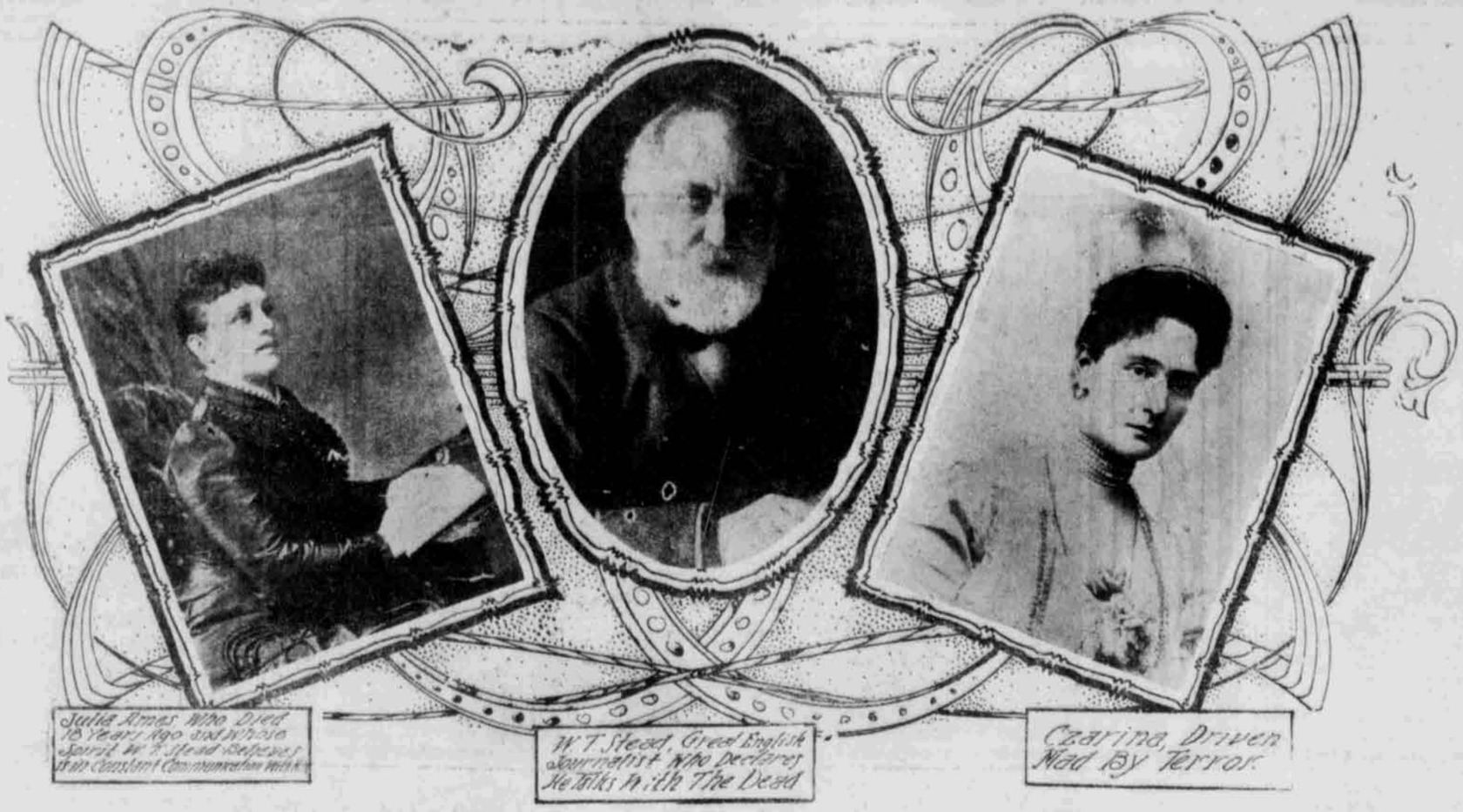
The Saturday "News" Special Foreign Service.

Wm. T. Stead's Bureau of Communication With the Dead

(Special Correspondence.)

