

three short capes to the shoulders adopted from coachman capes as worn during the first French revolution.

Couliissé, or drawn trimmings, are new, especially as applied to bodices. Sometimes a piece of silk so gathered forms the front breadth of the skirt and the front of the bodice, with the rest as a sort of over-dress—a very fashionable style; while in others the front of the bodice forms a vest, with five or six runnings at the neck, and then a heading where a low bodice would begin, below which to the waist are a series of close-set runners; the centre part of the back is also couliissé and drawn in at the waist, spreading out above and below.

Simulated skirts only beneath the polonaises are new and economical, and much of the flouncing round the skirts is sloped to them, and not as heretofore straight. Kilt-plaitings are intermixed with box and other varieties of fancy plaits.

Tucks are coming in once more, especially on the front of draperies of the scarf order, and are particularly fashionable on children's dresses.

Beads find their way on to most things—bonnets, dresses, scarves, and embroideries—such as clair de lune, clair de soleil, amber, pink, jet, steel, and silver. Most of these are made in Germany, but come to England from Paris. Clair de lune, having the shimmer of a black-leaded grate, is by far the most popular, especially on mantles.

Paletots of a modified form, shorter and not so clinging, Dolman's and long jackets, are the shapes of the season, and they are made in thick reversible cloth, matelassé cloth and silk, fawn cloths, and cashmere cloth—the last-named new, warm, and light. The straight piece of material or plastron laid down the front of many new mantles is in some formed into a muff, which is scarcely visible when not in use, yet serves as a most comfortable receptacle for the hands, and there is no fear of losing it.

The newest ulsters and waterproofs have triple

capcs. The latest fringe is sewn on with the heading downwards, so that the fringe falls over it; it is also applied in tufts.

A new style of braiding has been brought in; the narrow braid is sewn on with the edge uppermost, instead of being flat; the patterns are close and intricate.

The winter's bonnets are made in felt, beaver, plush, and velvet, trimmed with feathers and reversible ribbons, each side being a different colour. The newest additions, however, are gilt or silvered wings and quills, stuck in at the side in the midst of the folds; a goose-quill or a crow-quill in gold is a favourite ornament on a Paris bonnet. Strings and curtains are universally adopted, but there is great variety in the shapes, most of them high over the face, yet close; some of the hood forms for young ladies resembling the Bébé bonnet of last winter.

Hats are as picturesque and as masculine as of old. There seems to be no choice between the picturesque Rubens, Dame Trot, and Gainsborough, and the helmet or cleft-crowned felt, which any gentleman might wear. The Vienna felts are a novelty, having long hairs of a distinctive colour all over, which brushed down show the ground in marked contrast.

The new fan-holders are metal belts, wrought in arabesque or filligree designs; they are made to fit to the front of the waist, the rest being a chain from which the fan is suspended. The new fans have the two sides of different colours; both are painted in body-colour, the design being carried on to the ribs.

Silk gloves with a warm lining and many buttons are comfortable winter wear, and will be generally adopted.

The stockings are in plain colours with contrasting toes and heels, embroideries being introduced on to some of the more expensive kinds in a broad line from the instep to the ankle.

These items will, we hope, answer the difficult question, "What to wear?"

WITH HOP-PICKERS IN KENT.



IT is early morning, and I am with a friend at Maidstone. We have been travelling for about two hours from London, looking at beautiful bits of country lit with sun. The train has carried us through leagues of land covered with ripened hops, that are now besieged with the busy workers that for days have been coming to the gardens in crowds. We have seen motley groups of them at their labour as we have passed; we have wondered at the many miles of luxurious bine, with clustering cones hanging like green grapes; and now we are in the centre of the Hop Country, walking along the quiet, quaint old High Street of Maidstone.

Over our morning meal we are assured that the Poet Laureate may often be seen strolling about the streets down here, and we are reminded that "Queen Mary" is historically connected with this part of the country,

and that there are references in the drama to Maidstone and the neighbourhood. We challenge our informant to justify his assertion with a passage from the play—"An instance, come, an instance!" He readily replies—

"The bells are ringing at Maidstone,
Doesn't your worship hear?"

"This," he says, "has reference to All Saints'. The bells ring there just as they did in Queen Mary's time, and you may still hear them where Wyatt heard them, and a fine walk it is out there."

