ON A SAFETY BICYCLE,

And Off It, Too; Experiences of a Woman Learner.

NEW THINGS IN CLOTH GOWNS.

Talk About Clothes For Women Who Are Not Rich.

SOME GIRLS AS THEY WERE FOUND.

How a College Man Cured a Girl of Biting Her Nails—She Wanted Sausage and Sauerkraut—Various Manifestations—Interesting Information About Women.

It was in an evil and unguarded moment when, on knowledge bent, the writer visited the training school for women cyclists and listened to the voice of the tempter counseling and advising that the only real way to know all about bicycle riding was to ride and understand. "Why," said the master, persuasively, "you'll know more about bicycle riding in fifteen minutes after you mount the machine than I could tell you in a week." That man knew what he was talking about. There are more surprises in store for the woman who rides a safety bicycle than for a young father with his first baby.

The woman's province in modern journalism is a peculiar one, demanding less mental power than bodily vigor to endure the exposing of one's self to the steaming heat of the Turkish bath one day, the cold plunge of the swimming pool the next, the habiliments and the odors incumbent upon Salvation Army slumming, the atmosphere of stage dressing rooms, the effervescence and high tension of women's clubs, and the pathetic solemnity of Young Woman's Christian Association carnivals and W. C. T. U. revels. And the woman journalist is a most conscientious creature. A man assigned to write his sensations under certain circumstances studiously avoids subjecting himself to the conditions prescribed by such circumstances, but a woman assigned to relate the feelings of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego on their walking match through the fiery furnace would not feel justified in writing a line until she had picked up her petticoats and tripped through some kind of a conflagration to write her story, with bandaged hands and singed eyelashes.

Accordingly, if a lesson in bicycle riding could throw any rays of light upon the mighty theme, there was no other way than to make such disposition of one's earthly effects as seemed most desirable, bid farewell to a vain and empty world, and make up one's mind and toilet as Esther did to face the King, and mount the wheel.

Now, a word as to the toilet for riding. Of course, there is much variety as well as smartness in the costume affected by the advanced rider. New York lady cyclists wear, as a rule, a rather short, full skirt of some heavy material that will not blow indecorously on a breezy day or in a lively spin, and that will be warm enough to do away with a multiplicity of petticoats, which are one of the things you can't wear to advantage on the wheel.

Beneath the dress a single divided skirt of dark color and warm woolen tights are worn. The smartest of bodices, the most irreproachable of boots, and some kind of a snug, close, little bonnet that is secure in its fastenings completes the cyclist's costume. Some of the ultra devotees to the wheel wear a divided dress skirt so full and arranged in such a way that its division is scarcely noticeable, and these odd bifurcated garments have sufficient popularity to warrant their being placed on sale in the shops. In France, lady cyclists are frequently seen riding in dark gray or blue knickerbockers, elegantly, but not inordinately full; a full white flannel or silk shirt, with a bright scarf and sash, and a jaunty little cutaway coat. And in Denmark, where bicycle riding is so universally popular, the ladies wear tights beneath baggy sixteenth century "shorts," a blouse which has a short skirt like a frock, a jersey jacket, and a jockey cap.

My advice to the beginner is not to invest any large amount in a fancy costume until you have taken a lesson or two and see if you need it. Wear an old gown that you don't mind tearing, ripping, scouring the floor and wiping up the dust with. Rip off all the fluttering flyaway rubbish that uselessly decorates it. Or, if you don't have time, it doesn't signify, it will be ripped off for you after the first lesson and you'll take it home in your hand. If you are a nice, right-minded girl you will feel like putting on your best so-kings and finest lingerie for your same thing will happen. Don't! There's no such thing as a graceful fall off a bicycle, revealing captivating glimpses of dainty frills and the swift vanishing shimmer of silk-clad ankles. A tumble is the most prosaic suit in the world, and a girl done up frills and frills looks like an upset laundress's basket. A nice girl who had taken two or three lessons and hadn't died told me that the day after she took her first lesson she got a dark old gown of her grandmother's and shortened it a little for her dress, matched it exactly in color and in thick flannel for a petticoat and for a garment beneath, made like trousers, only very full and expanding nearly to her ankles. Then, after she had put her best shoes on and said her prayers, she felt prepared for what might come.

As to the machine, of course, every woman of any spirit rides a safety now. She would scorn a tricycle as she would a wooden rocking horse, and a woman who is graceful looks extremely chic and pretty upon the wheel, which is exactly like the wheel her big brother rides, except that the chain which turns the wheel is encased in a heavy iron sheath to prevent its catching her clothes, and the connecting bar slopes down in a graceful curve to accommodate her skirts.

