

A FRAGMENT

Sylvia Townsend Warner

(In the Sylvia Townsend Warner collection at Dorchester Museum is one page of an article by Warner. It is from a magazine called Eve, and the publication date is 18th August 1926. Can any member supply the remainder of the article?)

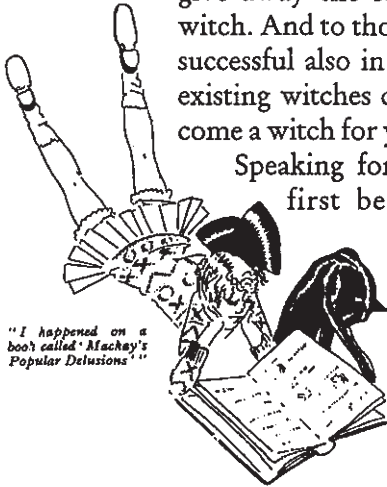
Women, in their passion for something new, are continually reviving something rather old. They collect Victorian tea-trays, they work samplers, they cut their hair as short as was done by their great-grandmothers.

I think there is a great deal of pleasure and profit to be found by women who revive the old art of witchcraft. There is an idea that witchcraft is an antiquated thing which can be best practised in the country, but this is an error. The traditional witch went to the witches' sabbath riding through the air on a broomstick. The modern witch will go on a vacuum-cleaner. There is nothing in witchcraft to make it in the least unsuitable for Ealing or Mayfair. It has many advantages: it is easy, it is cheap, it isn't obtrusive. Without any regular monthly payments, or exercises before breakfast, or installing large patent machines, or undergoing a special diet, a witch can do what she wants, and have what she wants, without exciting any comment, except the usual exclamation, "Selina always has such good luck!"

Why are some women so successful in all that they do? They grow the largest sweet peas, they have the neatest sandwiches, their complexions are so permanent, the backs of

their necks are so small; their children always have measles at school and never at home, and everyone enjoys their dinner parties. They can't all be geniuses, and they can't all have this phenomenal good luck. There isn't enough of it to go round. They are witches!

They don't say that they are. Indeed, if you asked them, they would assure you that they are not. Witches may not give away the secret that makes them a witch. And to those women who wish to be successful also in the happy infallible way, existing witches can only say, "Go and become a witch for yourself!"



"I happened on a book called 'Mackay's Popular Delusions'."

Speaking for myself I can say this. I first began to be interested in witchcraft at an early age. I was about ten years old, and had begun to find reading a pleasure, when I happened upon a book called "Mackay's Popular Delusions." It was bound in green

leather, it was in small black print, and it has a few incidental small, black pictures. It was very Victorian, rationalistic and superior, and it had a respectable, fusty smell. One of the "popular delusions" it dealt with was witchcraft. The writer felt contempt for the witches, but his contempt was qualified by pity, because he thought it a hard end for an old woman to be burnt or drowned. The account of witchcraft was very thorough, and gave many examples of spells and invocations for calling up the Devil. I could not understand much of these, because they were in Latin and other foreign languages, but I learnt them by heart, and used to repeat them to the cat. He was a black cat, and a manx cat, with a . . .

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