LONDON, Nov. 18.—Not so many years ago a man who calmly set up a bureau for the avowed purpose of establishing communication with the spirits of the dead would have been laughed at as a fool or condemned as a charlatan, but there is a man in London today who has done this and while many persons think that he is mistaken, no one who knows him either personally or by reputation would dare to say that he is either a wizard, a fool or a charlatan.

This man is William T. Stead, one of the keenest journalists in England, or, for that matter, in the world. He is editor of the Review of Reviews, a great monthly magazine, of half a dozen other publications and the head of an important publishing business. He has exposed many frauds and is familiar with all the world of pretense and deceit, but he is as firmly convinced that he and others are in daily communication with the dead as he is that the sun shines in the heavens. And now he is anxious to place this gift within the reach of others and to that end he has established what he calls "Julia's bureau," the name being that of the person who may be called without levity Mr. Stead's familiar spirit. She has been dead for 15 years and during most of that time Mr. Stead believes that he has been in constant communication with her. He declares that he seldom takes any step of importance without consulting her, and it was at her suggestion that he established the bureau, which has now been in existence for about four months.



WAS A CHICAGO WOMAN.

A word about Julia and her relations to Mr. Stead may be useful at this point. In life she was Miss Julia A. Ames of Chicago. She was on the editorial staff of the Union Signal, the organ of the Woman's Christian Temperance union, and when she visited Europe in 1889 she met Mr. Stead and they became warm friends. The next year she died in Boston, but before death she promised a woman friend that if it were possible she would communicate with her after death. Some time later this woman was staying at a country house in England where Mr. Stead also was a guest. He had been experimenting with automatic writing and one evening, he says, Julia "assumed control" of his hand and delivered a message which was at once accepted by her friend as genuine. Other messages followed and Mr. Stead was soon convinced. Ever since then she has made him one of her mediums of communication with this world. He has collated and published a number of her communications under the title of "Letters from Julia," and it was in one of these letters that she suggested the establishment of the bureau.

For a long time Mr. Stead was loath to undertake this responsibility but Julia was insistent, and it is now in full working order. It may as well be said at once, however, that the machinery of the bureau is not at the disposal of everyone and that mere curiosity seekers or even earnest scientific investigators are sternly barred. Julia has no objection to investigators, but she reserves the bureau for the sole use of those who are sorrowing for lost loved ones and are truly anxious to communicate with them.

WITHOUT PRICE.

One thing Julia will not permit and that is that any charge should be made for the use of the bureau, so that all suspicion that anyone is making money out of it is eliminated at once. If an applicant offers money before using the bureau it is refused, but if anyone afterwards is willing to make a free will offering towards the expenses of the concern he is at liberty to do so.

The bureau is established in a large, airy, light room overlooking the Thames embankment within a stone's throw of the Strand, one of the busiest streets in London. It was formerly used by Mr. Stead as an office and it still is used by him part of the time, but its main use is now as Julia's place of business. Applicants for the facilities of the bureau must pass a rigid test. They must fill out an application form which is submitted to Julia by her two "amanuenses" who are automatic writers and clairaudients, and Julia decides whether the applicant is worthy or not. Various other formalities have to be gone through, but Julia is consulted at every step. Mr. Stead declares that 75 per cent of those who have passed this severe test have received satisfactory communication from their dead.

He told me all this sitting with one leg tucked under him on a high couch by the window overlooking the Thames and the other swinging freely. He was the picture of a keen man of the world of middle age, his strong face framed in a great shock of grizzled hair standing out in sharp silhouette against the window behind him. It was a startling experience to hear him talk about people who have been dead for years as one does of his everyday companions, and indeed Mr. Stead is firmly convinced that they are his everyday companions. He laughs and jokes about them and tells funny stories about what they say and do. And Julia is not the only one. He believes that he is in constant fellowship with his son who died a couple of years ago.

"My son drops in here constantly," he said, "and I see him just as plainly as I see you now. He was here this morning. He just looked in for a minute to see how I was going on and stood over there"—pointing to an end of the long table. "He didn't say anything today, but frequently we have long talks.

"Julia is here every morning and she always attends our conference. That's her chair at the head of the table. We all see her quite plainly. I never do anything without consulting her and I generally find that her advice is good. Of course, she makes mistakes sometimes. We are all liable to do that."