The machine, as it is trundled out into the hall, looks as innocent and subdued as a lamb on a tombstone, but let a woman mount it and only a wild broncho harnessed tandem with an unbroken thoroughbred by electric wires can equal it in diabolical manifestations of depravity. But it is not so much the iniquity of this bit of mechanism from that confuses you as the contradictory attributes of its peculiar nature. It has heights of virtue undreamed of by a P. M. L. leader, and depths of rascality which even a stage villain may not fathom. It is as willy as a woman, as strategic as a ward politician, as incorrigible as a street gamin, and as little to be depended upon as a dynamite cartridge, an electrical wire, or the Signal Service weather reports.

So much for the costume and the courser, and now for the hall, which is large and light and airy, with thick ominous leather padding, shoulder high, all around its four walls and encircling the pillars which support its ceiling.

The first woman who ever rode a bicycle was taught in the misty light of early dawn on the bleak roadways of the West End drive. The was Miss Pauline Hall, whose ambition to ride was fired by a spontaneous burst of admiration, and, as there was then no place in which women were taught in the city, no retired path where a woman might learn the art away from the unfeeling observation of a cold and unsympathetic world, the fair cantatrice rode at 4 A. M. when the drive was deserted, and was taught by the same amiretical and jovial little master who coaches women in the art to-day. That was scarcely three years ago and now the hall is occupied during all the days by struggling women mounted on wobbling wheels. The modern Bedott believer in the equality of the sexes would find all his pretty theories shivered into atoms finer than the original star unit by the spectacle of one abject woman trying to establish her equilibrium on a wheel. She might make a better President than the stuffed prophet or the keeper of the Sacred Scroll of the Department of State—she would be to blame if she didn't, she might plead a case more logically, preach with more inspiration, administer quinine and calomel more scientifically, and she can write her name above senior wranglers, but the smallest, smudgiest, snub-nosed little freckled, sunburned boy can convince her that he is her lord and master and make her ashamed of herself on a bicycle.

He it said to the honor of brave women that some of them, most of them, do learn eventually, owing to pluck, perseverance, a scar of healing teased if they give up a delight in the exercise, and, above all, a most patient and skillful teacher. He is a man of great bravery and nerve, else he never could take his life in his hands as recklessly as he does by propelling women excellent on the devious ways. If one had the choice of encountering a runaway locomotive on a bender or a girl on a bicycle I think they would choose the locomotive, as there is at least some certainty, something you can depend upon, in its peregrinations. There stands on record one wonderful woman who learned to ride in three lessons, and rode her wheel home in triumph on the third day. There is a tradition of another who learned in a single lesson, under the tuition of her father, and another girl, infatuated with the exercise, saved her pin money for weeks and months, denying herself almost the necessities of the wardrobe, to buy a beautiful imported wheel, and then learned to ride it herself. But occasionally the powers that be create a woman poet or artist or author or bicycle rider by a master stroke. The average woman requires the entire time of ten lessons, with considerable practice, before she handles her machine cleverly. As in horseback riding some women are graceful and attractive in the saddle and others only emphasize their awkwardness into positive deformity, so on the wheel there are divinely slender, exquisitely poised womanly figures, so fair and charming to look upon that all the seeing world are constantly their debtors, and there are some humpy bumby stooping figures that shake one's faith in the divinity of the Creator and help to make men pessimistic and suicidal and selfish by their very ugliness.

Sixteen is given as the maximum number of lessons requisite to acquaint the woman cyclist with the art, and only one woman ever really failed in her attempt to learn of the master. This woman was fat and forty, without being fair, and as strong-willed as she was stout. She had dreamy theories about bicycle riding that she couldn't reconcile with the processes involved. There is nothing more continuing to well arranged preconceived theories than a little actual contact with these theories and a bicycle, unless it is with a small boy, and the vanquished woman gave up the attempt to reconcile the two in despair. One interesting fact remains to be told. Stout women seem to learn to ride with fewer tumbles and greater ease than thin ones. They have a natural fear of falling which makes them careful and usually placid, and steady nerves, which are the most essential of all to success.

And now for the lesson. The master holds the diabolical machine as steadily that mounting is as easy and graceful as sitting in an opera chair. With one hand on the handle and the other grasping the stout leather handle attached to the belt about your waist you are gently propelled about the room until your legs ache with the action of the treadle and your hands smart with tight grasping of the handles. He warns you especially against this clutching of the handles, and tells you of its uselessness and the blisters it will raise, but you must cling to something terrestrial, and, like a drowning man, your grasp is like a vise. At the end of the first circuit you are convinced that it doesn't require any superhuman skill and intelligence to ride a bicycle. But the next time something seems wrong. The machine sways and reels beneath you, it careers madly down the hall, it turns unexpected double curves, and gets the upper hand of you in such a way that you have no control over it. Then you notice, if you aren't too dizzy, that the master's finger has slipped from the handle, and that you are kept from falling by his firm hold of the handle in your belt. You try to remember what he has told you, to hear what he is saying about turning the handle this way and that, and then you hear a fearful bang on the other side of the room. A firm hand on your lever quiets the raging stark-mad machine beneath you, and you are quickly dismounted, for the other girl has fallen. You see a heap of something that resembles two or three dead girls and five or six machines; you hear a voice from its interior saying, "I told you I couldn't dismount and you weren't here to help me," and then you see the heap resolve itself into one girl and one machine, and the girl isn't dead, after all.

