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OBSERVATIONS.

John Ruskin.

Josiah Allen's wife heard her husband regret that there were so few women of the type Ruskin describes in his book "Sesame and Lilies." Over and over again in this book Ruskin exhorts women to cease doing for the sake of being. A woman, he advises in a hundred different ways, whereof he knew how so well, to cease weighting her shoulders and hardening her palms in service. He thought that man would be fed, warmed and comforted by the contemplation of woman as an object of beauty. Why should she scrub, sew, bake, sweep and dust to make him happy, when she might drape her limbs in classic garments and sit down where the light softly falls, in an attitude happily preserved for her consultation on the low reliefs of the Grecian urn? Mrs. Josiah Allen catching the disapproving looks which the man of the house directed upon her as she was scrubbing his clothes, decided to consult "Sesame and Lilies" herself. Reading therein that making her hands hard and knotty in household ministry she was breaking the cobwebby law of beauty, Mrs. Allen concluded that she would reform, for Josiah's sake. Her squat figure had long since forgot, the sway of the rose. Only the healthy, russet red of her cheeks and the clear twinkle of her eyes suggested sturdy, irrepressi-

ble field flowers. In the book to women Mrs. Allen read over and over again in the hundred, cunning phrasings of one idea, "Oh! woman be a rose, be a lily!" and Mrs. Allen decided to obey the author whom Josiah thought infallible.

When the poetic spouse returned from the barn with foaming pails of milk, he found his wife carefully disposed in a rocking chair in the middle of the room with a beam of light from the setting sun resting tenderly upon her hair. "Strain this milk," he roared, but Samantha looked gravely and sweetly past him at the setting sun and the illuminated west. You will remember that Josiah had to get his own supper and his breakfast and to continue doing the work outside and inside until he remembered with aching regret the homely services he had disparaged at the command of Ruskin. To convince his wife to give up her role of a rose he was obliged to confess that he was "a blame fool" and Ruskin was too.

Samantha Allen took Ruskin seriously. It is doubtful if he thought his own advice would be followed literally. In choicest and most musical phrase he informed woman of her mission in life. Of the women who knew him, only his mother ever loved him and that was because she was his mother. He was a champion of woman whom all the women he knew rejected. He said he was a champion of the poor man, and his books were the most expensive ever published. No laborer of the sort he wrote about was ever seen reading one of Ruskin's books. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that he aimed high, but according to history he never hit anything. A review in the current Scribners is fair to Ruskin and to the artists he contemned as well as to those he admired. Turner has long since ceased to occupy the whole of even the English horizon and Ruskin who apotheosized him is slowly getting into focus. Ruskin's fame and claim to human interest is not as an authority upon and god of art or architecture or social matters. He was a genius in words. Like Tennyson his phrases were perfect, brilliant, fascinating, but the whole of his work was lacking in effect and meaning. Nobody is an authority on art. Only the great painters, sculptors, architects can suggest changes to other artists and to an inspired understanding it is permitted to explain why pictures are beautiful. More than this the generations of men will not long endure.

The Mode in Hats.

Between the year of 1850 and 1860 Godey's magazine shows that the hats were rimless, oblong, or oval cups, worn as Tommy Atkins wears his cap, and attached to the head in the same way with an elastic. Since then women have worn queer shapes enough, but none were entirely

devoid of grace and beauty until the cynic woman-hater that sits enthroned in Paris delivered the styles for this spring. Conforming to the entirely artificial coiffure of the day the hats are heavy, solid looking rolls of silk mull, silk or ugly straw, with an occasional dead bird flattened out as if for broiling on top of the hat. The type or model is the turban of the Turks. But the copies or conventionalized turbans, lack the grace, the structural simplicity, the excuse of long custom and religion of the Turkish headcovering. A Turk knows better than to attempt to wind a sheaf of brittle straw about his head. The turban of the Turks is yards of softest silk that easily passes through a finger ring. With the deftness of more than two thousand years of practice he winds it in irregular rolls about his head and fastens it by a motion swift and inimitable. He wears it with dignity. It is a national head-dress and protects his head from the vertical rays of the sun that is a near neighbor to Turkey. It has also the beauty of sincerity: the rolls are rolls of silk and not hollow, scratchy straw that bends and bulges in the breezes.

