

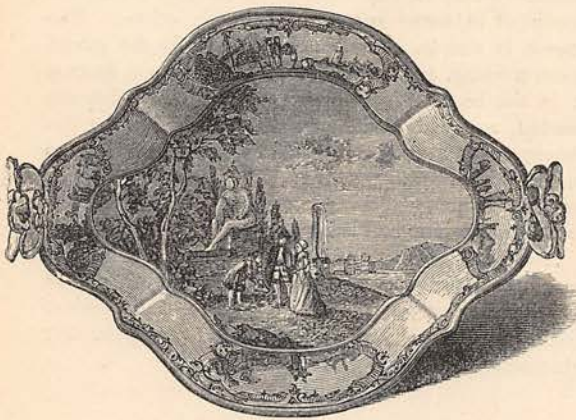
VIEW OF DRESDEN.

DRESDEN CHINA AT HOME.

WE are so accustomed to speak of Dresden china, that many are doubtless unaware that the manufacture of this famous porcelain is not carried on in the Saxon capital itself, but in the little town of Meissen, which lies further down the Elbe, and which may be reached by the Leipzig Railway in about an hour, or by steamer in two hours from the city. To inspect or purchase the china, indeed, it is quite unnecessary to make this excursion, as specimens of every kind are displayed at the attractive depôt in the Schloss-strasse, Dresden, where a variety of tastes may be gratified by the beauties of colour and form, the grotesque or elegant,

day's excursion it is to go there by boat and return by rail. The return sail is to be avoided as tedious, for it takes twice the time to steam up against the swift stream.

Being fortified with friendly advice to this effect, we started at ten o'clock from Dresden in the small steamer which is moored on the river immediately below the Hôtel Bellevue, and close to that long bridge of many arches which, connecting the old and new towns, is the main artery of life in Dresden, and crowded with traffic from morning till night. The boat was filled mainly with peasantry, whom we dropped at the various little villages lying right and left on the banks; many of the women, in short skirts and with black kerchiefs on their heads, were on their way back from early market in the city, bearing heavily-laden dossiers on their backs, which they were only too glad to set down; and whenever the boat stopped, there was a hum and stir in helping each other to take them off, or to pass their arms again within the leather straps that kept the heavy burden in its place. Some few were empty, others gay with bright pelargoniums, or piled up with enormous cucumbers, or, still more frequently, flat brown rye loaves. Here and there the strong arms of a sturdy son pushed out a flat-bottomed boat to receive the housewife, whom we watched gaining the green bank, and making her way along the fields to some invisible home beyond the slight ridge.



PLATEAU IN DRESDEN CHINA, IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.

the useful or ornamental, in much greater profusion than at the showroom in the royal works; but to see the process Meissen must be visited, and a pleasant

Here and there, too, a party of more fashionably dressed people came down to the landing-place to meet a friend, or vary the even current of country life by a glance at the steamer and its passengers. A handsome villa, with formal gardens and lines of closely-cut hedges running down to the water, and some troops exercising by the river-side, were episodes to vary the tame aspect of the flat banks, over which, at each successive bend of the brown river, reappeared on the horizon the green domes and cupolas of Dresden, rising above a long sweep of verdant plain, and transporting us back in imagination to that long gallery of the Zwinger, which is hung with Canaletti's views of the city.

By degrees, however, we got abreast of a range of low hills, terraced with vineyards, which rose to a greater height as we approached our destination. Here the Elbe was spanned by a light bridge, and Meissen towered above us on the left bank, a picturesque cluster of red-tiled roofs and brown houses surmounting one another, crowned by the ancient cathedral and venerable Schloss, residence and burial-place of the ancestors of the present royal house of Saxony. Every slope on the steep hill left vacant by buildings was occupied by garden and vineyard, and beneath waved snowy groves, which we recognised on drawing nearer to be acacias laden with bloom, shaking their long tresses in the breeze.

In the Schloss above, the porcelain manufacture was started in 1710, and there carried on till within the last fourteen years, when larger premises being found necessary, it was removed to a building erected for the accommodation of 600 workmen in the Triebisch-thal, a glen half a mile out of the town, along which we now followed a little stream. Ever and anon we

humblest window. The refining influences of beauty had evidently done their work, and penetrated the



BUST OF A BOY IN DRESDEN CHINA, IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.

artisan and his surroundings, and it was equally clear that climate and soil must be ready amply to reward any efforts at gardening in Meissen.

