

## CONCERNING SOME SMALL BAGS.

BY MRS. JEROME MERCIER.

It has been said that the first step towards civilisation is the acquisition of a pocket. If so, our great-great-grandmothers dropped civilisation when they wore garments so scanty that a pocket was out of the question; but, to make up for the loss, they adopted the use of certain small bags known as reticules, whereof more anon. Dear to their hearts were these little receptacles for the handkerchief, the netted silk purse, the smelling-bottle so necessary for ladies who thought it modish and elegant to swoon or have the vapours at every domestic crisis. They adorned the bags with ingenuity and industry, and sometimes with real taste. They tied them up with long ribands and beautiful bows, and they held them on their mittened arms with a grace

Miss Amelia titters, or perhaps says, "Oh, fie!" and so the little tinkling conversation ripples on—nothing in itself, yet conveying all that Sir Simon and Amelia mean to say, by dint of ogles and simpers and discreet sighs.

I have before me a collection of these bags, handed down in lavender in the stores of various ancestresses. Some have an odour of attar of roses, or a fading breath of some aromatic oriental perfume from having lain among cashmere shawls. They must have been very pretty in their day, but are tarnished and discoloured now. One is of violet velvet, with a wreath of flowerets worked in tiny vesica-shaped flakes snipped from fish-scales, and sewn on with silver thread, which thread

He will hear thee." Such reticules as these were called "Emancipation Bags."

But here is something that recalls a longer story to my mind. It shows the etymology of the word "reticule," in the first place, being an honest *reticulum*, or little net. It is made of crimson floss silk, finely netted, and lined with white satin. But it is no longer a bag—it has been converted to another use; and hereby hangs a little story of seventy years ago.

My mother and her sister were two good little girls, Susan and Jane, or rather, Susan was very good and minded her book and sewed her white seam like a little gentlewoman, but Jane was frisky, and did many naughty things which met with condign punishment, just like the bad girls in the little story-books on "Virtue Rewarded." She was pinned to her school-mistress's apron, and even so, contrived to stick a pin into the child on the form before her. She came into the room when the maid was cleaning the mirror with soft-soap, and, under the impression that it was the insides of figs, she stuffed a handful into her mouth and, with both hands full of the forbidden delicacy, rushed from the room to enjoy her prey, or "dree her weird," in secret. Poor little Jane! She is the dearest of old ladies now, with a merry twinkle in her dark eyes and a bit of fun ever ready.

Well, one day, when Susan and Jane were with their parents in lodgings in London, it so chanced that just above their parlour was that of a French marquise, and as they went up to bed they were apt to peep into the room and admire the pretty things it contained. One day the little marquise stepped to the door, with her white hair drawn back, and her gold-handled stick in her hand. Jane put her finger in her mouth, but Susan made a pretty curtsey.

"Come in, my little dears," said the French lady, "and see what I have got for you."

So they went in; and when they came out they were the richer by this pretty crimson reticule (which was Susan's) and a green and white china cup and saucer (which were Jane's).

That was a lucky week for the little girls, for, as it chanced, not three days later, during a sad, sad wet morning, when the pouring rain had deprived them of an anticipated visit to the Thames Tunnel, and they were drearily watching the drops running down the pane, a ring at the bell was followed by the entry of a servant with two large parcels, sent by a kind friend "for Miss Susan and Miss Jane." One was a big doll wrapped in silver paper, and the other contained a delightful organ, with wooden pipes full twelve inches high, and a little wooden man who doubled himself up and jerkily turned a handle when so impelled from behind; and, as he turned, ever and anon came forth tinkling music. Ah, how



BEAD BAG WITH GILT CLASP.

KNITTED SILK BAG WITH GOLD BEADS.  
"EMANCIPATION BAG."

CROSS-STITCH BAG.

hardly second to that with which a Spanish lady holds her fan. Do but look at an illustration in one of the old editions of Jane Austen or even Maria Edgeworth, and you will see how daintily they do it. The name of the bag, too, lent itself to a graceful hilarity; it was conveniently called "a reticule" by the less educated classes, and so the better bred had always an easy joke to hand. "Miss Amelia has left her *reticule* behind her," says Sir Simon (their jokes were always in italics in those days); "ah, there is nothing *ridiculous* about Miss Amelia."