Mr. Stead then explained that there was very little difference between the spirit world and the material world we know. Spirits, he said, keep on developing after death, and the reason why when they do appear it is generally in the form which they bore during life, is that this form is familiar to their friends.

"They can assume any shape they want," he said, "and they constantly do assume different forms. For instance, if I were dead and wanted to appear to an old lady who only knew me as a boy I would come to her as little Willie Stead in knickerbockers and an Eton jacket. But if I wanted to appear to you I would come as you see me now."

STEAD'S ARGUMENT.

In reply to a question as to whether it was possible to establish communication with a friend who was long dead Mr. Stead said:

"It all depends on whether he was held in loving remembrance or not. The best simile I can give you is that of emigration. When a young man goes to America or Canada, the thing he wants most in the world for a while is letters from home. If the letters are kept up he retains his interest in his old home and he wants to come back and visit it. If they drop off, however, he soon forgets all about it and soon he doesn't care two straws about the old place. That's just the way with the dead. If there is a link of affection with those whom they left behind they want to come back, but if there isn't, they forget just as the living do. And that affords to me a satisfactory explanation why at all the spiritualistic seances, many of which are genuine, we get the spirits of the mighty dead, such as Shakespeare and Julius Caesar and Milton. There is in their work a link which binds them to us on earth today. We read and think about them and thus we keep in touch with them."

Mr. Stead then told me a remarkable story which I give just as he told it. He spoke of it in the most commonplace way and without the slightest suggestion of levity or irreverence, although his language was colloquial throughout and he laughed heartily at the amusing incidents just as one would in discussing the sayings or acts of persons still alive.

He was at Wimbledon, a London suburb, and a seance was suggested. Communication with Julia was established and the party soon learned that a spirit was outside who wished to communicate. Julia advised against it as the spirit was deeply troubled and excited about something, and she thought that an interview might not be good either for him or for Mr. Stead, who insisted, however, on the spook being brought in and who declares that the medium described him as moaning and lamenting. Eventually it was discovered that he had been murdered recently. Further questioning elicited the information that he was Sir Curzon Wyllie, the Indian official who was shot in London, by an Indian student a few days before.

"Oh, why did they send me over here so suddenly," Mr. Stead says he said. "My poor wife, my poor wife. What will she do?"

Sir Curzon then declared that he bore no enmity toward his murderer. "He is mad. He is mad," he said. "I hope they will not punish him."

There was some further conversation and then an Egyptian spirit chimed in with the explanation that the kind thoughts and prayers of those left behind were a great help to the spirits of the recently deceased who were often much upset and troubled on their entry into the spirit world, particularly when that entry was made suddenly.

"If that is true" said Mr. Stead, "that's the first rational explanation I have ever heard of the Roman Catholic practise of masses for the dead."

Immediately a deep voice which seemed curiously familiar to Mr. Stead interposed.

"I am glad to hear you say that," said the new spirit, "particularly as you were not one who loved me when I was alive."

"Why who are you?" Mr. Stead asked.

INTERVIEWING A PRELATE.

"I am Cardinal Vaughan," was the reply and Mr. Stead then recognized the voice as that of the predecessor of the present head of the Roman Catholic church in England.

"Yes, it's quite true that I went for you pretty hard at times," Mr. Stead replied, "but I didn't dislike you. What I couldn't stand was your love of pomp and show, especially when I contrasted it with the humble and Christlike bearing of your predecessor, Cardinal Manning."

"You are quite right," the spirit replied. "I freely admit it. A love of pomp was my besetting sin. But, oh if you could only get some priest of my church to understand the occult significance of the mass for the dead, how much good you would do both to those on this side of the veil and those on yours."

This is the story as Mr. Stead told it. He believes he is telling the truth. I give it for what it is worth. Mr. Stead's latest exploit has been to "establish communication" with W. E. Gladstone and obtain some characteristic expressions of his opinion on English politics today.

JOHN S. STEELE.

Czarina of Russia Lives in Constant State of Terror

(Special Correspondence.)

ST. PETERSBURG, Nov. 15.—Rumors concerning the czarina's health, whispered through St. Petersburg and Moscow during last winter, have now taken definite form. The unhappy lady, after years of anxiety and months almost without sleep, has fallen into such a nervous state that the doctors fear she will not recover her reason for many months to come.

