

The Strangest Studio Corner in the World

By Elizabeth Van Benthuyzen

Amazing Collection of Jewels, Trinkets, Paintings, Autographs and Weapons Gathered by a Russian Enthusiast, and How the Treasures Look in an American Retreat

Sacha Votichenko, Who Has Amassed the Great Collection.

YOU see strange decorative spectacles in studios, but only the studio of a confirmed "collector"—a collector on a large scale—could give the combination possessed by a studio whose medley of curiosities has been called the strangest in the world.

That distinguished Russian, Sacha Votichenko, is the wizard who has evoked the grotesquely glittering mass of souvenirs that makes "Petit Trianon" in New York a wonder place. The Petit Trianon is in the Hotel des Artistes, which, as its name implies, is the haunt of the artistic fraternity.

Votichenko's greatest enthusiasm is music. But his passion for collecting is scarcely less ardent. Everything he gathers seems to have a bit of history behind it.

In Votichenko's studio you feel that you are hearing the whispers of kings and queens—that you have stepped into the sacrality of geniuses and nobles—and famous freaks. In histories such characters come as figures at a fancy dress ball, wearing their dominos and the costumes that present them in such aspects as they would have the world see them. In their own circles they gave vent to the human weakness of writing intimate things, and of having pictures made, both of which operated to flash a burglar's lantern upon the truth and permit fleeting glimpses of the uncouth individual.

Treasures of Handwriting.

Some one, watching the sliding knife of the guillotine in the sombre days of the Revolution, commented that there really wasn't much difference between a king and a sans culotte under the knife. Nor is there such a difference before the writing table when the twain take pen and ink into their confidence. Votichenko has made a fad of finding in queer places the intimate things of royal persons and noted artists, and he regards his reflections upon the past as being illuminated by a lighting system that is all the more accurate and convincing.

In a large album in his museum and studio, which takes its name and its scheme from the love cote that the French Louis built upon the

Mme. Votichenko Wearing One of Her Studio Gowns.



brink of the Revolution for the establishment of his pleasures, there are many things to hold the interest.

Commonly, one regards as the champion pest the individual who pulls an album on an unsuspecting visitor. But it is a lucky person who has a chance to peep into the Votichenko album. It holds no and prosaic pictures of bald-headed uncles and high-collared ancestors of a commercial age. Kings and queens meet there in the intimacy of the royal circle. Churchmen who held great sway in their history-making periods look wisely out upon a world torn with new sensations, which were not new to them. Authors who made fame fretfully stand unmasked before the visitor, and musicians whose names are revered in opera and mispronounced by the owners of mechanical musical machines give token that writing music did not engross all of their moments.

So it is worth while to journey to the studio and profit by the work that the strange whim of an accomplished artist has made possible. It is indeed a museum that he has created. Brocades, laces, cloth of gold, medallions and quaint portraits find place in the strange city den. It would shock the artistic soul of the artist to hear his studio called a den, but then modern folk in large cities take liberties.

This unusual collection owes its presence in New York very largely to the fact that several millions of our fellow-citizens of the world have seen fit to engage in a controversy over the water that does not make for the safety of treasured articles in many of the hitherto quiet spots of



A Corner of Sacha Votichenko's Studio, the "Petit Trianon," in New York, Where Priceless Treasures Out of Old Russia, and Royal Gifts from Many Lands Are Heaped in an Historic Mass.

geography. And among the least quiet on the map is that part of Russia from which comes the musician. Nothing stands sacred before the mob in any land, and the mob rules Russia. Thus it happens that the intimate mementoes of kings and queens are refugees in the city of New York, flying before the horrors of war as the old people and children, with their home possessions, vanish before the smoking destruction of an invading army.

From Kings Dead and Gone.

Alexander of Russia, whose descendant in authority not so long ago faced a firing squad, finds sanctuary in the Central Park West home. Near him, in their dignity and state, the French kings repose safe from the onslaught of marching men and roaring cannon. Edward VII, father of the triple entente, which blocked the German idea of world domination more than any one movement, is enshrined near George V, who now rules the land of the Briton. And King Albert of Belgium, ruler of a kingdom that was and will be again, is in the royal set along with his queenly Elizabeth.

George Sand is represented by a letter that has unusual interest, and there are items from Chopin, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Gounod, Verdi, Puccini, Massenet and Debussy, all housed in the priceless album that forms for the seeker after interesting enlightenment the most entrancing treasure in the whole place.