You take another spin on your machine and things go worse than before. You don't know, but the machine does, that the master's hand has slipped from your girdle, and that he is walking beside you holding a long strap to right you up with in case of emergency. Then it is the apparently listless mechanism beneath you begins to revolve for your benefit something of its possibilities, gets in its fine work, so to speak. You play tag all round the padded wall because you can't get away from it, and then, when you make up your mind that you like it and cease to struggle away, that machine diverts of its own accord to have a round with each pillar in the place in turn. You begin to evolve ideas as to what to do to prevent this slugging match, in which you seem to be getting the worst of it. You steer away from the obstacle, and the machine careens sickeningly to the right. You right it up with a sharp curve, and over it goes to the left, and you bring up with a bang alongside the same post. You become fertile in expedients, reckless in ventures. You are sure that not a joint in your whole anatomy articulates as it should, not a muscle but has been strained out of its place. You come to the conclusion that there are two ways of riding a cycle. One is not to try to go anywhere, and the cycle will take you there. The other is to try to go in a different direction from the one you really wish to take, to steer for the one you wish to avoid, and you are sure to take the one and avoid the other. You feel the rampant steed beneath you, that fails to appreciate the tender touch of a woman's hand, suddenly grow calm as the master's hand rests upon the lever. You know how a seasick passenger feels when the ship strikes a rock. You see the master telling some one that she has done nobly, but you don't know until the next day that it is you he means. You limp painfully to a chair in the corner, and try to remember that he says arnica and a hot bath are good, and then you watch the other girl spinning round and round suddenly, just as she approaches the master, she takes a sudden header directly toward him, there is another awful bang, a jumble of wheels and petticoats and feet—oh, so many feet—and a voice from the depths, saying: "There, if you hadn't tried to help me dismount I wouldn't have fallen." But the patient master only smiles and tells her she is doing beautifully, and picks up the little limp machine that looks as innocent as a cherub in a church window. And the girl, a little white about the lips, says, with a ghastly attempt at a smile: "Well, I skinned one knee in the other still and now I've removed the cuticle from the other one; I always did like things to match."

The next morning and the next and the next, no matter how lame you are, how bruised, how shaky, you must go for the lesson just the same. For you lose the little bit you gain by allowing any time to intervene between, and all at once, as if by magic, the peculiar little trick of riding comes to you. You feel yourself going, just as you do in waltzing after wearisome practice of the step; all at once the waltz movement comes to you as by inspiration, and you glide into it as never again to be forgotten measure. At least so a nice girl told me who could ride—I never went for the second lesson—and she says there's never been a bone broken in the school or a hurt received so serious that a piece of court plaster would not cover it. It was some time ago that the bicycle article was assigned and the lesson taken—and, well, I am able to write at last, and my admiration for those of my own sex who master the tactics of cycling is unbounded. I take my bonnet off to the girl cyclist with positive reverence.

CLOTH GOWNS.

Some of the Styles for Early Winter—Some Very Rich Designs.

Cloth gowns vibrate between two wide extremes—the severely simple and the inordinately elegant. The former are in rough woollen goods of the horse-blanket order, without so much as a button or bit of braid to ornament them; the latter of fine finished cloths, elaborately braided and broidered and with fur borders, appliques, collars and sleeves, with picturesque Louis XV. coats and resplendent waistcoats. Those coats are quite the latest and most striking inspiration of Fashion's fancy, and on tall, slender women are very distingué, as well as becoming. They are made of cloth like the skirt, of velvet of the same tint or of black velvet, with fur trimmings. One of the most effective gowns yet seen in this style has a skirt of dull green cloth, trimmed across the front with heavy black fringe ten or twelve inches in depth. The bodice is of black velvet cut long below the hips, slashed deeply in squares, and has large Persian lamb sleeves and a high collar of the same fur. Another dress, of brown cloth, has a jacket apparently of cloth, cut also deeply in squares and overlaid with velvet to within three inches of the bottom. The sleeves, which are high and imposing, are of the cloth, with deep velvet cuffs, and a plaited velvet collar completes the costume.

Many of the coats are cut with basque laid on in a seam just below the waist, and are produced in cloth for strictly mourning wear, and in rich velvet brocade and matela as for smart occasions. The buttons are a special feature, whether they are in carved bone or chased gold, in metal or tortoise shell, velvet or passementerie. The illustration above shows a costume of royal serge suiting of mushroom color, with a perfectly plain skirt and a cavalier coat. A very French and unique effect is obtained by bordering the coat, its deep pocket lapels, and its silk waistcoat and gauntleted cuffs with a delicate pattern, embroidered on the goods with jet. About the neck foots of white mull are arranged like a stock, and a frill of the mull escapes from the edge of the waistcoat and from beneath the cuffs.

