

SIGNS OF SPRING IN THE CITY

Photos By A Staff Artist



Getting the Garden Ready



Preparing the Posy Patch



Corner in the Shopping District



Cleaning the Lawn

Housewives at Home and Abroad

MANY American women declare that the trials of housekeeping are becoming so manifold that after a few years of arduous labor they are seized with nervous prostration and many other nervous diseases to which we Americans are especially heir. To one traveling abroad it is interesting to compare the responsibilities of the foreign housewife and her American sisters.

While in Dresden I met a woman who gave me much information concerning this question as it appears in Germany. One day she showed me through her home, artistic in its simplicity. The house was full of sunshine and fragrant odors given off by potted plants. The place bespoke ease rather than beauty. There were plenty of comfortable chairs to be found; attractive prints and etchings were everywhere on the walls, and the library was well stocked with books. After she had shown me through I remarked that she must have many servants to keep so large a place in order. She answered: "I suppose my home would appear a great deal more attractive than it does if I kept more servants. You see, I only have a cook, chambermaid and a woman to help with the washing and ironing two days out of the week."

I told her that the majority of our women with large households kept many servants.

"But," she replied, "your women have so many more interests than we. We have no clubs and classes that demand our time. Take my own case. I cannot read all day and the greater number of my calls are made with my husband; so my mornings are spent assisting in the house. Besides making up the bedrooms, I keep the sitting room and my husband's library in

order and do the week's mending. My afternoons are given to reading and an occasional call or 'Kaffee Klatsch.' Besides, most of the men in Germany come home at noon, so we have dinner at 12 and a cold supper in the evening. Our husbands lay much stress on their food, and if the meals are not cooked properly it is we and not the cooks that are held responsible. Though a woman does not always do her own cooking, it is taken for granted that she will superintend her kitchen. We do all our own marketing and rarely order anything over the telephone." She continued: "Perhaps you have not been in our country long enough to appreciate the situation, but a housewife's position in this country is so different from what it is in America. The German woman is not expected to attain social position for her husband nor sustain it. Her function is to please him, look after her home and bring up the children."

Surprised at what she was saying, I asked if none of her friends belonged to clubs and classes.

"I am not astonished," she answered, "that from your liberal American point of view these things appear strange. But they will not if you remember that with us woman is considered the homemaker and the men look upon themselves as the proper ones to consider social and philosophical questions. My husband, who is a lawyer, is far more liberal in his views than most of the men of our acquaintance; for instance, he lends me all the modern books as soon as he finishes with them, and I keep up my French and English through the reading of foreign literature. Still, if I took any lessons in the foreign languages and belonged to clubs he would think it ridiculous, for with us women are

expected to get their education before they are married. The average German woman does not cater to the mode; her millinery and dressmaking does not take so much of her time as that of other women. Our way of entertaining is equally simple; it is only the wealthiest of our people who give elaborate receptions and grand balls. We think we are doing our duty if we are devoted wives and kind mothers; but to be leaders of any kind is considered quite out of our sphere. And, with it all, many of us often long for the freedom given to your women."

But the women of the well-to-do classes have easy lives compared with the peasant women and wives of mechanics. One day while walking along a country road I came across a dog and a middle aged woman hitched to a cart. I stopped and asked her if her load was not too heavy. She said that carrying her vegetables to market was not the hardest of her work. She had seven little children at home to cook for and to keep clean. When she got through with the children and the house she went out and helped her husband in the field.

One day while in Paris I was speaking to a French woman and during our conversation she remarked that it was strange her countrywomen had the name of being frivolous. She was sure that they had not the game. Certainly there was a small class of women that led a butterfly existence, but there is no country where the average woman is busier with her family, however small it may be.

The French woman is probably the best housekeeper in the world. She is devoted to her home and to her family. Her household is exceptionally clean and at-

tractive, though she manages to do it with few servants. If she does not assist in the kitchen, she superintends it; she sees that the table cloths and napkins are snow white and that the table is set with taste. She is equally particular about her own appearance and that of her children. And just because the average Frenchman takes things pretty much for granted she does not receive the credit due her.

Though the average household of the well-to-do English woman is larger than the small chateau of the French or the apartments of the German, she has more servants to assist her. Besides, the Englishman does not lay so much stress on the small details of his household. The English are exceedingly simple and unaffected in their homes. They desire comfort more than luxury. Still, in the family the husband is considered the head of the household. He limits the weekly expense and no improvement is made in the household without his being consulted first. If expenses are to be cut he will not deprive himself of his cigars nor his clubs, rather it is his wife who is expected to get along with one servant less. An English woman will live on a leg of mutton served hot on Sunday and warmed up in different styles during the week, so that her husband can frequent his club, enjoy oysters and partridge. Notwithstanding that the English are hearty eaters, they live simply. The household is managed with great economy, dinner in the evening being the only elaborate meal of the day.

After I had visited many foreign women in their homes I came to the conclusion that it was not housekeeping, whatever else it is, that gives nervous prostration to many of our American women.—Della Austria in Chicago Tribune.