

Women's Work.

It is delightful to hear of new work for women, whereby, by the utilization of their talents, they can live independent lives. Which of us forgets the first money earned by honest work—in whatever sphere that work may have been?—not the writer. How well I remember the first monthly payment of salary I received, as a sister at the London Hospital. How eagerly I took a 'bus, and, arriving at St. Paul's Churchyard just at closing time, hastily selected two brilliant (and very hideous) blue china plates! These gems were suspended in an alcove, in the sisters' sitting room, and after eighteen years' wear are still extant, quite perfect, and crackless, kept as mementoes of a then uncultivated taste for art.

The indulgence of "the lust of the eye" may, or may not, be a vice. But when one becomes aware of the fact that to-day one of the most interesting, and I hope remunerative, branches of business for women, is that of decorative artists, and dealers in the antique, it is certainly a most soothing salve to the conscience to feel that in selecting a dainty specimen of old china, or work of art in satin-wood or bühl, or in acquiring possession of a coveted piece of bric-à-brac, one is doing a good turn to "some other woman."

This *apropos* of the fascinating *atelier* of those two charming ladies, the sisters Helen and Isabel Woollan, at 28, Brook Street, Grosvenor Square, which comprises a suite of four rooms, in which most artistically arranged, beautiful things of all descriptions are to be found—genuine antique furniture, miniatures (amongst them a life-like portrait of Mr. Rhodes, by Mary Carlisle), old prints, lace, china, glass, and art needle-work.

How I came to step into this El Dorado of lovely things was somewhat prosaic. I wanted a cook, and very sensibly the Misses Woollan combine less interesting, but perhaps more practical, features of business with the sale of artistic wares—they do not only sell works of art, but act as house agents, and decorate and furnish houses. They have also on their books several high-class families who are willing to receive paying guests, and they also supply domestic servants of good character; so that all these tiresome details of domesticity are made quite pleasurable. If one drops in at 28, Brook Street, at what our French neighbours call "the five o'clock." There one can sit on a gilded Empire chair, surrounded by genuine antiques, and discourse of "cooks," until one forgets such mundane matters as over-salted soups, over-fried fish, juiceless joints, and somewhat over-seasoned tempers; indeed, what matters it that mere carnal appetites go unsatisfied when one can enjoy such a feast of art?

The Misses Woollan sell on commission, so that the greatest variety of articles are crowded into these lovely rooms; here to the right, on a "real old Chippendale" table, is to be found a complete tea service of genuine Bristol china. One lady deposited every item, minus the teapot; another customer happened to have picked up in East Anglia the veritable teapot belonging to the service, so that after long years of

separation the whole family party was again united—dainty cream jug, sucrier and basin, and quite a dozen little twinkling tea cups and saucers. That was a happy hour, and no doubt the confidences exchanged were of an entertaining character—one always gossips over tea. Now the complete set can be procured for a five-pound note, and please, whoever buys, don't separate the sweet things again.

To the left, one round table is all set out with "Lowestoft"—dainty rose-strewn china—painted by one Thomas Rose, who fled from France previous to the great Revolution, and whose peculiarity in the mode of representing this flower is unmistakable; it is cast stalkless on the surface of cup or platter, and the translucent green leaves, and other flowers, are similarly disjointed. One little piece, surmounted by a gilded strawberry, tenderly handled by Miss Woollan, is brought to my notice.

"It is called a dishlet," she explains, cosetting the said potlet.

"Ah, what a petlet!" I exclaim, entranced.

"Is it not a sweetlet?" my hostess murmurs.

"Quite too *too* lovelet," I respond; and then we two working women burst out laughing at our own china mania, and I hurry home to write a dissertation on the acute stage of the disease, which will appear in these columns some other day.

The feline characteristics—love of luxury and a capacity to spit and scratch when attacked, instead of defence "straight from the shoulder," in contrast to the many noble characteristics of the dog, which comprise all the great virtues—fidelity, generosity, and courage—have for generations been freely accredited as distinctive of our sex, and far be it from me to deny the pussy-cat propensities developed in the average domesticated woman. But we must not blame the woman. Environment develops instinctively the safest methods of self-protection, and it is to the cramped environment of past generations of women, that we owe our claws—at the expense of healthy muscles.

I chronicle, therefore, with pleasure, evidence in the woman of to-day of nobler instincts. We all know—for do we not all devour our *Daily Mail*?—that the result of journalistic genius has created Mr. Alfred Harmsworth a millionaire. We do not all know that in days before his genius was crowned with success, he married the lovely lady of his heart. During the past year, Mrs. Alfred Harmsworth has spent much time in making beautiful her town and country houses, and instead of thoughtless and lavish expenditure at some palatial furniture emporium, she has wisely distributed her wealth with generous discrimination. I am informed that from the Misses Woollan's establishment, many choice pieces of old furniture, artistic old prints, and lovely bits of china have found their way into Mrs. Harmsworth's homes—so that many of her sex, who, in their day of misfortune, have had to part with these valuables, have been benefited by generous prices paid for them. Now male monopolists of all the canine virtues, please note the decline of pussy-cat propensities in the modern woman.

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