A notice put up in the window of a porter's office as



PORTION OF A SERVICE IN DRESDEN CHINA, WITH ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE "SORROWS OF WERTHER," IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.

stopped on our way to admire the cottage gardens, with their bright patches of mule pink and tall standard roses, one thick head of crimson blooms, and the creepers that ran up every house and peeped in at the

we entered the corridor of the long, three-storied, white building from the high-road, stated that persons were admitted to see the works any day upon payment of one mark a head to the guide; but, arriving at noon,

we found that many of the work-rooms were closed for the dinner-hour, and that it would be advisable to wait.

On returning at half-past one to the works, we spent some time in the long show-room, amusing ourselves by a further inspection of large figures, "Mayflower" vases, plaques painted with copies of heads from the noted pictures of the Dresden Gallery, cups and plates covered with flowers, mirrors embossed in wreaths of flowers with which Cupids played, and fantastic animals of all kinds, from a huge hippopotamus or life-sized cock, down to a tiny pug-dog or kitten, besides blue and white dinner services and other useful articles—until a workman was summoned from one of the painting-rooms above to act as our guide. After asking us to enter our names in a book, and depositing our marks in a box for the "Sick Fund," he led us first into a long room on the ground-floor to show us the baking furnaces, explaining that as there were many rooms in the building where precisely the same processes were carried on, he thought we should be satisfied to see one of each sort.

Our first introduction was to the beautiful white clay, found in two places within half an hour of Meissen, which, with the sole addition of a little felspar procured from Norway, furnishes the material for this china. The felspar is also used in making the glaze. Here we found men standing before long marble counters, looking very much like bakers at work on their white dough, as they moistened and kneaded the clay. It is considered of great importance to work this thoroughly, that each part may be exposed equally to the atmosphere, and thus rendered less liable to crack in the firing. On the same floor were the baking furnaces, heated by coal procured in the Kingdom of Saxony, and from Bohemia, known respectively as "Steinkohlen" and "Braunkohlen." The articles ready to be fired are enclosed in thick terra-cotta moulds, and then piled up inside the circular furnaces, when the entrance is plastered up. They are heated for four days, and then allowed gradually to cool before being opened, the whole operation taking eight or ten days. We entered one furnace that had been open for several, and glad enough we were to make our escape from even that degree of heat.

The next step was to see the potter with his wheel and treadle moulding the various articles, a process which, in its apparently magic facility, is invariably fascinating to watch, whether the result be common earthenware or, as in this case, dainty cups and saucers. We were more especially interested, however, in the manufacture of the figures, that most noted branch of Dresden art, and were surprised to find through how many hands they pass; the principle of division of labour is thoroughly carried out at Meissen, each process, trifling though it may seem, being entrusted to a different person. Thus the various parts of a figure are made separately, and united at last by one workman: the limbs are first cast in a mould, then passed on to another man who finishes them with a knife, modelling them into more exact form and detail; a third sits at a table with a heap of arms and legs before

him, marking the nail on each tiny finger or toe, and so on through all the various parts and accessories of a group, till they are brought to one man, who sits with his model before him, uniting and finishing the whole till it is ready to pass into the hands of the painter, after which it has to be glazed and fired. Each tiny flower and bird must be moulded separately and stuck on by hand, which sufficiently explains the expensive character of the favourite "Mayflower" ware, studded as it is with tiny hawthorn blossoms. One young man, with long slender fingers, had his table strewn with white petals; he was making a rose, and each petal had to be rolled up and moulded separately before he could begin on the flower itself. Very dainty and inviting the work looked, and reminded us much of paper-flower making, especially when we saw a show specimen of a carnation and mallow in pure white porcelain placed under a glass-case, where the light streamed through the petals, making them look as transparent and fragile as tissue paper.

A school of art is attached to the building, for instructing *employés* in drawing and furnishing new designs. In the painting-rooms, on the upper floor, we found men engaged on a great variety of objects; some were cups and plates for ordinary services, the design and colouring of which were copied from Oriental specimens; the outline was in some cases transferred by means of a perforated pattern through which charcoal was dusted, but more frequently the design was traced with a fine steel pen, and then passed to another hand for the colour to be filled in with the brush. The fashion for dark blue china has reached Germany, and at Meissen four times as many rooms are engaged on its production as on any other kind of ware, while the show-rooms made a prominent display of blue and white services, vases and figures. The deep blue now in vogue is produced by two successive paintings with cobalt, after each of which the porcelain is baked. The blue looks a dull brown until it has been acted upon by the fire; nor would it be easier to divine the future glories of a crimson plate, when seen in its unfired and unglazed condition.