The two illustrations which follow are facsimiles of some particularly costly and handsome gowns forming part of the winter outfit of a fortunate woman. One is of terra cotta habit cloth, with a black velvet waist, ornamented with gold filigree buttons and black velvet sleeves, bordered with astrakhan. The bodice is in the Louis XV. style, with deep side pieces, and skirt and bodice as well are ornamented with deep vandykes of astrakhan and rich Oriental embroidery.

The other gown is in cornflower blue, with a broad skirt band and sleeves of Persian lamb. The coat, which is deeply slashed in the back, is bordered with the lamb and trimmed with a scroll of jet embroidery caught up at intervals in bow knots.

The black velvet coats which follow are the bodices of street gowns with plain cloth skirts, the one in gray, the other a yellow shade of tan. They are designed more particularly for calling or reception gowns, and are not to be worn in the house, except to a formal lunch or breakfast. Heavy fringes and passementerie ornaments the one, black velvet with a collar and border of lamb; the other, in rich golden brown velvet, with an applique of passementerie, brightened with gold traceries, and surrounded in all its intricacies with black feather trimming, is one of the richest and most attractive dresses of the season.

It must be remembered, however, that tall and slender women only can follow this mode, which demands a certain amount of stateliness and dignity from its wearers. Shorter and less striking women must content themselves with less exacting as well as less elegant bodices modelled upon a modified form of the fifteenth century courtiers' coats and waistcoats. There is a wonderful fascination about these picturesque Old World gowns when worn by the few regal women upon whom the mood fairies have bestowed the gift of queenliness, but worn haphazard by short and dumpy, stout and clumsy personages, however worthy and deserving, the picturesqueness is lost in grotesqueness, the ludicrous supplants the courtliness, and the sublime is lost in the ridiculous.

TIMELY ADVICE TO ALL.

Common Sense Talk Which Each One May Take to Herself—The Moral of It All.

The deserved criticism made upon newspaper fashion articles by the women of moderate means, by whom the articles are most consulted, is that, as a rule, the models described and the ideas given are all of an elegant and sumptuous kind, involving so much expense in their materialization that only women of unlimited means can profit by them, and these women buy their gowns in Paris, and vex not their souls with their construction.

The startling, the striking, and the interesting appeal always to the newspaper instinct, whether it be in dress or duels, costumes or political candidates, but at the risk of being commonplace, if not tiresome, it may be well to act upon the suggestions of anxious inquirers, and speak for their instruction less of the sensational than of the sensible in modes.

The law of costume rests mainly with a few costumers of London and Paris and so inflexible and arbitrary are their laws this season that less opportunity is given for the display of individuality in dress or in the combination of colors. However, in decorations the variety and beauty have never before been equalled.

A New York woman, whatever be "that state of life to which it has pleased God to call her," will find life a little better worth living if she provide herself first of all, not with a lot of Fourteenth street gorgeousness hustled together by a cheap dressmaker into a shoddy imitation of a rich reception or theatre gown, but a simple cheviot or rough-finished serge simply made. The sham skirt is cut and fitted carefully, and the drop or outer skirt, plainly hemmed, has a full back laid in fanlike plaits, and a straight, scant, seamless front, laid up in two or three circular folds about the hips if the wearer is slight, or simply plaited lengthwise or gored away at the top to fit plainly if she is stout. This skirt may or may not be hooked upon the bodice. If it is hooked up the bodice should be plain and severe, either fastening down one shoulder and under the arm with invisible hooks or with small round buttons on the outside. The fulness usually disposed of by means of darts should be plaited down in two plaits stitched in flat and closed on either side the front and back. Waists worn outside the skirt are made single or double breasted with turn-over collars, beneath which a white collar stands staight and severe and a bit of white necktie is visible. Sleeves are cut a little wider and longer on top to allow the fullness that will never very large as they spoil the effect of the gown. Marketing or shopping, the housewife is well dressed in the snug little gown that defies wind and weather, and the business woman is never so well, so comfortably and so neatly prettily gowned, whether she write or teach, heal the natives, or sell ribbons and bonbons, as in this exquisitely neat, serviceable dress. The next most important gown to the well-dressed woman in winter is a cloth as handsomely made, as faultlessly fitted, as rich in material, and decoration as her means will allow. All sorts of teas, receptions, matinées, even the theatre itself, everything except the solemn functions of a ceremonious dinner, a ball, or the opera, call for the handsome cloth gown. There are no limits to the gorgeousness involved in its decoration. Silk stitchings, silk braidings, braid-clad cloth-of-gold waistcoats and gauntlets, and costly fur bands and jet passamenteries are considered quite the suitable accompaniment of cloth gowns. The sensible and economical woman avoids high-priced and conspicuous novelties in cloth, which are sure to look passée after a season.

