

# My Lady's Bower.

BY ALMA.

Lady readers are invited to discuss current topics in these pages, suggest subjects for discussion, and also to contribute photographic studies on any subject of interest. Contributions should be addressed: "Editor My Lady's Bower, New Zealand Illustrated Magazine," and should arrive early in the month. In all cases where stamps are enclosed for the purpose photos will be returned.

## CULTURE IN NEW ZEALAND GIRLS.

I WAS not a little surprised to read, recently, in an American magazine, an article which commented very adversely upon the conversation of the average American girl. My surprise, mingled with much relief, was owing to the fact that I had been cogitating over the remarkably inane, would-be-smart chit-chat, which in the majority of cases, forms the conversational stock of the New Zealander. And, although it is evident, that in the matter of uncultured conversation, our girls do not stand alone, still that is no reason why we too should not analyse the matter and set ourselves, if possible, on the right path. A short time ago, the query was propounded in these pages, "Are New Zealand Girls becoming less cultured?" Many correspondents have been interested in the matter, and have stated to me their views on the subject.

The first thought that occurs to one, is the fact that speech is an index of the mind. Therefore we must judge the mental acquirements of our girls by their day-by-day conversation. I am aware that very often the girl with a mind, speaks frivolously in a manner quite opposed to that which she admires in others. She may be influenced by her surroundings, it may seem to her affectation to converse as she thinks, and principally, being

reluctant to appear dull in comparison with her friends and acquaintances, she adopts the same style of conversation, and to all intents and appearances, is no whit more intellectual than any of them. This is weakness, sheer weakness. The girl who at heart dislikes smart flippancy, is a coward if she is not sufficiently strong of will to assert her own individuality. And thus it gradually becomes the accepted style to make a semi-cynical remark as the prelude to a conversation, to be always ready with a 'smart' reply, however cruel the personal application, may be, to attempt to 'score' all the time. And men converse accordingly with these girls, and some day leave them wonderingly lamenting in favour of a "rara avis" who can appreciate an intelligent remark. It may seem that I infer that, in most cases, men are dragged conversationally down to the level of the women. I know, however, that part of the fault lies with men. Instead of trying to discover whether the girls have minds, they too often plunge into the desert of flippant inanity.

At the same time, girls have the opportunity of neglecting to follow such a lead; and in how many cases do they show that they prefer something higher? I notice that in a society circle in New York, women are choosing for each month a topic which they agree to discuss during the whole of the allotted time. This