

A CHAT WITH A GIRL PHOTOGRAPHER.

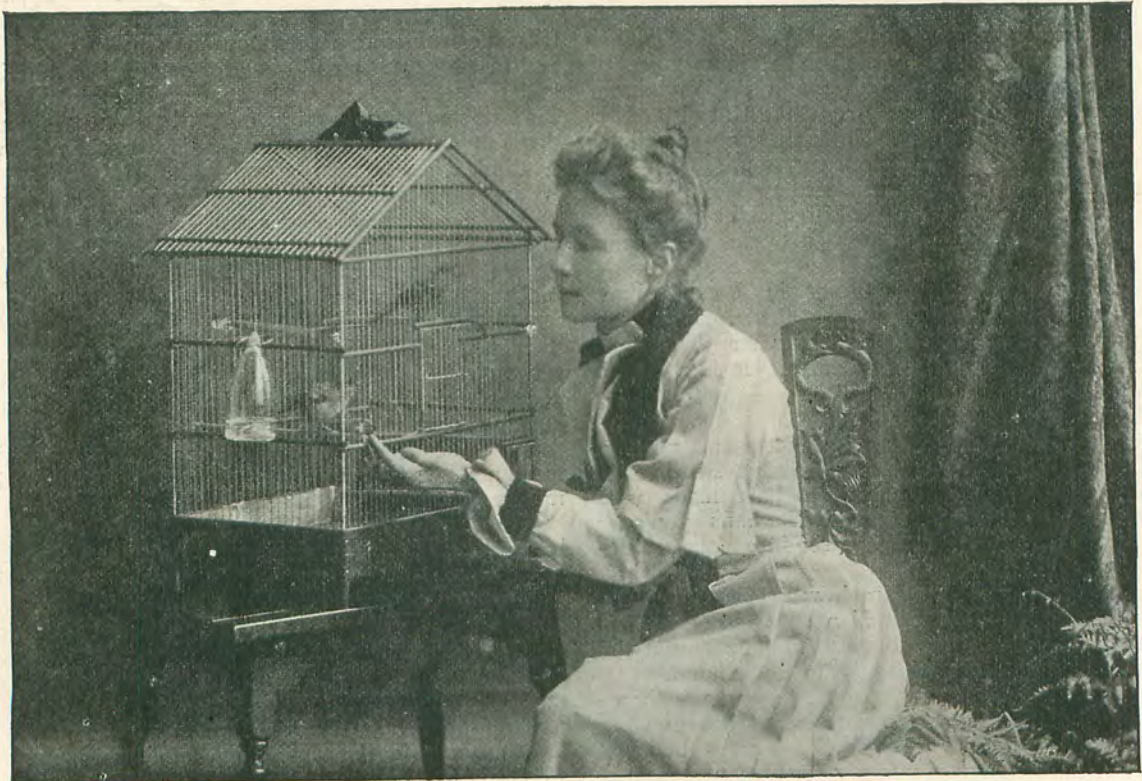
By FREDERICK J. CROWEST.



MISS EDMONDS.

NOT a hundred miles from Whiteley's stands the "Abingdon" studio—a creation of Miss Edmonds's own—sandwiched in a space which seems to have been exactly made for it—instead of it for the space. It is worth describing because all is so different from the old style studio. Not many years ago—indeed, to-day these relics of the "good old times" exist—if one wanted one's features reproduced for a cousin at the Antipodes, it became necessary to mount seemingly endless flights of dirty, dark, and dangerous stairs (generally in an unhealthy house), eventually arriving at the "studio"—an oven in summer, and an ice-well in winter; having entered which it was quite possible not to return alive again, so far was it removed from the street below or civilisation generally. The "operator" was a man, frequently not a very desirable one, whose artistic perception, if weighed, would scarcely turn the jeweller's most delicate balance. Fashions are changing—as we shall see.

Passing a delicate green door with copper name-plate, one is in the entrance of a model modern photographic studio. Sage green walls hung with photographs are passed, and lead into a cosy sitting-room furnished, not with "stuffy" cushioned sofas and chairs, but with "bits" of old oak furniture; a veritable Chippendale dresser, rich with true willow pattern china, etc. The studio is large and lofty, beautifully cool in summer, yet warm in winter. Its walls are distempered cream colour with an ample soft brown arras dado, forming a splendid background for pictures. The entire room with its quaint cupboards and alcoves is a harmonious study in soft blue and brown, not without green and brighter colours in the rugs on a stained floor. Those monstrosities which make up the usual photographic "accessories" are conspicuous by their absence. There are no stiles and wicket-gates, no balconies or artificial bridges. "Of this sort of furniture," states Miss Edmonds, "I have practically none. The only two things in my studio that could come under that head are an end of staircase and an imitation



"SWEET, SWEET!"



