THE LITTLE BLACK TEAPOT.

I.

When the sky darkens down on a cold Winter's day;
When we long for the sunshine to come and to stay;
When the angry wind rages, and down from each cloud
Comes the white flakes that envelop all things in a shroud—
To warm me, and cheer me, I have something at hand,
In the little black teapot that smokes on the stand.

II.

And this teapot, though tiny, is handsome and bright,
With its mate, the small creamer, gold-bordered and white;
Then the sugar dish has, on its handle a bird,
And it makes a shrill whistling as boy ever heard.
And "Forget me-not," this is its golden command,
Both to me and the teapot that smokes on the stand.

III.

While a pile of cream crackers suffices for lunch—
I've no longing for wines—am a stranger to punch;
And I never am called on for bills at the bar;
So my credit is good and my "paper" at par.
When I thirst I've a beverage at hand,
In the little black teapot that smokes on the stand.

IV.

Let them pile on their silver, their service of plate;
Let them sit at Delmonico's table in state;
Let them quaff at the capital Europe's rich wines;
And wring the life-blood from the foreigner's vines;
I'm content—while I envy no lord in the land—
With the little black teapot that smokes on the stand.

Expensive Night Robes.

The blonde head was bent low over a cloud of fleecy lace that occupied part of the counter in a large Broadway dry-goods house, recently. After a prolonged inspection the wearer of the light hair turned to the other lady by her side and said with a pleased smile:

"Isn't it beautiful, mamma?"

"Very. But it is very expensive."

"Yes, it is a little expensive, but just see how perfect everything is. See the cunning little pocket and the delicate blue cord running down the sides. Oh, I must have one like that," and the young lady held the marvel of lace and insertion at arm's length and with head perched bird-like on one side contemplated a garment fit for a queen—or for an American girl.

To the uninitiated male spectator the apparel on exhibition appeared to be a very ornate ball dress except that there was no train and the intricacies of lace and ruching seemed rather formless. A whispered inquiry of the saleslady in waiting as to the nature of the dress on exhibition brought the low reply:

"It is a nocturne in night-dresses."

"A what?"

"A symphony in evening wrappers. In plain English, it is a beautiful night-gown, designed for a New York bride."

"Is it expensive?"

"Not very. That one cost $125. We have a few more costly, and quite a number equally ornate, but less valuable. This one is used as a sample only. When a lady purchases such a robe, she has it made to order, as it is just as necessary to guarantee a perfect fit in this class of goods as in costumes designed for more public wear."

"Who purchases such expensive night dresses? At first sight it appears to be useless extravagance to waste so much money on a garment seen by but one person and worn only at night."

"You would be surprised," she said with a smile, "at the number of expensive gowns sold. Now here, taking down a satin-lined box and exposing its contents, "this robe alone is worth $300, nearly half as much as a Worth dress. Our best purchasers are, of course, brides—that is, young girls on the eve of marriage. No I don't think vanity has a great deal to do with the selection of such expensive night-dresses. Every woman likes to appear well in the eyes of her lord and it is as much a compliment to him as to herself to dress herself well for him alone. Then, too, the mothers of the girls are always anxious that their daughters undergarments and night-robes should be of the finest material. If a bride is difficult to satisfy at this counter, her mother is always found infinitely more difficult."

"Are the finer robes imported?"

"Oh, no, we tried that plan for some time, but it failed. Foreign dressmakers appear to have no idea of what is required in an American night-dress. They are so accustomed to fitting the full forms of their English, French and German customers that they have lost all faculty for properly draping the lithe, willowy figure of the average American girl. So we have these costumes made up here. Much of the material is imported, however. This real lace about the sleeves and filled in around the neck and down the corsage is from Belgium, and this edging about the skirt proper is from France. The material is of domestic production, and is the finest of its kind. See."

She lifted the garment tenderly and held it at arm's length, the soft material falling in clinging folds to the floor. Creamy white percale formed the background for the display of a profusion of delicate lace. Cut very decollete, the opening was half concealed by downy draperies of hand-made lace, and down the front breadth the same material was carried in graceful curves. The narrow bands across the shoulders were enriched with elaborate rosettes, doing away with the necessity for sleeves. A cord of pale pink traced the outlines of the figure to the waist.

