

**LET NO STUDENT GO ABROAD UNCHAPERONED,
WARNS MAUD POWELL, CELEBRATED VIOLINIST**

She Describes Some of the Insults to Which Young American Women Are Subjected in Europe – Necessity of Curbing the American’s Free Temperament – Some Specific Cases

by
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Too many art and music students seem to believe that by indulging in the more reprehensible habits of bohemianisms they thereby cultivate the “artistic temperament.” Such habits do not make talent. As many stupid people as talented indulge in follies that waste their time and strength, while great talent is found as often in men and women of strong character as in the weak and will-less.

In the student life the choice of companions, of teachers and of pensions is of vital importance. Let no student go abroad unchaperoned or unprotected unless he has proved beyond a doubt that he is strongly moulded, morally. The barriers are down over there, the whole moral attitude is different, especially on the continent, the surprise and unaccustomedness of it all are dangerous to the inexperienced.

In the early eighties I lived in Germany. With my mother at my side I have had my hair seized (I was scarcely more than a child) and men have asked me if it was real. And being spoken to or “at” was of frequent occurrence. A young American woman in our pension, tall, fair, well built, was addressed by army officers and other men every time she went out of the house. Another young woman, the first girl to be accepted in the Leipsic University, was persistently annoyed and insulted by her fellow students for months. She won the respect of professors and student ultimately, but it was a bitter fight.

Matters have undoubtedly improved since then, but a French gentleman of high culture told me not many years ago that American women are entirely misunderstood in Europe. Their freedom of manner is misinterpreted to their disadvantage, not to say danger.

“And, anyway, American women have to go to the very brink,” said he. Alas! How many have jumped or fallen over! Well-bred Americans nowadays can travel on the Continent unnoticed or mistaken for English of the better class, but those of coarser fiber, throwing all normal home restraint to the winds, arouse nothing but contempt in the mind of the foreigner, who, jealous of our prosperity, promptly makes up his mind to share some of it. Small wonder that we are the dupes of the unscrupulous (and their name is legion).

My contention is that we should think first and foremost of character and high standards of citizenship. American art will follow, all in good time. Our American temperament is one that drives us to extremes. We never do anything by halves. Even in our accidents, our graft systems and in our follies, we are stupendous. The American student, if left alone, either works too hard or dissipates too hard. He needs careful watching anywhere, but especially does he need it on the continent of Europe.

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