FANCY FREE.

stone seat—the latter I very rarely use. For the rest my “properties” consist of good simple furniture, some genuine old articles, English and French, such as might be found in any well-furnished house, a few old shawls and draperies, once a part of a grandmother's wardrobe. These latter are charming when used as backgrounds and form splendid bits of colour in the studio. Balconies and pedestals, and pictorial backgrounds, with impossible perspectives, find no place here.

“Yes, I have to use some background,” admits Miss Edmonds, “and a dark graduated canvas, painted for me after a picture by Rembrandt, is the one I most often use. Another favourite is an ‘Empire’ interior, designed and mostly executed by myself in charcoal on calico, and originally made for my picture ‘The Mirror,’ which was hung in the recent Exhibition in the New Gallery.” The fact is, Miss Edmonds has learnt that difficult lesson, the art of taking infinite pains. She required an “Empire” interior, and tried many channels for a wall. Baffled, she set to work copying one in bold charcoal drawing on calico, which answered admirably, as the reproduction of it in the *Camera Obscura* for October, 1900, shows. By-the-by, of this work, “The Mirror,” this well-informed journal of photography—it is written in four languages—said, “Amongst the lady exhibitors we may mention Miss Catherine Edmonds, whose character portrait, ‘The Mirror,’ is distinctly good, and is moreover a production which should show the way to many another portrait photographer.”

How has such a happy issue been brought about? Well, it is the same old tale: a love of the work, perseverance, and sound art foundations. In her early days—our subject is still young—quite young to be battling the business-world single-handed, Miss Edmonds was a student at that excellent institution, the Royal Female School of Art in Queen Square, Bloomsbury, presided over most ably for so many years by Miss Louisa Gann. Born in Berkshire, Miss Edmonds early conceived a passion for the beautiful and true in art, and having to fight her way in the world, went in for photography, for which, having studied drawing and painting, she was particularly well grounded. In time the school work had to be abandoned, for both purse and health failed. Recovering the latter she answered an advertisement of a Kensington photographer who needed a “receptionist” and saleswoman—shop-woman in fact. Two years of this, and her employer, discovering she was fond of photography, generously gave her permission to use the studio, after hours, for trying her experiments. This was an opportunity which Miss Edmonds took advantage of to such purpose that in a short time she left shop work for the studio, and remained in it some two years.

A studio and business of her own, however, constituted her ambition. She cast about for a promising site—the present one—and after almost insuperable difficulties had the satisfaction, one day, of beholding her own place of business planned and built after her own heart. In 1899 it was opened for business operations, since which time Miss Edmonds has had little cause for other than thankfulness. Her *clientèle* has grown rapidly—a consequence of one strong point, namely, the individuality and convincing character of all her work. Here is one more instance, gentle reader, of the necessity nowadays of infusing one's personality into any work—even photography—that is to be a success. There are few “short cuts to perfection” left in anything to-day, and the man or woman who aims at success in science, literature, or art must work, work, work. All mental production worthy the name has reached such a point of excellence that, to improve upon it—even to equal it—there must be clearly set upon all work that is to succeed and last the inner man or mind of the worker who created it. Only the other day, for instance, an artist friend and clever portrait-painter remarked to me, “Those portraits of Miss Edmonds are the most characteristic and successful things I have yet seen in photographic portraiture.”

“Yes—the sitters I like most of all are certainly children—they are so delightfully fascinating and manageable. I like, too, the extremes of old men and old women. Apart

from their inartistic clothing, men, generally, of well-marked features and character are appreciated, as they lend themselves to the strong light and shadow of the Rembrandt style of portrait which I have made a speciality.”

“Yes, and a remarkably successful one, Miss Edmonds.”

“Young children in their unconsciousness make charming sitters. One wee person, after a very lively morning, told her mother ‘she had been playing in such a lovely big nurseley.’ She had played to some purpose—in one only out of eighteen almost instantaneous exposures, had she kept still. The result, however, fully justified the outlay of plates and patience. That one sweet and, curiously enough, pathetic picture is always known in the studio as ‘The Angel,’ and I never expect to take a photograph that will please me more than this one has done.”

