

AUTOGRAPH COLLECTING FOR GIRLS.



I AM certain that there are many girls, old and young, among the readers of the GIRL'S OWN PAPER who, at all events sometimes, suffer from that most terrible of complaints—ennui. It is to these I humbly present myself as a physician with a cure for their sickness. I am fearful of degenerating into a bore;

but, even at the risk of so doing, I venture to plead my hobby as a sovereign remedy for the evil I have mentioned. In these days of women's competition with men there can be no need for me to point out any new field for women's employment; so I merely suggest, as one who has tried its effects, that autograph collecting should be given a trial as an intellectual and yet simple amusement—a light occupation, of the same description as stamp or crest collecting, far more interesting than either if one sets about it properly, and one that carries with it, or should do so, the proud consciousness of being as it were a guardian for the materials of history. Another advantage, though one that I do not care to insist on, is that it is instructive to an extraordinary degree. The reason I do not insist on the last is that I fear girls, old and young, and, in fact, people in general, do not like the idea of instructive games or recreations; they savour too much of the sugar-coated pill, the jam with the powder—hideous recollection of infancy. But it is not so with autograph collecting—autograph collecting proper that is. Knowledge is gained, but gained, as it were, unconsciously; you do not feel in the least bored by it. On the contrary, some old and formerly deemed dry description of an episode in our history becomes suddenly of tenfold interest when resting by one's volume is a tattered old letter written by the hero of the event himself, possibly referring to the very incident, which naturally enhances its value immensely. Every single reference to him is, for the future, carefully hunted out and annotated for reference. Then there is always the cherished hope of the genuine collector to look forward to, viz., the possibility of turning up a letter or document that may throw some entirely new light on a vexed question of history, or reveal some hitherto unknown motives for action. Or, what can be more fascinating than to place one of Pope's witty and sparkling epistles, brimming over with mirth and good-fellowship, beside one of Johnson's laboured letters, deep and clever enough in all conscience? But see the difference in style of the two writings to begin with; the light, somewhat straggly writing of Pope marks him out at once as Johnson's anti-type, Johnson's writing being regular and black, and absolutely redolent of the man himself. But I must not wander off into these long disquisitions, or my readers will turn over in disgust, and away goes any chance of making converts to my hobby. Many and many a time, far oftener than you would think, have valuable manuscripts been chanced upon when the lucky finder least

expected it. And alas! many and many a time, as one can easily imagine, have ignorance and carelessness combined to finish the work begun by the damp and the rats. There is a famous story of how Sir Robert Cotton, the father of autograph collectors, discovered a tailor in the very act of clipping an original copy of Magna Charta into measures. At Leeds Castle, Kent, many years ago, some fortunate individuals purchased a box apparently filled with old coloured paving-tiles. On removing the top layer of tiles, a mass of manuscripts of the time of the Civil War was found, which had evidently been stowed in the box, with the tiles above them, in order to conceal them. They were afterwards famous as the Fairfax MSS. A hundred and fifty years ago some plaster fell from a ceiling in Lincoln's Inn, and behold! the long-lost State papers of Thurloe, Secretary to the Lord Protector Cromwell, are exposed to view. Such instances could easily be multiplied, but these will suffice to show that one need never despair of coming suddenly upon such treasure trove.

