

Page Caruso for the Subway

By Boyden R. Sparkes

THE fat office boy brought in his card. It really was not a card; merely a roughly torn portion of a newspaper margin, upon which he had scrawled: "Herbert P. K. Twitchell desires to see the editor about an idea for making metropolitan life easier."

"Is he a nut, boy?"

"Am I an alienist?" countered the youth, in whose cupped palm glowed the burning end of a furtive cigarette in violation of the rules of conduct for the office boys. Then:

"Shall I open the gate?" With that he started off, obviating the necessity of making a decision—and making decisions is more harmful to the system than going without rubber heels. In a minute the boy returned, followed by a white-mustached old man whose feet, weighted with overshoes, were lifted high, as though at each step he was drawing them out of thick, pulling mud. The caller held his broken derby hat in his right hand and over his heart in the attitude of a civilian saluting the colors. There was a dull green tone in the faded fabric of his ancient frock coat and his trousers were so voluminous that they conveyed a curious illusion that he was wearing a skirt. About his neck there was wound several yards of ocher-colored muffler fringed with purple.

He began to clear his throat when he was far from the desk, and when he arrived there he remained standing, but with his light blue eyes gleaming hopefully from beneath a tangle of bushy white eyebrows. When invited to seat himself he expressed his thanks effusively and then carefully pulled up his trousers to protect a crease that existed only in the old man's memory.

"Have you any idea as to the extent of insanity caused in great cities just by noise?" he began. "It is frightful."

He fumbled in the pockets of his coat and presently brought to light a half smoked cigar and a match. There was no embarrassment in his manner as he lighted it. His eyes glittered with the enthusiasm of an inspired artist. He seemed no longer conscious of his auditor.

"My idea," he resumed, "is to harness all the noise of the city and convert it into melody, a great metropolitan symphony. Boston would have its distinctive theme; Chicago another, and New York the grandest of all. This could be applied to factories, too, so that a manufacturer of cheap watches or of boilers would have his plant equipped with instruments for converting the hideous noises of industry into harmonious sound that would be as soothing as a cathedral pipe organ. The one drawback—of course, there is a drawback—is that the commercial instinct might force a striving to have the factories tuned up in a fashion that would drive the workers to increased effort. You know how 'Dixie' and 'Turkey in the Straw' stir folks, even the most lethargic.

"I have not patented the idea. I keep the plans here," and the old man tapped his forehead impressively, "where they can't be stolen by some one whose sole motive in developing them would be personal gain. In my case all I ask is recognition—recognition, and one or two other small concessions from a busy world."

Puffing vigorously on the cigar stump for a moment, he resumed:

"Perhaps you will say this is impractical. That is precisely what was said to Fulton, to Franklin, to Stevenson, to Edison. Probably it was said to Henry Ford. Let me continue. There is the subway; its roar is sufficient to cause something akin to shell shock to the nervous system of a sensitive person. I would begin with the subway. I would translate the roar and screech of the underground trains into music that would change the course of this nation's history.

"In the morning when the workers are bound downtown to office and factories their ears would not be distressed by a grinding roar, robbing them of self control. No, indeed. They should hear a strange and fascinating melody that would haunt their day with sweetness, keeping their brains and fingers happily active.

"In the evening rush hour a single lever raised or depressed would alter the theme of the music so that the peak load crowds would submit without complaint to having their feet tramped upon, their ribs elbowed, their noses assailed. The wheels of the cars, besides generating electricity to light the trains, would also provide vibrations that would be transformed into restful tunes.

"It will be difficult to get the subway patrons to see this—you see, I have a few illusions left—for they are quite incapable of seeing anything but the bottom of a column of figures. Just see how this glorious idea has escaped a truly practical application in the Broadway subway of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit!

"Have you ridden in any of their trains that have been equipped with a device for conveying the conductor's voice into all the cars of a single train? As the train approaches Fourteenth Street station he shouts into the transmitter:

"Four-r-teen-th ysa-a-a; change for downtown local."

"Not half the passengers understand these nasal shouts, though the voices are magnified considerably. The metallic quality given by the amplifier is amusing at first and then annoying, and constant irritation leads to the madhouse.

