

"How I Lost 100 Pounds—AND STILL STAY THIN"

Miss Amelia Summerville, Once the
"Merry Little Mountain Maid,"
Explains How She Got and Keeps Her
Fashionable Aesthetic Slenderness



ANYONE can reduce his or her flesh. Anyone can become thin. But almost no one who has once been fat and has grown thin remains thin. Amelia Summerville, the actress, seems to be an interesting exception to this rule. Miss Summerville, once a ballet girl with the Black Crook Company and afterward the Merry Mountain Maid in "Adonis," was a memorable monument of flesh. Filled with an ambition to play Trilby she lost one hundred and ten pounds in eight months, a feat which is not so remarkable as the fact that she still stays thin.

Everyone who has lost a large amount of flesh is haunted by the fear of regaining it. The fear is usually well grounded. Miss Summerville explains on this page to-day the secret of how she lost her hundred and ten pounds and the more interesting secret of how she retains her reduced weight.

Ever since she rid herself of her ponderous weight she has remained as svelte as a girl. Five feet ten and a half inches tall, she weighs 161 pounds. That weight she has preserved for twenty years, and she will preserve, she says, as long as she lives.

By Amelia Summerville.

(In an interview.)

THE reason why, having lost one hundred and ten pounds, I never regained the incubus is in large part mental. I employed few material aids. My success has been a triumph of mind over matter.

Dominance over fat is the exercise of intelligence. I remembered by what means I had acquired surplus weight, and I refrained from again using them. Therefore I have remained thin.

Alertness of mind and agility of body are the price of middle-aged slenderness.

While I was playing the Merry Mountain Maid and singing about "plucking huckleberries and looking for love" I was earning more money than I had ever had in my life. I had never before earned the great sum of fifty dollars a week. I felt plutocratic and spent thirty dollars of the fifty at a first-class grocer's. Most of the provisions for which I paid thirty dollars a week I myself ate. Life was one grand gorge for me.

When I tired of playing the buxom role I cast my eyes about for another part. I wanted to play Trilby. My friends roared at my ambition.

"Don't do it," they warned. "That would be homicide. Your audiences would die of laughter."

"I'll show you," I said. "There's nothing ridiculous about me except my weight. I'll soon rid myself of that."

In eight months I had shrunk to my present weight. I had lost 110 pounds. I did this by putting a checkrein on my appetite. I ate not what I wanted, but what I needed. And wherever I went I walked.

I reason that whatever had caused me to lose 110 pounds would cause me to keep them away. I apply this rule with unrelaxing severity.

I eat only one-third of what I did in my fat days. I never count it by ounces. I simply see to it that my plate that had once been heaped with good things is only one-third covered. I used to push things on one side and cast a measuring eye upon the plate. I am so concerned about the matter and have so trained my eye that I notice the slightest deviation from it. I eat just enough to nourish me. I allow myself not one whit more.

I do not feel weaker than when I ate three times as much. I feel stronger, for I am not tired by carrying about a surplus of flesh. Once I felt exactly as a person might who was carrying two baskets, each one filled with fifty-five pounds of, let us say, meat. You can imagine how much ground a person so encumbered could cover, and how slow and clumsy his gait would be.

Next to eating more than is required for

nourishment the greatest of fat accumulators is sitting. Most people sit too much. No one who tries to convert himself into a perpetual-motion machine ever grows fat.

Keep moving. Don't stop moving unless earning your livelihood or the rest you absolutely require necessitates it.

I never take an elevator. I scorn an escalator. All apartments are walk-up apartments to me. No matter where I go, whether to Harlem or the Battery, I walk. My longest walk was taken with Maurice Barrymore.

He was a great athlete. It happened that both of us were invited to a party which Leander Richardson gave. Mr. Richardson lived at One Hundred and Thirteenth street. I lived in the same street as Mr. Barrymore. We took the walk together. That was four and a quarter miles each way, I recall.

The man, who was a model of manly beauty, the greatest matinee idol of his time, said: "That's right. Keep it up. If all women walked eight miles a day they would never lose their figures."

