

AN ARTIST IN PHOTOGRAPHY:

A CHAT WITH MADAME GARET-CHARLES.

BY ANNIE MACKENZIE.

Illustrated from Photographs.

“**T**HIS way, please, madam. What a lovely day!—so seasonable for this time of year. How would you—cabinet or panel? Most ladies go in for panels now; they are all the *rage* this year. Lady Beamish was here only last week and ordered five dozen. Oh, no, *we* do them for fifty shillings the dozen. You see you get so much more of the figure in, and when a lady has a figure—if I may make so bold as to say it—Perhaps you would prefer cabinet size then? *Cartes-de-visite*? They're *quite* out of vogue. *Very* well, madam. Jones, the small camera.”

How one hates the man! How he fusses round one, patting one's shoulder-puff here and dabbing down a stray curl there, vivaciously trying to show you how much he is giving you for fifteen shillings a dozen! How one rebels against being pictured with a clump of plaster-of-paris rock for seat (making one feel like Andromeda on her rock) and a dismal screen of painted ocean for background (if the Irishism be permitted)! And, oh! how one loathes the condescending grimace that accompanies the smirking injunction to look

pleasant, to hold one's chin up, to fix one's wandering gaze on a particular smudge on a side screen! The one delightful part of a sitting such as this is the excited rush one makes into the street, thanking one's stars that it is all over, and hoping that one's features will not be distorted out of all recognition. Ah, how often we have been through it!

Think, then, of my delight when I found a photographer—a woman-photographer too—who was human, who treated me as a human being, and who was that rarest of rare things, an artist as well. After I had tasted to the full the pleasures of discovery, I bethought me that perhaps the readers of

the WINDSOR might like to know something of the artist whose studies have been so frequently reproduced in these pages. “From a photo by Lallie Garet-Charles”—is not the legend familiar? So I made a special voyage through the mazes of Regent's Park to Madame Garet-Charles's studio, where, by-the-by, Burton Barber at one time used to make his famous animal studies.

After glancing over Madame's latest pictures I lured her into a cosy corner and attempted the rôle of inquisitor over theafternoon



MADAME GARET-CHARLES.



A CHILD STUDY.

cup of tea. Madame endeavoured to divert my attention by protesting that her one aim in life was not to photograph well, but to learn the bicycle. But I declined to be drawn into a discussion on bikes—I have many friends whose brains and tongues go on wheels—and at last I persuaded her to tell me something about her work and her success.

“Really, you know,” said Madame Garett-Charles, “I never did take up photography, I simply drifted into it. I had always been fond of playing with a camera, and as my results began to get more and more creditable I gave the art—for I do think it an art—more and more of my leisure time. I studied the craft thoroughly, and people said so many kind things about my work, and editors to whom I sent pictures began to ask for more, and—really that is all. After working for a little over a year now, I find myself a public character, being interviewed.” And Madame Garett-Charles laughed light-heartedly.

I ventured to air my *bête noir*, the mere man-photographer, the machine who presses the button, leaving chance to do the rest.

“Now,” said my charming hostess, “that just fits in with my own pet theory, that woman, as a rule, prefers to be photographed by woman. You see a strong morning light is horribly realistic; it shows up one’s little deficiencies so, or it accentuates the beginnings of a wrinkle here and a crow’s-foot there. Now every woman, be she of the new or the old variety, likes to feel that she is being seen to the best advantage—in the presence of man. Therefore when she is posed by a critical male, who notes all her little weaknesses of complexion or feature, she feels ill at ease, she loses whatever of naturalness she has, and as a consequence the resulting picture (save the mark!) is more suited to a chamber of horrors than to a Regent Street show-case.

“And more,” went on Madame Garett-Charles; “what does the average photographer know of his sitter? And knowing little or nothing of his subject, how can he make a faithful picture? I never take anyone at the first interview. I like to have my sitters all to myself for a quiet half-hour



MISS RITA MARTIN.

—over afternoon tea for preference—so that I can pick out their *best* features, their best side, their most natural pose. Then when they are gone I turn over in my mind the collection of facts I have gathered, and I

labour that went to make the actual sitting easy and swift."

"Then you have no other special methods of work?" I asked.

