

FINE FEATHERS.

SCRAPS FROM LADY BABBIE'S NOTE BOOK.

THERE is a tide in the affairs of fashion which, taken before the flood, leads a woman into the category of that select few who really attain and deserve a reputation for smartness. For to be smart is, to our modern understanding, better than to be most other things—even desirable ones—and thus one may be ornamental, or intelligent, or extremely worthy, or merely pretty, or own other beatitudes variously; but to fail in that much-desired particular is to miss being first at the winning-post—a parlous state into which no woman will willingly allow she has strayed or fallen while her talents, fascinations, or other possibilities still remain ready for action. The crux of the modish situation may be defined, therefore, by plagiarising an old parable and leaping before others think of looking. There is no particular *kudos* to be got from doing what everyone else does and only doing it just as well, for the honours of war or otherwise lie in that strategic forethought which spells success. Therefore, in these columns, exclusively devoted to the Eternal Feminine and her particular affairs, I shall endeavour to show how the enviable estate of being the admired of others can be achieved—more especially concerning the immediate matter of clothes, of which it may indeed be said that when well considered they present that “first letter of recommendation” which Master William Shakspeare authoritatively laid down as being the result of a pleasing appearance. Just look at Queen Elizabeth! We all know she had red hair (not so much admired then as now), insignificant eyes, even if they were very effective in a

passion, a thin-lipped mouth, and no complexion to speak of. Yet men raved of her and of her beauty and fascination—some of them honestly, too, no doubt. Nor can there be any question that the stress she laid on clothes—two thousand frocks, were there not?—was not due any more to mere coquetry than to cleverness. For even in those far-off days human nature was, as we are given to understand, made up of similar elements to our modified selves of the century-end, and the way in which one woman wore her farthingale as compared with another would make all the difference between that *chic* and “go” we covet and admire, or the ineffective dowdiness which no doubt at all times, from the earliest period onwards, women have critically deplored in others.

One reflection which dissolves into thin air the misty halo of romance that for long clung round my fond ideas of Mediævalism is that they were all so indubitably dirty despite their fine frocks and feathers. If we only hark back as far as that merciless man about town, Horace Walpole, who tears the veil even from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's fascinating personality by describing her dresses as being a groundwork of dirt with an embroidery of filthiness, there is given to us matter for some self-glorification that we at least live in times when “the cleaner” is abroad, and the daily tub of our fond affections is no more looked upon as an effeminate luxury or a superstition of “these washing Quaker-folk.”

But if the eighteenth century was so averse to the gentle arts of soap and water that it disliked even washing its hands



A HANDSOME DRESS IN SOFT VIOLET-COLOURED CLOTH.

before going out to dinner, as in the case of Sidney Smith's dirty-fisted parson, what could have been the exterior darkness of those Mediæval dames, whose wardrobes, like the Virgin Queen's aforesaid, while being constantly added to, were constantly in use throughout their lives, and never, never, never knew the grateful and comforting attentions of a Pullar, or a Campbell, or an Achille Serre? It were, indeed, better to restrain one's imagination in the matter of such detail, and while admiring the picturesque pageant of the Middle Ages from the sumptuary point of view, rejoice to think that we strut across the stage of a century-end which, while missing much, gives back to our Spartan requirements the elementary and unpoetic but satisfactory and practical clean skin of the ancients.

At the present moment we are harking backwards in our fashions to the ugly early Victorian aspect of things, and except in the matter of the unpardonable crinoline, women have been wearing a curiously retrospective air this season. There is the drooped hat-brim and low-lying feather of the 'forties and the pince-taille, the visite, the pèlerine, the mantlet of Worth's early creation, when all feminine Europe sat, figuratively speaking, at the great man's feet, and to wear a Paris gown or a bonnet that one's husband brought back from the Rue de la Paix was to be at once the mildly admired and wildly envied of one's acquaintance. All the various sorts of fur that obtained favour with our great-aunts are again brought into the bill of things that be by modistes and mode-makers this winter. Even the *tours de cou*, or fox-skin boas of the old pre-sealskin days, are high in favour; and black, silver, blue, white, and even lap-fox is, with lynx, greatly affected of those who think that the costly sable skin has become too much in the manner of the well-to-do multitude. It seems, indeed, that the only form of fox escaping the ultra-fashionable fancy of the moment is the little red Reynard of our home coverts, for which relief the hunting contingent, at least, will offer up much thanks. Fashions in furs

