

happened?" she asked, as she followed Fairy.

"By the gate. Jack wants you to help to carry him indoors; he is insensible."

"Insensible! What has made him insensible? How did it all happen?"

"I don't know, it was all so quick. Charlie wanted me to dance with him, and Jack was angry because his lamb is dead, and he hit Charlie with his crook, and somehow Charlie fell and knocked his head against the stone gate-post," said Fairy.

They were close to Charlie and Jack, and Mrs. Shelley saw at a glance it was a more serious matter than she had at first supposed, and having, like Jack, a quick imagination, as well as a quick temper, she guessed what had prompted Jack to raise his hand against his brother, and, for the first time in her life, she turned and spoke unkindly to Fairy.

"Go out of my sight; it is all your fault; but for you there would never have been strife between my boys. Fool that I was to take you in, when something warned me, even then, it would lead to no good. Oh! Jack, Jack, my son, my son, what are we to do?"

Even then, in the first flow of her grief, Mrs. Shelley's sympathy seemed to be for her darling son who had struck the unlucky blow, and not for the poor boy stretched lifeless, to all appearance, on the ground.

"Get him indoors first, mother, and then I will run to Lewes for the doctor. If you will take his feet, we can easily manage him."

"Yes, yes, to be sure; we don't want all those men to know what has happened. Your father will be out in a few minutes for some more ale, and then we can tell him," said Mrs. Shelley, helping Jack to carry Charlie to the house.

Again Mrs. Shelley was thinking of her eldest boy. If, indeed, Charlie were killed, she knew it would be a terrible thing for Jack, and in any case she did not want all this shearing company to know what had happened, and gossip about it.

As she and Jack carried Charlie to the house, Fairy followed, trembling, and wondering what Mrs. Shelley's cruel

words meant. Why was it her fault? What had she done? When had she wilfully stirred up strife between the boys? And where was she to go out of Mrs. Shelley's sight? Was she to be turned out of the house because poor Charlie was dangerously hurt? Frightened and grieved for Charlie and Jack, cut to the quick by Mrs. Shelley's words, Fairy threw herself on the bench outside the door, and burst into tears.

A minute or two later, John Shelley, coming out of the tent to fetch some more beer from the house, saw the unwonted sight of Fairy crying as if her heart would break.

"Fairy! Why, my pet, what is it? Crying at my White Ram. What is the matter?" he asked, laying his hand on the bowed golden head.

"Oh John, John!" sobbed Fairy, clinging to him, "poor Charlie is dreadfully hurt; it was partly an accident and partly Jack hit him, and he fell, and he is insensible. Go in and see. I mustn't come."

John had not time to stop and ask why Fairy must not come, but went in to the little sitting-room, where Jack and Mrs. Shelley were applying restoratives to the still insensible Charlie.

"What is this?" said the shepherd, glancing sternly from the prostrate Charlie to Jack, who dared not meet his father's glance.

"Hush, John! it is a terrible business—listen." And in a few words Mrs. Shelley, who had heard from Jack exactly how it occurred, told her husband the story, and what prompted the unfortunate blow.

"Poor boys, poor boys! Jack, Jack, what were you thinking of?" cried John Shelley, stooping over Charlie to try and see where he was hurt.

"He is alive, thank God; perhaps he is only stunned; we must go for Dr. Bates at once," said John, after a brief examination of Charlie.

Here a stifled sob broke from Jack, who was standing with his head buried on his elbow which he was leaning on the corner of the chimney-piece, and caused the shepherd to turn to the son who was suffering far the most acutely. John crossed the room to his eldest son,

and put his arm round his neck. He did not say a word, but as Jack grasped his father's hand, he *knew that he not only forgave him, but sympathised with him also.* If they had never understood each other before they understood each other now, these two, as they stood half broken-hearted by the chimney-piece. Jack understood that whatever trouble might be in store for him in consequence of his hasty act, his father would be his friend and do his best to help him; he knew, too, that he would never hear a word of blame from his lips, for as children, the shepherd had ever been wont to forgive them directly they showed any signs of *repentance, and it did not require much penetration to see that Jack already bitterly regretted his hasty temper.* And the shepherd understood what it was that had roused Jack's anger; in fact, at any rate, he could quite sympathise with his vexation and annoyance at the death of the lamb, and he guessed at his jealousy with regard to Fairy, for Jack's love for her was no secret to his father.

"Jack, some one *must go for the doctor at once. Will you, or shall I?*" asked the shepherd.

"Oh! I will, I can go quicker; besides, you can't leave the men yet," said Jack, rising and seizing his hat.

"That is the best plan; I can't dismiss these men yet, but I will tell them we have had a bad accident, so I can't ask them to stay late, and I'll come in every few minutes, Polly, to see how you are going on," said the shepherd, as Jack left the house.

All this happened much quicker than it has taken to tell, and ten minutes after the blow was struck Jack was running across the fields to Lewes like a madman, knowing that his brother's life hung in the balance. While he was gone John Shelley told the men in the tent his youngest boy had met with a serious accident, and was lying between life and death, and, to their credit, the men unanimously stopped singing and took their departure before Jack returned with the doctor.