An article in the *Archivist* (a little quarterly journal devoted to MSS. and autographs) recently gave a list of hunting grounds for collectors. The writer was a well-known connoisseur and collector. He places Paris in the front rank of such places, for the reason that a very large number of MSS. which are known to have existed there have now disappeared. This is not, to my mind, wholly satisfactory proof that Paris may yet contain them, although I certainly concede that it should be one of the first places to search for them. At all events, I hope I have said enough to show that autograph collecting may be made interesting. Now for a little more practical instruction how to set about it. First of all let the young collector disabuse her mind of the very common idea that an "autograph" is necessarily a "signature"—any Greek or Latin scholar, on thinking, will remember that one may write (graph) anything oneself (auto) without it necessarily being his name. The words "Paris Exhibition," for example, written in my handwriting, are my autograph, although William Jones may be my name. For shortness, of course, people talk about a person's autograph; they do not say his autograph signature, although as a matter of fact, if a distinguished person be asked for his autograph he usually writes the date of his visit—if he is on a visit—and finishes by signing his name to authenticate it. It may seem useless to many to make such a fuss about a comparatively small matter, but until you collect autographs you can have no idea to what extent this notion prevails. Therefore, remember that in most cases not only is a mere signature of very little interest, but it is as a rule of absolutely no value as an autograph whatever. Of course in the case of an autograph signature of, say, Dean Swift or Queen Elizabeth—two very scarce personages in the autograph line—even a signature, if of undoubted authenticity, becomes of great value. But even then unless it is affixed to a document, for example, which would substantiate its genuineness, it is a most difficult thing to prove the authenticity in case you desire to dispose of it. Rather than allow the owner to cut the signature off a letter for me I have more than once refused the gift politely until such time as the letter becomes of no value or interest to the owner, when it may fall into my hands whole and unutilized. Now for a short explanation of the few terms used among collectors. An "autograph letter signed" is always called an "A.L.S."; "A.D.S." stands for "letter signed"; "A.D.S." for an autograph document signed; "D.S." stands for documents signed, and so on.

Another strict rule is, or should be, observed, never to stick in autographs as you would stamps or crests; not only does it lessen their value by rendering it impossible or very difficult to take them out without injuring them; but in case you want to alter the position, or look at the back, or exchange for a better specimen, you find it involves the partial destruction or hiding of the old specimen. I know of many fine collections containing otherwise beautiful letters, that have been ruined by the ignorance or foolishness of an earlier collector. Mount them in any way you think best, either with cut slits in the page of the album, or, better still, the paper corners sold for the purpose. To revert for a moment to another plausible argument often advanced against collecting, viz., where should they get the autographs from? how should they start their collection? they don't know any famous men; where would they be likely to find autograph letters? To this I reply, autograph collecting is a matter of patience. You certainly won't form a fine collection in a week, or a month, or even a year, unless you are a rich person, with unlimited cash to spend. But then, what kind of collection can be formed in such a time as I have mentioned?—not even stamps or crests, certainly not eggs or butterflies, for many of these latter are only to be procured in certain spots, perchance inaccessible or dangerous to any but experienced or professional collectors. No; you must learn to wait, or you will never learn the art or pleasure of the true collector. Half the pleasure of the thing is got by anticipation. There are places in my album for letters of most fabulous rarity, which I, Micawber like, am always waiting for something to turn up and fill.

A word of encouragement. It is a most astonishing thing what numbers of people have one or two old letters from famous people stowed away in remote boxes and desks, tied up with the usual piece of soiled ribbon, together with a programme of some long-ago amateur charades, or other entertainments of the home circle; a faded photograph or two; perchance a lock of hair in a piece of tissue paper, and some verses written by an early adorer (if the desk be that of a lady), or an effusion of one's own that we never dared send and yet thought too much of to throw away, if that of a gentleman. It does not require much persuasion as a rule to induce these good people to "fork out" and rummage about for more, especially if it is pointed out that an honoured place in a beautiful album is waiting for the old letters, with the name and title of the person who gave it to the present owner underneath, and a description of the way it fell into his or her hands. Many and many a time have I come across really old and valuable letters stowed away in some corner of an old desk or writing-case. And this brings me to another rule for the young collector. Never under any circumstances let an opportunity pass of examining any old bundles of letters or papers—written papers that is—that you may chance to come across. Examine each one carefully and separately: if it is not written by a famous person it may possibly refer to some historic event in which the writer took an active though an obscure part. Think, for example, how interesting it would be to find a letter of any one of the officers or men who fought at Trafalgar or Waterloo, giving an account of the battle. It would always possess an intrinsic

value of its own which nothing could rob it of. Never mind how "unlikely" it is that you may find anything "good" in an old box or desk; if I may say so, it is just those "unlikely" places that are the most likely. I myself once found a lot of State papers, one hundred and eighty years old, under the hay in a farmyard loft. They were not lying in a likely place either; they were mixed up with old numbers of the *Illustrated London News* or *Graphic*; but under those old newspapers were some letters which are now the pride and joy of my collection.