“I think,” continued Miss Edmonds, “that pathos is one of the most irresistible charms of childhood. There is something of the sublime and angelic in the wistfulness that characterises the faces of many children, and it is often a matter of wonder to me that ‘grown-ups’ should so invariably demand a ‘smiling’ representation of their little ones. I care not whether the subject be child or adult, a broad smile is only pleasing—tolerable, one might almost say—in proportion to its evanescence, and becomes, when fixed on paper, tiresome in the extreme.”

“Stories about children? Yes, I could talk all day about them, and then not end my pack. One tiny boy sitter clearly went through all gradations of concern and, possibly, pain as he fixed his eyes intently on the Venus of Milo over my chimney-piece. ‘Can't you do anything for the poor lady with broken arms?’ he pityingly asked, and he seemed greatly distressed when I confessed to him that I feared I really couldn't.”

“No, not with cakes nor sweets do we win the graces of our small subjects! We have to play with them. ‘Bricks’ is a favourite game, one in which the children get so very much interested that they are reluctant to go home. One day a sweet little thing of three summers positively shed tears because she was forced to leave the ‘booful dark lady.’ Of course,” adds Miss Edmonds, “toys galore are provided, and I verily believe that I enjoy the games we have as much as the children themselves.”

“Occasionally, very often really, the chicks are quite reluctant to relinquish the playthings, and I was much amused the other day by the broad hint of an astute little lassie of barely four years. She had been playing with a mechanical bootblack which had been discreetly whipped out of sight at the conclusion of her sitting. At the door she paused, and, looking anxiously round, exclaimed, ‘Where's little Manny gone?’ ‘Little Manny's tired,’ she was told; ‘he has blacked so many boots and shoes that he is quite tired, and is going to bed.’ She looked wondrous wise, and speaking with evident deep conviction, said, ‘I fink little Manny wants to come home with me. I'll tarry him!’”

“So you occasionally go out for a youthful specimen?”

“Yes,” Miss Edmonds rejoins. “Now and then, when in need of child models, I descend upon a neighbouring Board school, and select my victims. They are very happy little victims, and a lady on the Board of Management assures me that I am regarded as ‘a sort of fairy godmother’”—a visit to the studio with the consequences of cake, and tea, and a “dressing up” being a much coveted honour. The night-capped and gowned little maiden in “Good Night” was one of the infants in such an elementary school.

A great portrait painter has declared that before painting a portrait the artist ought to dine once or twice with his sitter. Whether this should be at the expense of the painter, or subject, has not transpired. Anyway that does not matter. The idea evidently was to become acquainted with the personality, mind, character, inner man of the sitter. Well, Miss Edmonds does not exactly give banquets to her sitters, but she does give them tea whenever she can. She is a great believer in the tenet laid down by the celebrated painter, and cares more than the average photographer for this matter of “personality” in pictures. Therefore she gives her subjects Bohea, which is probably better than a banquet or anything else beginning with a

"b," as a preliminary to the ordeal of having one's photograph taken. "Do try," Miss Edmonds urged upon me, "to make it known that taking a portrait properly is not like going to a dentist's to have a tooth drawn; nor is it equivalent to a great surgical operation. Many sitters have confessed to me that the notion has been so with them, but in the end they like it, and some enjoy it very much."

A cup of tea and a chat are without doubt mighty factors as links in a civilised community, and they remove a lot of the stiffness and even bad temper with which Nature seems to load us directly a photograph is contemplated, whereas all should be quite the reverse. Therefore tea is good in photography—so, too, is gossip, especially when one can continue talking of different subjects to interest sitters without appearing to be gossiping for a purpose—even though that *Ultima Thule* be a good photograph. "One of the first things I like to do," Miss Edmonds tells me, "is to show my studio and its 'furniture.' The peacock's feathers are not, for instance, for everybody. Some people are superstitious—the Irish particularly so—and would shudder at the idea of such feathers appearing in a picture. Then I find most people like to hear a little narrative; such a one, for instance, as that of the old lady (dear old soul!) who, having a photo of a pet grandchild, conceived the notion that the body was too large for the head. 'Had I any other bodies from which she could select one more in keeping with the particular head?' The Siamese cats' experience was also exciting. Two admiring ladies had brought their pets to be photographed. A turkey-bone and daffodils came with them, but these customary allurements for good behaviour quite failed, and recourse had to be made to holding the cats from behind—which the owners did. Just at the psychological moment, just as the 'snap' was being made, up jumped the cats in wild excitement, and overturned nearly everything that was not too heavy in the studio. But I was not to be beaten. A good strong 'Mew, mew' from behind the camera brought them together: in another second they were in a form that would exist long after them."



