

**WIDE OPEN SPACES**

By FANNIE HURST

ONE of those experiences that you read about in books came to Alonzo Meierberg when he was thirty-one, and on the upward plunge of a wave of success as a young surgeon that was carrying him to the top of his profession.

He walked out of the office of one of his most distinguished conferees, with his own suspicion of himself corroborated. One of his lungs had a hole in it. Tuberculosis had him. The man who was considered the most brilliantly promising plastic surgeon in the city of New York, and that meant practically in America, was doomed, at thirty-one, to exile. If not permanent exile, and most probably that, then for a period of years that was apt to play havoc with the soaring of his career.

Well, Meierberg was about as logical as the average intellectual would be under such conditions. He placed his situation before him, so to speak. Reckoned on the alternative advantages of remaining at his post, and dying young and perhaps brilliantly, or going off to struggle for an existence that might not be worth the living.

With his mind, the latter alternative won. But love of life was too strong in this man to go down before the mere argument of a sophisticated brain.

In the end, Doctor Meierberg went out to a shanty town of an altitude and dryness necessary to his well being, and there took up his abode.

The wide open spaces. God's country. Back to nature.

Cactus Post was all those. A little smear of a town situated on the slope of a mountain that hung between desert and snow-caps. The sun came up in glory over Cactus Post and went down in magnificence. The air was as dry, as thin-tasting, as sparkling, as champagne and, every morning of his life Doctor Meierberg awoke to the incredibly lovely chirping of birds he did not know by name, and to the clear ringing sound of axes hurling into the wilderness of tree boles that lined the mountain side.

Glory hung over Cactus Post. Dew-drenched mornings. Peace-drenched noons. Long, somnolent afternoons fled with the doctor knew was sedative balm for his wounded lung. Evenings before a pine wood fire that went deeply up into the nostrils like the tickling elixir of a chartrouse. Leisure for reading that never before in all his closely packed years of struggle and endeavor had the doctor enjoyed. Boxes of books arrived from the East almost weekly, and were read! Not merely placed on a reading table to be read at some future time. But read, there and then.

The folks in Cactus Post were a goodly enough sort, too. Simple women and girls. Bred to the open spaces. Fearless folk. Fine, the doctor thought.

And yet it must be admitted that as the months marched along and then the years, such a nostalgia began to lay hold of the doctor that the heart of him was almost as sore as his healing lung had been.

Years of the coyote-riddled, night silences. The flaming sunrises ushering in the long, somnolent days. The gorgeous sunsets ushering them out. Monotony.

The old days began to gnaw at him. Closing his eyes on an evening beside his book-stacked fireplace, the doctor could visualize things back home. The incandescent-eyed city. Women who were a million years and three thousand miles alien to these husky, calico-clad ones, wrapping themselves in furs and riding out into the spangled evenings. The warm, vibrant flare of life along New York's Broadway. Mental stimulant of theaters and concerts. The voice of the city. The warm, pulsing note of humanity. That was it. Humanity. The doctor was lonesome unto death. The wide, open spaces were too wide. Too open. Humanity was a charmed circle closing within it life and love and warmth and beauty. Secretly, the nostalgia was becoming almost more than the doctor could bear. And yet, he knew that, somehow, he must stick it out for another year. He knew himself on the road to recovery but he dared not hasten the way along that road. Another year, what with careful living and right habits, would see the spot on his lung healed. Another year!

Sometimes, during the passing of it, the doctor feared for his sanity. Tedium of waiting. Terrible, terrible tedium of waiting.

Then there was his sense of delicacy and of actual fear of revealing his state of mind to the people about him. To the sweet-eyed Clarissa who rode in thirty miles on horseback to tend his shanty for him day by day and rode home through the purple, star-spangled desert without fear. The cowboys, the ranchers, the homesteaders who had been his good friends. Who took him along on their jaunts into the heart of the universe. Who taught him the secret things of nature. Who had been kind to him. Who were kind to him.

It was unthinkable to let these good people know how the heart within him was a heavy thing.

Up to the very day of his departure for the East, he kept it from them. Had not the heart to tell them that his departure was final. That he was

shaking the desert dust off his feet forever.

They had been good. Kind. Their delight in his cure was scarcely less than his own.

When he finally stepped into the rattling tin can of a car that was to drive him the forty miles to the nearest station where he took his train, it was with the understanding that he was to return to them in the autumn. His shanty was to be there and waiting. His friends.