And now I come to what is a delicate point for genuine collectors—it is the reproaches that are hurled against them, collectively and individually, by various persons, eminent and otherwise, who have been pestered by beggars for their autographs. When I have spoken

of genuine collectors, I wish to distinguish them from the people who will write to a popular artist or successful actor for no other reason than an insane desire to possess a slip of paper signed by the popular idol. They do not, as a rule, care twopence for any other kind of autographs. If I were to offer them Addison's or Newton's at a gift they would probably turn up their noses at them; and moreover, when they get the desired reply they only keep them littering about in a drawer, or at best insert them in their photograph album, with a photo of the person himself, as if to deceive people into the idea that the portrait was presented to them by him. I freely confess that as a boy I committed this very absurdity myself; but I erred from ignorance. I should blush at the bare idea of doing such a thing now. I hope

that no sensible person will think of including the genuine autograph lover who searches through old albums, pokes about in ancient chests, dives into old desks, nay, burrows into what are apparently rubbish heaps, in search of treasures, with Mr. Grossmith's "pestilential nuisances who write for autographs." Mind, I don't see any objection to asking a friend who has known or been in correspondence with celebrated people for a specimen of the letters of his friend: that to a certain extent is justifiable, for in nine cases out of ten they would only be thrown into the fire when a clearance took place. On the contrary, I think it is part of the duty of collectors to save, as far as possible, these interesting and often precious relics from destruction. It is a mistake in that case to lose anything through the want of asking.



ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MUSIC.

TAM O' SHANTER.—It would be more easy to play the pianoforte agreeably than the violin. The latter would require a longer experience and more perfect ear, as you would have to make the notes, whereas those of the piano are made for you.

"A STITCH IN TIME" tells us that she has heard of two girls who suffered from curvature of the spine from playing the violin, as she also herself experienced. Now, one swallow does not make a summer, and when she considers the hundreds and thousands of persons throughout all Europe, as well as our own country, who play that instrument and have no curvature, we think we may fairly regard these cases as exceptional. Very young or delicate girls, and others having a predisposition to curvature from weakness of the spine and hereditary unhealthiness, growing too fast, or practising too long, might well be recommended to play the piano instead. Students of the violin or harp must only watch their backs, and rest after short lessons.

AMY HILL.—1. See our article on the "Duties of Servants," in which you will find full instructions for a lady's maid. 2. Write to a music-seller, such as Novello; ask for a good manual, and the price of any he may name.

H. D. MILLS.—No birds sing while moulting, and if your canary be a female it will never sing much.

ESCA will find plenty of advice on the subject of stammering given from time to time in answer to correspondents. If a bad case, a professional had better be engaged to give a few lessons.

WORK.

NINA W.—Sixpence an hour is the usual price for such needlework when performed at home. But fourpence an hour might pay you if the quilt should prove a long business. At any rate, keep a careful account of the time spent in doing it, and you will soon know what to charge.

CLARA DE VERE, C.B., EVELYN ALLEMBY, PATTY.—We can only advise you to advertise for what you need. There is no "royal road" to finding employment or selling work except by personal exertion, by advertising, or, in case of an artist, taking your work round and showing it to the various publishers.

MISCELLANEOUS.

KATHLEEN'S HANDFUL.—The fact that you so earnestly desire to love your Heavenly Father and your Saviour is an evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart. So is that feeling of unhappiness at your coldness. This should cheer and give you courage, and aid you in persevering prayer. Our Blessed Lord says: "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out"; and again, we have the assurance that "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through Him." Think of His love and His power and willingness to save you, and rest all your hopes on Him, your unworthiness not being taken into account so long, of course, as you sincerely strive to please Him and seek His aid in so doing.