This poetical association gives us a touch of new pleasure, but our object is not of an antiquarian kind, and we cannot therefore visit the mustering-ground of the famous rioters whose deeds are chronicled in history and remembered in romance. We have come out to-day to see the hop-gardens in the time of harvest, and to watch the pickers at work; and we are now on our way with bright, cool weather to cheer us.

We soon leave the townfolk behind, and find ourselves in the plantations. In a little while we are shut out from all sights of the charming Kent country, and seem almost buried in the unfamiliar growth about us. We can see nothing on any side but hops clinging about their poles, that stand about fifteen feet high. The paths appear interminable, and we can see nothing beyond us but the sky.

The hop-plants are grown in many flower-gardens for ornament, and this can surely not be wondered at, for they might almost be mistaken for vines, and their light cones for fruit. Still, they have a peculiar, un-English appearance, and to people who do not live in these parts, and have been accustomed all their lives to see country acres covered with wheat and barley, they may be more suggestive of parts of Italy and France than of England.

We wander up and down till at last we come to a break in the forest, and find ourselves with busy companies of pickers. They are a strange, mixed lot of very poor people, dressed in all kinds of clothes that do not fit them. There is nothing in their appearance to suggest that they are country people, or that they have lived much in fields and lanes. Some of them recall to me the faces of men I have seen using the pick at Portland, or making hay (what an occupation for convicts!) at Dartmoor. They are not the comfortable poor folk you meet with in the novels of George Eliot. They are such people as stand in the reek of London gin-palaces; they come from the throng that live in the dark, unhealthy rookeries of the Great City, that you may meet in the Seven Dials or the New Cut, that you may notice in the galleries of theatres "on the Surrey side," that live a life-long struggle for bread, and suffer a daily temptation to wrong. You may feel inclined to add, "Let no such men be trusted," but perhaps on a little reflection you would be willing to admit that there could scarcely be a happier lot in life than to be able to practically help such people. My friend is rather timid in their company, and whispers a line from Shakespeare—"By these *pickers* and stealers." And yet probably the worst of them would prefer to get their food honestly than to search for it in such a way as to give them "a fine double-barrelled chance" of coming disagreeably into contact with the police. See how busy they can be when they have work to do!

My friend becomes more courageous, and begins to put some questions to the pickers. "How long are hops growing?" he asks of an old man with a pipe in his mouth. "Well, sir," he replies, taking up a bunch of bine, and coming nearer, "hops like these, sir—" He does not finish the sentence, but in another instant he is busily brushing my friend's boots with the bine, amidst the general laughter of all around. With as much politeness as he can assume he then asks my friend to "part." We soon find out that if a hopper can succeed in brushing a visitor's boots with some of the bine he is expected to "pay his footing," and my friend accordingly "parts" with some of the "current coin of the realm." The custom having been honourably observed, the old man's tongue becomes very

movable, and he is willing to tell us all that he knows. We find that there are male hops and female hops, but that "male hops ain't no use, 'cause they don't bear nowt but bloom, and that ain't no use." The old man tells us that hops are not fully grown until the third or fourth year after plantation, but that they bear to some extent in the second year, and that they are called second-year hops or third-year hops, according to their age. This accounts for some plants being smaller, and weaker, and thinner than others. When new grounds are planted, the grower must wait two or three years before he can expect much return for his money, but when the plants are full-grown they will yield every year for a life-time. The old man assured us that some of the gardens had "gone on" for a hundred years without fresh planting.

Hop-growing is sometimes a rather dangerous speculation. The plants are delicate, treacherous, and sensitive. Frost for a few nights will do great mischief amongst them, and at certain times of the year they naturally give great anxiety to the growers. They are liable also to be infested with lice. "A good year," however, gives such rich profits that a grower on a large scale can easily make a fine season pay for a poor one.

The hops, especially where they are being picked, have a faint, yet keen kind of odour, that is very agreeable. The picking is a most picturesque occupation. The thousands work for money, but there are many who pick for good appetites, and it is not often they are disappointed. Hops not only give good appetites to those who can work amongst them, but they give sleep to the suffering. It may not be generally known that the Prince of Wales in his severe illness, several years ago, was induced to sleep by a pillow of hops.

