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## "How I Learned from a GOOSE to Get Thin"

Geraldine Farrar Tells How Observation of Her Operatic Goose Flock and Study of Pate-de-Foie Gras Led Her to the Right Road for Slenderness

By GERALDINE FARRAR

The Charming and Versatile American Prima Donna.

LAST spring when my season ended I realized that I had grown too stout for either musical or practical purposes.

I had suspected it for some time before, but when I asked my friends what to do they gave me plenty of advice but no proof.

One of them said "Walk." She had been walking six miles a day and I noticed no decrease in her size. Instead her muscles were growing larger.

Another said: "Diet," but diet with her was a synonym for starvation. While she was growing lighter in weight she lost all her energy. My vitality was my capital. I could not afford to impair it.

I was advised to take reduction baths. The woman who gave me this advice even presented me with a sample of the strange compound, a powder she poured into the tub. But her face bore strange blotches, which she said were the result of the baths. I waived the baths.

A woman I knew went to the Turkish baths every day. I believed that breathing hot air so often would injure my vocal chords.

An amateur physician prescribed obesity pellets, but she had taken them and I happened to know that her digestion was all but ruined. Success waits on good digestion. The obesity pellets were foregone.

Still in a quandary I went abroad. I weighed one hundred forty pounds. I wanted to weigh one hundred twenty-five, the right weight for my height, which is the medium one, about five feet five and a half inches. How should I rid myself of those fifteen pounds of excess avoirdupois, unless bodily baggage?

While I lounged in my deck chair—I hate to walk the deck—I hummed some airs I had sung the last season. One of these was the song of the Goose Girl. Midway in the "cluck-cluck" song I stopped and sat up straight and looked out over the dancing blue waves. I had an inspiration.

From the Metropolitan Opera House to Strasburg had been but a step in the long boots of imagination. I saw my white geese crowding around me in the big, echoing stage. Then I saw them in different surroundings, in a dark cellar in Strasburg, a nail driven through the webbing of one foot, chaining them cruelly to the floor. I saw a man stuffing them with food. I saw them fattening, as it were, under

his hand. They were nailed to the floor so they couldn't get any exercise; they were put in a dark cellar so they couldn't get any sun, and only enough air to keep them alive; this and the food made them enormously fat, gave them fatty degeneration of the liver—and gave the world pate-de-foie-gras.

The story of that tidbit on your after-theatre plate is a story of suffering, though it be only the suffering of a goose. The farmer who lives near Strasburg, in Germany, catches his biggest, most likely goose and takes it to town. It is bought by a dealer in meat supplies, who places it in a cellar with other victims. In the darkened cellar, when his frightened eyes adjust themselves to the dim light, the poor goose sees others like himself standing quiet, because every movement of theirs strains and tears at a poor foot that has been nailed to the floor. This dealer in goose flesh has done so that the goose will take no exercise and so fatten faster. Then, being deprived of the slightest exercise the goose can only eat and sleep. His keepers see to it that he eats, for they force food down his throat.

Thus overfed, and not exercised, he grows enormously fat—so fat that fatty degeneration begins. This disease fastens upon his liver, making it huge and puffy. When he has been inflated enough to please the epicure he is killed. His liver is extracted and we smack our lips upon it and say: "How good is pate de foie gras."

That I understood in a flash, was what had happened to me. I, too, had been nailed to the floor by the circumstances of my life as an opera singer. No air had been as delicious to me as the musty, oxygenless air of the stage. I had taken no pains to breathe any other. I had had no exercise because I never took a step I didn't have to. I had been chained as the goose was and with the same effect. I, too, had fattened, only, unlike the poor goose of Strasburg, I was not suffering from fatty degeneration of the liver, at least I hoped not. I had not yet reached the pate-de-foie-gras stage, but I might.

Five minutes' meditation often changes a career or alters a life. I have heard. The inspiration I got from "The Goose Girl," changed my summer.