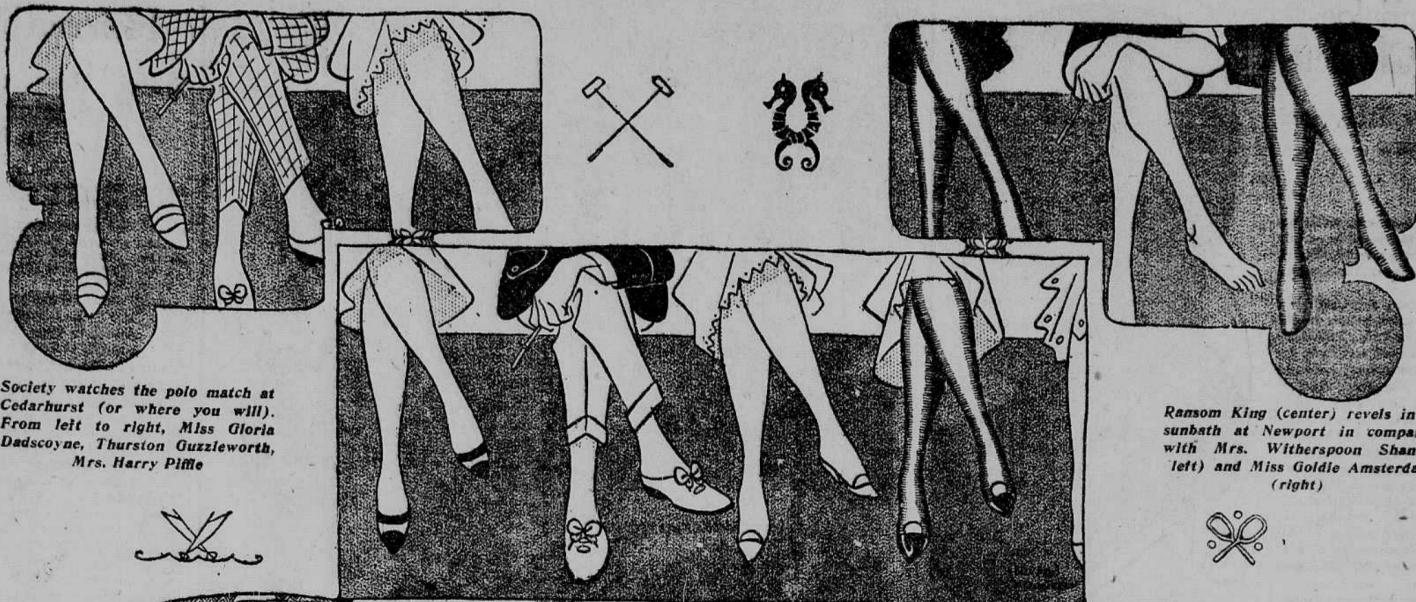
"Now, can you imagine any one so stupid

OMITTING THE NON-ESSENTIAL

Exclusive Summer Pictures by Ellison Hoover

Paris to Greenwich Village

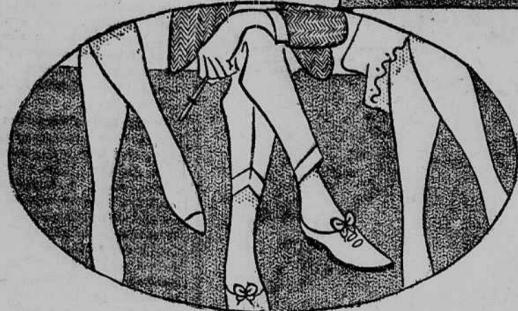
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Society watches the polo match at Cedarhurst (or where you will). From left to right—Miss Gloria Dadscoyne, Thurston Guzzleworth, Mrs. Harry Piffle



Ransom King (center) revels in a sunbath at Newport in company with Mrs. Witherspoon Shanks (left) and Miss Goldie Amsterdam (right)



Prominent members of the younger set snapped on the lawn of the Siesta Country Club during the recent open-air horse show. Left to right—Mrs. Thurston Guzzleworth, Harry Piffle, Miss Georgia Rexingham and Miss Audrey Onyx.



Left oval—Mrs. Ethelbert Tatlow 3d, Peter Blue and Miss Deborah Van Datt watch the finish of the yacht races at Bar Harbor.

Right oval—Miss Millicent Shanks, Effingham Oddlot and Mrs. Livingstone Surtax follow the tennis finals at the Croesus County Club.

that it has not occurred to him to apply the principle of the talking machine to these announcers? Instead of a harsh-voiced subway guard growling into the amplifier, if I were president of the subway I would have Caruso or Ruffo or Galli-Curci make records containing all the information that a conductor is ever called upon to shout to his passengers. I would have these artists sing 'Fourteenth Street' in their best grand opera voices, to say nothing of 'Houston Street' and 'Prince Street' and 'Times Square.' Why, Caruso could apply that sob he gives in 'Pagliacci' to the 'City Hall' stop and probably insure the defeat of Mayor Hylan—and you realize how much a lot of us desire that.

