

BEAUTIFUL HANDS.

By "MEDICUS."



AM old-fashioned enough not to have lost all faith in human nature, even in tramping human nature. While out for a run with my dogs on the great Bath Road, I often meet specimens of the latter sort, and when I notice what I consider a deserving case, I cannot,

for the life of me, withhold the little penny, or tinier but more welcome threepenny-bit.

"Very silly, I call it," a friend said to me one day. "They just go into the nearest public-house and spend it."

Well, perhaps most of them do, but not all, and I may occasionally give a penny to an angel unawares.

One day I met a poor Welsh woman, bearing up for London, with two little girls. She said they had walked all the way from South Wales, and she was going to the great world of London to look for her errant husband. I did not quite believe her, but I gave her, as I thought, a penny. She was exceedingly profuse in her thanks, and I immediately discovered I had given her half-a-crown by mistake.

"Well," I thought, "it can't be helped. May a blessing go with it!"

But a few days after, as I read in my paper, this poor woman turned up with her sad story in a police court, to beg the magistrate's advice. He kindly gave it, and something to boot, out of the poor-box. Only, you see, this woman had told me the truth.

One day last summer I saw a poor humble creature, in a thin shawl, sitting on a rest-and-be-thankful. She looked wistfully at my well-fed, happy dogs, but let me pass, and didn't beg. So I turned and gave her a little coin. She burst into tears at once.

"May the Lord love you!" she said. "Neither bit nor sup have I had since yesterday morning, and I'm ashamed to beg."

Then, only recently I met a tall and elegantly-shaped middle-aged woman, who did beg, though shyly. (N.B.—I think it is my dogs that make people beg from me, though of course they may see something soft in my eye. But if a tramp meets a gentleman with about twenty-five yards of solid Newfoundland, with coats like jet, dancing and gamboling round him, he can't be blamed if he imagines he has a copper to spare.) But about this woman. She had her hands rolled up in her shawl, to keep them warm—for it was snow-time, you know; and when she extended one, I could not help looking from it to the woman. She was, or had been, a lady, and a more delicate and shapely hand I have never seen in my life—not even in Spain, and that is saying a deal.

It was this woman's hand that put me in mind that my paper on "Hands" was due, and a week overdue. I had been down with the influenza, and forgotten everything on earth but my racking headache.

Now, girl readers, you won't mind my having introduced my subject by talking about tramps, will you? Thanks! You are very good.

Well, now, I gave, in my last article, a good many hints about the feet;—the hands naturally follow. From the point of view of beauty I believe hands are even more important than feet.

Well, I mean that for one person who will be rude enough to criticise your feet, a score will take stock, mentally, of your hands. If they are beautiful, they will be admired; if not beautiful, I trust you have other charms that will counterbalance their plainness.

I'd rather not say very much about shapeless and stumpy hands, for I cannot give you a receipt to make the fingers long and taper, or to reduce the breadth of beam across the knuckles. I shall be content to imagine your hands are fairly nice in shape, and that you can stretch an octave easily enough. Now, miss, when you are done looking at those digits of yours, I shall proceed with my sermon. Staring at your hands won't do any good, you know, and I want to tell you what will.

A pretty hand, then, should not only be a shapely one, but it should be soft and white, and free from blemish. It ought to be fairly plump too, and warm—not cold and skinny. Some girls who shake hands with me—or rather "lay their loofs in mine"—make me think it is Good Friday, and that I've got hold of the tail of a salt cod by mistake.

Well, the nails should be pink and pretty, like the bill of a pure-bred Aylesbury duck—pardon the metaphor; they should be artistically trimmed, have no up-growing skin, and be as smooth and shiny as polished pebbles. Look here, miss! Will you or will you not give up staring at your fingers, and keep your eyes on your paper? Thanks again. Now we'll forge ahead.

The first thing one should do, then, in order to secure beautiful hands, is to see to existing blemishes, and their removal, if that be possible.