In one part of the studio there is a peculiar stained glass door that excites curiosity. This curiosity need not go ungratified, for the pleasing artist who owns the collection will not hide this, or any other feature of his place. It leads to the Russian chapel, where before the altar there hangs the picture of Catherine the Second. Rarely has such a shrine been seen outside of Russia, and the most interesting part of the shrine is that it was

once a clothes closet in a hotel in Central Park West, and the artistic hand of the musician transformed it into a chapel, with all of the subdued lighting and mysticism-provoking trimmings that bring their own hypnotic spell.

A Strange Shrine.

Votichenko made this studio himself. It was his own creative genius that conceived its vagaries, and his own hands, chiefly devoted to drawing beautiful strains from musical instruments that worked out most of the detail. For a number of years he played to royal audiences. The court circles of the old world sought him and commanded his efforts. His last work abroad was in obedience to the command of Queen Alexandra to play at Marlborough House before the royal family of England. Ally and Teuton alike, when they had an ear for music and not for the cannon, knew his deft touch. In his journeys through royal courts he received from the men and women of the purple many personal gifts and testimonials, and these treasures he has brought to this city as the one remaining centre where Art does not have to dodge the cannon and the crowd. It was in July of 1917 that he came to New York and joined the already large colony of artists who have made the country's metropolises their haven during the big world storm. Among those who have heard him play in his home are men and women whose names are written prominently upon the social and financial chronicles of the time.

A Relic of Louis XIV.

Amid the quaint things found in the most picturesque corner of this studio by these interested folk of society is the royal tympanon, an instrument that was given to an ancestor of the Russian musician by King Louis XIV. of France. Among the maids in waiting at his court was one particu-

larly attractive, one who married Pantaleon Heberstreit, who was famous in his day as a musician. Louis presented him, as a wedding gift, with the rare old instrument. It is fashioned after the gaudy ideas of the period. This instrument is the great-great-grandfather of the modern piano and came before the day of the harpsichord and the spinet. It is so made that its strings can be played by the fingers, after the fashion of the harp, or it can be manipulated with a hammer. The peculiar characteristics of the tympanon fit it chiefly for music of the 17th century.

The instrument was taken to Russia, where it passed through several generations of Votichenko's forebears and finally to him. He mastered its vagaries early and now plays upon it many of the weird melodies that had their genesis in the years preceding the downfall of the old line of revolutionary monarchs.

It stands in the studio among his other treasures, surrounded by queer things from all parts of the earth, and among them the master musician moves as one in a strange world. But his chief delight is to study the habits and the characters of famous people by the one measure that he esteems adequate—the intimate articles that they themselves used and wrote in their most intimate surroundings.

He insists that no man or woman can use any article without leaving the impress of character upon it, and he feels that in his storehouse he has real parts of the famous figures that they represent.

How the Exercise of Blowing Bubbles Helps Heal Wounded Lungs

TO strengthen the wounded lungs of soldiers who have been injured a simple device for blowing bubbles has been found beneficial. Those suffering from wounds in the throat, and chest can improve their condition by blowing bubbles in a bottle of water, according to Dr. Pescher, a French surgeon.

The bubble blowing device is described in Popular Science Monthly as simply a long rubber tube attached to a bottle that rests in a basin. In order that the patient may receive the full benefit of the treatment his body should be erect and his chest thrown out so that the lungs may

be well expanded. The best effects are obtained by inhaling through the nose, slowly and regularly, and blowing through the tube, compelling all the water in the bottle to run off into the basin below. This exercise should be practised 30 times during each treatment. When the lungs improve a larger bottle is used.

In making this apparatus ready for use it is necessary to pour a small quantity of water into the basin and then place the water-filled bottle, mouth down, in the bottom of the receptacle, taking care that the water does not run from the bottle. One end of the tube is placed in the neck

of the bottle and the other in the mouth of the patient. Treatment given in this manner will aid the patient to regain his breathing facilities.

Dr. William T. Porter uses a tomato can cut in two, each half being shoved over a collar of tin so that it can be drawn out. A rubber tube enables the patient to breathe in and out of the can, filling it with the carbon dioxide he exhales. As the gas increases so does the patient's respiration. This machine is designed to increase the blood pressure. The can is washed with fresh air by the simple method of pulling the halves of the can apart.