A vase has certain parts such as the rim or lip, the neck, the body and the base. None of these can be ignored or entirely obscured without destroying the beauty of the vase. The Chinese have made vases with a dragon or amorous bird twined about them but even they have not dared to make the dragon or the bird larger than the vase it ornaments. The style-maker in Paris had a pipe dream of a hat that was like a turban and was yet not a turban, of a hat that had no rim and no crown—the two inalienable, unalterable characteristics of a hat. When he awoke and reflected on his profane millinery nightmare, he laughed and twisted straw and silk into the shapes he had seen it worn on the Brocken of his dream. The French women rebelled. Something of the obstinacy of the classic Greek is born in the French woman. Her hat must have a crown and brim, her skirts must retain the folds of pendant drapery. It is said that Paquin refused to make the sheath skirts of last winter, but gave always to the back breadths of his skirts the essential fulness. In France the high corset that makes the torso rigid has never been worn. The French women know better whatever the style. Like the Greek potter, however original the form and decoration, his vase was still a vase and conformed to the law of vases. At the present time the Parisienne's hat is not a nightmare of a turban. It has a brim and a crown and the feathers and ribbons and gauze are subordinated.

Nebraska women lost their freedom long ago. They wear anything however unbecoming and absurd that comes from New York. Some of the

richest and most knowing of the New York women insist upon a modification in the season's shape, but women in the interior of the United States will still wear anything at all that they can be made to believe is chic. The over-loaded, heavy, formless things with no ancestry and no dignity that fill the shops now are unbecoming and if we were a free and independent sex they would stay in the shops. Why do the manufacturers, dealers and style-makers not endeavor to dispoil the tyrant man of his right to a hat or a coat or a westcoat? Because in the last analysis the tailor, the haberdasher and the hatter are man's servants. Man has work to do and he must not be fettered. Woman has nothing to do but fascinate man. To accomplish this she will let her feet be bound to lameness as in China, she will let her face be veiled as in Turkey, or as in America, where her anxiety to be fascinating has destroyed her sense, she will wear any hideous harness or emblem commanded by Vogue.

Eric Hermansson's Soul.

Miss Willa Cather has poems in The Librarian, a poem in The Critic, the Saturday Evening Post has accepted a story and the current Cosmopolitan contains a story by Miss Cather called "Eric Hermansson's Soul." Eric Hermansson is a Swede, with the blue eyes, yellow hair, and height of the men in the Sagas. Near Red Cloud where Miss Cather's childhood was spent there is a large Norwegian settlement and her stories of the Nebraska Norwegian though colored by a strong imagination are of the soil. "Eric came of a proud fisher line, men who were not afraid of anything but the ice and the devil. Eric was handsome as young Siegfried, a giant in stature, with a skin singularly pure and delicate, hair as delicate as the locks of Tennyson's amorous prince, and eyes of a fierce, burning blue whose flash was most dangerous to women. He had in those days" (of his first coming to Nebraska) "a certain pride of bearing, a certain confidence of approach, that usually accompanies physical perfection. It was even said of him then that he was in love with life, and inclined to levity a vice most unusual on the Divide. But the sad history of those Norwegian exiles, transplanted in an arid soil and under a scorching sun, had repeated itself in his case. Toil and isolation had sobered him and he grew more like the clods among which he labored. It is a painful thing to watch the light die out of the eyes of those Norsemen, leaving an impression of impenetrable sadness, quite passive, quite hopeless, a shadow that is never lifted. The change comes quickly or slowly according to the time it takes each man's heart to die." At the dance of the Norwegians: "The all boisterous with d— not be sure.