

A WOMAN'S WARDROBE IN PARIS

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IT may be safely asserted, notwithstanding the absence of a court, and of an ostensible leader of society, that on most points connected with the toilet Parisiennes still hold their old supremacy. French women are often accused of extravagance in dress, and this is in a great measure true. Not that they have a large

number of gowns of one sort at a time—on the contrary, they have perhaps fewer than would be considered necessary elsewhere—but they make up for quantity by quality, and each is perfect of its kind in material, make and finish. Good dressmakers are very expensive; a handsome visiting costume from Worth, for instance, would always cost from \$150 to \$200; but then even the most elegant of women only go to such houses for some of their toilettes, contenting themselves with smaller fry for their more simple frocks, in which cases the grander ones are often useful as models, or as suggestive of ideas. And although Parisiennes are more ready to wear their dresses straight on until they are done with, rather than allow those which are half worn to accumulate, of course a woman with any pretensions as a leader of fashion must have gowns suitable to all occasions. First of all there are the indoor toilettes, for morning and afternoon wear, which are quite distinct from those worn for morning shopping, or afternoon walks and drives, while visits, receptions and weddings have each their proper attire. Then there are the intermediate gowns for small dinners or concerts—something between a smart morning dress and the regular evening dress, too elaborate for the former, but high to the throat, with long sleeves—a style of dress unnecessary in England, where *decolleté* dresses are much more frequently seen than in France, where they are almost exclusively reserved for balls or very big dinners. There must be a separate equipment, too, for the Riviera in the winter, and for Trouville in the summer.

Another fruitful source of expenditure is the attention paid to the delicacy and elegance of the underwear, the perfection of underskirts as to cut and fit, this latter detail being most necessary to the setting of the dress, while bonnet, mantle, gloves, shoes and hosiery must all be in accord with the costume. This care as to accessories may seem excessive, but without it no woman is called well dressed.

Naturally, these remarks apply only to the richer classes, though in nearly all grades the outlay is proportionately large. Even in the middle classes, a girl with a marriage portion of \$20,000 will spend a quarter of it on her trousseau, in which, however, house linen plays a considerable part, and the supply of personal linen is enormous. And it is only married women who dress so elaborately, girls affecting extreme simplicity.

Humbler folks, who, either from choice or necessity, are content with ready-made garments, find a plentiful supply, superior in many ways to that found, at all events, in London, and with the exercise of a little taste and judgment may manage to present a very fair appearance at a comparatively small cost.

One exception may perhaps be taken to the dressing of French women, and that is their somewhat sheepish adoption of any prevailing fashion. Individuality in dress is a thing almost unknown, all women being, broadly speaking, attired on the same pattern, allowing, of course, for variations in costliness and elegance. This want of independence in the choice of raiment, while it prevents the eccentricities and vagaries often to be found in an assemblage of English people, also precludes the development of any originality in the matter of dress, which should always be to a certain degree the outcome of the wearer's personality. There is no doubt that many women gain immensely by adapting fashions to their own requirements, instead of accepting them unconditionally.

In the matter of millinery French women have a strong sense of the picturesque, and show a certain daring in their airy arrangements of flowers, butterflies, lace, or other trimming, as well as in the coquettish curves into which they so cleverly bend their hats. As a rule, too, they have a quick eye for color, and while less precise and exacting in the question of perfect matching of shades, they generally succeed in producing an harmonious *ensemble*, being especially happy in the combination of different colors. Subdued tints and half-tones are more favored than the more decided and brilliant shades, though occasionally one is almost startled by some wonderfully vivid costume, or dash of color