Like a sneak, the doctor turned his back on Cactus Post, knowing he had lied to them and yet had lied out of the kindness of his heart. The little group of women in their calico who had been so kind to him. Mrs. Hodges, the general storekeeper's wife, who had nursed him through bronchitis. Sweet-eyed Clarissa who had tended him so faithfully. Bless them.

The city met him like a boom of ocean, a surf of humanity running and hissing up against his feet his first step off the train.

Bing. Boom. Bang. The heart leapt in his bosom. The eager, quick-footed men. There! The women in their furs and the beautifying wrappings that he had so missed. Even their painted faces! Gaiety was here. Pulse of life. The streets swam vitality. Rush. Eagerness. Lights blazed. The hotel where he stopped had the warm, perfumed quality to it that reminded him of the bare shoulders of women and the whisper of furs.

Life! Vitality. Sophistication. Here were the men who made the universe go around. The women who made the universe matter.

The city caught him up once more. Goaded him. Spurred him. Within the month he was on the old tread-mill again, straining, yearning, aspiring. The young doctor was back in the race. The profession which had practically forgotten him began to turn an eye upon him again.

The doctor was back again. Cured. In the race.

And after the first six months, it was borne in upon an amazed, a startled young doctor that the race no longer mattered. His work, the scientific curiosity that spurred him on, his love of it, could not be best pursued here in these marts of men.

The doctor had tasted of the beauty and the peace and the nobility of quiet. He missed the ring of axes into wood. The glibberish of birds against dawn. The clear voices of women calling through high, thin air. This was a roar. The lights of the theaters represented the cheap tarnished pastimes that people sought. People without the leisure or the nerves for quiet reading. People who must forever be jamming, pushing, seeking. In all the months since his return, he had not had one evening for quiet reading. The stack of books beside his bed was half a man high. Life had him once more. By the scroff of the neck. The painted faces of the women mocked him. Pallid faces gone flabby from lack of the simple things that had kept those calico-clad ones out there firm fleshed and bright eyed even by light of dawn.

The autumn came around. The color of asphalt in the city. The color of quartz and topaz and cornelian and ruby and lapis lazuli in Cactus Post.

The doctor knew! Knew it with his heart that was aching.

And so, come autumn, as he had promised, the doctor did return to his shanty, in Cactus Post. A sunset the color of the blood that must have been surging around his heart met him as he stepped out of the rickety tin automobile that had driven him the many miles from the station.

Clarissa of the sweet eyes met him, too.

The doctor had come home.

**Ruin Left in Wake of West Indian Hurricane**

We hear a great deal about West Indian hurricanes, but the Virgin islands have been singularly free from destruction. It seems that in 400 years there have been 140 severe hurricanes, of which only ten touched St. Thomas and St. Croix.

On July 23, which is called Supplication day, all the people go to church, to ask God to preserve them from hurricanes. July 26 is considered the beginning of the hurricane season. On that day the natives pack their most valued possessions and begin to watch Signal hill.

When a storm is coming the government runs a flag up on Signal hill—a red flag with a black disk. When a second flag appears every one runs to "bar up."

The houses are all provided with heavy wooden shutters, to shut against the wind and rain. Masters and servants hurry about with hammers, nailing bars that close doors and windows.

When the third flag appears the hurricane is near, though there is always a warning of several hours. Then the world grows dark, and hot, and still. Not a leaf moves. It seems as though there must be a mistake. Then, suddenly, the gale breaks.

The usual length of a hurricane is 12 hours. The wind tears off roofs and uproots trees. The rain makes noise beyond belief. And the black night is filled with lightning. The sea comes in and floods the town, tearing up the cement waterfront, beating down the cabins on the shore.

At last it is over. Crops and groves are ruined. Great palm trees are felled. And there is devastation everywhere. But the sky is blue as heaven. And the sun dances on the waves. And the people all go up to church, to thank God because he spared their lives.

**Class-Day Frocks for the Graduates**

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



TIME for diplomas! And after proudly and demurely receiving them in perfectly proper cap and gown, then what? Listen to fashion's answer—the prettiest style-significant array of crisp and sheer class-day frocks that ever adorned any group of sweet girl graduates.

Let's hasten to go into detail regarding these enchanting frocks, for there's not nearly enough space here allotted to tell all the lovely things which should be said about the adorable frocks that will answer to the roll call of those present at college and school festivities during the ensuing days.