In the summer it was announced that the court would spend the winter in St. Petersburg, for the first time for many years. The visit to France and England was to be followed by one to Italy, by way of the Black sea and Dardanelles. The autumn maneuvres in the Crimea were to represent the invasion of that peninsula, and all kinds of festivities were to follow. Even then people who frequent the court shook their heads and said they feared it would tax the czarina's health too much to take part in so many functions.

Now, all these engagements have been cancelled, for the czarina is incapable of seeing anybody or of taking interest in anything. The doctors who have been summoned from all parts of Europe to attend her are divided in their opinions as to the gravity of her malady. Some say that, as she is only 37, she will be cured; others affirm that, as her husband's life is always more or less in danger, she will never be quite well, for, as soon as she recovers a little, anxiety for her son's and husband's safety will cause a relapse. This is the secret of her malady. Day and night the thought that they will be killed haunts her.

TRAGEDY AT CRONSTADT.

This nervous condition began with the revolt three years ago. A natural inclination towards melancholy was much aggravated by the anxieties of that terrible time. When the fleet at Cronstadt mutinied, the court was at Peterhof, a palace on the Gulf of Finland, within sight of the scene of the troubles. It seemed as though nobody but the mutineers had any power left. Suddenly a messenger came to the palace with the news that the sailors were starting for Peterhof, to assassinate the czar and his son. The history of that eventful day has still to be written. What really happened was as follows: The crew got drunk and their leaders fled their heads. Had they carried out their plans and crossed the gulf to the white palace, within a stone's throw, the dynasty of the Romanoffs would have ceased to be.

The shots and cries of the mutineers at Cronstadt could be heard at the palace. The royal family, when they learned what the noise meant, were horror-stricken. Many of the servants had already fled but Baron Fredericks, grand master of the court ceremonies, rushed to the stables, ordered horses to be put to a couple of carriages, put the czar and his family in and had them driven post haste to the station—a people of miles away. Thence they fled to Tsarskoe Selo. As they left their rooms were filled with the booming of cannon at Cronstadt and the cheers for the revolution. Not so much as a hand bag had been taken and they arrived at Tsarskoe Selo half dead with cold and fright.

A second great shock to the czarina's health occurred a year later when a plot to kill the czar in his bed was disclosed by a "trusted" 3d guard. The officer who had charge of the duplicate keys to the rooms had joined in the plot and given the keys to the revolutionaries. When the czarina heard this she threw herself on her husband's neck and implored him to leave the country.

"Here," she cried, "we are never safe. Everybody pursues us!"

The third great shock was the attempt to blow up the imperial yacht, the Polar Star, when the czar and his family were cruising in the Gulf of Finland in September, 1905. One evening a terrific report was heard—the lights went out and the yacht began to fill with water. The fears of that night brought on the state of nervous prostration which lasted for many months, only to return at stated intervals and which has now become so grave.

When the lights went out on the yacht the little czarewitch could not be found. It was some time before lights could be procured, and meanwhile panic and darkness reigned. The czarina thought her son had been done away with during that time. He was, however, quite safe, on the bridge, in the arms of a faithful sailor, who was about to assist to shore with him, but the mother never recovered from those terrible moments. Of course the attempt to wreck the yacht failed, but, as she said, another one might be successful and, during the voyage to France and England, she was in hourly dread of a similar attempt.

AFRAID OF BOMBS.

Now things have got so bad that she knows nothing of what is going on around her. This nervous collapse cannot possibly be due to over excitement, for few women lead quieter lives than Alexandra Feodorowna. When people read of the splendid Russian palaces, with their museums and picture galleries, of the winter palace in St. Petersburg, with its thousand rooms, and of all the wealth of the 50 crowns comprised in the czar's title, they are apt to think that he lives the life of magnificence that characterized his forefathers. This is by no means the case. For many years the Russian court has lived in the greatest simplicity, and the most simple part of the court is that devoted to the czarina. For seven years she has avoided being in St. Petersburg, where, round the winter palace, the massive iron railings can be seen which her grandfather, the old king of Denmark, gave her, so that the children might have an enclosed garden to play in. Needless to say, they have never used it, as it looks on some of the city's busiest streets, whence a bomb could easily be thrown by anyone nimble enough to climb the railings.