EDITHA.—"The Scripture-Reading, etc., Prayer Union" is under the direction of the Rev. Ernest Boys, Beverley, Sidcup, Kent; the "Head-quarters," at Exeter Hall, W.C. There is also

"The Bible Guild" (in connection with the "Christian Women's Education Union"), Honorary Secretary, Mrs. C. H. Waller, 16, South Hill Park Gardens, Hampstead Heath, N. Another society is called "The Bible and Prayer Union," under the direction of the Rev. T. Richardson, Vicar of St. Benet's, Mile End Road, E. This is a very widely extensive society. Bishops of the English and Moravian Churches, Zenana and other missionaries, and all classes of workers of all sections of the Church of Christ, have joined, and many missionaries have been led to go out to Central Africa, Japan, and elsewhere, through this Union. There are branches in Australia, Canada, Ceylon, the Argentine Republic, New Zealand, China, Finland, Sweden, Syria, the United States, the South Sea Islands, Tasmania, India, Switzerland, Germany, and elsewhere.

MAD CAP had better show the protuberance on her nose to the doctor who saw it in the first instance. We could not prescribe for what we have not seen, knowing nothing of the owner's constitution.

AN ANXIOUS ONE.—We can only advise you to keep your head up after meals, especially dinner, and abstain from reading and employing your mind in study for an hour if possible.

"GULIA."—We should advise you to be careful how you do anything culpably clandestine and foolish likewise. Your parents' right is God-given, so they are the proper confidants of every girl.

A READER.—The complaint of which you write could not, we think, be cured by local applications. It arises from some constitutional defect, and needs medical treatment of the general health.

MAUD C.—The name "thimble" is derived from the Scotch *thummet*, from thumb-bell, a bell-shaped shield originally worn on the thumb; sailors and, we believe, shoemakers still use them. It is to the Dutch that the invention of thimbles appears to be due; and in the year 1605 an establishment for their manufacture was opened at Islington by one John Lofting, a Dutchman. In the fourteenth century they were made of leather, a leather guard covering the palm of the hand being still in use by men. Afterwards, in the same century, when metal was substituted for leather, the name "thimble" was adopted. Shakespeare speaks of them in *King John*:—

"Their thimbles into arm'd gauntlets change,
Their needles into lances."
There is an allusion to them, likewise, in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

MR. DESPERANDUM could certainly have "The Girls' Own Indoor Book" forwarded to her by post to Philadelphia. We are glad that you agree with the majority of our correspondents, that this magazine is of so "great value to all girls."

MYRTLE.—There are several training homes for intending female missionaries, and they may not all have the same standard of eligibility as to age. You are too young at nineteen, but with your parents' approval your studies might begin.

JOSEPHINE.—It is wrong to repeat profane remarks.

The representation of the happiness of the redeemed, consisting of "Sitting on a cold cloud and singing all day," is well hackneyed amongst those who have turned their backs on the Heavenly City. Just as the birds sing of their own free will, and as a vent for their happiness, so "the children of the Resurrection" "sing for joy of heart" in a feeling of bliss inconceivable to us. And as to sitting still with nothing to do, it is utterly contrary to scriptural truth. This may be gathered from several statements. Those who employed their talents well in this world were to be made "rulers over five (or ten) cities." How much is comprehended in these words! The Apostle says, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" And our Lord says that His twelve Apostles shall "sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." There will be no stagnation, no idleness, yet no experience of fatigue, nor disappointment in any work appointed.

PATIENCE.—We regret that the verses sent to us are not suitable for this paper. They lack originality; and the composition needs revision.

PODGE.—You seem to misquote the forty-sixth verse of the thirteenth chapter of the Acts: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said . . ."

GELEHRT.—1. You are not entitled to ask more than one question. A writer who assumes a *nom de plume* must have his secrecy respected by his editor or publisher. 2. If your friend be the bridegroom, it is to him that your wedding gift should be presented. 3. On no account read stray books on theology; only those recommended by your parents, your clergyman (or minister), or friends whose sentiments agree with theirs. We are not surprised that your "mind is in a muddle," especially if they be German books.

LE NEZ EN L'AIR.—1. The Ta-kiang, or "Canton River," is 920 English miles long; the Menam of Siam about 920; Jordan, 300; the Kizil Irmak of Turkey, 580; the Amu Daria of Turkestan, 1350. It is against our view of the character and object of our Correspondence to answer what may be called school examination questions. It encourages laziness, for the students should study and make their own researches, and not hand over a work of time and trouble to someone else. 2. We refer you to former answers and articles by "Medicus" on the subjects of the complexion, hair, and hands.

