

and just how it could be remedied. But these poor men are singularly deluded in many ways, and upon these delusions clever women play, as a master plays upon an organ. And young girls, who have not had time to study into the philosophy of it—how should the poor things know that clothes have any philosophy?—as usual have to suffer for it.

One of these delusions is the "simple white muslin" delusion. When a man speaks of a "simple white muslin" in the softly admiring tone which he generally adopts to go with it, he means anything on earth in the line of a thin, light stuff, which produces in his mind the effect of youth and innocence. A ball dress or a cotton morning gown is to him a "simple white muslin."

Now a word with you, you dear, unsophisticated man. I have heard you, with the sound of your hundred-and-fifty-dollar-a-month salary ringing in your ears, gurgle and splash about a girl who wears "simple white muslins" to balls, and I have heard you set down as "extravagant" and "too rich for your purse," the girl who wore silk. There is no more extravagant or troublesome gown in the world than what you call a "simple white muslin." In the first place it never is muslin, unless it is Paris muslin, which is no joke if you are thinking of paying for

it yourself, as it necessitates a silk lining, which costs more than the outside. If it is trimmed with lace that would take as much of your salary as the coal for all winter would come to. If trimmed with ribbons they must be changed often to freshen the gown, whose only beauty is its freshness. Deliver me from a soiled or stringy white party dress! If it can be worn five times during a winter the girl is either a careful dancer or else a wall-flower. In either case, after every wearing she must have it pressed out and put away as daintily as if it were egg shells, all of which is the greatest nuisance on earth. Often such a gown is torn all to pieces the first time it is worn. Scores of "simple white muslin" ball gowns at a hundred dollars apiece are only worn once or twice.

Now take the "extravagant" girl with her flowered taffeta silk, or plain satin, or brocade dress. There is at once the effect of richness and elegance. No matter how sweet and pretty she is, you at once decide that you never could afford to dress her. But that taffeta cost, perhaps, only a dollar a yard. The satin, possibly a dollar and a half. They require almost no trimming, because the material is so handsome and the effect must be as simple as possible. Such a gown never need be lined with silk unless you want to do it. Many a girl gets up such a gown for fifty or sixty dollars, and then the service that there is in it! It doesn't tear, it doesn't crush. When she comes home she looks as fresh as when she started. When it soils at the edge of the skirt she has it cleaned, and there she is with a new dress again. Do you call that extravagant? Why, my dear sirs, it is only the very rich who can afford to wear "simple white muslins."

There is a hollowness about having a man praise your gowns when you know he doesn't know what he is talking about. When a man praises your clothes he is always praising you in them. You never will hear a man praise even the good dressing of a woman whom he dislikes. But girls who positively hate another girl often will add, "But she certainly does know how to dress."

And so the experienced woman wears her expensive clothes for other women and produces her "effects" for men. She wears scarlet on a cold or raw day, and the eyes of the men light up when they see her. It makes her look cheerful and bright and warm. She wears gray when she wants to look demure. Let a man beware of a woman in silvery gray. She looks so quiet and dovelike and gentle that she has disarmed him before she has spoken one word, and he will snuggle down beside her and let her turn his mind and his pocket wrong side out. A woman couldn't look designing in light gray if she tried. He dotes upon the girl in pale blue. Pale blue naturally suggests to his mind the sort of girl who can wear it, which is generally a blonde with soft, fluffy hair, fair skin and blue eyes—appealing, trustful, baby-blue eyes. Did you ever notice that men always instinctively put confidence in a girl with blue eyes, and have their suspicions of the girl with brilliant black ones, and will you kindly tell me why? Is it that the limpid blue eye, transparent and gentle, suggests all the soft, womanly virtues, and because he thinks he can see through it, clear down into that blue-eyed girl's soul, that she is the kind of girl he fancies she is? I think it is, but some of the greatest little frauds I know are the purry, kitteny girls with big innocent blue eyes.

Blazing black eyes, and the rich warm colors which dark-skinned women have to wear, suggest energy and brilliance and no end of intellect. Men look into such eyes and seem not to be able to see below the surface.