"Some of the night-dresses," explained the saleslady, "are made with loose, flowing sleeves filled in with tulle, but the majority are made low-necked and sleeveless as this one is. It depends, of course, entirely upon the personal preference of the purchaser. If the bride is the fortunate possessor of white, rounded arms and shoulders of which she is proud, she chooses the pattern of the garment which best reveals those charms. I have noticed that while younger ladies select the sleeveless robe, nine-tenths of the widows ask that the sleeves be sewed in and give minute directions upon this point," and carefully refolding the garment she replaced it in its box.

A request to look at different colored night-robes was met with a pitying smile, and the information was tendered that white alone was used in their manufacture. Why this was so the saleslady was unable to say, further than that white was symbolic of purity and innocence. "Why," she continued, "we would drive a prospective bride away by the mere suggestion of any other hued garment. The only color permissible is a very delicate tracery of cord, almost imperceptible. Even with this bit of color we have enough difficulty in suiting our customers. It must harmonize exactly with the complexion of the wearer or she refuses to take it. In one order alone we were required to change certain shades of blue three times before conforming to the capricious tastes of the Brooklyn girl. In one instance a slender piece of cardinal ribbon was inserted around the neck, half hidden by the lace. But this was the exceptional case of a pronounced brunette. If color is desired a handkerchief worn in the pocket gives the desired effect."

"Is a $300 night-dress really any more comfortable than a common $1 gown?" was asked after the saleslady had bowed out a fault-finding customer.

"Well," she replied reflectively, as a pair of dimples grew into the corners of her mouth, "it is difficult to say. While a cheap robe may be equally as comfortable, you can see for yourself how much more beautiful these finer dresses are. The first requisite of such a wrapper is that there must be nothing scratchy about it. Everything should be soft and yielding to the touch. So the more expensive the material the more down-like it is, and consequently the more comfortable. A gown is, you see, the diametrical opposite of a jersey—from a modiste's point of view. The one is made to fit closely, bringing every curve into relief. The other is worn more loosely than a day-dress could be worn, and is shorter and more open than a street or ball dress."

Further information was vouchsafed to the effect that orders for these expensive goods came almost entirely from this city and Brooklyn. Occasionally a southern girl purchasing her trousseau in the city would order two of the dresses, but from the wealthy residents in New York came the greater part of the custom. The tendency to richer night apparel seemed to be growing and all elaborate trousseaus purchased recently included expensive gowns of this class.

In two of the larger stores visited special dressmakers were kept who did nothing but work on these garments, to such an extent had the demand grown. Besides, a large portion of needlewomen's time was devoted to repairing the originally expensive lace marvels.

"These things," the forewoman explained, pointing to two gowns on a table near by, "are continually being brought to us to be mended or to have little rents in the ruching or lace work carefully repaired. That is one reason, apart from the first cost, why only very wealthy people can afford these luxuries. To a lady that kicks at night, or who is at all restless, a delicately made gown is an expensive investment. The least careless movement, causes a tear, which takes time, trouble and money to repair. We have had this garment returned half a dozen times for repair within three months," holding up a flimsy net.

"Another expense is the laundry work, which must be carefully done, after the removal of the more delicate lace. Taken altogether, one of these robes is more trouble to the wearer than a pet poodle," and the speaker glanced across the store to an corn poodle that was quietly masticating a lady's silk train.

Across the street a large men's furnishing establishment advertised "night-shirts for presents." Inquiry elicited the information that quite a trade in shirts of this description was carried on, and that the purchasers, in most cases, were ladies. "They buy them for their sweethearts first, their husbands and brothers next," softly said the young man with the banged hair who presided over the department. "It is getting quite fashionable for a lady to present her fiance with an elegant robe de nuit. Young wives, too, like to surprise their husbands with such testimonials of affection. Then we have a class of customers who purchase these shirts for their own wear. Most of these are dudes, I believe, though occasionally an old man who is about to commit matrimony a second or third time invests in a pair of high-priced shirts. Oh, prices range from $8 to $20, according to material, workmanship and amount of lace used. You won't have one to-day, then? Good-day."—N. Y. World.