The workmen are all paid by the piece or dozen, and can earn from 1½ to 3 thalers in the day, according to their ability and industry. They looked comfortable and intelligent, and seemed happy and interested in their work, while ready to explain anything about which we were inquisitive, and to salute us with the usual foreign courtesy as we entered and left the work-rooms. Some sat with a finished water-colour landscape before them, reproducing it on a smaller scale upon a vase; others were working from a mere outline sketch, which they filled in and coloured after their own taste. A few of the largest specimens on hand, decorated with views of Dresden and the neighbourhood, and bearing poetic inscriptions, were in preparation for the then approaching silver wedding of the King and Queen of Saxony. Those men whose seats commanded the windows generally had a row of plants by their side, and many kept a few cut

flowers in a bottle or glass on their table, where some numbers of a popular journal lay ready for perusal at odd moments.

As we passed through several of the painting-rooms, we kept expecting to see women engaged on work which in our own country they have found so good and remunerative an occupation, and great was our surprise to learn that at Meissen they were only employed as

drudges, in the hard work of burnishing the gilding, the final operation on the china, which is performed by rubbing the gold with agate polishers, before which it looks perfectly dull and brown. In a country where women are commonly employed in field labour, it is perhaps natural that fine and delicate manual operations should be left to the stronger sex, though it reverses our insular ideas and customs.

MY EXPERIENCE AT THE NATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL OF COOKERY.



WAS some considerable time making up my mind to attend the school in the first instance. I had thought of it many a time, but it seemed such a strange thing for a middle-aged, respectable mother of a family like me to leave home every day for six weeks, to don

white apron and sleeves, and toast myself in a hot kitchen, making dishes for folks out of my own family to devour; and I rather shrank from the undertaking. But my difficulties with Mary Ann increased daily. She was willing, but she did not know how to cook, and I did not know enough myself to feel competent to teach her what to do.

At last I summoned courage to suggest the advisability of the thing to my husband, and he settled the affair at once, as husbands generally do dispose of their wives' small domestic difficulties, evidently regarding them as almost too small to trouble about. He listened patiently to what I had to say—how I could not meet with an experienced, trustworthy cook, and how, if I only knew everything for myself, I should be independent, for I could engage a young girl and teach her what to do.

"There are three questions which must be answered about this," he said at last. "The first is—have you the strength for it?"

Yes; I was quite sure there was nothing to prevent me on that score.

"Then how will the household go on in your absence?"

"I have asked your sister Mary to come to us, and she would look after the house and the children."

"That will do, I think. Then the third consideration is, what will the expense be? I suppose you don't know that yet?"

"Yes, I do. You don't think I should propose a thing like this to you without knowing all about it? I heard that visitors were allowed to go over the Cookery

School in the afternoon, so I went, looked over it, and made all inquiries."

"And what did you make out?"

"Oh, I went all over, and found it very interesting. There were three large departments—one where what they call demonstration lessons are given, another where artisan cookery is taught, and a third devoted to middle-class cookery. We went first into the demonstration kitchen, and saw and heard one of the students 'demonstrating.' We stayed about a minute, and she looked exceedingly relieved when we took our departure. We then passed through the other two kitchens, and saw a number of ladies, fifty I should imagine there were at a rough guess, all busy, some whisking eggs, some pounding ingredients at a large marble mortar with a pestle that was fastened to the wall, and all looking very happy."

"Who took you through then?"

"The secretary, a very polite lady. I inquired the terms, and I found that if I went into the school for six weeks——"

"Six weeks!"

"Yes, it would take three or four days more than six weeks to go through the course. The secretary says numbers of ladies go in just to be able to teach their cooks, as I should do. And it would cost 10s. 6d. for the lessons in scullery work; £2 2s. for ten middle-class demonstration lessons; 10s. for ten artisan demonstration lessons; £2 2s. for ten artisan practice lessons, and £3 3s. for ten middle-class practice lessons; altogether £8 8s. all but sixpence."

"That is definite enough," said Jack after a pause; "but do you think," he added, "you should care to go through the scullery part of it?"

"That is the part I am most doubtful about. Of course it will be the most fatiguing, and besides I expect it will be the least useful to me of anything. On the other hand, if I go through the scullery the middle-class practice lessons will cost £3 3s., if I miss the scullery they will cost £4 4s."

"And how do you feel about it?"

"I fancy I feel imbued with the spirit of the man who said he might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. If I do go in for it, I might as well do the thing thoroughly. The secretary said it was always felt to be much more satisfactory to go right through."

"Yes, I dare say it is. Well, my dear, you must please yourself. If you would like to go through the course, I am agreeable. I think you will find it