"La, sir," replies Miss Amelia, simpering behind her taper fingers, the little one elegantly stuck out; "La, sir! I vow you are vastly complimentary and amusing."

"Why, madam," replies Sir Simon, "merely to look at Miss Amelia were able to inspire with compliments the most obtuse and unlettered person."

executes divers flourishes and tendrils around the pearly blossoms. Here is a ribbon-work bag of the style now revived; also a cross-stitch and satin bag. Another is worked in silks in tent-stitch in the Macdonald tartan, and was the labour of my Macdonald great-grandmother. Another recalls the time when Wilberforce and Clarkson were moving all hearts to set free the poor negro slaves, and tender women used even these trifles to stir up their friends to sympathy with the movement. This is a white satin bag—ah, how yellow with age!—on which is finely drawn in Indian ink a picture of a negro woman mourning over her dying child, and on the reverse it is written: "Negro woman, who sittest pining in captivity, and weepst over thy sick child, though no one seeth thee, God seeth thee; though no one pitieth thee, God pitieth thee: raise thy weeping eyes and stand up and call upon Him from amidst thy bonds, for assuredly



the little girls rejoiced, and how the raindrops became radiant all at once as though they were part of a veritable rainbow, for the sun of innocent delight was shining on them! Forthwith Susan proposed a lovely game. Jane would play her organ, which, of course, would make it Church without any difficulty, and Susan would bring her new little wax daughter to the service.

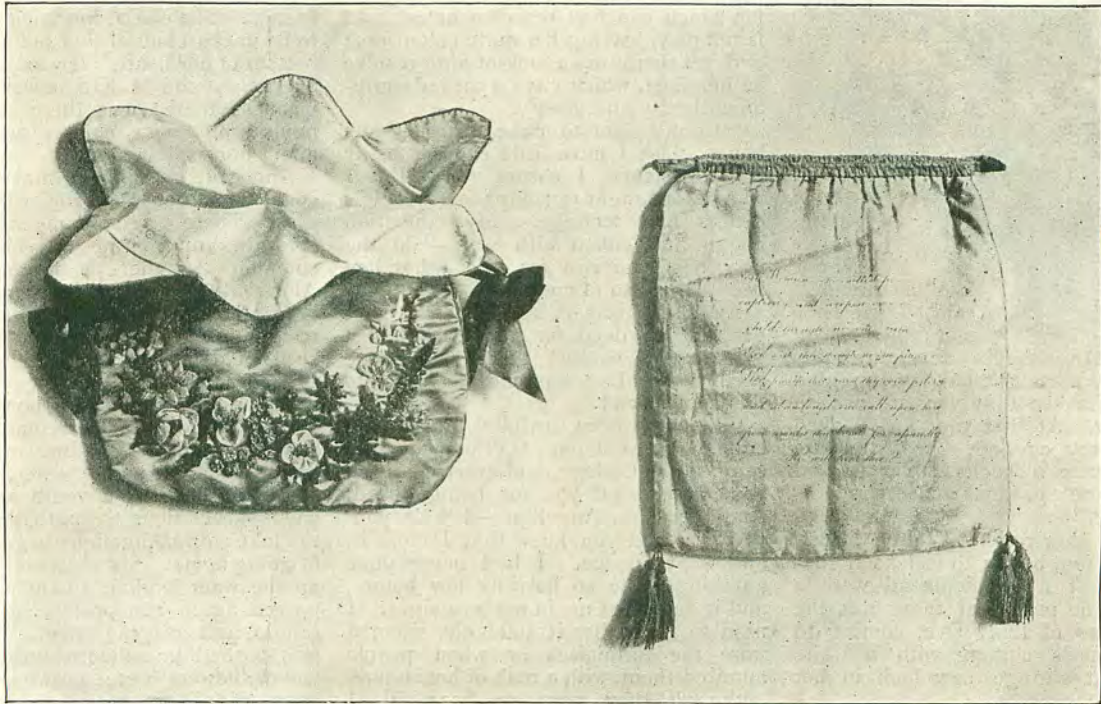
"But she can't come to church without any clothes!" objected Jane.