"The subways are trying to get people to ride to Pelham Park, to Van Cortlandt Park, to the New York Zoological Gardens, or Bronx Zoo, as it is sometimes vulgarly referred to. How much more effective their advertising would be if they should advertise:

"Caruso will announce the streets on the Jerome Avenue branch next Friday and Saturday. Give the wife and babies a treat."

The old man fumbled in his right-hand waistcoat pocket. There was no watch there. He glanced at the wall clock and then murmured an apology.

"I fear I am taking too much of your time," he apologized. "I should hurry along, too, for I have some important research work to do in

the subways. I ride on them a great deal, using them as laboratories to develop my idea. Do you know, sir?"—and here his voice was lowered to a confidential whisper—"it is almost unbelievable that a genius such as I undoubtedly am should have to neglect experimental work for lack of money to buy subway tickets. If I had thirty cents it would be a laboratory fee for several days, for I do not have to emerge often, transferring from one train to another at express stops. If I just had thirty cents, why, I might—Oh, sir, thank you! You may not realize it now, but you are as much a benefactor to posterity as ever was Carnegie with his silly libraries."

The old man rose slowly to his feet. His joints creaked strangely, and as he moved

away he lifted his feet in that odd manner which had marked his entrance.

A memory of a previous encounter with the strange visitor prompted the query:

"Hey, weren't you here once before with a gag about the subway?"

He paused at the gate and stroked his chin nervously. Then he smiled and replied:

"Of course I was. I had forgotten. That was while I was trying to develop my scheme for a scenic subway, painting panoramas on the dull, dark walls of the tunnels. Yes, yes; so I was! Goodby, I'll return some time and tell you the result of my further experiments. Thank you again for posterity."

The gate slammed behind him, but there was no music in its noise.

EMILIE OF THE BEAUTY SHOP

By MARION SPITZER
Illustrations by Eleanor E. Sanxay



She built my head into a lumpy mountain, covering it with a net

Hennaed hair, waved and built out to an incredible size over her ears. A single line of eyebrow. A vermilion cupid's bow growing where none grew before. You know Emilie!

I started to take the hairpins out of my hair. Francene always permitted that. Not so Emilie. She frowned with great dignity and finished the job herself. I wanted to apologize but I was afraid.

"What'll ya have?" asked Emilie in a condescending tone.

"A shampoo and a wave, please."

"Henna?"

"No, not henna."

Emilie was speechless, but not for long.

"What, no henna?"

"No, no henna. Just a plain shampoo."

"It costs only 75 cents more."

"I'd rather not use henna," I said wearily.

"You ought to use it," Emilie informed me. "You rilly have very nice hair, girlie, but it ain't got any luser. Lemme try the henna."

I thought of how I had scoffed at the tales of men who found themselves helpless in barber chairs, and groaned. Meanwhile Emilie applied the henna. She left the thick, muddy paste upon my rebellious scalp for what seemed an hour. I had visions of emerging a perfect Leslie Carter. Meanwhile Emilie chatted gaily somewhere outside my curtained cubicle.

"I was to Long Beach yestiddy," she told the world. "That place ain't what it used to be. Why, a couple years ago it got the most refined crowd in New York. An' now it's nearly as bad as the Island. There ain't any exclusive place any more."

Emilie sauntered back to the torture chamber and looked in.

"Please come in and rinse this stuff off," I pleaded weakly.

"Ya want it off so soon? It won't hardly show at all."

"Take it off," said I, mustering up my severest tone. "Oh, all right," said Emilie, "it's your hair."

It was something of a relief to hear that.

The hair was rinsed and dried to an accompaniment of Emilie's impressions of the latest movie release. After the last brown, sticky particle had been removed from my ears and neck, Emilie handed me a mirror.

"Now," she said, "ain't that much better? Some life in your hair now." I scanned it closely. Well, anyway, I still looked like the same person. But there were undeniable

tintings in my ordinarily brown locks. I knew what Tommy would say. And I hate Tommy to scold.

Emilie was progressing.

"My, what dry hair you got," said Emilie, aghast. "Better lemme give it an erl treatment. You don't wanta get dandruff, do you?"

No, I didn't want to get dandruff, but I didn't want to get an oil treatment. I hate oil. However, Emilie was haughtier than I could be. Also Emilie was standing above me with an oil can or something.