"No," she replied, "beyond certain



A SELECTION FROM MADAME GARET-CHARLES'S PORTFOLIO.

fix definitely what I am to do when they return to face the deadly lens. Heaps of times ladies have said to me when they were going away after having sat, 'How quickly you work! It must be delightfully easy work!' They know nothing of the mental

technical 'tips,' known only to myself and my sister, Miss Rita Martin, who is my right-hand man, so to speak. My sole creed is to know my sitter and use every little bit of that knowledge. I try to make people feel at home—to feel that they are not in a



"WE FOUR!"

studio. Then they fall into their usual habits of sitting and looking. The rest is—feeling."

Knowing that Madame Garet-Charles has made studies of many well-known actresses, my next question was, "Do you find that actresses pose better than ordinary sitters?"

"No, indeed," was the reply. "That is all a mistaken notion. The ordinary woman is every bit as good for my purpose; in many cases she is a good deal better, for the actress has been taught to pose, and is more or less always posing, so that in time one never sees her in a quite natural attitude.

Another question I am often asked is, 'Don't you hate to take plain women?' You haven't asked me that, but if you had I should say, 'My dear interviewer, no woman is plain. In every face, be it never so uninteresting, there is always something that appeals to the artist.' I always strive to get at that *something* and to fix it on my plate. The sudden beauty often astonishes the sitter herself."

"Do men ever seek reputation at your camera's mouth?" I asked.

"Only very occasionally," said Madame Garet-Charles. "I don't care much for men—as sitters," and she laughed merrily. "This is dreadful heresy, I know; but—men are much more difficult to please than women. A rare man is he who thinks he is good-looking, but every man believes he is



"ROSES, ROSES ALL THE WAY!"



A NOVEL FLORAL STUDY.

distinguished, and that no photograph ever does sufficient justice to his distinction. But don't go and say that, or I shall make enemies of all my men friends!"

"And about children?" I said, for I saw heaps of beautiful child-studies lying about on chairs and tables.

"Ah! Now you have come to the most pleasurable part of my work. I love children. They are delightful to work with, and I think my best pictures are those of the little ones, as is shown by the avidity with which editors snap them up. And parents too, who are generally so hard to please, seem to find my pictures all they want them to be.

"The humours of photography?" said Madame Garet-Charles with a laugh. "Well,

I am Irish and therefore ought to see humour in everything, but I have been working so earnestly that I have not had much time to look for humour. The funniest experiences I have had have been with editors. The first one I visited—in fear and trembling, let me tell you—paid me a somewhat doubtful compliment. He was Scotch—and stern. I was nervous, and tried to hide it under a flow of small talk. He took some of my pictures, looked at me severely, and said in a critical tone, 'You'll get on. You have plenty of cheek!' What could I do but laugh



A POPULAR FAVOURITE.



PENSIVE THOUGH YOUNG.

at the man? Perhaps you will find this amusing too. A little time ago I received a letter from a young man in the country, saying that he had seen in some paper or other a picture of Miss —, taken by me. Could I, and would I, let him have some photos of her? He would call and get them the first time he came to town. A day or two went by, and then another letter bombarded me. This time he was more audacious. Could I, and would I, get for him one of Miss —'s gloves or handkerchiefs, or in fact any little knick-knack belonging to her? He would be glad to get it when he called for the photos. Of course I could do nothing of the sort; but anyway, he has never put in an appearance. He must have fallen a victim to another charmer—by another photographer.

"Now I hope I have told you enough."

"Just one more question," I answered, with that persistence which is the chief pride of the interviewer and the abhorrence of the interviewee. "What do you think of photography as a profession for women? The query is inevitable, and you are surely well qualified to answer."

"Thanks," said Madame Garet-Charles. "I would say that a woman may have a good deal of success if she is willing to

devote time and real hard work to it. She must be possessed of the great essential, artistic feeling; she must have a necessary amount of capital—not a small sum either—to cover initial expenses; she must acquire a good practical knowledge of the technique of the art; and again I would say, she must be prepared to work hard. But then work is the alpha and the omega of success—first to win it, then to keep it."

But Madame Garet-Charles said nothing about that quality without which all the capital and all the hard work in the world are of but little avail. One may call it genius, individuality, artistic perception, or whatever one pleases, but the fact remains that the nameless "something" which she infuses into her work is, after all, the one great secret of her success. It is that which instantly appeals to us in any of her exquisite studies.



LADY KITTY.