If I go to the Professional Woman's League, which is up two flights, I walk. If I visited the Singer or the Woolworth Building—the tallest building in the world—I would do the same. Two flights or forty flights, it is all the same to me. I walk.

I dance a great deal. Dancing should take off more flesh than does walking. One gets as much exercise at a dancing party as on a seven-mile walk. But, alas! The conditions are not the same. The air is stale and overheated. The ideal walk is a brisk one in cool, pure air.

Another aid that I consider indispensable is flushing the body well with hot water—not too hot. I know a man who died because the water he drank scalded his oesophagus. Discretion should temper the heat of the water. It should be a little more than warm, but it should not be dan-

The Two Pictures of Amelia Summerville Above Show Her Back in the Old Days When She Was Famous as the Merry Little Mountain Maid Weighing Nearly 300 Pounds, and the Central Picture Is a Photograph of Miss Summerville at the Present Time.

gerously hot. The fat person suffers from an accumulation of deposits. They clog the joints and tighten the vents. The result is that there is faulty elimination. Plenty of warm water cleanses the body of waste. Waste makes fat.

That is a reason why fat is regarded as a disease. It is a disease. Six pints of hot water a day will help to wash away the fat. Drink two pints in the morning while you are dressing. Two pints should be drunk an hour after the midday meal. Two more pints should be drunk at night. This quantity assures proper elimination of the poisons of the system. It washes away the substances that, clinging to the walls of the miles of intestines, would be converted into fat.

This is not normal fat, but puffy, bloated, unwholesome fat. There is no fat so hard to cope with as that which accumulates inside the body. The outer fat is more or less obedient. The inner fat once formed obstinately tries to hold its place.

Let me tell you what helped me most to get and to stay thin. It is holding the picture. No, I am not using the vernacular of motion pictures, though I have but just

finished "April Folly" with Miss Marion Davies. Also I was with her in "Getting Mary Married." By the way, have you noticed that nearly all motion-picture actors are lean? Their activity makes them so. If you see one who is obese it is because it helps his business to keep so. He nurses his flesh. He is the Strasburg goose of the screen art.

What helped me most is that I formed a picture of myself as I wish to be. I always judged a woman by her arms. If her upper arm was large it indicated to me grossness of person. The upper arm is the index of a woman's figure. The neck is what might be termed a sub-index.

I visualized to myself my arms as being long and slender and graceful. Upon my word, it was not long before people began saying to me: "What long, slim, graceful arms you have." That is the compliment I most frequently receive. I survey my arms while I am combing my hair. If they seem to me to have gained a quarter of an inch in circumference I cover even less than one-third of my plate with food. I am content for a time with a sixth of it. If my neck begins to grow plump I am really alarmed and I skip a meal.

A woman's personality should be poetic. She is no more poetic than her neck and upper arm. I keep hanging before my mental eye the picture of myself as I wish to be. If the picture reflected by my mirror is a little more round than usual I add two or three miles to my daily walking, or I go to the roof and dance in the open air.

The poetic figure is neither fleshy nor emaciated. It has neither a predominance of curves or angles. Neither curves nor angles should be pronounced. The figure in which curves are pronounced is fat; the figure in which angles are pronounced is thin. The woman of poetic figure is one whose curves blend so easily into each other as to form a slightly undulating line.

Another great mental help to me in keeping thin is my conception of food. I don't give it much importance in my mind. If circumstances cause me to miss a meal or to postpone one for several hours I am in no way inconvenienced. I refuse to be one of those who carries a clock around in her stomach.

Furthermore, I classify food as God's food and the devil's food. I define devil's food as that which revolts the mind. If food raises unpoetic fancies in my mind I decline to eat it. Yes, I will illustrate.

When I sit down at a table and look it over I am pleased to see God's food. That is, luscious fruits, apples, or green vegetables which grow above earth, or green salads and nuts. Lettuce is God's food. Anything which might be termed the inwards of an animal I class as devil's food. Calf's liver, chicken's gizzards, lamb's fries, ox hearts—I revolt at them. They are far removed from the poetry of life. They seem to me devil's food.