Here was a difficulty! But it was soon

the feathered hat, for that was lost on a most auspicious occasion. Little did Dolly or Dolly's small mistress imagine the honours in store for them. Ramsgate was very fashionable at that time; many smart little girls were paddling on the shore or in the little pools with Susan and Jane, and among these little girls was one for whom Fate had great things prepared. The little Princess Victoria was there with her handsome mother, the Duchess of Kent.

One morning—a date ever cherished in the

Jane's tongue and the little crab were alike rescued by mamma, a gentle, dignified lady, with a sweet little girl holding her hand, came along the beach, and, hearing a child's cry, drew near to know what was the matter. She heard the story with a smile; the hat was forgotten in the interest of the little stranger's company, and floated serenely on the pool with its swan feather sticking up like a sail. The lady inquired about Susan's ankles, and the little girl with her smiled and spoke sweetly, and there was a never-to-be-forgotten



RIBBON-WORK BAG.

REVERSE OF "EMANCIPATION BAG."

solved. Dolly was tied up in the red bag and so was ready for the ceremony, and was conducted thither in triumph.

Presently it was resolved to make a move to Ramsgate, as Susan's ankles were weak and needed sea-bathing. Dolly must be dressed before the journey, and dressed she was in the red bag, with its satin lining converted into a pretty skirt; a bodice of white satin was added and a satin hat, with a swan's feather picked up beside the Serpentine, and so she went to Ramsgate. She lies before me now, clad in the red netting, but not in

memory of Susan to her long life's end—one morning the sisters were on the shore. Things had begun ill, for Jane, fishing tiny crabs out of the pools, had put one in her mouth to see what raw crab tasted like, and Mr. Crab, having a mind to know what raw little girl tasted like, pinched hold of her tongue firmly with his small but piercing nippers. Jane fled howling to her mamma, Susan jumped and screamed. With the jump, Dolly's hat fell off into a salt-water pool in which Susan was dabbling her weak little ankles, and all was sorrow and catastrophe. But before

quarter of an hour of gracious intercourse, and then the lady turned to go. But before she went, she said—

"Dear little girl! Kiss her, Victoria." And the little Lady Victoria bent down and gently kissed the quiet little Susan, and thus for ever kindled in her heart the most loyal and enduring passion for her Sovereign. Born in one year, meeting that once, they each went on her way—one to great dignity, the other to a simple life; but the old doll, named Victoria, was thenceforth a sign and memorial of a most happy meeting.

ODDS AND ENDS.

THE cleverness of the postal authorities, not only in deciphering difficult hand-writing, but in delivering oddly-addressed letters to the people for whom they are intended, has frequently been the subject of remark. The post offices of France, England and Germany have recently solved what was practically a puzzle. A short time ago a letter arrived in Paris from a distant province addressed

"M. M. X.

"Requires no boiling, made in Germany,  
"No. 1 Rice Starch."

It had been written by a French labourer's wife, who had apparently seen an advertisement relating to starch in English. She

thought, "Requires no boiling, made in Germany" was the address of the makers, "No. 1 Rice Starch" being the town in which it was made. The French post office sent this letter to London, whence it was despatched to Germany, where, after many wanderings, it eventually reached its destination—a small firm of starch-makers in a far-away provincial town.

"LIFE is too short to waste in critic peep or cynic bark,  
Quarrel or reprimand; 'twill soon be dark;  
Up—mind thine own aim, and God speed the mark."—Emerson.

THE senses of taste, sight and hearing are generally associated entirely with their own particular organs, the tongue, the eyes and the ears. But each of our senses is governed from a centre in the brain, and if that part of the brain in which the power of speech resides becomes in any way injured the individual so stricken at once becomes dumb. It is the same with the senses of hearing and seeing, people very frequently becoming deaf or blind whilst their ears and eyes remain perfectly healthy. In these cases the brain-centres of these two senses have either been destroyed or injured.

"By desiring what is perfectly good we are part of the divine power against evil."