common sense, as well as so much honest solicitude for the happiness of those little ones who were always so near our blessed Saviour's heart, that it has made a very deep impression upon me. I confess that I have never visited the institution mentioned and as it may not be in my power to do so for some months to come, I have decided to let my correspondent speak for herself, as she seems not only to be very much in earnest but also to know whereof she speaks. If her letter had been written in a spirit of fault finding, or useless criticism, it would most assuredly have found a nameless grave in the waste basket because there is nothing in the world easier than to find fault with an existing state of affairs especially when the fault finder has no practical suggestion to make for the improvement of the matter criticized, but Mignonette is not only actuated by honest anxiety for the welfare of the little children, but makes a very feasible suggestion for brightening their lives.

Now, I have not the least doubt that everything possible is done for the comfort of these poor little waifs and that they really do receive, as far as possible, a mother's care, but the fact remains that a basement room with brick walls and an asphalt floor is not the sort of place any mother in the land, however poor she might be, would wish her child to spend the greater portion of its existence in, and the mere fact that the windows are above the range of a child's vision almost constitutes a cruelty. The child who is deprived of the pleasures of looking out of a window is cut off from one of the dearest joys of childhood, and I cannot believe the little creatures can be healthy or happy, if they spend much of their time in a basement. My correspondent touches the right chord when she says children are like flowers, and need sunshine and brightness in order to thrive, while one dilapidated rag doll of its very own, to be loved and cuddled, dressed and undressed and slept with at night, is a thousand times better than the best collection of toys that was ever placed behind glass doors to keep it free from dust.

I do not for a moment mean to suggest that the matron and her assistants should not have pleasant rooms, but I do think that even if some little sacrifice has to be made, some economy of room for storage of domestic uses, the children should have a cheerful playroom, and while I agree with Mignonette as to the advisability of turning the unpainted upper flat into a playroom, I am well aware that orphan asylums are usually far from being wealthy institutions and it might be quite out of the power of those in authority, to make the required alterations, so it would be better to concentrate their efforts upon some other plan, and try to effect the necessary change by condensation, instead of expansion. But by all means let the poor little children have as much brightness in their lives as possible, even to bright colored pinaflores which do not cost any more than mud colored ones!

DEAR ASTRAL—Are you interested in the P. orphan asylum? Have you ever been through the institution? If so I would like very much to know what you think of it, and if you agree with me in what I write. I have only seen an occasional visitor, having very little time at my disposal, but in a few visits, while seeing much that is commendable, yet I have seen much that might be improved.

A noticeable defect is the want of a suitable playroom. When asked if I would like to see the playroom, I at once said "Yes." I love little children dearly and like to see them with their toys and books, and the word "playroom" called to mind a cheerful room,—for toys and bright pictures—where many happy days of my childhood were spent.

The pleasant young woman in attendance then conducted us down stairs into a basement room, lighted by windows far above the tallest child's head! Cold brick walls papered by way of decoration with prints from old illustrated papers. There was some kind of a brick arrangement through the centre of the room—perhaps a chimney, perhaps a furnace, I did not notice it particularly, only it was there! One long, dingy bench, and shade of the lovers of happy childhood! An asphalt floor! And here the little children with their mud-colored aprons were supposed to be playing! Not a gleam of brightness was there and children do so love pretty things. Although the friend who accompanied me, and myself were in dark clothing, some little glimmering about our dress, a button or a bracelet attracted the little ones' attention, and they crowded about us, to look at, and timidly touch the bright spots!

We tried to say some word of praise about the room, but the words died away on our lips, and I am afraid there were tears in our eyes as we turned away and went up stairs to the pleasant reception room, with the impression that although the building was supposed to be a home for orphans it was in reality a home for the Matron and her two assistants, while the orphans were in the background, and we felt like echoing the words of the aged minister: "Those poor orphans! Those poor orphans!"

It has been said that the matron and her assistants have the best and pleasantest rooms. This I do not know, and my object is not to find fault with the matron or her helpers. But to improve the condition of the children. "But," some may say "They have plenty of toys. Yes, they have, stored away in an inner room in book-cases and on tables. Into that outer room, I think no child ever enters, and the toys and books are allowed out 'sometimes.' Now having pointed out the grievance, I suggest a remedy. After conducting us through the institution the attendant pointed to a flight of stairs saying, "That flat has never been furnished." What a capital plan it would be for the directors to at once set aside a large playroom, and in that collect all the toys, with low tables for the picture books and games, and bookcases easily reached for the books. These things have all been contributed by generous friends, not I am sure to be shut up in

bookcases. I know there is more enjoyment in one little toy that one can really play with, than in a dozen, only to look at. Vividly to my mind comes the memory of a grand doll that because it was so grand, I kept for a long time, almost afraid to touch it. At length it got a little shabby, and then how I loved it!

