

A VILLAGE MUSICALE

BY MADGE MORLEY



THE history of one particular day of a delightful month spent last fall in a little town on the Hudson River may prove of interest to some of the busy wives and daughters, living in villages, who are thrown upon their own resources for diversion during the long winter months.

I was visiting an old school friend who never had allowed her household duties to prevent the daily hour or two at the piano, which made her music such a pleasure to all. From a quantity of beautiful music she chose one selection for a little extra effort, and told me it was in preparation for the musicale of the next week, which I, as her guest, was privileged to attend. I scarcely knew what to expect, my experience in that direction having been limited to several formal evening affairs in the city.

Late in the morning of the day appointed we went to the home of a neighbor, and found many congenial friends assembled. As we descended the stairs the perfume of flowers in vases, large and small, fragments of music and song softly rehearsed, and the gay chatter of a roomful of people, prepared us for the charming sight that greeted us. The pretty young hostess who met us so cordially, had transformed the homestead, one of the oldest in the town, into a thing of beauty. The spacious apartments with their deep window-seats and oaken panels remained as before, but portières, rugs and easy chairs made them luxurious. The rooms and wide hall were in the possession of matrons as well as maidens, for love of music, not age, was this assembly's criterion, and the girls fresh from college and conservatories of music were as welcome as those whose girlhood was twenty years back.

Soon after our arrival the secretary called the roll, each member present responding with some quotation in regard to music or musicians. The programme for the day included Mendelssohn, Moszkowski and Kjerulf, the first two offering a choice between the old school and the popular music of the day; and the last for the vocalists. Between the selections essays on the composers were read, and the "Reporter" gave an excellent condensed account of affairs in the musical world. The programme consisted of twelve or more numbers, and in listening and discussing, two hours passed very pleasantly.

Luncheon was announced soon after the close of the programme, and some who were present insinuated that that was the most important feature of the day. I will not deny that on this occasion it was to me, at least, a very enjoyable part. There were several tables each seating eight, an arrangement which has an advantage over smaller tables in affording more space for decoration. The one at which I was seated had an exquisite centerpiece of Roman embroidery in white and gold, and the china was in dainty, old-fashioned shapes of the gilt-banded style which at home we children used to welcome with such glee as the "gold dishes." Chrysanthemums were at their height and furnished the decorations; upon our table a yellow vase of golden beauties completing the picture, which was a feast in itself. The other tables were similarly arranged in lilac, pink and white.

The luncheon was served by the young friends of the hostess, their dainty gowns, fresh faces, and skillful serving forming a delightful improvement on the efforts of the hired waitresses who, in small towns, are usually inefficient. First we were given potato croquettes and fried oysters, with the accompaniments of delicious coffee, bread and butter, then chicken salad with olives and wafers, and after that cake and ices. Between the courses we admired the embroidery, which was lavishly used everywhere, and in comparing the inscriptions on the cards by our plates, for it was the thirty-first of October, each of us found as a souvenir a card with an old saying concerning "All Hallow-E'en."

I may be too enthusiastic over this plan of meeting once in several weeks to feast soul and body, but I see no reason to prevent the success of such an undertaking in any town. One great advantage is the incentive to keep in practice; many girls after leaving college or conservatory of music find their first taste of society so alluring that there is great temptation to let the results of years of study disappear; but they soon find that the fingers which were so nimble need the daily hour or two at the piano. The busy housewives also are glad to keep informed concerning the new music and composers. Of course all of this has reference to an organization in a small town, for those living in cities have all the advantages of concerts and musical lectures.

On inquiry as to the history and rules of this society, I learned that from an original membership of seven or eight it had grown until it included twenty-five regular members, who were expected to add some part to the programme at each meeting; this seems to me a very pleasant number. A small yearly fee paid all current expenses, often leaving a generous sum for charity, or anything else of common interest.