"If you come for these erl treatments regular," she told me, as she rubbed vigorously on my protesting head, "we'll soon have you in a fine condition. It did appear that way. Little drops of oil were oozing down my neck and under my collar. My hair felt damp and soggy, like engine waste. I was raging, but helpless. Just then the telephone rang. It was for Emilie. She left me flat at the call of her gentleman friend. And while Emilie and the young man battled back and forth regarding the respective merits of the Rivoli and the Capitol, I remained in the chair, boiling in oil.

After awhile she returned.

"Now," she said, smiling fatuously, "I'll rinse it again. The erl will come right out."

But it didn't. The hairs clung together in little ratty tails, each tail separated by a wide space from its neighbor. Drying didn't help much. By now, however, I was resigned. I was in Emilie's hands, helpless. It was as though she had hypnotic power.

"How do you want your wave?" she asked, as if she cared how I wanted it. "Up or down?"

"Wave it up, please," I replied weakly. "It's unbecoming the other way."

"All right, I'll wave it up," said Emilie briskly, as she proceeded to wave it down. By the time that was over, I was thinking of Bill, who used to say:

"Some day you'll meet some one you can't dominate. Then you'll suffer."

Of course Bill wasn't thinking of Emilie when he issued that warning, but the effect was the same.

"Want me to put it up for you?" asked Emilie, putting it up. "It's only 50 cents extra, and I'll show you how to fix your hair so it shows off real good. You have nice hair, dearie, but you don't comb it right. Too plain. You ought to get side pieces made."

Then Emilie took a comb and "teased" my

hair. That, in case you don't know, is a process of tangling which is ruinous.

"Stop that," I roared. "This thing has gone too far. I will not have my hair ruined."

"Oh," said Emilie, unperturbed and going on, "that's all right; you can brush it out. But you'd really ought to get side pieces made."

She continued, using no less than sixty hairpins, and built my innocent head into a lumpy mountain, covering it with a net. I hate nets. Ultimately I escaped. It was well past the dinner hour, and I was expecting a girl from the office. A new one to my family, too, and she'd probably be there before me. I hastened out, but not before Emilie had extracted from me, by her mesmeric power, a 50-cent tip in appreciation of the torture she had inflicted upon me.

When I reached my room I rushed to a mirror, bitterly surveying the wreck. I didn't recognize myself. As I stood there my mother came in. Neither did she.

"How do you do," she said in her best company manner. "You are the friend Marian was expecting? I'm glad to see you making yourself at home. Marian will be here soon."

There were a dozen other women in the ordinary stateroom, some sick and all trying to get back into their clothes.

The poor doctress was looking commiseration. She was only a unit in the shameful and badly managed business, obeying orders like the rest of us.

The whole thing was a disgraceful farce. "You know you don't do this to first class passengers," I remarked. She stared at me, dumb.

Once back on deck and in the air my spirit of audacity revived. But there our last great struggle took place—examination of our baggage by the customs men. And once more we were to feel the ignominy of being second class passengers. We were obliged to wait until after the first class were dealt with.

The day was waning; soon it would be 6 o'clock, and I was thinking of myself, a veritable Rip Van Winkle of a stranger in New York with not a where to lay my head. I had taken an advertisement of a hotel in Gramercy Park from The Ocean Times, our daily paper printed on board, and I looked carefully to be sure that the announcement was for rooms from \$1.50 a day—up, of course. Also, I had the address of a rooming house in Greenwich Village.

But there was plenty of time for reflection. At least 500 second class passengers were standing in line, hoping thus to get a customs inspector a bit sooner. I declined, and sat down on my luggage resolved to let the line eat itself up before making a move.

Here I met several first class passengers and when I explained what we had been through with since daybreak they vouchsafed the information that nothing of the kind had happened to them.

In other words, for a difference of a hundred dollars or so one may protect his possessions and keep his self-respect!

While I was waiting I called up the hotel of the advertisement above mentioned and was promptly told that was a summer rate ad, and that they had nothing under \$6 a day.

Then I started for Greenwich Village on the streetcar. I asked a man on the car if he would please tell me where to change cars, and thanked him for his information. He looked rather surprised, I thought, though at what I could not tell. But he raised his hat. "What a nice man!" I thought.

It was now too late to do anything serious in the way of home hunting, and besides I was "dead beat." I took a makeshift in a street on the outskirts of the noble colony, thinking I might keep it a few days. The quest was over and Greenwich Village was achieved at last!

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