Household Dirt and Sickness.

A good deal has been said at various times about the terrible effects which may be expected to follow from a whiff of gas inhaled on passing a sewer grating in the open street. There are, however, facts known to medicine which justify the belief that such a whiff would have any effect at all. If stinks could kill, the inhabitants of London would speedily undergo a serious diminution of numbers, and many foreign cities would be left as desolate as the ruins of Palmyra. The high probability is that those sewer gases which are the most offensive to the nose are the least likely to be deleterious, if only on account of the haste which is made to escape from them, and of the impossibility of their presence being unperceived. That they should be injurious to passers-by, except to the extent of producing nausea or disgust in some delicate person, seems inconceivable, especially when it is considered how largely and how rapidly they become diluted with air as they escape and are thus exposed to the chemical influence of the great purifier, oxygen. A far more subtle enemy to health, whether at home or at the seaside, is to be found in the oftentimes cherished presence of what may be comprehensively called household dirt. The dirt of an ordinary house, the dirt which might be wiped from the wall, swept off the furniture and beaten out of the carpets, would be sufficient, if it were powdered in the form of dust over the patients in the surgical wards of a great hospital, to bring all their wounds into a condition which would jeopardize life. It cannot be supposed that such dirt is innocuous when it is breathed or swallowed, and it certainly possesses the property of retaining for long periods the contagious matters given off by various diseases. Instances without number are on record in which the poison of scarlet fever, long dormant in a dirty house, has been roused into activity by some probably imperfect or badly directed attempts at cleansing. The preservation of health is not a mere mechanical question of the perfection of traps to certain drains, but depends upon the intelligent avoidance of the causes by which disease is liable to be produced.—London Times.

The Greenback and Democratic parties renominated Butler for governor of Massachusetts.

Martyrs to Vanity.

Miranda has the loveliest arms you ever saw. She is delighted that short sleeves are worn, and her gloves are not nearly so long as other people's. Her favorite attitude is sitting, with her right elbow in her left hand. She waves her hand when she speaks. At a dance, her right arm is well displayed behind her partner's left, if he is tall, or on his shoulder if he is small. Those beautiful arms have spoiled Miranda. She wears black, though it does not suit her complexion, because her arms look so white against it. She is always directing her attention to those unlucky ones, numerous enough, who have thin arms. Whoever marries her will have to be very careful never, under any circumstances, to admire another woman's arm. If he should make a slip in this direction, there would, to use a good old phrase, be "wigs on the green."

Did you ever see such dear little feet? Or such perfectly turned ankles? or more wonderful stockings? Never, indeed. Her pretty feet are Lesbia's specialty. That is why she wears those flowered stockings and those little pointed toes. That is the reason her skirts are so unusually short. Lesbia is bright and clever. She is sensible about everything but feet. She is a trying girl to talk to. She will interrupt the most interesting conversation just when you think you are "both beginning to get on so well," to ask if you approve of high heels, or some other such leading question. She is like Mr. Dick with King Charles, and must drag the topic of feet into everything. It is a pity; and yet many prefer her to Nora, whose feet are well shaped enough, but who has "no style." She talks merrily and pleasantly when you know her well, but is rather quiet with strangers. Not at all the sort of girl to get on. Her voice is not sufficiently loud or imperious. She does not bustle about with an air as though the world was made for her. She wears pretty gowns, but does not bunch them out, nor mince along with a soubrette like trip, swaying her gown from side to side, as Lesbia does. In fact, she will never look anything "in a room," though she may be well enough as the presiding spirit of a home. She is hopelessly unfashionable.