They have not the pleasure of a long, deep gaze into immeasurable depths. And so they think her designing and clever, and perhaps (God save the mark!) even intellectual, when perhaps she has a wealth of love and devotion and heroism stored up behind that impulsive disposition and those dazzling black eyes, which would do and dare more in a minute for some man she had set that great heart of hers upon, than your cool-blooded, tranquil blonde would do in forty years. A mere question of pigment in the eye has settled many a man's fate in life, and established him with a wife who turned out to be very different from the girl he fondly thought he was getting.

Yet whenever I complain to experienced married women of how discouraging it is to wear your good clothes for unappreciative men, they beg me, with tears in their eyes, not to be guilty of the heresy of wishing things different. If they have married one of the noticing kind they tell me harrowing tales of gorgeous costumes having been cast aside because these wretched men made fun of or took a prejudice to them and "made remarks." And they point with envy to Mrs. So-and-So, whose husband never knows what she has on, but who thinks she looks lovely in everything, so that she is at liberty to dress as she pleases. When a woman defers to her husband's taste she sometimes is the best-dressed woman in the room. And sometimes another woman, dressing according to another man's taste, is the worst-dressed. So you see you never can tell. "De mule don't kick 'cordin' to no rule."

There is something rather pathetic to me about a man's being so ignorant of why a woman's dress is beautiful, but only the effect remaining in his memory. He remembers how she looked on a certain day in a certain gown. He thinks he remembers her dress. He thinks he would know it again if he saw it. But the truth is that he is remembering the woman herself, her face, her voice, her eyes—above all, what she said and how she said it. If she wore a scarlet ribbon in her dark hair, a red rose in another woman's hair will most unaccountably bring it all back to him, and he will not know why he suddenly sees the whole picture rise out of the past before his eyes, nor why his throat aches with the memory of it.

I know one of these men whose descriptions of a woman's dress are one of the experiences of a lifetime. He loves the word bombazine. His mother must have worn a gown of black bombazine during his impressionable age. And he never will be successful in describing a modern gown until bombazines again become the rage. This same dear man brought back to his invalid wife a description of a fashionable noon wedding, which consisted of the single item that the bride wore a blue alpaca bonnet. It really would be of interest from a scientific point of view to know what suggested that combination to any intelligence, even if it were masculine!

I have more evidence to go on, however, when I wonder why the idea of the cost penetrates a man's brain when shown a new gown by any member of his family, all of whom he is weak enough to adore. His daughter will say, "Daddy, do look here just one minute. How do you like my new gown?" And the answer never varies: "Very pretty indeed, I hope it's paid for." He will say that of a cotton frock made two years ago—he never knows—of a silk *négligé* or of a ball gown of the newest make. The fashion produces no impression upon him, nor the material, nor the cut. But let his daughter put on any kind of a pale green dress, and stand before him with the question, "Daddy, how do you like my new gown?" While he is raising his head from his book he begins the old formula, "Very pretty, I hope—"; then he stops and says, "I have seen that dress before. Child, you grow to look more like your mother every day of your life."

And there is a little break in his voice, and before he goes on reading he takes off his glasses and wipes them, and looks out of the window without seeing anything, and sits very still for a moment. It was the sight of the pale green dress. When he came home from the war his lovely young wife, whom he lost when she was still young and beautiful, came to meet him, holding her baby son in her arms for his father to see, and she had worn a pale green gown.

Why certain kinds of clothes are associated in the public mind with certain kinds of women is to me an amusing mystery. Why are old maids always supposed to wear black silks? And why are they always supposed to be thin?—the old maids, I mean, not the silks. Why are literary women always supposed to be frayed at the edges? And why, if they keep up with the fashions and wear patent leathers, do people say in an exasperatingly-astonished tone, "Can that woman write books?" Why not, pray? Does a fragment of genius corrupt the æsthetic sense? Is writing a hardening process? Must you wear shabby boots and carry a baggy umbrella just because you can write? Not a bit of it. Little as some of you men may think it, literary women have souls, and a woman with a soul must, of necessity, love laces and ruffled petticoats, and high heels, and rosettes. Otherwise, I question her possession of a soul.