They spend the summer in the Crimea, at Livadia, and the winter at Tsarskoe Selo, a small town some 15 miles from St. Petersburg, where there are two palaces. The large one, built by the Empress Catherine, consisting of a score or so of rooms on each floor—of which there are two—opening into one another without any corridors, so that the unhappy courtier who lives at the end has to pass through 19 rooms before he gets to his own, is only used on state occasions. A much smaller building, of stucco, with large verandahs, is used by the imperial family. Besides them, only a guard, a few servants and the equerries and ladies of honor who happen to be on duty, live in it. The rest of the court, from chamberlains to scullery maids, live in houses scattered about the park.

SIMPLE APPOINTMENTS.

The rooms where the family live are standoffish itself. The nurseries, with their white enameled furniture and iron bedsteads, might belong to any English or American children. The toys of course are costly, but the less complicated ones are first favorites. One which the czarewitch is very fond of is a small motor car, but large enough to hold him. It goes by electricity and is perfect in every detail. His four sisters, the little Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Marie and Anastasia, though older than he, are kept very much in the background, for, in spite of his being but five years old, he is fully aware of his superior social position and makes them obey him in everything. If they argue about it he stamps his little foot and tells them to remember he will be czar one day and they nothing but his subjects. He is especially angry if they linger in the room when an old general comes to pay his respects to the imperial nursery.

"This is no place for girls," he says and sends them away. He is full of life and enjoys every pleasure that comes his way to the full. Some time ago, before he quite realized the difference between little children and grown up people he made an amusing remark to his mother. She wished him to sit up to the table in a high chair.

"Yes, mother, but you must sit in a high chair, too," he said.

"But I am grown up, so I need not," was the czarina's answer. The child thought it over and then asked, with a bright smile:

"And when will you be little, mummie?"

FOND OF PLAY.

He is very fond of playing with the sons of some of the officers attached to the court. One day he wanted to give an order that his father wears to one of them. The sailor who looks after him explained that he could not. The czarewitch was very much surprised, and said:

"Why? Isn't my friend, Ivan, going to be a czar, too, when he grows up?"

He is, of course, too young to begin lessons, so he spends the whole day in the open air and his sailor nurse has strict orders to let him do anything he likes. He may be persuaded, but must never be forced to obey and the young sailor has, as may be imagined, all his work cut out for him. The czar has made up his mind that the child will not be able to rule unless he learns to rule from the very beginning. The general idea is that those who are to rule must first learn to obey; but the czar says this principle is wrong.

TRAINING OF AN AUTOCRAT.

"He must learn that he is an autocrat as early as possible," the czar once said to an old general who ventured to give a few hints about discipline. "If he does that, he will know what course to take, instead of asking half a dozen people's advice and wavering between them all."

Some courtiers say that their imperial master is afraid the czarewitch will grow up like his father, who listens to everybody's advice—and, therefore, changes his mind half a dozen times a day. It is an open secret that Nicholas II hopes, in his way, to make his son grow up like his great grandfather, Nicholas I, who, though a cruel man, was a just one, and, above all things, knew what he wanted.

This future czar is watched with all possible care. His rooms are carefully searched every day lest some explosive may be left there and he is not allowed out of the sight of faithful attendants for one moment, either by day or night. His food is tasted by trustworthy people before being given him, and, after that, put into covered dishes and sealed. Very often the empress herself insists upon trying it, saying that she is sure that somebody has tried to poison him on that particular day. She never allows him to be put to bed before she has examined the cot and the bedclothes. Many times the unfortunate lady wakes up in the middle of the night and rushes to his room, crying that he has been murdered, or stolen away. She always knows what part of the house or garden he ought to be in at a given moment and becomes wild with terror if he is not in the exact spot where she expected to find him.

BUT ONE INTEREST.