Letitia has a waist. It is her great point, and she is very proud of it. Well she may be, for it is the result of patient years of pain. She has laid on the shrine of that little waist many precious things—good health, good temper, and good spirits. Having sacrificed the first, the two others followed as a matter of course. But then it is such a wonderful waist! It cannot measure more than seventeen inches, at the very most. The pressure has made her nose permanently red. Not all the waters of Araby would make that nose white again, but what matters? Does it not belong to the smallest waist in London? One thing immediately strikes the beholder. He wonders how so small a waist can possibly be so obtrusive. Were it two yards round, it could not more aggressively insist on being noticed. Draperies are so arranged as to lead the eye down to it, and skirts are of such a fashion as to guide the attention up to it. Letitia walks with her elbows well out from her sides, so as to advertise, in a pointed way, the fact that your view is scarcely interrupted by her slight and well distributed figure. As she stands talking to you, she puts a hand on either side of this wonderful waist, and appears to be curbing herself in, as it were. She wears the tightest of jackets, and never is seen in a dolman. She gets terrible colds in winter, because she will not wrap up. In fact, her whole existence is a burnt offering to her waist. Were she to grow stout, her object in life would be gone. Letitia denies herself even the gratification of an excellent appetite in the interests of a small waist, a self-sacrifice that would be noble in a better cause.

Mirza has the loveliest complexion in the world. Without it, she would be a perfectly charming girl. With it, she is quite a bore. If there is any wind she is unhappy, "because it makes my cheeks so rough." If the sun shines, she is miserable, "because I tan so frightfully." If it is hot, she grumbles, "I flush so painfully." If it is cold, her cry is, "I can't go out to-day, for I get so blue in cold weather." Her cheeks are of such an indescribable texture that roughness has never yet invaded them; tanning never approaches their fairness. She flushes the prettiest dainty pink you ever saw; and in cold weather, a soft color rises in her face, and a wistful look comes into her eyes that makes her quite adorable. Why, then, all these excuses? Simply because she thinks prevention better than cure, and is afraid of a thousand viewless enemies on her complexion's account. She is a martyr to her own consciousness.—London Truth.

Growth of the Patent System.

The business of the United States Patent office is growing to enormous proportions. For the first quarter of the present fiscal year the number of issues was 5440, being an increase of 11½ per cent. over the number for the corresponding quarter of last year. At the present rate, therefore, the annual issue of patents amounts to 21,760, and even this will soon be exceeded, as the volume of business is steadily and rapidly growing. In the last ten years about 140,000 new patents have been issued, beside ten or twelve thousand reissues. So vast has the business of the patent office become that only a careful systematization renders it possible that it should be transacted by the small force allowed by the government, or preserves it from falling into irremediable confusion. There are now 25 principal examiners to inquire into the merits of and report upon the immense number of applications annually presented, and it is evident that this class of civil servants are entitled to the credit of earning their money.

All inventions are classified according to subject, there being 169 principal classes and over 3000 sub-classes. In this way the work is methodized and simplified. If the bare fact of the issue of 20,000 patents a year does not sufficiently indicate the multiplicity of purposes for which inventions are designed it would be done by the minuteness of the classification, which is, of course, becoming constantly more elaborate. An application for a patent can now be put in any one of three thousand sub-classes—a number sufficient to show that there is no conceivable mechanical process for which somebody does not design an improvement in which he wishes to be protected against piracy. In the class which includes electrical inventions there are 70 sub-classes, revealing the number of useful applications of electricity which can be made. Fostering the inventive genius of the country by holding out the hope of pecuniary reward is almost the most beneficent thing our government has done. It is impossible to weigh the importance of the patent system to the progress of the country and its people. But without exaggeration it may be said that the most important element in the development of the country has been the application of thousands of ingenious minds to the problem of mechanical invention. This mental force is as valuable as the physical force of all the water powers in the world. Indeed, if all the mill streams of the world could be brought to this country, on condition that we should issue no more patents to protect inventors, the exchange would not be worth making.

But it is all important that the patent office should be maintained on a scale which will enable it to do its work with efficiency. It is self-supporting—even paying a revenue to the government by the excess of fees over the cost of administration. But the experienced examiners are being enticed away by the offers of greater compensation by private firms and corporations, and hence a majority of them go just when they have become most valuable. That private parties offer the examiners more for their services than the government pays, shows they are worth more, and under the circumstances the demand of the examiners for increased remuneration which has been refused by several congresses, ought to be granted. The value of the patent office to the country does not consist in the revenue which the government derives from it, and it is more important that its work should be well done than that a few thousand dollars a year should be saved.—Alta-Californian.