As to men's clothes I know very little. I know that tan shoes should never be worn with evening dress, and I also know better than to trump my partner's ace. I know that I always associate a frock coat with side whiskers. Perhaps because I do so hate both. But then I always associate smart clothes with the wicked ways of the world, which is very wrong of me, and my mother never likes to hear me say so. She says it isn't funny at all. I don't see anything funny about it either. I think it is sad. I hate to think, if I hear of a young man's having fine principles, that I dread to see him for fear his coat-tails will be too short and his sleeves too long.



"Men look into such eyes and seem not to be able to see below the surface"

## FROM A GIRL'S STANDPOINT

### \*III—THE PHILOSOPHY OF CLOTHES

By Lilian Bell

Author of "The Love Affairs of an Old Maid," "A Little Sister to the Wilderness," etc.

DRAWINGS BY W. GRANVILLE SMITH



If you are interested in the spectacle of letting people paint their own portraits, at the same time entirely unconscious that they are engaged in doing so, ask a lot of women and girls whether they dress to please men or other women, and then listen carefully to what they say and watch their faces well while they are saying it. Most of the girls will say they

dress to please women, and the reason I ask you to watch their faces is that you may see the subtle changes going on by which they persuade themselves that they are telling the truth. Women—nice, sweet women, the kind we know—seldom tell a real untruth. But they have a way of persuading themselves that what they are about to say is the truth. Women must believe in themselves before they can hope to make other people believe in them, therefore they have themselves to persuade first of all. For that reason I think women are naturally more honest than men, for when men are going to utter an untruth they never care whether they believe it or not, just so they can make other people believe it. And the so-called brutal honesty of man is only brutal want of tact. That poor, patient, misused word "honesty"! How sick it must get of its abuse.

Yes, girls really believe, I suppose, that they dress for other girls. But they don't. They dress for men. And only experience will teach them the highest wisdom in the matter. But that they cannot acquire until they believe that only another woman will know just how well they are dressed, and above all, whether Doucet turned them out, or a dressmaker in the house at two dollars a day.

Men only take in the effect. Women know how the effect is produced. Of course, now I am speaking of the general run of men and women. Neither the man who clerked at Cash & Silk's nor the one who pays his wife's bills in Paris, but the man in his native state of charming ignorance of materials, the man who always suggests a "gusset" as a remedy for too scant a gown; who calls insertion "tating," and who, in setting out for the opera, will tell his wife to put on her "bonnet and shawl," although she may have on point lace and diamonds. In his more modern aspect he tells you that a girl at the Junior Promenade had on a blue dress with feathers around her neck—which you must translate into meaning anything from blue satin to organdy, and that between dances she wore a feather boa.

It is the effect only that men take in, and when a man goes into fits over a gown of pale green on a hot day, just because you look so cool and fresh in it, when you know that you only paid forty cents a yard for it, and only grunts when you show him your velvet and ermine wrap, which cost you two hundred dollars, I would just like to ask you if it pays to dress for him. Women know this from a sorrowful experience. Girls have to learn it for themselves. A ball dress of white tarlatan made up over white paper cambric, with a white sash, will satisfy a man quite as well as a Paris muslin trimmed with a hundred dollars' worth of Valenciennes lace and made up over silk. Most of them never would know the difference.

I don't know whether to be sorry for these men or not. It must be lovely not to agonize and plan and worry to have everything the best of its kind. I'd like to take in only the effect and never know why I was pleased. Too much analysis is death to unmitigated rapture. You always are haunted by knowing exactly what is lacking,



"He dotes upon the girl in pale blue"

\*The third of a series of articles written by Miss Bell for the JOURNAL. The first article, "The Man Under Thirty-five," appeared in the December, 1895, issue; the second in the February, 1896, number. Others will be published during the year.