SHY GIRL.—1. There is a great difference between being "talkative" and being able to converse agreeably. Read our article on this art, which has been republished in "The Girls' Own Indoor Book." Consider the age and tastes and occupation of the person to whom you should try to make yourself pleasant, and either tell them something that they would feel an interest in hearing—something you have read, seen, or heard—or ask them questions about subjects with which they are connected. 2. Do not on any account write any larger, or you will have to use leaves from a copybook instead of note-paper.

NURSIE.—Wash off all the caterpillars with a garden hose containing tobacco juice, or salt and water. Then surround the shrub with a border of quicklime, and they will not cross over that boundary.

AUTOGRAPH COLLECTING FOR GIRLS.

II.



Y last paper dealt with auto-collecting in general: let me now give a few practical hints as to starting. To begin with a word of encouragement, I may mention that

never once since I started collecting have I met with a refusal to contribute a letter, or a scrap of writing, I desired for my albums. It is all a matter of tact. Nobody with a trace of politeness or good sense would openly covet a letter which is obviously treasured by its owner, nor would she therefore lay herself open to the mortification of being refused, a course in all likelihood as unpleasant to the one who refuses as it is to the person refused.

An important point in collecting, and one to which I will now address myself, is the course of collecting to adopt. By "course of collecting," I mean the branch or line you intend to follow up. For, as an earnest collector speaking to those wishing to collect earnestly, I must lay it down as a law that should certainly be regarded as immovable, to take up a certain branch or vein and work it out. It is astonishing what a lot of working a comparatively small vein will take. I am acquainted with people who have large means to command and who have been trying for years to get the "Seven Bishops" without success. That, of course, is, for peculiar reasons, an exceptionally difficult thing to attempt. But let my reader think of a subject, any subject will do, as long as she takes an interest in it; then let her work up the chronology of it, and the biography of the persons it concerns, and then commence to work it out. I do not say, have nothing to do with interesting autographs of other people, and concerning other things, that may fall in your way. That would be an extremely improvident thing to do. But devote all your real energies to your speciality. Every collector should have his or her speciality. Some choose poets; some, statesmen; others, soldiers; and yet others, clergymen; but none of these people, I venture to say, would refuse an autograph of Garrick or Kean, merely because he was not in their line. My own line is a very extensive one, and will serve as an illustration at the same time of the method I adopt in classifying my collection. I take the period generally known as the Queen Anne period for my basis, and then extend it to include all celebrities who lived and died between the years 1700-1750. A glance at your history will show you the enormous extent of my field. It is, indeed, one I can hardly ever hope to complete, unless I live to be a millionaire, and I greatly fear half the pleasure of my collecting would go, if I continually knew it to be merely a question of taking the trouble to buy.

A very popular mode of collecting, and I may add, a frequently very expensive one, is "Grangerising," so called from the fact of its having originated in the idea of the Reverend Joseph Granger, an old parson of the early part of the century, who so enlarged a certain *History of England* by adding portraits and autographs of every single person mentioned, that from its previous moderate size and value, it swelled to the prodigious size of seventeen volumes, which, at his death, was priced at many hundred pounds. Such books as *Pepys'*

and *Evelyn's Diaries* lend themselves to treatment of this kind. But, for a beginner, I do not recommend this course. Far better take up a small line to commence with, such as naval commanders of a certain reign, or a certain interesting period, such as the first decade of this century. Build it up gradually: begin with a Howe or a Collingwood, then advance to St. Vincent, and finally crown your set with a small piece of extravagance, and beg, borrow, or buy, a scrap of the autograph of the illustrious Nelson.