As for Warts, for instance, they are very disfiguring, and should be got rid of at as early an age as possible, so that any scars left may the sooner disappear. There are many simple remedies for warts, but they are not always effectual. The ordinary milch-weed of suburban gardens may be tried. The wart is to be touched with the juice twice or thrice daily. If this does not succeed, we go a step further, and try a wash like the following, which not only tends to banish and prevent warts, but is useful for red hands, and helps to do away with clamminess. It is very simple. You take about a dram and a half of sal-ammoniac, and dissolve it in a quart of rain-water. Add a tablespoonful of toilet vinegar. The hands are to be steeped in this—they must have been previously washed and dried—for about a quarter of an hour every morning and evening.

Well, but very likely, if obdurate, the warts will want more stringent treatment. There is strong acetic acid to be had at the chemist's, in tubes all ready. It should be used with caution—not a drop or half a drop being allowed to fall anywhere, for it stains and burns. Touch only the wart gently once a day, and don't let any on the whole skin. But the caustic silver pencil is equally effectual.

To remove lunar caustic stains from the skin, wash the part first in a solution of iodide of potassium; then rub off with a solution of spirits of ammonia.

Children often suffer from what might be called "the wart diathesis." Arsenic tonics will be needed, and good living, so a doctor should be consulted.

Now Moles may also be got rid of by acetic acid or even caustic silver; but they are more ticklish things to tackle than warts, so surgical aid should be had. I am much against self-treatment where safety is jeopardised.

Superfluous hairs are disfiguring. Well, they can be removed by the ordinary depilatories of shops; but these often contain arsenic; they are thus dangerous. Besides, they are dear; and one does not always like to ask for such things. I think the following depilatory as good and safe as any. It is simply a strong solution of sulphuret of barium formed into a paste with powdered starch. It is left on a few minutes and scraped off with the back of a knife. Or here is a French recipe: Crystallised hydrosulphate of soda one part, and three parts each of powdered starch and powdered quicklime. Make into a paste with water, put on, and let stay on for two minutes; then scrape off with a wooden knife.

Depilatories all require to be handled with caution. Touch the skin with oil afterwards, and do all this at night. Hairs may be tweezed out. Then there is electrolysis—a long and somewhat painful process.

Chapped Hands.—Some girls suffer greatly from this complaint, especially during the winter months. They must take the precautions I shall presently give for the preservation of the hands, and they must live in such a way as to increase the general strength and tone of the body, for chapped hands as well as chilblains are often associated with a weakened state of the constitution.

I may say here at once, that no girl can expect to have pretty hands who lets herself get below par. They will be red and rough, because the heart is not strong enough to receive back the blood as well as it ought. It therefore gets dammed up in the extremities—and with what results? Why, coldness of hands and feet, clammy feet or hands, red, rough hands, red ears, and—let me whisper it—a red nose. It is surprising how soon, in cases of this sort, improvement may take place from a course of citrate of iron and quinine—three to four grains thrice a day in water after meals—the cold or tepid bath after breakfast, an occasional mild liver pill, good solid—not sloppy—food, cod-liver oil or Kepler's Extract of Malt, and unbounded exercise in the open air. Try this treatment, and have the grace to think kindly of your "Medicus" for recommending it.

But of course for chapped hands some local treatment is also necessary. Well, the camphor ball is as good as anything I know. It soothes, and it allays irritation too. Then there is almond paste, rubbed well in at night, with gloves worn.

Another little mixture is glycerine mixed with a small quantity of tincture of benzene, and well rubbed in several times a day.

Now I want my readers to disabuse their minds of the notion that cosmetics of any kind whatsoever will permanently whiten or beautify the hands if the health is neglected. I am very earnest in saying this, and I hope you will remember it.