The czarina's anxiety for her son is only equalled by that for her husband. She dreads the most ordinary court function and declares that she would rather be killed outright than again live through the agonies she endured when they visited France and England last summer. She has never taken any interest in politics or in the questions which occupy her husband and his advisers. Only one thing interests her—the safety of those nearest to her. When people are presented at court she is often so absorbed in her own thoughts that she takes no notice whatever of them. As a rule, on these occasions, she stands behind the dowager empress, who says a few pleasant words. Of late, she has kept away from those ceremonies altogether, being replaced by her mother-in-law. Her rooms are as simply furnished as her children's, the drawingroom at Tsarskoe Selo having nothing more valuable in it than chintz covered chairs, her children's photographs and flowers from the conservatories. When well enough, she likes to listen to music and especially singing. She likes women's voices better than men's, and is always glad when her maids of honor tell her of some newly arrived singer, whom she summons to sing before her.

RUSSIAN HEIR TO AN UNEASY THRONE.

CONSTANTLY GUARDED.

She and her husband are like carefully guarded and much venerated prisoners. They can never enjoy the beautiful palaces and are not in a position to realize the wealth their position has given them. They take their daily exercise, not in spacious parks, but in a walled garden, surrounded by soldiers armed with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets. Before they go to bed their rooms are searched from top to bottom, and when they travel to Peterhof, Gatschina, or the Crimea, or embark on their yacht, armed soldiers are placed at intervals of a couple of yards from starting place to destination. At one time the czarina liked yachting, but since the affair of the Polar Star, she is as nervous at sea as she is on land.

This imperial pair have no holidays, no pleasant trips abroad like King Edward, and no distraction but books and the theater at Tsarskoe Selo. This last is kept especially for their benefit. Only the best artists are engaged to act there, and the audience is most carefully chosen, the officers of the guard being personally responsible for the distribution of tickets. Those fortunate enough to get in see what the Russian public have not seen for years—the czar and his wife enjoying a play or a musical comedy. The little theater is one of the best in Europe. All details of stage-management, decorations and furniture are as complete and beautiful as money can make them. Besides the ballet, the czar has a troupe of French actors who play exceedingly well. The Russian drama is not much liked at court, owing to its pessimistic tendencies. When well enough to go to the theater the czarina likes a good farce better than anything else—probably because it is quite unlike her own dreary, anxious life.

MARIE FILON.

"Too Beastly Aristocratic," Says the Countess Szechenyi

(Special Correspondence.)

LONDON, Nov. 18.—When talking to the head of a big firm here the other day, I asked him who was the pretty chic woman talking so earnestly to his partner.

"Why," he replied, "that is Countess Laszlo Szechenyi, a young American woman who married into a very aristocratic but not wealthy Hungarian family about two years ago. Life in Bohemia was so deadly dull and as she expressed it herself 'so beastly aristocratic,' she felt she must do something to work off her energy. The result was she bought up a couple of factories with the determination to give employment to the Hungarians. One of these days that woman, as sure as I live, will be a millionairess on her own account. Although she looks so fluffy and pretty she ought to have been a man, so strong is her business capacity."

"And are you buying some of her stuff?" I demanded.

"Yes, that is, we are sending a buyer over to inspect it and give an order."

It seems the countess has been telling all her friends that she is "going into trade" to get rid of her ennui, and her determination has knocked all the court's swagger relations in Hungary into fits. They are furious, and everything has been done to stay her hand, but without avail. She is reported to have said, "It is a disgrace to be without money. I am going to teach Hungarians this."

The count, like the usual man who marries an American wife, falls in with all she wishes. He never makes trouble and never contradicts her. Count Szechenyi is in Scotland shooting and the countess probably has returned there by now.

Shooting parties bore her and never by any chance does she follow the "guns" like the usual smart woman in the country house. She is, nevertheless, pleased that her lord and master should have a good time "killing things," as we Britishers say. Wherever Countess Szechenyi goes she makes it lively for her companions. No one is ever dull in her company and what she really loves better than anything else is shocking people and then laughing at their solemn faces.

"FINISHING" IN PARIS.