I know some people who are keeping toys to give to the asylum, and they will keep them until a suitable place is set apart for their enjoyment.

It would not, of course do, to allow the children to be in this room overnight, but one of the ladies connected with the establishment could surely be in the room all the time, to prevent unnecessary injury to the toys, assisted perhaps, by some of the older girls, who could have their sewing or knitting and at the same time watch the children. The sewing machine could stand in that room, and the presence of the operator on that, would be a check on any rudeness or careless treatment of the contents of the room.

There is another point to be considered. Although the children are well cared for and have almost a mother's care from the venerable matron, yet a close observer of their little faces will detect a dull, lifeless look. I could not account for this until I read somewhere that poor children who were raised in basements were not nearly as bright and intelligent as those living in more elevated homes however humble. As a flower in a cellar grows pale and delicate, but removed to a sunny room in a short time puts out strong green leaves and beautiful buds. Children are human flowers and need all the brightness and sunshine they can get. Our asylum stands on a beautiful spot and, if I mistake not, from the flat I speak of there is a fine view of part of the harbor. Every child loves to look out of the window and I am sure more brightness would come into the little lives if my suggestion were carried out.

I will say nothing of the pinaflores, only this, children have a keen sense of beauty, and when cottons are so cheap and pretty, surely our little waifs should have a share of the prettiness.

Soon they must leave the asylum's sheltering walls—soon life's burden will fall upon them; till then give them what childhood craves—brightness, happiness and love, and the God of the fatherless will bless our orphanage.

MIGNONETTE.

Now is the time when the far sighted maid or matron buys her furs, and after getting a good wear out of them for the rest of the winter she has them "to the good" for next year, and almost as fresh and new as if you had waited until next autumn and paid one third more for the very same garment, all furrers dislike carrying goods over from one season to another, and sooner than do so, and run the risk of moth and rust and the numerous other drawbacks to the care of furs in summer, the trouble of packing, and the risk of fashions changing they would prefer to sell their goods at little more than cost price after the month of January. It really pays to invest in furs now because fur garments are usually made just a little in advance of the fashion to prevent them from getting out of style too soon, so one may safely purchase either a jacket, cape, or cloak of this winter's cut, and feel reasonably sure of being in the fashion for next year.

This rule applies almost as well to the later importations of cloth jackets and mantles, because though the more extreme styles, such as the Russian coats, and the triple capes, will probably not last another season, the heavy tailor made coat of either rough cheviot, or heavy hopsacking, cut three quarter length and with flaring English collar, and no capes will most likely hold its own as well as the others and be less out of style.

The same may be said of dress goods; certain lines such as chevrons, broad cloths, and serges are never out of style provided plain sell colors are chosen, and the woman who intends having a dark cloth costume next winter, and possesses a moth proof closet, cannot do better than invest in one now, as she will get it for almost half price, and can therefore afford to indulge in some piece of finery such as a new evening dress, or some long coveted extravagance, not hitherto within her means. It is by the exercise of such forethought that many women of moderate means are enabled to dress as well as their more affluent sisters, on little more than half the money.

Speaking of economical dressing reminds me that the time has once more arrived when the girl who is economical either from necessity or choice, and who possesses a little taste withal, can turn two partly worn, or out-of-style dresses, into one new and stylish one, with satisfaction to herself and profit to her parents and natural guardians. A lovely model which is as pretty as it is odd, consists of brown velvet for half the depth of the skirt, met by a deep flounce of brown moire in the same shade, and the joining hidden by a band of golden beaver fur: the upper part of the bodice, was of the velvet, and the lower part of the moire in soft surplice like folds, the velvet part was embroidered elaborately in jet and steel, and was made with a deep cape, or epaulette falling over the sleeves which were made with a puff of the moire to the elbow, and long close cuffs of the velvet.

By the way moire antique is the fashionable material for trimming this winter, and anyone who happens to have a moire antique gown lying by, is in luck.