So ended John Shelley's first White Ram.

(To be continued.)

## A VEXED "WOMAN'S QUESTION."

By ISABELLA FVIE MAYO.

THERE is no more vexed "woman's question" than that of "clothes." It has been said that if we see how a man regards money and deals with it, we see the whole character of the man; and we think it is equally true that if we find out how a woman or girl feels and acts about clothes, we should have an excellent key to her nature and history.

There is the woman to whom "clothes" are the object of life. This does not necessarily mean that she is a rich woman, who can spend much money, nor does it mean

that she succeeds in being a well-dressed woman. She may be one of those who indulge in what the poet Crabbe called "The piteous patchwork of the needy vain," and who send "one poor robe through fifty fashions"; or she may be a millionaire, always on the alert to catch up the latest fashionable outrage on good taste and good sense. Only in either case, dress is always foremost in her thoughts. The first question she asks about any public event is, "What did the ladies wear?" Her first anxiety concerning any crisis in her own life is, "What shall I put

on?" At church she remembers the bonnets and not the text; and the moment she enters an evening party she appraises all the toilets present, and is unhappy unless hers is the most modish and costly, whether it be with the costliness of Worth's latest whim from the Continent, or of the last box of frippery received at the village shop.

If she feels that any reflection is cast on her waste of time and expenditure of money in the matter of dress, she defends herself in the following manner—that she owes it to society to look nice; that it is everybody's duty to

make the most pleasant appearance; that it is well to employ labour and to put money into circulation, etc., etc. If she has "gone in" for "culture," perhaps she may quote Browning—

"Be thy beauty  
Thy sole duty," etc.

On the other extreme there is the woman who does not care a bit for dress; who says she wishes we were born covered with black fur, or that we might cut holes in a sack for our feet and arms, and tie it up round our necks! She carries out her words so far as generally to appear in garments specially unsuitable to the occasion on which they are worn, and seems arrayed in remnants and oddments, chosen without any regard to her age, complexion, or circumstances; she thinks getting up a lace fichu is "a waste of time," and finds it too much "bother" to wear the little ornaments with which family affection may have provided her. She defends herself from any charge of slovenliness by pointing to the swamp of petty frivolity in which too many female lives are sunk, and avers that she scorns any regard which would be influenced by what she wore or did not wear. It may be said in her favour that she generally grows tidier and trimmer as she advances in life, and, proving much more amenable to the criticisms of "her young people" than she was to the raillery of school friends and cousins, is often a matron of comely and attractive appearance.

Then there remains the great multitude between these extremes—a multitude who does not quite know its own mind, and cannot find any principle whereby to regulate its movements; who wants to look pretty and to please, yet is afflicted in its conscience when it reflects on the sin of personal vanity, and on our responsibility for the souls and bodies which are perishing at our gates; a multitude who is sadly tossed between the conflicting arguments of the more strongly-biassed ladies whom we have just described, with the demoralising result that it generally leans in practice towards the former, and in theory towards the latter.

It is this great multitude of girls and women whom we would like to help by offering a few broad principles for their consideration; for principles underlie everything. And it is only by our grasp on principles that we can guide ourselves through the ever-varying details of duty.

Let us say at once that it is the right of all to be well dressed, because that means to be dressed suitably to the climate and circumstances in which they live, and to their occupation, age, and appearance. A woman may be quite as well dressed in print and serge as in velvet and satin. When you hear people complaining that "nowadays everybody will go so well dressed," you hear a misuse of language; and language loosely used is a dangerous thing; because it leads to looseness of idea. Nobody has any right to complain of anybody's being well dressed. What they really mean is that these are unsuitably dressed. And there is a great deal of unsuitable dress in the world of the kind, more or less in degree, of that seen in the daughter of a *parvenu* millionaire of the Western States, who, when she went to a sensible New England seminary, where the young ladies were expected to wait on themselves, descended to the scullery in a velvet robe and diamond earrings!

Anybody, therefore, is not well dressed whose attire unfits her for the performance of those actions which *ought* to be her duty. The tight-laced, be-flounced be-trained damsel proclaims to the world her utter unwomanliness. The nursery would soon make havoc in her finery. Let us hope she would never carry it into a sick room, and in the kitchen it would be a nuisance and a bad example. But then "Isn't it pretty for wearing in the parlour

during those hours when we are doing nothing?" Let us reply with other questions: "Ought there to be hours when we are doing nothing?" And "In providing ourselves with clothes only fit for such occasions, are we not falling into the error we often smile at in working men who will buy stiff, uncomely Sunday garments of broadcloth and silk hats, instead of providing themselves with gala suits of the sensible tweed that will serve afterwards for work-a-day wear?"