Yet I believe I am not a radical. I am not in practice a vegetarian. Occasionally I eat meat. I am an advocate of raw food. Fire is a purifier. I desire that it be applied to everything I eat, even to ice cream in its initial stage. French ice cream, you know, first has been boiled.

Chocolate is devil's food save to the person who has nothing else to eat. It is too concentrated except for a soldier on a long march.

It is fat clothed in charming form. I would no sooner touch chocolate than I would a pair of red-hot pliers.

I favor a balanced diet. Save for the things I mention which revolt me, I eat everything. It is not the ingredients of the food to which I object. It is the quantity of it. A mixed diet is a very good thing. It is the amount with which we stoke the long-suffering stomach against which I protest.

I would recommend the two-course meal that wisely economical folks adopted during the war. Two courses are quite enough. Soup I would banish unless little else is eaten with it. A thick soup and a salad or some fruit are enough for a meal. One real meal is enough for any one.

If I have eaten what I consider a reasonable meal I nibble the rest of the day. In the morning I breakfast on two bran or graham muffins or two slices of bran or graham bread and a saucer of fruit. Pineapple and apricots are best. The apricots contain acid and the pineapple bulk.

If I eat a fairly substantial luncheon, as meat, vegetable and dessert, I dine on graham crackers and fruit, or I vary it by a meal of nuts and an apple.

Moderation in eating is the key to health. If one be healthy she will never be fat. If you know the dominant disease of a country you will learn that it is produced by the dominant food. Too much fish produces scurvy, as, for instance, in Portugal. Too much rice causes early senility, as in Japan. Too much macaroni produces early obesity, as in Italy, where the women grow old early and lose their beauty. An excess of raw meats produces a brutal nature.

I have not varied five pounds in weight in twenty years, because I have practised what I am preaching to you.

Clothing has much to do with keeping the lines of the figure gently undulant. The fat woman is the one addicted to the kimono habit. I believe in the corset. I know that to keep the long lines of her youth a woman should wear stays every moment except while she is asleep. I wear them even while going through the few setting-up exercises in the morning, which everybody knows, and which it would bore everybody to repeat.

I have no set rules for exercise save the "keep moving" which I have quoted.

While I was reducing my weight I learned fencing. And even now I occasionally go through the fencing exercises with a cane. As soon as I have taken my bath I put on my corsets, and I keep them on all day.

I do not favor nor practise extreme baths. That is, I do not recommend nor practise the very hot nor the very cold bath. I discovered that hot baths tended to flesh forming, and I stopped them. I began a course of tepid baths. I bathe in water that is lukewarm. I try to match the temperature of the body. As soon as I have gotten into the tub I turn on cooler water, so that when I leave the bath my body is well cooled. I never remain in the bath more than ten minutes. If I stay longer than that a feeling of lassitude follows. Rest follows lassitude and fat follows unnecessary rest.

Next to walking, swimming is the best exercise for beauty of figure. Nobody ever pictured a mermaid as fat. Even the medieval painters, who were ignorant of a lot of things, knew that. I always contrive, no matter how busy I am, to do some surf swimming in the summer. The cool salt water makes the muscles firm. No matter how little one swims, swim fast, just as no matter how little you walk you should walk quickly.

The best part of the bath—that is, the most reducing part of it—is the drying. A Turkish towel vigorously used is the third aid in reduction. You must have gathered from what I said that I regard cutting the quantity of food to one-third as the first, and walking wherever you go as the second. I rub my shoulders and my hips more vigorously than any other part of my body. That is because those are the flesh-forming centres.

Mark well that I do not advise the rigorous diet, which is only another word for starvation. One should eat three meals a day. But I divide these into major and minor meals. An admirable menu for biggest meal and the two which are lesser or minor meals. An admirable menu for the lesser meal, especially if it be an evening one, is my favorite supper. That is bran bread with apple butter. Three slices of the bran bread, toasted or not, as you wish, with as much apple butter as you wish, nourish the body and are an excellent preventive of intestinal disorders.

No need to let the skin of your face and neck become flabby while reducing. Apply cold cream plentifully and harden the muscles and make the skin firm by applications of cold cloths.