Many bodices have the skirt fastening over them, which is not very pretty I think, as it gives the figure a cut off look. Others have the bodice cut off just a shade below the waist line, and a rippled skirt added.

For evening dresses, accordion plaited fabrics are in great demand, black spotted nets thus treated are charming and nothing can be prettier than a black net, spotted with either cream, gold or scarlet accordion plaited and made up over a

black satin skirt. Colored satin is frequently used also, and a favorite model for such a dress is a plain skirt of black plaited net, with white spots draped over a pink satin skirt, which was trimmed at the foot with a flounce of the net, put on in Vandikes. The bodice was of the satin with a full baby waist of the net and a "frill" of the same at the neck. For a very young girl a gown of white net, is always, with double skirt, the upper one reaching to the knees, a plain baby waist and a sash of white watered ribbon, tied in a large bow behind. The sleeves were cut up to the shoulder in a deep scallop, and on each shoulder was a standing bow. The foundation of the dress was white China silk. Silk gauzes, silk muslin crepe lisse, and all silk tissues are much worn, but, as I have said before, they are expensive and do not wear well.

A very pretty way of making an evening dress for a tall graceful girl is the combination of wateau, and empire styles which has the wateau back, and the empire drape of lace or net extending from the low neck, to the foot of the skirt in straight folds. Of course such a drapey would be out of the question for a short or a stout woman.

There is a new evening material called changeable white silk which looks quite white when seen in certain lights but when draped or folded shows the faintest and loveliest tints of purple, green or pink. Imagine a dress of this lovely material made up with a foot trimming of violets sewed on without the foliage, the skirt further trimmed with bunches of violets trailing down each side of the front breath; the bodice slightly draped with silk muslin, in palest shade of green, large puffed sleeves and low neck finished with a border of the violets! Lovely, is it not?

Lent will soon be here, however, and the good people will have to turn their attention from evening gowns to spring fabrics, for it seems to be a time honored custom, to spend the penitential season in planning out ones summer wardrobe, and preparing generally for the spring campaign.

Early as it is, and absurd as it seems to be thinking about spring garments with the thermometer at zero, and the ground covered with snow, the shelves of the principal dry goods shops are already laden with spring and summer goods, some of which are very new both in design and coloring, while others are so very old-fashioned, that they will seem new to the present generation. Amongst these are the genuine "sprigged" muslins, lawns and chambrays dear to the hearts of our grandmothers and some of these are shown in the old fashioned colors which make them seem like the product of the looms of 1830. Fancy a lawn with a white ground over which struggles a pattern of parsley leaves in real parsley green.

Another equally old-fashioned but prettier pattern has a pure white ground thickly strewn with lovely blue forget-me-nots, and their small pale green leaves. Printed dummies and printed jaconet muslins are also shown, and barred organdies, the bars being of a saten texture out a very thin back ground, with perhaps a sprig of some small flower. These goods are all so old fashioned as to be almost forgotten, and therefore come out now as the greatest novelties, and they are exact copies of the old time fashions, having been reproduced from the old patterns.

These fabrics are to be made up with double or triple skirts edged with lace, and not too fully laced, while the bodices will be in either yoke or spencer style.

A ST. JOHN GIRL—I am very sorry that I shall not be able to help you, but don't you see how utterly unlikely it is that a busy newspaper woman, whose days are spent in the office, should know much about the houses which are to let in the city? Such things are very much out of my line, and if I wanted a house or a flat for myself



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to-morrow, I should not know where to look for one, but would either advertise, or study the advertising columns of the daily papers. I really think this would be your best plan. I would willingly help you if I could.

Molly—I think—St. John—It is quite proper for her to appear at church the next week, but not to be seen on the street more than she can help for the first month for six weeks. She is not supposed to make any formal calls at all for at least three months, but of course the first she should be upon those who have shown sympathy for her in her sorrow. In England she would not make any calls except upon her most intimate friends or her own relatives for six months. In deep mourning black cards are customary, but not strictly necessary except for a widow. It is only proper and in good taste to show your appreciation of the kindness shown to you by writing to thank your friends separately for the tributes sent, and for the expressions of sympathy which, of course, accompanied them. It is proper either for the husband, or eldest daughter to do this. I cannot see how you can denigrate your questions as silly, I think they were very sensible and practical indeed, and I shall be happy to help you at any time whilst as it lies in my power.

ASTRA.

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