High colors, prominent stripes or figures are less genteel as well as less sensible than plain materials in quiet colors and exquisite quality. Brown in all its shades has been popularized in New York as well as London, by the Princess of Wales, whose exquisite taste has realized its possibilities in her own beautiful toilets in this her favorite color. Tan in countless tints and combinations with brown or green is much used, blue is well worn, gray is affected by the few to whom it is becoming, and a peculiar dull shade of green in combination with black is quite the newest and most striking of them all. Her color and material decided upon, the wise woman takes the dress to a first-class place to be made, even if by so doing she has to renounce any attempt at decoration. Your cheap dressmaker can make up an effective evening waist out of dainty materials, but it needs the master hand of an artist to deal with cloth. The skirts of all cloth gowns are cut like the skirt previously described, and, to be in the extreme of the mode, should touch the pavement. But the sensible woman avoids that. It means destruction to her gowns and all manner of uncleanness to her ankles and skirts. Fur of all kinds is the popular choice for these dresses. A single band of fur about the bottom, with or without a more or less elaborate braiding or a velvet flounce beneath, is the favorite skirt decoration. Some heavy cloth skirts are made with no foundation skirt. But most of them have a silk foundation containing one reed put in some distance below the belt, and so short as to be entirely unnoticed. The waist may be a seamless affair fitted over a yoke and sleeves of contrasting color braided or embroidered with the color of the main part of the dress. It may be a one-sided bodice with mysterious fastenings or a coat with the basque piece on about the hips. These coats open over more or less elegant waistcoats, and are made in a great variety of styles. The richest combination is a plain straight skirt of cloth and a waistcoat very long in the basque with cloth sleeves—the exact reverse of last year's modes. A very stylish model is a dull green skirt trimmed with deep black fringe and a black velvet coat with astrakhan sleeves. Another dress, also green, has a band of velvet about the skirt beaded with a row of jet embroidery and a long black velvet coat trimmed with jet passamenterie.

Clever women embroider or braid two or even three pairs of sleeves of varying designs of elegance for the same gown to be easily adjusted for different occasions. One may visit the grocer, the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker in the morning in a golden-brown gown with black braided sleeves, and one can go with equal grace to the most swell reception of the season in the same gown with sleeves and vest of chamois, wrought with gold and bronze.

The economical woman has two or three pretty theatre jackets or bodices to wear in the evening with the regulation black silk or lace skirt, and a fairly well-worn black lace skirt has been known to do duty at the opera with a low-cut bodice freshly draped. These are the dresses to trust to the cheap dressmaker, and give free rein to your own fancy and individuality. Sometimes the materials need not be of the choicest, but aim always at daintiness and becomingness of color combinations and arrangements. A Louis XIII. jacket of deep mauve velvet, with a pale heliotrope vest and deep flaring cuffs wrought with silver, made one pretty woman a perpetual joy to look upon all last winter, and the only new thing about it was the silver cord, which she bought for a few cents a yard and applied herself in vermicelli pattern.

Pretty cashmeres and comparatively inexpensive light wools of all colors make the sweetest kind of house dresses, and these, too, can be made at inexpensive places. The skirts should be slightly fuller than for the street and considerably longer. A short woman with her hair on top of her head and her dress on the floor looks almost stately, and a tall woman is quietly graceful. Soft gray and yellow, dull green and silver, cerulean blue, tan and brown, tan and gold, all the great family of mauves and heliotropes in combination with white are used for the pretty inexpensive dresses. There is a decided Parisian air to these gowns. A deep braided and flounced band on the skirt and sometimes a slight attempt at drapery. One of the prettiest designs imaginable for a house dress was worn by a slender lady at a crowded reception the other night among toilets which were vastly more splendid, but no more charming. It was a long straight skirt of gray cashmere, slightly fulled at the belt in front, and very full in the back, extending in a demi-train, had a two-inch band of blue velvet of the same shade, beaded with a narrow gold passementerie all the way about the bottom. The waist was fulled, into a collar of the velvet and gold, and into a pointed band at the waist, a slightly pointed band of the same width as that on the skirt at the bottom of the waist. The full sleeves had a narrow cuff of the same velvet, and were gathered into the armhole beneath an encircling band of velvet and passamenterie, fitting smoothly over the shoulder. That was all, but the lady came in her carriage, wrapped in almost priceless furs.

Buy one good suit a year, and have it well made, if the rest of the gowns are evolved out of shreds and patches. Remember, it is not always economy to try to buy a dress to be worn all the year round. You are then frequently never really suitably dressed. A good winter suit may be made to do duty two seasons with a little freshening, so the winter and summer gown may be bought on alternate years. Wait a little until modes cease to fluctuate and embryonic fashion fads have died the death or crystallized into permanency before ordering a gown.

