

A large proportion of them were young, a larger, perhaps, were growing old rapidly in spite of a pathetic clinging to youth; one here and there had white or grey hair which they were inclined to wave as a banner when everything else failed them. For to live in St. Edward's Chambers was popularly supposed to involve the impressing of a distinct individuality upon your friends and neighbours. The distinctiveness being the matter of the most moment.

And yet with hardly an exception to an old-world mother's eyes as well as to those of the "mere male," their rooms or chambers presented an almost monotonous collection of similar oddities. Early in their existence a clever woman writer pointed out the fact that the inhabitants appeared to clothe their own persons, their walls and their sofas indiscriminately. The "Art Serge" that appeals with curious certainty to the would-be free women of our time as at once economically and aesthetically worthy of their patronage, if it hang in limp folds over a draughty door one day, may be impounded for the making of an equally limp cloak on the next, and finally end its career as a "beautiful patch of colour," concealing a shabby table or even a dilapidated coalscuttle. Art muslin again has a refinement lurking in its penny-halfpenny lengths that is inconceivable to the Philistine mind; while amazing posters, the evolution apparently of Japanese nightmares, are becoming the essential accompaniment of "black and whites," after Whistler, or autotypes of the most extreme Burne-Jones, Rossetti school.

Carved oak bureaus stand out amazed at their own substantiality from a few rush-bottomed chairs, usually manifestly painted or "japanned" by amateur hands, and the

tables continually do justice to the masculine maledictions hurled at them. A sofa bed would be comfortable if it were not for the elaboration upon it of cushions and hangings supposed to conceal its identity, and a hammock chair or two invite to cigarettes and midday snatches of unrefreshing sleep—a consequence of work or excitement pursued mainly by lamp-light.

Hetty's particular art serge was peacock blue, her art muslin a delicate yellow and her floor rejoiced her eyes with a (for St. Edward's Chambers) unusually costly druggery of a rich moss green. Three or four little bookshelves with dangerously slender supports bore their burden of "favourites" proudly, and coloured pots on brackets, photographs of the home folk, and pictures framed, or "drawing-pinned," covered most of the convenient wall space.

At St. Edward's Chambers there were no little kitchens or sculleries such as are attached to many of their kind, to allow of the inhabitants indulging in any very substantial cooking on their own account. Few, if any of the women had any time for such employment of their energy even if they had had the inclination. Luncheon and dinner could be ordered at certain specified hours from the house-keeper's rooms below, and tables were laid and cleared with restless precision by maids who, alas! had little time to rest in, much less waste. What they must often have thought of the surroundings of their deftly set out cover were perhaps best left undetermined. But Hetty at any rate on the first day that I was invited to inspect her little domain had it radiantly ready for admiration.

It was still spring-time, and with the help of a box of daffodils and lilies-of-the-valley from the "Hall" garden, she had turned

her little study into a veritable bower. Her friend Mary, who made her dwelling in rooms on the topmost floor of all, had descended to act as assistant hostess, and a merrier, kindlier or more completely light-hearted couple of lassies never made an old auntie more welcome.

Already Hetty had begun to take an absorbing interest in her work and to speak of us and our and we as if the association of which she was the newest and probably the youngest recruit was infallibly the reforming agency of the century. Mary was perhaps quieter in her faith, but seemed a no less devoted adherent; and I went away to write a long letter of description to Mrs. Bramston to tell her that, perhaps, after all, the young folks could see further along the road of life than we, whose eyes were growing a little near-sighted and too apt to be sensitive only to the lights and shadows of our own immediate circle.

For nearly six months after that I was absorbed in sorrows and anxieties that had arisen nearer my own home-life. Then I heard quite unexpectedly that Hetty had had an accident in getting in or out of her lift that had resulted in a badly broken ankle. At the same time I learnt that her mother had spent some six weeks up in her chambers nursing her, and that now they were both home again together for Christmas at the Hall.

From a rather guarded sentence towards the close of Mrs. Bramston's letter I gathered that there was little fear of Hetty's desiring a longer lease of life in chambers. But it was not until I again accepted an invitation to watch the spring making its welcome conquest of the Shropshire valleys that I heard "all about it."

(To be continued.)

VARIETIES.

FOOLISH LISTENERS.

It is told of Bishop Aylmer that when he observed his congregation inattentive he would repeat some verses of the Hebrew Bible, at which the people stared with astonishment. He then addressed them on the folly of eagerly listening to what they did not understand while they neglected instructions which were readily comprehended.

THE NEWSPAPER NEAREST THE NORTH POLE.

The paper that is published nearest the North Pole is one edited by a Mr. Modler among the Eskimos of Greenland. He set up his office in a place called Godthaab, among a people that did not know how to read. Twice a month he makes a long trip on skates through the country to sell his paper.

At first his paper consisted of nothing but pictures; then he put in an alphabet, then added a few words, and at last came to sentences, until now his journal contains long articles on important topics.

And so this little paper of his has taught the Eskimos of that neighbourhood to read; and what great paper in the world can point to a piece of work more useful and enterprising?

THE WISE GIRL.

"How foolish is the pessimist,
Despondent and forlorn,
Who always when she gets a rose
Goes hunting for a thorn!
The optimist has better sense,
The charm of life she knows,
She doesn't mind a scratch or two
If she can get the rose."

THE DISADVANTAGE OF HAVING WHITE HANDS.

When Mary Queen of Scots made her first attempt to escape from the Castle of Lochleven, she entered the boat in the disguise of a laundress. She carried a bundle of clothes, and had a muffer over her face.

They had not gone far when one of those who rowed said in a joke—

"Let us see what manner of dame this is."
With that he tried to pull down her muffer. "In defence," says a contemporary account, "she put up her hands, which they spied to be very fair and white; wherewith they entered into suspicion whom she was."

The Queen was much put out, and entreated them to row her to the shore, but they paid no attention and just "rowed her back again."

THE CHEERFUL PHILOSOPHER.

"'Twere easy told
That some grow wise and some grow cold,
And all feel time and trouble;
If life an empty bubble be,
How sad are those who will not see
A rainbow in the bubble."

PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE.—Patience is very good but perseverance is much better. While the former stands like a stoic under difficulties the latter makes it its business to vanquish them.

THINK THIS OVER.—By all means, girls, go on learning, but remember that knowledge is worse than ignorance if it does not lead us to live wiser and better lives.

HE SAW HE WAS BLIND.

"Well, John, did you take the note I gave you to Mr. Smithers?" asked a gentleman of his rustic servant.

"Yes, sir," said John; "I took the note, but I don't think he can read it."

"Can't read it! Why so?"

"Because he is so blind, sir. While I was in the room he axed me where my hat was, and it war on my head all the time."

DEFINITIONS.—The "complete angler," as a definition of "a flirt," is particularly happy. Beauty has been called "a short-lived tyranny," "a silent cheat" and "a delightful prejudice;" while modesty has been declared "the delicate shadow that virtue casts." Love has been likened to "the sugar in a woman's teacup and man the spoon that stirs it up;" and a "true lover's knot" has not inaptly been termed a "dear little tie."

ALCHEMISTS.—"In their search for gold the alchemists discovered other things—gunpowder, china, medicines, the laws of nature. There is a sense in which we are all alchemists."—*Schopenhauer*.

THE SPEED OF THOUGHT.—"It takes about two-fifths of a second," says a scientific writer, "to call to mind the country in which a well-known town is situated or the language in which a familiar author wrote. We can think of the next month in half the time we need to think of the name of last month. It takes on an average one-third of a second to add numbers containing one digit, and half a second to multiply them."