I had thought of a few weeks in



Miss Farrar as the Goose Girl in "Koenigskindler" Tending the Geese That Taught Her to Be Thin.



Photo © by AINE DUPONT N.Y.



On the left is Seen Miss Farrar When Her Increasing Plumpness First Began to Startle Her. On the Right is Miss Farrar After She Had Taken Her Lesson From Geese and Pate-de Foie Gras.

the delicious, invigorating air.

At luncheon at one o'clock I ate whatever I liked of simple American food prepared by an American cook. Had I eaten the heavy German food I could not tell this true story. I did not stint myself in amount nor in what I ate except as to two things. I knew that the killer of the goose at Strasburg fed him butter and cream and milk. These I declined. Luncheon over I wrapped myself in a linen duster, swathed my head in a veil, topped it with a motor cap, and drove until dusk.

I arrived at home in time for dinner, and as soon as my dinner was finished I rested, not in my room, but in the garden. And all the while I breathed deeply and let the oxygen do its perfect work. Oxygen taken in great draughts into the body was what the poor goose of Strasburg needed.

Had he contrived to get that, the darkness and even the lack of exercise against him as they were, he might have saved his poor liver. For the air burned up the fat tissues as a flame burns paper.

Every morning when I awoke I thought of the Strasburg goose. I imagined his forced breakfast of fattening things, and I waved away the maid who tried to tempt me with buttered toast, telling me how excellent it was with the chocolate, and I sternly ordered her to take back the pitcher of thick yellow country cream she longed to pour into the cup of chocolate.

And that was all! Positively everything! I lived out of doors as the goose did not. And I declined the food on which the goose's liver gradually, fatally, developed into pate-de-foie-gras.

For two weeks there was no perceptible difference in my weight, but I thought I noticed a slight loosening of the bands of my gowns. The third week I was elated, for the scales in my bathroom showed me three pounds lighter.

Thus encouraged, I went steadily about my goose cure. Even in damp weather or when there were mountain storms, wearing rubber clothes, I sauntered about the garden and toured the beautiful country about Munich in my automobile. And my weight steadily lessened. Reduction, like a ball, acquires momentum. I lost two pounds the fourth week and two and a half the fifth, and my weight steadily decreased until I, on one glad day, found myself where I was, so far as avoirdupois goes, when I came to this country from Germany. I was no longer encumbered by one hundred forty pounds. I weighed one hundred twenty-five.

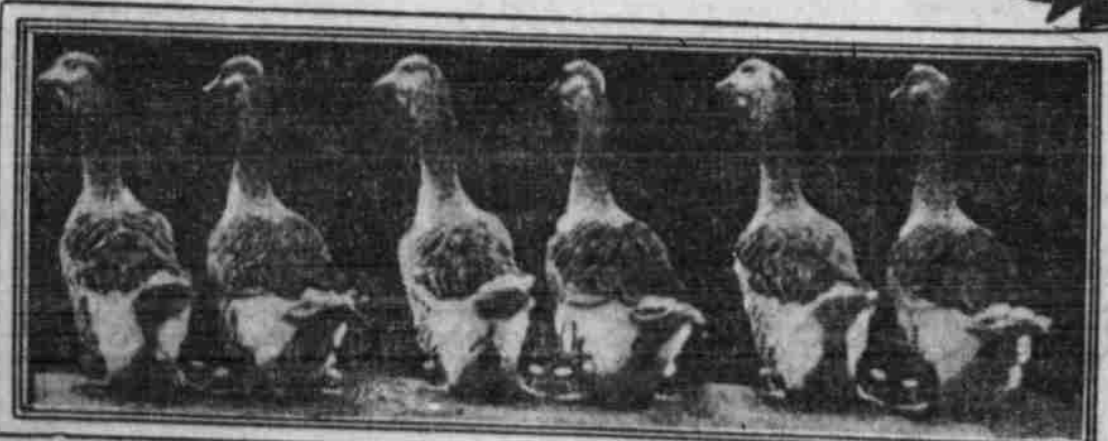
I had gotten my inspiration from one of my roles. I had learned a lesson from the silliest of birds. A goose had taught me how to get thin.