Pin your faith to the fundamental articles of the creed of good dressing. Don't try cheap gloves or shoes—you will be sorry. Don't forget that fresh ruching, tidy braid, buttons, and little fastenings, and the cleanliness and neatness which are the price of eternal vigilance, make the simplest of gowns more genteel than web of silk or cloth of gold elegance untidily worn. To be stylish is a gift as rare as to be musical, poetical, gifted in letters or art. The stylish woman doesn't try to be stylish—she always looks it. The average woman must aim only to be ladylike, to have garments appropriate for the occasion and suitable for her age and circumstances, and try to be content within her limitations if the coveted gift be beyond her reach. It is better in this latter day to be stylish than to possess all the cardinal virtues, but style cannot be acquired by study or by effort, cannot be purchased with gifts or acquired by favor. It is the gift of the gods to the rare woman. But many a mistaken commonplace little woman, who might be sweet if she would only be sensible, rushes into the extreme of the modes, wears unbecoming and little suited to her individuality, in a futile attempt to be stylish, and succeeds in becoming bizarre. If not vulgar, particularly when she pursues her wild career on a limited income and indulges in cheap imitations and tawdry finery. Many a woman fails short of being genteelly dressed by ignoring that good dressing is almost as abstruse a science as political economy, and may not now be accomplished without serious thought and effort.

INTERESTING INFORMATION.

A Woman Housebreaker—Woman Duellists—Smith College's New Year.

Housebreaking has been added to the list of woman's accomplishments. A young woman in London was recently arrested on the charge of housebreaking and appropriating certain valuable articles. The woman conducted her own defence with considerable ability and shrewdness.

Now that Mrs. Langtry has aroused the attention of the London press by her revival of "Cleopatra," one hears marvellous stories of her style of living, which is more luxurious and gorgeous than that of any of the royal family. The baths at Marlborough House are of plain enamelled copper, and there is no special luxury about the Prince of Wales's bathing apparatus. But the Lily "tubs" her esteemed form in a solid silver bath, made by a London silversmith for a great Eastern prince.

As an artist the fair Langtry is not always a success, but as a financier she is equal to one of the chosen people, and could give points to Jay Gould himself.

Mrs. Howard Teufel, better known as Blanche Willis Howard, is so much occupied with the care of young women whose education she superintends that she does little novel writing. She edits an English magazine at Stuttgart, and makes its pages interesting with her bright thoughts and witty reflections upon her neighbors.

Madame Patti is pronounced by one of her intimate friends the most modest woman in the world. She is one of the few singers who have been decorated by royalty, which in former times meant to be knighted, but she never talks about herself or her wonderful successes, rarely sings for her guests at Craig-y-Nos, and seems in private life utterly indifferent to her own powers. She is highly esteemed by her people; by the rich with admiration and by the poor with gratitude for her gracious charity. She gives two performances a year for the poor in her own section. The reason for the great singer's sudden indisposition during her Paris engagement and her failure to fulfill her contract is said to have been owing to her great disappointment in not receiving from the French Government the decoration of the Legion of Honor.

An American woman with a pretty foot and a well-filled purse is having an order filled abroad for six pairs of boots to be encrusted with precious stones. Evidently the fair diplomat desires to call attention to her shapely foot.

Mrs. Vicken, a member of an English woman's bicycle club, has won a road race against a team of men riders in a race of nineteen miles, which she accomplished in one hour and forty minutes. Another wonderful English rider, Miss Fordham, has ridden a safety 1,000 miles, at a rate of 76 miles a day, during the season, and hopes to accomplish 2,000 miles before the season closes.

A Canadian lady, who died not long ago at the age of 92, leaves the noble record of 17 children, 145 grandchildren, and 286 great grandchildren. She was married at 15, and 903 of her descendants still survive her and maintain the tie of kinship.

By old-established statute Postmistresses in France were practically debarred from marriage. Husbands of women employed in the postal service were prohibited from exercising trades or professions, lest such employments would offer temptations to the husband to tamper with the mails. But the Government has finally done tardy justice to the spinsters, and abolished all restrictions in the choice of husbands by Postmistresses, with one exception—the husband must not serve in the capacity of police official.

It is not so long ago that duels between women were common in France, the home of the duellist. The most celebrated duel of modern times was that of the Marquise de Nesle and the Countess de Polignac. The cause of the quarrel was a violent penchant of both women for the same admirer.

This admirer, the Duke de Richelieu, unfortunately made an appointment with both ladies at the same rendezvous and hour. In spite of the Duke's pacific endeavors, the meeting was not a pleasant one, and terminated in the duel, which had not very serious consequences. The Countess alleged her opponent's ear, and then each combatant fell to the ground simultaneously in a dead faint. Time. La Duise was also a great duellist, and was called out by her own husband, who taught her a lesson by giving her several serious flesh wounds, which quelled her ardor for some time. D'Aubigny, the Parisian opera singer, whose mad freaks were the talk of all Paris, attended upon one occasion a masked ball at the Palais Royal attired in men's clothing, and so grossly insulted a lady that three of her friends challenged the singer at once. The challenges were all accepted, and after having fought her adversaries and killed them all three in turn, D'Aubigny went back and enjoyed the ball as if nothing unusual had occurred.