Now as to preserving your specimens. I have already, I think, enunciated the cardinal rule—*never stick*. It is fatal from any point of view, for besides spoiling the specimen, it utterly prevents its removal, should a different system of arrangement come into operation. I recently had the privilege of inspecting a large and very valuable collection, whose owner had adopted a plan, which, though presenting one or two novel features, is not an uncommon one. The autographs themselves, together with the pictures, prints, and cuttings "illustrating" them, were placed loosely on a plain piece of folio-sized paper. This was enclosed in a second sheet of paper, on which the contents, consisting of the letter, &c. were clearly described. This again was placed with others of its class in a large wooden box with the front arranged as a movable flap, to be let down when the lid is opened. Each box must have contained, roughly speaking, about 100 letters and documents, and the boxes themselves were safely stored in a large and deep bookcase, specially fitted for their reception. Outside each box was a label specifying the contents, such as poets, statesmen, &c. Of course, this was a very extensive collection, numbering, perhaps, some thousands of specimens; but there is no reason why a similar plan should not be adopted on a smaller scale by beginners.

The question of illustrations is one that must be left to the discretion of the individual. It is a branch of collecting that may be so enormously overdone as to quite overshadow the parent stem; or again, if left undone, may so greatly detract from the interest and value of a collection, that none besides its owner will care to spend five minutes looking at it. For myself, a good portrait or two of my subject, a short and, if possible, printed biography, together with perhaps a view of his or her birthplace or residence, is all I have ever deemed necessary; but, of course, one can reserve one's energy for any single favourite here and there.

Another important point to collectors is the value of autographs. This, too, is unfortunately a point about which it is hardly possible to frame rules. As far as possible, the following may, however, be fairly considered hard and fast:—

1. The most generally valuable form of an autograph is the A. L. S. or autograph, letter signed.
2. The next in order is the A. D. S., or autograph document signed, which is, of course, hardly less valuable and interesting, as a rule, than its predecessor.
3. In the third place may be put the L. S. (letter signed) or A. D. (autograph document) unsigned.
4. In the fourth place, the D. S., or document signed.
5. While the mere signature, unless a scarce one, is hardly of any value whatever.

Even these rules, however, are open to exception. For example, it is quite conceivable that an A. D. of, say, Charles Dickens, might be of vastly greater value and interest than a good A. L. S. While a document signed by

a monarch, presuming it to be the identical document condemning some famous historical personage to execution, would certainly be of greater value, both historically and pecuniarily, than an autograph letter signed by the monarch in question. Again, it stands to reason that the condition of the letter or MS. is an important factor in its worth; a disfigured or mutilated specimen, of course, being so much less valuable. A. autograph letter written in the third person, is never reckoned half as good as an A. L. S. and should be avoided, if possible. A long letter is naturally more desirable than a short one, and the contents, if characteristic in any way, should always be carefully noted, as tending to increase the worth of the specimen.

With regard to forgeries I have but little to say. It is absolutely impossible for the ordinary beginner to detect a really clever forgery, and therein lies a pitfall for the unwary autograph collector; not, indeed, that he or she is more liable to be "taken in" in their hobby than a collector of curios of any description; but that they are too apt to sneer at the expert. The only plan for the young collector to easily and safely adopt, is to hie her to the British Museum and there with diligent and careful research compare her own specimens with well-known and authenticated MSS. of the same writer.

A not unnatural and very common error among beginners, is to imagine that because a MS. is old, it is necessarily valuable, or at all events more desirable than a more modern letter. Nothing can be more fallacious. An ordinary MS. of even as far back as the 15th century, can be bought any day in the proper quarter for, at most, a sovereign, while the smallest authentic scrap of a MS. of any scarce name of a later date, such as Milton, Defoe, or even Goldsmith, would be valued at its twenty, ten, or five sovereigns, and eagerly bought at the price. It is very difficult, in fact, impossible, to account for the extraordinary rarity of certain names, such as, for instance, those I have mentioned above. It is a well-known fact that, of the national poet, "the Divine William," there are but six signatures in existence, and three of those are on his will; of Milton, not to count a few unique and priceless MSS. in the British Museum, and Trinity College, Cambridge, hardly a single good letter is in private hands, while Daniel Defoe and Oliver Goldsmith, both of them quite recently deceased, (for what is a century nowadays?) are almost unattainable in the autograph line.

