Types of Feminine Slackers in New York

Random Observations on the S, the Washer, and the Trifler—Tinfoil as Proof of Patriotism—The Cost of Showy Gowns and Pekingese Spaniels

By GENEVIEVE PARKHURST.

As a rule she lounges at a hotel in the Washington Square neighborhood and "tea" at another near by, and occasionally she dines at an up-town restaurant popular with artists and theatrical folk. I found it easy to strike up an acquaintance with her.

"How often do I come here? Oh, nearly every day," she said lightly, in answer to my question. "Just one moment—I must telephone Harry. If I don't feel like going home, I let him know and he sends the children to the store to get some dinner. He doesn't mind. I can't possibly express myself in some way."

After she had telephoned she resumed her conversation, entwining it with gossip about the other women in the café. I asked if she did any work.

"Oh, certainly," she replied candidly.

"I go to the Red Cross once a week, and I'm collecting tinfoil. A housewife is not expected to do more," and she displayed to me a diamond mounted in platinum—a recent acquisition.

She was one of many women I encountered in following up a chance suggestion. It was during the last Liberty Loan drive in New York. A member of the Woman's Committee, who devoted her time from 9 in the morning until late at night, for several days in some of these women's clubs, remarked:

"There is a certain class of women which it seems impossible to reach. They are women one sees about the tea-rooms in hotels, in cafés and restaurants, over-dressed and covered with jewelry. They flutter away their time, spending just the same lives as they did before the war."

Slackers are of three classes—squaderners, walkers, and triflers.

To the squaderners, time, money, material, and energy have no significance except as they may earn personal pleasures. Life to them is just one bubble after another, blown through it. Their mornings are given over to the manneuse, the beauty specialist, or the modiste; their afternoons and evenings to frittering. By the dozens they frequent restaurants and discos, slipping and smoking, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by young dancing men. More often they are driven to seeking the company of their own kind. Seldom do they wear the same gown two days in succession. The latest in jewelry, fur, and costume is their fuel.

Fifteen cafés, visited in as many days, gave a working average of statistics. Seven out of ten of these women are married. Four of the seven are moth-

Not one of the ten is self-supporting.

The husbands of the married ones are, for the greater part, prosperous navalmen, either lieutenant or stationery. Their homes are in apartments or hotels. Some of them keep two maid-servants, others in hotel rooms; and they spend all of their meals in restaurants or patronizing the newest delicatessen.

Getting acquainted with these women is the easiest thing in the world. They will talk with any one. Their family histories and troubles become an open book. One woman had her Pekingese spaniels with her. She had traveled all the way from a Middle Western city.

"It is such an expense carrying them around," she complained. "You know they have to have certified milk—a quart a day each, and it costs me $2 a day at the hotel for them."

When it was suggested that it might be a good idea to give them a change of diet and send the milk money to the children of France, she exclaimed:hoist.

"What? Why, the poor little dogs would suffer. They've always had their certified milk and cream and I couldn't think of depriving them."

She almost wept upon their smoothly combed coats.

Her remark about the cost of keeping dogs at hotels led to investigation in that direction. From eight clerks in hotels where special quarters for dogs are provided, it was found that there were sixty women who paid $500 a year each for the keep of their dogs. Smaller hotels, charging from $10 to $20 a month for their keep, showed that out of every fifty women who live in hotels one supports a dog. Computing from these figures, it would bring the number of women in New York who keep to hotels one or two pets up to the thousands. Judging from the daily parades, between the hours of 9 and 11 in the morning and 5 and 7 in the afternoon, which take place in the apartment house sections and in the parks, there must be ten times that number in town.

Some of these women are doing many things toward winning the war. They are conserving food and clothes, entering into Red Cross activities, investing in Government securities. Rather are they wasters than squaderners. Not for the world do they call slackers. In their class also are those who still buy things they do not need. A filter is fashionable dressing establishment said most women were buying good things, such as even a man of a name of a woman prominently identified with war work" has five gowns turned out every week, just as she did before the war? She is always talking about the need of conservation in others, too. And yet she spends two hours every day for dress fittings.

A woman prominent in intellectual circles, who has done tremendous work in helping Herbert Hoover, said, in speaking of these women: "They think if they follow the food card that their full duty is done. They can't see that they have not the right to waste any kind of food, with part of the world starving. One woman I have in mind fellow all the regulations as to wheat and beef and pork, and yet she gave a dinner of twelve courses to thirty guests recently, at which she served imported hams, etc."

The third class of women slacker, whom I have dubbed the "trifler," is also insurmountable. It was hinted that she was not doing her full share. She is so bright and early about that. She spends an hour or two folding bandages, another hour or so at a concert, another hour fervently driving soldiers about in an automobile. If such a thing as real work is suggested—washing dishes, sweeping the floor, or lifting supplies—she disparages. She works all day and does nothing.

Her name is legion. It is this class that always objects, and strenuously, to any contract between the women of England and France and those of America. It is this class which should be touched by the testimony of women like Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst. Mrs. Pankhurst has said, "for they realize that women who must support their families must fill the more remunerative positions. They never accept a place unless they see the salary is small. Neither do they accept salaried work which requires a trained mind unless they are sure they can do it and that no woman with a trained mind and responsibilities needs the salary."

And as it all comes back to the question asked by the woman on the Liberty Loan Committee: How are the women slackers to be reached? In an age when women have received political equality, it seems as if there could be but one answer:

Although the women of this country, as a majority, are doing their well-intended but not expressing the winning the war reports of the United States Department of Labor, show that there is no increased demand for workers; that, while there may be a surplus of them in some districts, there is a shortage in others; that, because of the wholesale absorption of men workers into industries essential to warfare, the need of women to take places in essential industries has become immediate. The problem of man power for essential industries has become nicely solved by the Government's order. "Work or fight."

Such phrases as "releasing men for the front," "full organization of woman power," "conservation of energy," "women and war economics," "division of labor," have become as numerous as bumblebees in a June meadow. It is well to employ those two overworked sisters, parship and ramouges, to belf front issues. The hour is here when the American women must face facts. She must sum total of them and set about to discover just how close her accomplishment is to her margin of possibilities.

Men who would not fight and who would not work have been made to fight or work.

"She spends two hours every day for dress fittings."