The latest organization for woman artists in Paris is the "Union des Femme Peintres et Sculpteurs," and a journal devoted to its interests will soon be started.

Miss Marion Talbot, Secretary of the Woman's Association of Collegiate Alumnæ, gives this year a course of lectures on political economy to the students of Wellesley College, in which the girls are unfailing in their interest and attendance. Among the new pupils at the college is a young Japanese girl, Sadzu Saglye.

A very practical and much needed enterprise has been recently started in Washington by society ladies. It is a nursery where mothers of every nation and rank are taught how to feed and bathe their babies scientifically as well as sensibly, and how to put their troublesome charges to sleep. Samples of food are shown, and the best method of preparing them taught, and after the lecture the prepared food is given to the baby most in need of it.

Smith College has this year an enrollment of 551 students and 4 post graduates. Its faculty consists of 29 teachers, and 20 of these are women. Six women are in charge of the college houses, and 3 of the 15 trustees of the institution are women: Mrs. Tenker of Andover, Kate M. Cone, Ph. D., of Hartford, and Anna L. Dawes of Pittsfield.

The petition drawn up by the Wageworkers' Political Alliance for the purpose of proposing the name of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, as a Judge of the Supreme bench, is worded as follows: "In view of the fact that women, whose minds are free from creeds as well as loyal to truth, justice, and humanity are better judges than men under the same circumstances, it is resolved that the President of the United States be and he is hereby requested to present the name of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton to the Senate of the United States as an Associated Justice in the place of Justice Miller, deceased."

NEWS OF THE RIDING ACADEMIES.

Public Music Rides in Fashion—Good Patronage for All the Instructors.

Public music rides seem to be all the go just now, and the weekly rides at the various academies are unusually well attended.

At Diekel's riding school there was a big demand for horses on Thanksgiving Day, and more than one handsome charger left the ring during the day. At the Central Park Academy there was also a good attendance on Thursday. Mr. Cohn expresses himself as well satisfied with the season so far. The New York Riding Club are having big rides weekly at Durland's. Mr. Durland's weekly music ride was a great success, as was also one or two young people's rides held during the daytime.

At the Boulevard the new ladies' room has become very popular with the chaperones, who may now view the entire ring from a comfortable point. Mr. Dyer and his professors of the Belmont are kept very busy. The ring since the advent of the recent raw weather is used both night and day, and everything is going just as the proprietor would have it.

It is an enigma to the patrons of the West End Academy what Mr. Isaac intends to do about his opening music ride. He has postponed it now about four times, but he has promised that when it does come off it will be the best of the season. The crack horse trainer, Carl Antony, is doing good work at the Fifth Avenue Academy, which is enjoying excellent business.

GIRLS AS WE FIND THEM.

Accurate and Entertaining Studies in Feminine New York City Life.

Women of fashion are unceasing in their efforts to drive the hours by at a joyous rate of speed, and it takes acute minds and careful application to invent new methods of entertainment as fast as society requires them. Recently a new craze has attacked the luxurious tenants of the mansions on the Hill. It began rather prettily. Mrs. S., a society leader who takes pride in her ability to give charming and smart entertainments, was having an At Home the other evening. To her great dismay it began to be stupid, and remained so despite every exertion of hers to brighten matters up. Her prettiest women and liveliest men were all out of sorts; her supper was tasteless and her servants awkward. Intensely chagrined, the lady shut her teeth together and looked about to find some way of retrieving herself and sending her friends away happy. In a group she discovered a pretty little girl whom she knew to be a stranger in New York, and she wondered instantly if this young woman was not capable of doing something interesting. She caught her by the hand.

"Oh, my dear, I have been looking for you," she cried. "I want to ask you to sing."

"I don't do it," responded the girl.

"You play, then," went on Mrs. S., showing some impatience.

"Never in company," was the reply.

"Well, don't you do anything?" asked the hostess, looking crossly at her.

"I can do a few card tricks," said the girl.

"Just the thing," cried Mrs. S., and she flew about the room telling every one that she was going to show something novel.

A table was drawn up and the company took chairs in front of it. The girl who was to do the tricks was so sweet in appearance that every one was interested at once, and when she had performed one or two feats with the cards Mrs. S.'s entertainment was saved from dulness at once. The grace and skill of the young woman were exquisite, and when she went to the limit of throwing her pretty hand inside the waistcoats of the men present to take therefrom any card that could be silently designated by one of the audience, the enthusiasm of the evening was complete. Nothing more was needed to start every girl in society to learning card tricks, and many of them are studying other styles of sleight of hand, so that they may amuse people at dinner, causing knives, forks, and plates to disappear. Society, however, never allows a whim of this sort to last. Before a month passes the art of legerdemain will have died of neglect and another caprice will be in vogue.

A party of men sat at a table in a Broadway restaurant sipping cognac after luncheon. A girl of 17 or thereabouts entered shyly and took her seat at a table near by. The girl's figure was slender, her lovely face was softly tinted, her eyes were blue and innocent. She drew her gloves from her small white hands, and held the bill of fare daintily before her. She seemed searching for something made of rose leaves and honey dew.