As to materials, please to note that we said "crisp and sheer" in the first paragraph which is just what they are. Organdie comes first and most of it is beautifully allover-embroidered in the daintiest colors imaginable. In fact, embroidered effects are "the thing," and what's real news about these patterned organdies is they are worn over taffeta slips which are color-matched to some prominent flower or figure in the design.

However, organdie has a rival this season which is none other than old fashioned, but now new-fashioned mousseline de soie. It's back again in all its fascinating crispness and sheerness. In pure white it is that sweet and demure looking one will be tempted to say in describing it that she who wears it was dressed in "simple white," no matter if it is a costly-as-thy-purse-can-buy import direct from one of the most exclusive Paris salons.

**Fawn Leaps to Front in Color Parade for Spring**

Fawn leaps to the front of the color parade this spring. In every house one sees dress and sports coats and suits in the lovely soft shade of fawn that is so becoming and flattering. It is a splendid compromise between brown and gray with the good points of both.

Beige is another color that looks like getting a good play this season. It hasn't been very popular for some seasons, but of course there are always some women who think of their spring clothes in terms of a beige outfit.

Those of you who get a suit of fawn with brown fur will find that you are right in the right picture for spring. As usual, there will be some inordinately smart suits richly befringed and grand for wear at smart places from luncheon on.

A richly furred suit is decidedly out of place in the morning and the woman who buys only one suit should be careful to see that the model is not of the lavish type. Otherwise its usefulness will be limited, while that of a simple, perfectly cut and detailed suit is endless.

**Semi-Sheer Fabrics Are Still Strong in Favor**

It is easy to see through the reasons for the extended popularity of the semi-sheer fabric. And knowing the many virtues of the various weaves of georgettes and sheer crepes, one is not surprised to find that every house just now is using such materials in abundance.

One sees more little frocks in semi-sheer stuffs than in any other weight or weave and it looks as though the woman who finds the season incomplete without a georgette or crepe remain frock will be able to find several models from which to choose.

**Lace Trimmed**

Another instance of the distinction of grege and black is seen in an afternoon frock of cotton crepe with its wide full sleeves trimmed with black satin inset with deep beige alencon lace.

It's the way of mousseline de soie to look the picture of simplicity, and the sweetly feminine, and for this reason among many it is regarded as ideal for the graduation frock.

There's this, too, about mousseline de soie, it yields beautifully to the new pin-tuck treatments which are such an outstanding feature in this season's styling. The lovely dress to the left in the picture is designfully pin-tucked, with sections of the silk mousseline left untouched so as to contrast the plain with the tucked which somehow or other makes this material look its sheerest. There is just enough stiffness in this mousseline to give it a sprightliness which is much to be desired when it comes to achieving young-looking silhouettes. The little puffed sleeves are the latest and ever so many of this season's graduating dresses have them, for the latest edict is that shoulders must be covered either with cap sleeves or capelets or puffs, or some sort of an arrangement.

There are more embroidered than plain organdies being used this season. Thus is a fetching note of color introduced, for white with a touch of color has become a slogan among designers.

The embroidered organdie frock illustrated to the right is a charming girlish model. It is worn over a slip of ice-green taffeta, and it adopts a little jacket of self-organdie. The wide sash is the same delicious green of the slip, but in a darker tone.