It by no means follows that an autograph is rare according to the celebrity, or the reverse, of the writer; rather the contrary. Any obscure English general who fought against the Americans in the War of Independence would be of greater value, in all probability, than the Duke of Wellington, premising that in size, &c. the specimens are identical. Among poets, Keats cannot be compared for an instant as to popularity with Sir Walter Scott, Campbell, or Coleridge; but the market value of his letters is at least five times greater.

And so on through all sorts and conditions of autographs. All these are small details, perhaps, but they must be learnt. Anyone may learn them, but neither I, nor anyone else, can teach them. There is nothing, however, to be frightened at. It is a recreation, not a task, and a recreation moreover that, as I have said before, teaches us while we learn it. Nobody who has once been bitten with the desire ("craze" is what our critics politely term it) to collect has ever regretted it, I am quite sure.

Even looking at it from a monetary and sordid point of view, it is good, for a judicious buyer may, by "watching the market," generally sell at a profit. You cannot lose, for what pecuniary value is lost, is amply repaid by the intellectual pleasure gained. There is, of course, more than one way of buying. The cheapest is, perhaps, having seen the catalogue of an auction sale, to mark the limits which you feel disposed to go to, and entrust the commis-

sion to a respectable dealer, who, besides relieving you of the trouble, will take pains to ascertain the authenticity of the coveted specimen. All dealers issue catalogues. Mostly they are dear, some few are moderate, and hardly any cheap. Perhaps the most satisfactory way in the long run of increasing a collection, is by "chopping" duplicates with other collectors.

But few girls (or other people besides girls)

are aware that they have a good example of the genuine collector set them by the highest lady in the realm, our gracious Queen, who, I believe, has been an enthusiastic devotee all her life long. Let them, therefore, set their hands to it, if at all, with all their might, and I cordially wish them as many delightful and profitable hours at this most entrancing pursuit as I have had myself.

H. SAXE WYNDHAM.

MRS. GREY'S STRANGE SILENCE.

By RUTH LAMB.



HEY were what anybody would call a most interesting old, or rather elderly, couple to look at; and they were seldom seen apart. If one were missing it was the lady, who sometimes remained in her own room, but whenever she was visible, he was sure to be close at hand.

It was under the roof of a Swiss mountain pension that we saw this couple, and they were only items in a long list of guests, but they were a centre of interest alike to young and old.

We knew they were husband and wife by reference to the "Visitors' Book," where he had entered their names as "Mr. and Mrs. Grey, Lindham, England." They might have passed for brother and sister well enough, for they were so much alike both in face and figure, only she was much the nicer looking of the two. She was quite a study in monotint, for she had the most wonderful quantity of grey hair, iron-grey, but softening to silver, and it was alike wavy and silky without any artificial aid. She wore it in great coils round her shapely head, and disdained to cover it with the milliners' compounds of lace and flowers affected by her contemporaries.

Did I say "disdained"? That is not the word to use: my old lady's every look and act suggested good will and gentlest kindness towards all the world. Her beautiful grey eyes had a suspicion of violet left in them, and went perfectly with that exquisite hair of hers. She always wore gowns of some soft grey material, except when, on some special occasion, she donned a silk of similar colour. Even then the texture was rich and soft. A rustling garment would have been out of character, so that the old lady and her clothes made up a delightful harmony of tints.

Before we looked in the "Visitors' Book" we had given the couple the name which actually belonged to them, because the old gentleman wore a grey tweed suit, and it amused us not a little to find that even in that matter all was in harmony.

After we had spent a good deal of admiration and interest on Mr. and Mrs. Grey, we began to notice certain little peculiarities which excited our curiosity. Though they were always together, and present at meals and other social occasions, he did all the talking. We might have thought she was dumb, so silent was she in company, if we had not heard her speak to her husband at different times, but even with him she never held anything like a sustained conversation.

The end of the long dining table went close to the wall, and Mrs. Grey sat at the extreme

of the right hand side of it. That seat had been originally allotted to Mr. Grey, but he put his wife in it and took the one at her left, so she had the wall to her right and her husband on the other side. This arrangement shut her off from all guests farther down than Mr. Grey. Her opposite neighbours did not count, for they were two stout Germans, who talked incessantly in their native tongue when they were not eating, and when they were, troubled themselves about nothing save their own wants in the way of food, which were not easily supplied. When satisfied they withdrew to the verandah and smoked continuously, save when they took an after-dinner nap, and snored loudly instead of talking at the top of their voices.