It seems to be "the thing" for the smart American "flapper" to be sent to Paris to complete her education before she comes along to take London by storm. Just now a great deal is being said about two sprightly young damsels who are expected here to make their bow at court in the spring. One is Miss Rutherford, Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt senior's girl. She has been studying most assiduously and owing to her mother's very deep mourning has not been about at all save for a drive in the Bois or a visit to a picture gallery. She is slight and pretty and, by all accounts, quite learned. I am told on good authority that she once attacked a French woman because she was smacking a 3-year-old child. Miss Rutherford and her governess, who were exploring, had wandered into a somewhat dangerous quarter of Paris when the scene occurred.

"If you slap that baby again," said the girl, "I shall slap you."

A man coming up at the moment seemed to approve of the action of Miss Rutherford and remarked "Well done, little mademoiselle. Bravo!"

AN ACCOMPLISHED BUD.

The other "bud" we expect to see when the primroses are here is little Ruth Welsh, the daughter of some very rich Americans who recently returned home leaving her in the hands of a chaperon and a score of masters who are initiating her into every modern accomplishment. She already speaks perfect French with a Parisian accent and she "sculps" and paints and is a musician of no mean capacity. She is one of the American girls of high degree who lately have gone in most assiduously for the study of domestic economy.

There are classes in Paris just now to which it is quite the chic thing for the ingenue to go and study the art of the housewife, where the curriculum embraces everything from the correct way of polishing a brass knocker to making a souffle. The girls have great fun at these gatherings. At "the 5 o'clock" which is served to the students all the cakes and sweets accompanying it have been made by themselves. Sometimes these are the funniest "confections" and taste, as a pupil expressed it, "weirdly," and this it is that arouses the merriment.

MRS. HARTMANN'S DILEMMA.

Mrs. Hartmann, the widow of the man who coined a fortune out of that hideous fabric, "Turkey twill," has been inundated by American millionaires with requests to be allowed to see her "things" before they are publicly sold. Half the millionaires in London have been inspecting them. One of Pierpont Morgan's advisers took a list recently of everything which he thought likely to appeal to his client, and another made investigations for Mrs. Whitelaw Reid and the Hon. Mrs. John Ward. From time to time Mrs. Potter Palmer has made purchases from Mrs. Hartmann, always paying handsomely for them, as is her wont, if she buys anything from an acquaintance. Another millionaire who has been after the treasures at White Lodge is Alfred Vanderbilt who is himself a first rate judge of what's what in art and fancies himself over that fact. If only Mrs. Hartmann could have let White Lodge she would not have needed to sell her precious belongings. From time to time more than one rich American or South African has suggested that he would give a fancy price for the loan of the royal lodge for a few months. One, I am told, who did so was Mrs. Joseph Stickney who was such a successful hostess here last summer. But it was out of Mrs. Hartmann's power to let the house, she herself being only a guest in it. The king was under the impression when he presented Mrs. Hartmann with the lodge that he was doing her a great favor. As a matter of fact, this house as much as anything else, helped to swamp her, costing as it did a fortune to keep up.

RESOURCEFUL HOSTESS.

It was in a hopeless state when it came into her possession, having been neglected for years. Out of gratitude to his majesty for the presentation the first thing Mrs. Hartmann did was to put it into the hands of the builders and decorators. When restored she proceeded to give magnificent parties there for the king and all his best friends, including, of course, Queen Duchess of Manchester. It was there a terrible contretemps occurred when one Sunday afternoon the king came out early to play croquet, and dine. When it was time to change it was discovered that his majesty's dress clothes had been forgotten. Mrs. Hartmann was equal to the occasion. She telephoned to an important official in the fire brigade, who, ordering a motor car from the garage and donning his official suit, tore up to Buckingham palace to procure the garments.

SALE OF TREASURES.

Another great sale which has aroused the interest of Americans is that of the treasures at Holme Lacy. It was said in the summer that Mr. Mills, the father of Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, was selling the beautiful old seat. At the time he and some of his friends went over it and he was certainly greatly impressed with its beauty. There is one set of furniture which was in the Tuileries in the days of the "Beloved Louis." It is in beautiful condition and Lord Chesterfield, the owner, has already refused several offers for it made privately. There should be keen bidding for the Gobelin tapestries as a few people are determined that they must not go out of England, while others are equally desirous that they shall cross the Atlantic. It is, therefore, anticipated that these heirlooms will end by fetching considerably more than they are really worth.

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