Save Your Melon Seed.

When one meets with an especially fine melon upon the table, he is desirous of saving the seed. Indeed, the only way in which a strain of melon can be kept up to its standard or improved, is to select seeds from the best specimens. In raising melon seed for the market, the growers allow the fruit to get much riper than is desirable for eating; this gives a greater yield of plump seeds, which are more perfect than if the fruit were taken in its best condition for eating. In the operations of the kitchen, the contents of the melon are sure to be thrown away, and whoever would save seed from them must attend to the opening of the fruit himself. Place the contents of the best melon in a bowl or other convenient vessel, cover them with water, and allow them to stand for a few days to ferment. They should be looked to stirred every day, and when it is found that the seeds fall from their attachments to the bottom of the vessel, the refuse is to be removed, the seed washed and spread out to dry upon boards or a cloth. The seeds of water melons are much less likely than those of other melons to be of perfect at the time the fruit is in eating condition; hence seed-growers allow water melons to get dead-ripe or rotten-ripe before they separate the seeds. Of the seeds separated when the fruit is eaten, a share will grow. Such seeds should be collected, washed and dried. In sowing watermelon seeds of any kind, it is well to recollect that a large majority are worthless, and to be liberal accordingly. With cucumbers, allow a few of the earliest and best shaped to ripen on the vines for seed. All others, if not wanted for use, should be removed, and not allowed to exhaust the vines uselessly. When thoroughly ripe, gather the cucumbers and cut them lengthwise, scrape out the contents into a vessel, and allow them to ferment until the seeds are freed from mucilage which surrounds them, and can be washed and dried.—American Agriculturist for September.

Good Advice to Brides.

When the bride on her bridal journey is a sensible young person, she will keep her silk suit in her trunk for a suitable occasion, and will not wear it on the railroad train. A pretty young girl the other day making an expedition to the Catskills, and leaving New York on a rather cool morning wore a black silk dress, but a white Spanish fishu, with a broad Gainsborough hat and nodding plumes. It got quite cool on the cars on the northern journey, but there was no wrap available. All the extra clothing was packed away in her trunk. The groom, who had given no advice evidently to his spouse, or, perhaps didn't know, had a stout cheviot suit and must have been, as he looked, quite comfortable. Arriving at the railroad terminus and taking the stage for the further pull up the mountain, it made one's teeth chatter to see how confidently the little bride climbed into the airy vehicle, still in the airy fishu, not a scrap of woolen for her shoulders, and her face white with the cold. Probably in her modest outfit there was a flannel dress or a woolen stuff of some kind, intended for the house. If she had put that on for the journey, and saved her best black silk for home uses, she would be more nearly on a level with the city persons who left their diamonds at the bank, and had taken two woolen suits and one cotton gown for a fortnight's journey among the mountains. Home, and not hotel parlors, and least of all, not the parlor cars, is the place to wear one's pretty, airy clothes. In a public crowd, on a journey, all delicate wear is sure to encounter dust, rain or chilling cold; the plainest flannel suits are the best for climbing, beach lounging and comfort generally.—Phila. Public Ledger.

Miss Parlos, the famous cooking expert, who has shown how a family of five people can live on ten cents a day, was once chief cook at a Jacksonville, Fla., hotel. She evidently has not forgotten her Jacksonville experience.—Phila. News.

"Why did you take your boy away from my school?" asked a teacher of an old negro. "Wall, I tell yer. I heard de white folks say dat de nigger was in need of higher eddycation, an' I sent my boy up on de hill."—Arkansaw Traveler

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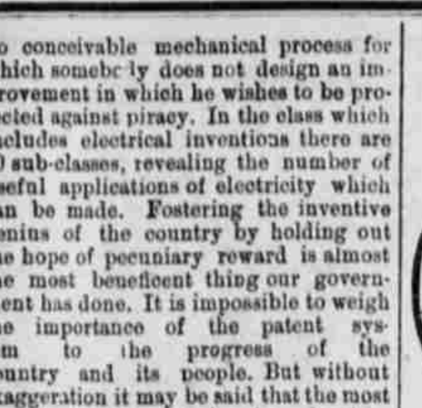

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