Ordinary Care of Hands.—Well, to begin with, they should be kept very clean, and gloves—silk is preferable—should often be worn over hands and arms, even indoors. But I do not advise you to be perpetually scouring your hands, nor using a too rough towel. The use of sand-soap or pumice-stone is highly objectionable. Always use the mildest non-alkaline soap; there are many good ones in the market, but do not trust to puffing advertisements, and never buy a cheap soap—cheap and nasty! Always use rain-water. Keep your hands gently warm—not hot—while out of doors. Muffs are not always advantageous,

as they sweat the hands. If you would avoid roughness and redness, never hold your hands to the fire. I may mention here, parenthetically, that all kinds of colds and troubles are caught, not out of doors in the open, fresh air, but in the hot rooms you enter after you come indoors. It is the most dangerous thing in the world to get warm too soon after being cold. It may sound paradoxical for me to say, "Get warm in a cold room," but this is really the only safe plan. Just listen. You may take two house-flies, and gradually freeze them—they may be even inside lumps of ice; they would in many instances come to life again if the thawing and warming process were done most gradually, but certainly not if done in a hurry. Now, if you please, take that as an example of the evil effects of thawing too quickly after you have been cold.

Standing about in cold rooms while in evening dress has a most injurious effect both on the complexion and hands. Always, if possible, throw a light, soft shawl around your shoulders. The condition of skin raised by cold, and called "goose-skin," really means temporary

paralysis of the cuticle, and is very detrimental if often repeated.

Drinking hot tea or hot drinks of any kind when very cold is also bad for hands and face. Such drinks produce a too early reaction, and mischief is done that it is difficult to get over.

Nails.—A soft nail-brush should be used in washing the hands. If any instrument be needed for the nails, it should be of ivory, not of steel; if you use a sharp steel instrument you roughen the under surface, and they soon get unsightly, and are more easily soiled.

About once a week is often enough to trim the nails. Do not cut them too much down at the sides, else you may have an in-growing nail. Trim them oval or filbert, whichever suits the shape of the fingers best. Do not, however, leave them too long, or they may easily be likened to claws by people who don't love you.

Wash in hot water, and the skin that grows up over the nail may then easily be kept in its proper place by the ivory trimmer.

The white spots called "gifts," that sometimes appear in the nails, are due to a deposit,

and point, not to gifts, but to more or less of the lithic acid diathesis.

The nails should be polished every day. This may be done with a trimmer covered with chamois leather, and a little levigated chalk mixed with lime juice; but polished nails look very pretty.

The liquor of boiled oatmeal groats will tend to whiten the skin; but it must be made fresh every day—it won't keep.

A cocoa-nut oil liniment is sometimes used to rub into the hands at night to whiten them. It is composed of half an ounce each of cocoa-nut oil, white wax, and almond oil, nicely scented.

Elder-flower water a pint, borax half an ounce, and lavender water an ounce. Mix. A cosmetic for face or hands.

I do not approve of always wearing gloves in bed. It is unhealthy, but occasionally it may do no harm.

In my next paper I shall touch further on the complexion, and give some hints about perspiration, which may be useful to many who are troubled therewith.

ROMANCE OF THE EARLDOM OF STIRLING.



is often remarked by travellers to the north of the Tweed, that whilst the Castle of Edinburgh answers

to the Royal Tower of London, that of Stirling is the very counterpart of Royal Windsor. And there is little doubt that when Scotland had a King and a Court, Stirling Castle was one of the proudest "homes and haunts" of royalty, since

even now, in its dismantled state, we can trace, in the "pleasaunce" which lies beneath its walls, the tilt-ground where many a tournament was held in the days when the Stuarts sat upon the Scottish throne. And since the fair city of Stirling seems never to have given its name as a title to any scion of the house of Stuart, it was only meet and fitting that its earldom, if bestowed at all, should have been bestowed on one of the noblest of the old Scottish houses.

The family of Alexander trace their descent from a very early period of Scottish history—namely, from Somerled, King of the Isles, who lived in the reign of Malcolm IV., and was killed in battle about the middle of the twelfth century. He left, by his wife Elfrica, daughter of Olaf, King of Man, a son Reginald, also King of Man, who in his turn became the ancestor of several noble houses, the ancient Earls of Ross and of Antrim, and the Lords Macdonald of the Isles. He was also, through the Alexanders of Menstrie, the forefather of the celebrated Sir William Alexander, one of the ornaments of the Courts of James V. and James VI., being at once a poet, a courtier, and a statesman.