London, of Paris for clothes, of the German baths, the usual round in Europe, but instead I went to Munich, took a large house a few miles out, and gave myself over to losing those fifteen pounds. I lost them, SIMPLY BY NOT BEING A GOOSE!

"What did the goose do?" I asked myself.  
"He lived in a close, dark cellar," I answered, "and that is just what I must not do."

So for the first time in my life I lived out of doors. Not at night. No, I did not sleep in a tent, nor in a sleeping porch. That would have given me the sniffles, and I hate sniffles. But every day I staid out in the open air for ten hours. This was my programme.

At six every morning my chocolate was brought to me in bed. After drinking it I dressed and went into the big German garden. I didn't take brisk nor even violent exercise, for I hate exercise and always will. But I sauntered about or sat in one of the big rustic seats and read, or wrote letters or chatted with my mother or any chance visitor. I breathed very, very deeply and often, as though I were about to sing, but I did not sing. It was part of my resolution to forget opera, and I succeeded. I have no special system of breathing. I inhaled deeply and exhaled freely countless times a day, bathing my lungs in



Strasburg Geese Being Fattened for pate-de-Foie Gras. Note the Cruel Nails Through Their Feet to Prevent Them from Losing Flesh by Exercise.

## Where Women Really Have Their Own Way

It takes about three years to woo a maid among the Ekoi people in Northern Nigeria. This is only in keeping with many other hardships to which the men of this race are subjected.

It seems that a man of the Ekoi doesn't confer a very great favor upon the woman he selects to be his wife. According to the native custom, he must serve her people for some considerable time—usually two or three years—before he can claim her. His work mostly consists in helping to clear the bush for the next season's farms, but other services may be required of him.

During this time he is expected to make presents to the relations of his future wife, the value of which varies according to his means. A very usual list of gifts to father and mother or guardian consists of a dent

john of palm oil, a head of plantains, a piece of dried meat, two bottles of rum, and two or more heads of tobacco.

The woman who is being wooed is often very exacting in the gifts demanded from her future husband. Here is the usual dowry required: Five silk handkerchiefs, two pieces of cloth, one bead necklace, a tin plate, a spoon, a looking-glass, a razor, a comb, a pair of scissors, a piece of black cloth, a piece of white cloth, five balls of string, an earthenware plate and a knife.

If the suitor does not make the gifts expected of him, the parents refuse to provide the daughter with a good "fattening house," a place where she can remain in idleness and fatten up for the marriage. Girls who do not have a good fattening house are looked down upon by their companions and a man who

marries a skinny maid is worse than disgraced.

After all these exactions, the husband is not at all sure that his wife will keep her side of the bargain. She may divorce him for little or no reason. One man, who had worked for his wife's people for four years, and stunted himself to make them the presents demanded, was divorced by his wife three weeks later because he was indiscreet enough to eat up all the pork in the house. It was also claimed that he had eaten up some fish she had prepared, but this he denied.

If a woman wishes to free herself without the consent of her husband, she takes out fire and pours water on the embers till they die out. She then cuts her hair and covers herself with white paint. These simple ceremonies completed she is free to marry whom

she pleases. If both parties agree to the divorce, the proceeding is even simpler. The severing of the marriage bonds is indicated by the wife covering her hands with white chalk.

Divorced wives may marry again, but widows must not listen to the proposal of any man until the mourning for the departed is over.

Among these people—as if the cup of down-trodden man was not near enough to overflowing—a husband must support his mother-in-law if she becomes a widow. In case of divorce, the wife has the first claim on the children, because she has risked her life for them.

The chief wife is regarded as the head of the household. It is she who selects the home, and it is the duty of the husband to follow wherever his chief wife may lead.