The hoppers are paid in proportion to the quantity they pick, and they do not waste much time. For a shilling they pick from four to six bushels, according to the crop, and arrangements made before the work is commenced. Each picker (or family of pickers) has a bin, which is emptied at certain times of the day, and a tally kept of the quantity taken. The plant is cut near the ground, and the pole is pulled up and taken with its growth to the bin, where it is speedily attacked by two or three pickers, or perhaps by only one. In any case it is soon stripped of its hops by practised hands that are dyed with the work. There are, of course, many bins, and each has its group of pickers, and the garden is gradually overrun till there is nothing left on the ground but bine and stripped poles. These poles are worth an extra glance of attention. Considering the hundreds of thousands used, they are wonderfully well shaped and straight. They are from Norway, and cost about fourpence each. Robin Hood and Little John would probably have liked such poles as these to cut down for quarter-staff play; and poor Barnaby Rudge, what a fine choice he would have here! When the season is at an end, and the cones are packed in what are called "pockets," the poles are piled up here and there about the grounds, where they stand through the

winter, adding with their barrenness a dreariness to dark days and bleak plantations. In this district the difference between summer and winter is wonderfully great. In winter you may see, in almost any direction, miles of bare gardens, with little or nothing to break the monotony beyond piled-up poles. In the summer the plants are so prodigal of growth that you can scarcely see anything beyond you but green leaves.

These men and women and children, picking out

are called houses, but they seem to be good imitations of stables. Still, as they are only occupied for a few weeks in the year, it is not necessary that they should be very elaborate. They are at least capable of affording comfortable shelter, and compared with "a lodging on the cold, cold ground," may be regarded almost as palaces.

Hoppers are seen at their best when they are picking in the sun, and when their varied gipsy-like colours



"HOPPERS ARE SEEN AT THEIR BEST WHEN THEY ARE PICKING IN THE SUN."

here in the early autumn weather, make many a pleasant picture, and they are doing such work as they cannot often get to do. These hoppers, however, have had to face very hard treatment in past years, and even now they are not so well provided for as they might be, though much has been done for their comfort. After the day's work they have had to sleep about the lanes, under trees or in barns, in fair weather and foul. Now, however, there is a Society for the Employment and Improved Lodging of Hop-pickers. The sanitary authorities have also worked well to bring about the improvement of late years. Near the gardens there are now buildings for the use of the hoppers. They

give warmth to the picture. The sun, however, usually sets in the evening, and then the people who are about the paths of these plantations do not inspire the happiest of thoughts. Pickers seen in the dusk, with their tattered families, would make many men almost afraid to think of the possibilities of human calamity. And yet it is a time of fortune with these people. What must their time of trouble be like, when they are "trying to get through the winter?" They seem to have no means of enjoyment. The world of innocent and healthy pleasure is shut against them. And if it were not, it seems a contradiction that men in their position should ever dream of enjoying themselves.

Yet a great deal is surely, if slowly, being done for them, and their condition is gradually improving. These thousands are for the most part from London. Some of them come by very cheap excursion trains, and a fair proportion walk the whole distance, starting with little or nothing, and living on the way as they can, begging here and there, and sleeping in such rough sheltering-places as they can find. When they are at the end of their journey, however, they can

ing thought, wishing them a good harvest and a safe winter.

We are too tired to stay longer amongst them, and we begin to think of returning to our resting-place. There are some miles betwixt us and Maidstone, but we can go the whole distance by what Tennyson calls "the brimming Medway," and this being so we are not disposed to quarrel with our walk. Years ago, in the hopping season, hundreds of pickers came



ON THE MEDWAY.

secure some comforts. They find tents to lodge in until they are employed, and then there are houses for them, and if they work well and are careful, they can return to London for the winter campaign with a little money in hand.

When we have walked about ten miles in various directions we find ourselves at East Farleigh, and in a lane we notice one or two stalls with bacon, and cheese, and herrings, and such things as hoppers can afford to buy. Trade is going on busily enough, and it may be that these pickers will thoroughly enjoy such food as they can get, so that we can at least leave them with some consol-

here on Sunday mornings to bathe and wash their children and their clothes, and prepare the Sunday dinner, but the "legend-laden" river is not so offended now. As we walk on the banks this evening we notice nothing out of harmony with "the gentleness of old romance" that is always suggested in such a place as this. The historic river goes on gently enough under the old trees. We notice here and there a contemplative man seeking his recreation, and patiently watching the float. He does not spoil the picture, but adds a subtle something to the feeling of peacefulness which is now about us, and which passeth understanding.

GUY ROSLYN.