Mrs. Grey's silence was very puzzling. She looked so delightfully intelligent that we were sure stupidity had nothing to do with it. Her face beamed with enjoyment and sympathy when the young folk were playing games, or fun of any kind was going on, so her silence was not the result of a sour temper or because she did not like to see her neighbours happy. She patted the soft cheeks of the two babies of the establishment, and bestowed chocolates and other wholesome sweets on the youngsters who were past babyhood, accompanying the same with kind words which needed no replies.

Mr. Grey looked equally smiling and sympathetic, and added other kind words to those spoken by his wife, as if he too believed in sunshine and sweets, and youth, and in making people, especially little people, as happy as possible. Nevertheless he always came between Mrs. Grey and anybody who seemed inclined to open a conversation with her, to which conduct the old lady submitted without even a remonstrance.

There were several girls at the Pension Couronne, and naturally these used to chatter and talk over everything and everybody, as is the nature of girls and even older people to do. Amongst them were two sisters, Conny and Janet Leveson, and they slept in a room adjoining the one occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Grey.

We all know that even in many English houses, it is not impossible for us to hear much that is passing on the other side of an inner wall. Those of us who have stayed in a Swiss pension whose walls, whether outer or inner ones, are of wood, can tell that it is extremely difficult not to overhear what is said in the apartments next to our own, to say nothing of the thumping and rumbling overhead and beneath us which announce the coming and going of other travellers.

Well, when we whispered and wondered over the strange silence of our sweet old grey lady, Conny Leveson gave her head a little toss, and said, "Poor darling! I know why she does not speak to anybody. You need not tug at my gown, Janet; I have no need to be afraid of speaking."

Janet was a sweet, tender-hearted little thing, who never said an unkind word of any human being, and she was evidently anxious to silence her sister, if furtive tugs at her sleeve and beseeching looks would effect her purpose.

"Conny, dear, I would not say anything. It does not seem right to repeat what it was never intended we should hear. You would call a person very mean that did such a thing by you," pleaded Janet, finding that silent efforts were useless.

"Speak for yourself, Janet. I care not who repeats any of my words, whether they are accidentally overheard or not. Old Grey is a wretch. There!" and Conny looked defiantly at her sister, and added after a momentary pause: "You know it as well as I do."

"Conny, dear, do not say so. We have no right to draw such a conclusion. We may be mistaken, we must be, for think how good and considerate old Mr. Grey is to his wife. When she is out, how he guards her as if he were terrified that harm should come to her."

"He takes care to shut her out from everything that would cheer and brighten her life, by keeping her apart in that hateful selfish way. He goes behind her if she is riding, so that no one else can come near her. Instead of letting her hear what is said about places and things, he pokes his guide-book under her nose and makes her read the stiff, stupid accounts of them written there. But he's more horrid when he is out of sight than in it. I am telling the truth, Janet, and you know I am."

"Do not tell. Wait, Conny. I feel sure there is something behind that we do not know about. Those words can be explained, depend on it," said Janet, with tears in her kind eyes.

"Something more behind! Of course there is; but I know quite enough. Take your hand away, and don't make yourself ridiculous. I am older than you, and I know what I ought and ought not to do better than you can teach me."

"I wish mother were here, I would ask her," said Janet, with a troubled face.

"My dear child, it is a pity you ever left home under other guardianship. You will never have a bit of self-reliance, and are not fit to be a yard from mother's apron-string," replied Conny, with an air of superiority which a difference of less than two years in age scarcely warranted.

The girls were travelling under the indulgent charge of an aunt, who was very good to them in her way, but having no children of her own was unaccustomed to such charges. Conny, revelled in her unusual independence of act and word; Janet was constantly saying to herself, "I wish dear mother were here, I am always wanting her. Aunt gives us everything she can think of—too much indeed; but no one is so wise as mother." She did not resent Conny's contemptuous words, but replied with rather a tearful smile, "I wish I