**CHIC AND PRACTICAL**

By CHERIE NICHOLAS

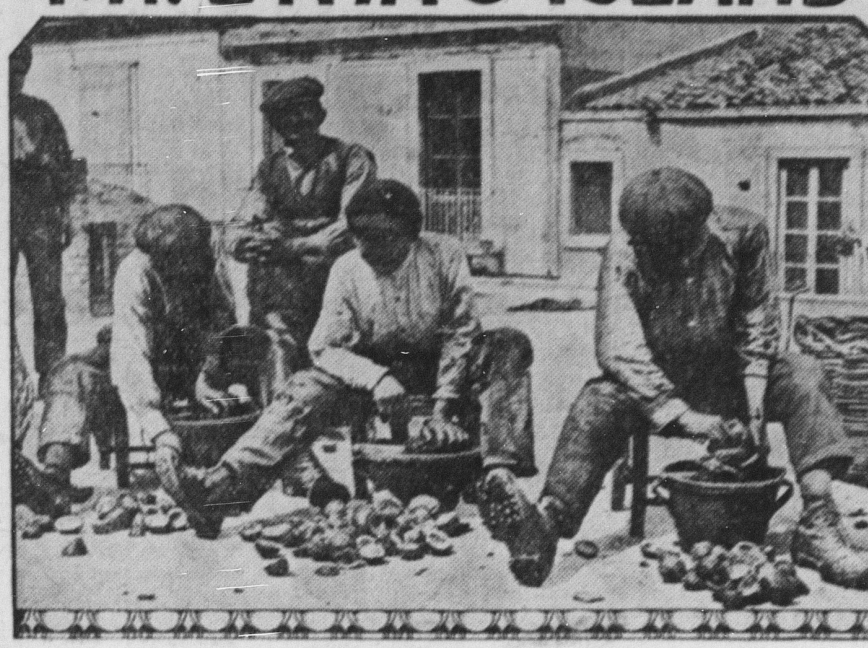


A pajama costume like the one pictured is about as practical an outfit as can be devised. The corduroy which employs bright blue for the trousers with orange for the blouse top is waterproofed, making it an ideal suit for beach wear at the same time that it is in excellent taste and will give splendid satisfaction as a lounging costume or to be worn during the recreation hours of the day. Tailored effects such as this are particularly good this season.

**Collar of Old Dobbin Suggests New Fashion**

Fashion has borrowed the design of Dobbin's collar for new spring frocks. Big, soft hoop collars of velvet or crepe falling halfway to the waist are worn with simple dark dresses. Most of them are caught on one side with two large artificial flowers.

**MT. ETNA'S ISLAND**



Sicilian Boys Pressing the Essence From Lemon Rinds.

(Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)—WNU Service.

SICILY goes back to work as the summit of Mt. Etna, famous landmark of the Mediterranean island, resumes its peaceful, eternal steaming. Recent rumblings and explosions within the mountain have preceded devastating lava flows in the past.

The present "threat" recalls the eruption of the huge volcano in 1928 when a lava stream, flowing like a 2,500-foot ribbon from one of its craters, flooded the eastern slope, one of the island's most fertile regions.

Orchards, vineyards and forests were destroyed; also the villages and towns that thrived on their products. More than a quarter million people live on the slopes of Mount Etna. The eastern slope is the most thickly populated with one town almost adjoining another. Almost every foot of ground not used for dwellings is cultivated, yielding abundant crops.

Etna has terrorized this district many times before. Whether the traveler goes by train or automobile down the east coast of Sicily, he passes flow after flow of lava. Some of them are centuries old; others more recently deposited from some of the two hundred craters that pepper the side of the cone-shaped mountain. The town of Acireale perches on a 300-foot cliff formed of seven distinct layers of lava.

Within the Christian era, Mount Etna has boiled over its crater rims more than a hundred times. It has wiped out cities, towns and villages and spelled doom to thousands of homes. Almost daily Mount Etna rumbles, and its summit constantly emits steam, but it takes more than these "suggestions" of action even to arouse the Sicilian's curiosity. The homes of their ancestors are sandwiched between two of the lava flows, and many of the present generation, like those of Mascall and Nunziata, chief sufferers of the last decade, have watched their homes sink beneath a new molten bed.

Catania, Birthplace of Bellini. Catania, lying at the foot of the mountain, has been destroyed and rebuilt many times. Catanians know Mount Etna so well that the famous volcano has to spit fire and boil over its rim before they seek shelter.

To the Catanian who loves his modern city, Etna has been a benefactor. To the traveler in search of antiquities it has been a despoiler, for ancient Catania of Greek, Roman, Saracen and Norman days is buried, save for a Greek theater, a Roman amphitheater, some baths and a few unimportant monuments.

Catania is more interested in its wide thoroughfares, public squares and parks, and in honoring her illustrious sons than in digging up ancient relics of a restless past. Bellini the composer was born there in 1802, and Catanians are not allowed to forget it. A statue of the composer adorns villa Bellini, one of the city's finest parks where on summer evenings one can sit and listen to Italian melodies played by a fine Sicilian band. The vine-clad slopes and the white head of Mount Etna form a magnificent background.

Another statue of the composer adorns the Piazza Stesicoro through which runs the Via Etnae, Catania's main street from the southern part of the city to the foot of the great mountain. A third statue stands among those of kings and great Italian and Sicilian patriots in the cathedral. There is also a Bellini theater, once the finest in Italy, and the Catania guides point with pride to the tablet which marks the house in which the composer was born.