THE STUDENT.

VARIETIES.

HOW SHE REMAINED SINGLE.

This is how an elderly young maiden in Antrim accounted for her single state:—

"Ye see, mem, the way o' it was this. Them that wad hae me, A wadna hae; an' them that A wad hae, wadna hae me."

THE OBJECT OF EDUCATION.—Education has for its object, besides calling forth the greatest possible quantity of intellectual power, to inspire the internal love of truth.

HIS GHOSTLY ENEMY.

"Who is your ghostly enemy?" demanded the strict school inspector.

"Please, sir, the 'spector," replied the trembling urchin

TRY TO ACT RIGHTLY.—Ever does wrong action beget its own retribution, punishing itself by itself and wrecking the instruments by which it works.—*J. A. Froude.*

NONSENSE ABOUT WEDDING-CAKE.

"It's all nonsense, dear, about wedding-cake. I put an enormous piece under my pillow and dreamed of nobody."

"Well?"

"And the next night I ate it and dreamed of everybody."

A 'APPY DAY.—Two little London girls had been sent by the kindness of the vicar's wife to have "a happy day in the country." On their return, being asked about their experiences, "Oh, yes, mum," they said; "we did 'ave a 'appy day. We saw two pigs killed, and a gentleman buried."

DRESS MAKES NO DIFFERENCE.

An ape's an ape, a varlet's a varlet,
Though he be dressed in silk and scarlet.

THERE ARE WITNESSES.—Though invisible, there are always two witnesses present at every action—God and our conscience.

MISCELLANEOUS.

KENTISH LASSIE.—There were two "maids of Kent." One was Johanna, the beautiful daughter of Edmund, Earl of Kent, known as "the fair maid of Kent" in reference to her beauty. The other was Elizabeth Barton, reputed to be a seeress or prophetess of the sixteenth century, who bore the title of "the holy maid of Kent." We do not know about which of these Kentish celebrities you inquire.

SARAH will find this a good recipe for "dough cake." Take four pounds of risen dough, add half a pound of lard or dripping, six ounces of moist sugar, four ounces of currants or sultanas, and cut up some citron or candied orange-peel into small square pieces and add them to the mixture, with a little spice and a pint of warm milk. Mix well, stand it in a tin (half filled) in a warm place for two hours, and then bake in a moderate oven. If divided into tea-cakes an hour and a half of baking will suffice. In "bottling fruit" you should take care that the bottles are quite dry, and it is well to burn a match in them to ensure this. Cork the bottles quickly after putting in the fruit, and place them in a cool oven till the fruit shrinks to a fourth part, then take out the bottles and fill up each with the reduced contents of another; pour melted suet over the top of the fruit; when the suet is set cork the bottles, and cover the corks with resin.

PANSY.—Why uncertain in a question of thanking for any favour or any little attention paid you? Be sure of one thing, that you can never err on the side of graciousness, and no trifling act on the part of another is too insignificant to be accepted with a kindly acknowledgment. Always say, "I am obliged to you for your escort," or words to that effect.

JANET, SWEET-TOOTH, AND OTHERS inquire for a recipe for making "Turkish delight." That sold in England is an imitation of the real lumps of "delight" made of flavoured gelatine; but the real is made of the pectin, or the vegetable jelly of fruits, and a description is given by Mr. Mathieu Williams, in his book, of some he had tasted in the kitchen of the seraglio in Constantinople, which was a masterpiece of His Excellency the Grand Confectioner to the Sultan. This veritable delight, the *rahat lakoum*, was made of the pure pectin of many fruits, and of the inspissated juices of grapes, peaches, pineapples, and many others, and was almost "too good to be true."

S. A.—Perhaps Dutch sauce would suit you. Take two ounces of butter, to be dissolved in a saucepan with a teaspoonful of flour. Stir well, and when melted add half a teaspoonful of milk, the yolks of two eggs, and a little salt. Stir again till the mixture boils, then strain through a sieve, and, if liked, add a little lemon-juice.



"GOOD NIGHT!"

[Photo by Miss Edmonds.]