It was mainly through his poetical talents that this Sir William first became a favourite at the Scottish Court; and when James VI. travelled southwards, and was crowned as James I. of England, Sir William, like a canny Scot, to seek his fortunes travelled southwards with the King. Soon after this, in 1604, he printed and published a quarto volume of poems and plays, which he followed up by

other works, all inspired by the Muse of poetry. The King, who liked to be thought a worshipper of the Muses, made him one of the gentleman ushers in attendance on Prince Charles (afterwards Charles I.), and also knighted him. From this time forth we lose sight of him as a poet, but find him busily engaged in various worldly projects and schemes of a more profitable nature than verse-writing.

The chief project to which Sir William devoted his talents was that of founding and settling a colony on the shores of North America, in a part which the Council of New England seemed anxious to surrender back to the King. Sir William Alexander saw his opportunity, and being a man of action, at once seized it. At all events, in September, 1621, he obtained from the King at Windsor a royal grant bestowing on him the said tract of country for himself and his heirs, to hold as his Majesty's Lieutenants, the country itself being styled Nova Scotia. The full list of his dignities is rather long, including the offices of Hereditary Lieutenant-General of the Dominion of Nova Scotia, Justice-General, Lord High Admiral, Lord of Regality, and Hereditary Steward within the said country. After the death of James, this grant was confirmed by a charter from Charles I., dated from Oatlands in July, 1625, giving to Sir William precedence over the newly created Baronets of Nova Scotia, making him also Grand Master of that Order, and investing him with the right and power of creating additional Baronets of Nova Scotia. Some of these grants, signed by Sir William as the King's Lieutenant, are still in existence; and all the Baronets, even those who received their titles direct from the Crown, held their *broad acres* from Sir William, under his sign and seal.

In the following year this powerful servant of the Crown was made Chief Secretary of State for Scotland, and in 1628 he obtained from Charles yet another charter, under the Great Seal of Scotland, in which he is described as "the King's Hereditary Lieutenant of Nova Scotia," and by which he was made Lieutenant also of what is styled "the Lordship of Canada." This colony, as well as that of Nova Scotia, was founded and established at the sole expense of Sir William, and both

grants were confirmed to him under the broad seal of the Scottish King and Parliament. About the same time he was raised to the Peerage as Viscount, and subsequently Earl of Stirling, Viscount of Canada, Earl of Dovan, and Baron Alexander—a long list of titles, sufficient to gratify his highest ambition—with an extension of the grant in favour of his female descendants, in event of the failure of his male line.

It may be thought fortunate for this extension to have been made, for his male line held the Earldoms and other honours for little more than a century, when they passed to the last Earl's sister, Lady Mary, who died unmarried, handing on the titles to her younger sister, the wife of a Warwickshire gentleman named Humphrys. These ladies, however, seem never to have actually assumed the title, probably because they were not rich; and when the second countess died—a year before the battle of Waterloo—her son, having been a prisoner in France, and inheriting a barren title without broad lands to maintain it, found it difficult and, indeed, impossible, to make good his claim to it. It is true that he assumed the title, and that on one occasion he voted at some elections of Scotch Representative Peers at Holyrood. But Kings George IV. and William IV., acting doubtless on the advice of their ministers, refused to receive him at Court as an earl. This refusal, joined to the want of means to prosecute his claim before the House of Lords, fairly broke his heart; and though he left no less than eight children, all born between 1812 and 1829, none of them have attempted to revive it. In all probability means would have been found to enable them to perpetuate the noble and illustrious Earldom of Stirling if it had not been weighted with the Vice-royalty of Canada, which, if admitted and allowed, would have clashed with the traditions of Downing Street and the regulations of the Colonial Office. But still, however handicapped by such awkward conditions, a claim is a claim, and a right is a right; and if any of the children abovementioned is still living, and if the various links in his or her pedigree can be proved, it is difficult to say with truth that the Earldom of Stirling is extinct.