"Two to one she orders lobster salad," said one of the men watching the sweet maid.

"Done," responded another. "Salad is too coarse for her. She'll have cold consommé."

"Well, now, you just listen for her to order an omelet *soufflée*," said a third. "I never saw a girl out shopping in my life that didn't run in at noontime and get an omelet *soufflée*. They are so fluffy and sugary that they just hit feminine taste."

"That girl will order a chocolate eclair and a cup of tea," said a fourth man in the party.

In the mean time the waiter was standing at the elbow of the dainty fairy, expecting her order. She studied the card long and carefully, and then she pouted.

"I don't think you have what I want."

"We have most everything," said the waiter.

"Yes," responded the girl; "but I came in here on purpose for one thing, and I don't see it on the menu."

"What is it, Miss?" asked the waiter.

"Frankfurter sausages and sauerkraut," replied the maiden.

One of the men at the neighboring table dropped his brandy glass, and another coughed convulsively from having swallowed some of the liquor the wrong way. The young lady rose from her chair and inquired of the waiter if he knew any place close by where sausages and sauerkraut were obtainable. She was told to seek Sixth avenue, and as she rustled away the men who had discussed her appetite ordered additional brandies.

"I will bet," said the waiter, "that that girl is of German descent." And he turned up his nose as far as it would go. He was French.

It is so very vulgar to bite one's finger nails that the habit in one of the most brilliant and clever girls in New York's high society was a marvel to the world as well as a serious source of worry to her intimate friends. The young woman has slender white hands, and lips that seem made only for the most poetic purposes, but she would nibble at the pink nails of her fingers until they presented an appearance not to be countenanced by refined persons. An English nobleman met the young lady in New York the past summer, and it is said that he gave as his reason for not proposing marriage to her the fact that his family would be disgusted by a woman who bit her nails. Every means to break the pretty creature of the ill-bred habit has been adopted by her parents, but with no good result. A young college student who was led recently by some chance into the presence of the girl became her slave at once and prepared to win her in the most enthusiastic and swift way usual with youth. He observed the remarkable habit of nail-biting, and found out that it was the bane of the parents' lives.

"I do not account for my daughter's peculiarities," said the mother, sadly; "she was born with two most remarkable idiosyncrasies. One is her habit of biting her finger nails. The other is that the odor of peppermint makes her instantaneously ill."

The college youth heard this remark and pricked up his ears. He was very attentive to the young lady. She could not do anything for herself, he was so ready to do it for her. Even the nail-biting performance would not have been objected to by him. One afternoon at a reception he helped her on with her wrap, and then passed her gloves. These she put on and went out in company with her fond companion. When standing in the hall of her own residence, talking with the college youth, she drew her gloves from her hands and instantly placed the tips of her fingers to her mouth. Her face grew suddenly pale, and she withdrew her fingers from her lips and reeled, as though fainting. Supported by the ready arm of the young man she staggered into the drawing room and sank among the cushions on the sofa. Her mother, who was in the room, hastened to her daughter's assistance, inquiring excitedly what was the matter.

"Per-per-mint," stammered the girl, holding her hand up to her mother.

"I put a little peppermint into her gloves, madam," whispered the youth. "Just be patient and see if it does not have a good effect."

For several days the young woman refrained from raising her fingers to her lips, and it was observed that whenever the instinct to do so partially asserted itself she grew pale, and seemed to murmur the word, "Peppermint." After two weeks had passed the overjoyed parents took the college youth aside and deluged him with praise for having accomplished what no one else had ever been able to. On the following day the girl and young man came into the presence of the old people, hand in hand, and received their blessings. It was agreed that a son-in-law who could cure an obstinate young woman of a habit of over fifteen years duration would be competent to the task of leading her successfully through the labyrinthine maze of a marital career.

The theatres, if not the woods, are full of Spanish dancing girls, genuine and counterfeit, and few of either kind amount to much. But we progress in our theatrical demands, and now a female gymnast is heralded to surpass all the señoras. She will literally dance on her hands as much as on her feet, turning flip-flaps in skirts, and readily kicking higher and harder than any of her rivals are likely to do. Within a month or so she will be introduced to the public, and the man who hired her for this singular use of her athletic abilities is asking $200 a week salary for her services.

NEW IDEAS IN FANS.

Some Exquisite Designs from Abroad that are Worth Great Sums.

Fans are always in fashion. It is difficult to learn just when they were first used, but there is Biblical reference to them at a very early date and a bas relief of Sennacherib in the British Museum represents him attended by women carrying fans. In Portugal they were used in the fourteenth century, in England, they were quite common during the reign of Richard II., and they were popularized in France through Catherine de Medici, who was seldom seen without one.

Queen Elizabeth also was exceedingly partial to their use, and in one of her most celebrated portraits holds a round