We began by saying that everybody has a right to be well dressed in the true meaning of the phrase. But, as Ruskin says in his grand "Letter to Young Girls," "Although in a truly Christian land every young girl would be dressed beautifully and delightfully: in this entirely heathen and Baal-worshipping land of ours, not one girl in ten has either decent or healthy clothing, and you have no business, till this be amended, to wear anything fine yourself." And Jean Ingelow, a writer with whose works you cannot too soon make acquaintance, brings this indictment against our sex—"For them mainly are the gorgeous pageants, are the costly clothes, the gold lace, the carpets of velvet pile, the diamonds and the splendours of life. The pride of life is in their souls, and mainly for them. It is luxury that stands in the way of the civilised world, so that men cannot marry young and be happy. For the earth does not produce unbounded riches for a few while yet the many can have enough. Equality is a word without meaning or possibility; but notwithstanding, squalor and destitution might be things outside our experience, as should be luxury and waste."

This brings us to the principle that should guide our expenditure, whether the sum at our command be large or small. Of material we should buy the best and most durable within reach of our purse. We have no right to keep people employed in weaving and making up useless and perishable shoddy articles. It is a dishonour to them to do such work, and if they are forced to do it that they may get bread to eat, we are keeping them in the worst kind of slavery. That we pay them for it does not make it any better, any more than if we paid them for any other degrading and wasteful service. We insult them by taking their industry and trampling it under foot, as if they had no concern in their work, but only in their wages. How can the industrial classes retain self-respect under such circumstances? And when self-respect is lost, respect for others always goes also. Quite lately we saw a lady sitting in a dressmaker's room watching the "setting-up" of what was considered a very grand garment. Its materials were certainly of the costliest, but it had yards of delicate silk trailing on the ground to an extent that must have ensured their speedy destruction, even on the most ceremonious occasion, and over the short front skirt hung masses of tulle, festooned by elaborate iridescent glass drops, worthy of the decoration of a South Sea Island god! Seeing our friend's grave face, we asked her what she was thinking of, and she replied, "I am thinking of the men who wove that silk to be trodden on, and the girls who sewed those beads to be smashed. Poor things! I would rather be the grimmest maid-of-all-work toiling for real human needs, or the roughest tailor or cobler, working to cover honest human nakedness."

Let all dress, therefore, always be as durable as can be, both in material and mode. As to "fashion," even that has a root of necessity and common sense, because dress must change as social habits and customs change. Ruskin advises that no garment should ever be thrown aside because unfashionable, and that no costly fashion should ever be followed. Think what that word "costly" involves. Tight lacing,

heavy flouncing, open bodices, high heels, and so forth, costly of health; dead birds' wings, and everything else costly of suffering; complicated trimmings, costly of time and human energy in a world where there are thousands of little children growing up ill taught, thousands of sick people dying ill tended, thousands of industrious folk slaving to death for a paltry pittance.

It seems to us that when a lady has once discovered the dress best suited to her age, appearance, and condition—the ideal robe in which she would wish to be painted for the eyes of unborn generations—her future study will be, not how much she can "follow the fashion," but how little she need follow it to escape singularity. Fashion has nothing to do with a desire to be pleasant in the sight of others. Let any of our readers turn to the graceful studies of girl-life with which M. E. E. makes us so familiar, and then to the figures in any fashion-plate, and ask themselves candidly which are most likely to commend themselves to the eye of artistic taste or of domestic affection?

And here we come to the matter of making ourselves "fair to see." This is a decided duty. We have to make ourselves attractive to those whose love we desire, and to those from whose wisdom we wish approval. But we imagine that the desire to be loved and approved has a very small share in extravagance and fantasticalness in dress. Let us speak out plainly. We seldom befrill and bedeck ourselves, and waste time and money, to please our parents or friends, but rather to spite and outshine our "dearest enemies" among our female acquaintances. Suitability of style, dainty freshness, and tasteful variety will always satisfy love; and good sense, combined with a little industry and taste, will easily secure these desirable objects. I remember the approving notice bestowed by a great divine and philanthropist on the appearance of a young literary woman, who, travelling under difficult and troublesome conditions, was provided with a very few dresses of the plainest quality and style, but who by artfully varied arrangements of muslin or lace and coquettish little additions of tasteful ribbon, managed to give her friends' eyes an ever-new surprise and pleasure. Can there be a prettier picture than that of a modest little maiden trying how a rose-coloured bow will brighten her sober dress, to please papa—or perhaps somebody else?

And now we come to the consideration of "luxury." If we are always to remember the ignorant and the starving, are we never to have anything whose price might have paid teachers or bought bread? Let us hear Ruskin again:—"What of fine dress your people insist upon your wearing, take and wear proudly and prettily for their sakes." Let us never seek luxury of any sort—let us rather avoid it; but let us still accept it with delight when it comes to us by the hands of genuine love. The diamond in a girl's engagement ring, the gold locket enclosing her mother's portrait, the dainty filigree bracelet sent by her brother abroad, the exquisite lace set worked by her dearest friends, are on quite a different line from the fashionable jewellery and ornaments which she buys for herself or teases her relatives to buy for her—as different (with all reverence be it written) as the gift of the alabaster box of precious ointment tendered by a loving woman to her Master is different from the cases of Rimmel's perfume which are squandered at every ball.

And thus we see that the great principle which underlies this vexed "woman's question" of clothes is the great principle of love itself—love, serving others, considering others; love bestowing, love receiving. Such love needs no law, being itself the highest law.