The cathedral, and a lava elephant atop a tall marble base at its front door, are two of the most popular monuments of early Catania. The elephant's origin is unknown but the cathedral is credited to the prosperous reign of the Norman King Roger. Built in 1001, it was badly damaged by successive earthquakes and eruptions of Mount Etna, but each time it has been restored and used.

Agatha, the Patron Saint. More honored than even the king's monuments in the cathedral is that of St. Agatha, Catania's patron saint. The head of her statue is said to contain the head of the saint who in defense of her virtue was tortured by a Roman praetor in the Third century. Among her relics is a veil which is said to have miraculously diverted a lava stream that menaced Catania in 1033.

Once a year, in February, Catania turns out en masse to honor her. The statue, mounted on two long poles, is borne through the streets from church to church by white-robed men. The route of the procession is jammed to suffocation, old balconies groan under the weight of humanity and every roof has its quota of spectators. At night there are torchlight processions which brilliantly light up the city, and in nearly every window a candle or two throws feeble beams. The yelling and whistling and confusion of the day continue, augmented by the booming of colorful fireworks, the toll of church bells and the occasional roar of a cannon.

The St. Agatha celebration is only once a year. Before and after, Catania is busy with its commerce and industry. The harbor is filled with commercial craft whose flags add a colorful touch to the view from the Flora della Marina, a narrow but beautiful parkway near the water's edge.

Catania is not only the second largest city in Sicily but one of the island's chief gates of export through which some 600,000 tons of merchandise pass annually. Sulphur, fruit and wine have made fortunes for Catanians, and these and other industries keep many of the city's 271,000 inhabitants employed.

Attractive to Travelers. Intest in Mount Etna's moods is not entirely confined to the volcano's immediate neighborhood. All Sicily feels the death-dealing blows of lava flows as much as all America feels the lash of a hurricane sweeping Florida.

Normally, however, Sicily is an island garden spot which nature has endowed with a warm sunny climate and all the charm that might go with it.

Its wild mountain scenery, ancient history, and picturesque inhabitants make it a mecca of European winter tourists. Travel in the interior was formerly considered unsafe because of brigandage. Such conditions, however, have long since been eliminated. Now the visitor is safe, and in addition to native inns, comfortable pensions are conducted by French, German and English landlords of many years' residence in the country.

Provincial towns of Sicily are famous for their situation, high up on picturesque hillsides or on rocky promontories jutting into the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Many of these towns are built on Greek foundations and contain ruins of Roman, Saracen, and Norman origin. A few Greek temples and theaters are practically intact.

Natives Are a Cheerful Lot. Racial types among the peasantry vary from classic Greek and swarthy Arab to blond Norman and haughty Spanish. In spite of his mixed ancestry, however, the Sicilian of today is distinctly a Latin product in matters of disposition, culture and religion. Travelers unite in testifying to his cheerfulness, quickness of perception, and hospitality. Stable government and education are said to be doing much to stamp out superstition and secret vengeance and terrorism. This movement for better conditions is exemplified by wholesale prosecutions against outlaw gangs now taking place at the old Roman bathing resort of Termini Imerese.

In Roman times the Island of Sicily was called the granary of Italy, and, while no longer specializing in wheat it is one of Europe's mainstays in the production of citrus fruits. Only California rivals Sicily as a grower of lemons. A part of the lemon crop is marketed in the form of citrate of lime and lemon extract.

For thousands of years this football at the toe of Italy has been the melting pot of many races. Its early inhabitants, the Sikels, who gave the island its name, were conquered by Greeks, whose great cities such as Syracuse dominated the land for five hundred years. Next came the rising power of Rome, during whose heyday Sicily was given over to the plunder of successive governors. Roman oppression grew so cruel that gangs of plantation slaves twice rose in revolution. Succeeding centuries saw Saracen conquests, Norman kingdoms, and Bourbon misrule. Finally, freed by Garibaldi, Sicily became a part of the kingdom of Italy.

During the last half century industrial conditions and political relations have not always been to the liking of the Sicilians, so that the island has been called the "Ireland of the South." Many thousand sons of the racial melting pot emigrated to America, some districts being stripped bare of men of working age. One town whose present population is 25,000, has sent 15,000 emigrants to the new country.