are, like all others, subject to change and fluctuation, and may be compared to a game of pitch and toss, seeing that sometimes tails and sometimes heads are in the ascendant, without any connection between their relative merits. Just now heads are in the bill, and boas, muffis, and the orthodox winter hat are generally flanked by one or more masks of the chinchilla, sable, or marten with which the article is trimmed. Long fur mantles, coming quite to the end of the dress, are really considered the smartest form of outdoor garment, and for driving have replaced the velvets of last season's form. Breitschwantz, as it is called in Paris, is even made into entire dresses, and when dyed brown, green, blue, or other tones variously, looks like a particularly soft rich cloth without altogether losing its furry character. No other fur than broad-tail could, in fact, be treated in this manner, but being light, smooth, and supple, it is particularly adapted to the long, tight-fitting costume of our immediate manner. Quite an admirably *chic* example of this last cry in garments has, by the way, just been done by Messrs. Simmons and Son, of Haymarket celebrity, whose old renown as masters of costume craft needs no apologia here. The casaque in question, to be technical, is a long tight-fitting coat of breitschwantz quite covering the dress, and moulded to the figure with subtlest curves. Its skirt, widening from the waist, is split up at both sides for about eighteen inches, the edges being bordered with chinchilla. Through these openings the dress peeps as the wearer walks. Chinchilla borders the front from neck to toe-tip, accounts also for the wide revers and roll-back collar and cuffs, while a dainty turned-back toque of the same fur, flanked with a mauve osprey and clusters of Neapolitan violets, completes a perfectly arranged "altogether." That this outfit has been specially ordered for St. Petersburg may sound like the classic sending of coals to Newcastle, but is, in reality, a tribute to the good taste and style which hall-mark all the "creations" of this firm. At Monte Carlo, where people are

more than ever smart as to their garments this season, the short coat and cape are quite read out of meeting, and the three-quarter or kit-kat variety queens it over all other shapes. Quite in another manner, but no less modish, is this costume here illustrated, of soft violet-coloured cloth arranged with a chinchilla corsage on which gold-embroidered applications of violet velvet are laid, with results the most ornamental. Once more the *chic* capote of chinchilla is employed to complete matters, helped to its becoming issues by a rosette of mauve velvet and clusters of the Neapolitan violet. These also appear on the muff, and a Moorish-patterned waist-clasp of dull gold helps as an appropriate detail. This large hat, of the drooped brim type, also claims a measure of admiration, with its well-contrasted effects of grey and cherry colour. The shape is one that particularly accords with the type of woman who is happy in the possession of a profile, as contrasted with her tip-tilted sister, to whom the jaunty toque is much more akin. If women remembered to suit their millinery to their individual styles, instead of themselves to the hat or bonnet of a passing fancy, there would be many more well-dressed people about. For a chapeau gives the last touch or the wrong turn to one's whole appearance, and is, in fact, the pivot on which our successful effects invariably hang.

It is curious to notice how the restlessly constituted modern woman changes not alone her fashions in hats and frocks and furs, but even in the less ephemeral matter of jewellery as well. Our grandmothers, who with much satisfaction to themselves wore jewellery that had been transmitted to them by their far back forebears, would be hugely scandalised, doubtless, could they have foreseen the way in which cherished heirlooms are set and reset, and made to do *chasses croissée* with the ruling fashion nowadays. One season we affect the wearing of golden hearts, not on our sleeves, but the adjacent wrist, and another round our necks, and a third a jewelled zany or a tortoise seizes the wayward feminine fancy. Of course,

really valuable and artistic designs of either old or new jewellery will always remain incapable of improvement by change, and though we cannot lay claim to having gone forward in some respects upon the patterns or methods of mediæval jewel-setters, there is no doubt that the modern lapidary is a law unto himself, as the shop-windows of Paris and Vienna, not to omit our own and only Bond Street, can amply attest. One departure incidental and peculiar to the present date is the working of high-class jewellery with imitation gems. So wonderfully advanced is the method of producing simulated pearls and diamonds, in fact, that when wrought up in intricate and highly finished settings, it is next to impossible for the lay mind to discriminate between the real and what is really too artistic and beautiful to be described as the false. The strongest illustration of this new art is to be found in the triplet of shops belonging to the Parisian Diamond Company, where examples of jewel-setting at its bravest, and most certainly at its best, are to be seen. Here are ropes of their now famous pearls, which in shape, colour, and lustre, might mystify even the practised eyes of a pearl-fisher himself, and stomachers and necklaces of diamonds and emerald replicas of historical jewels in museums and private collections. From the tiara or bracelet, copied from the best antique patterns, to the up-to-date version of the jewelled watch, aigrette, or bangle charm, there is a completeness of detail and perfection of finish about the work of the Parisian Diamond Company which has justly popularised their especial wares even among a class which once would have refused recognition to any but their costly and often unattainable prototypes.

The subject of jewellery brings one back, in natural sequence, to the question of evening toilette. Not that the wearing of gauds is by any means restricted to the twilight or lamp-lit hours. Far from it! But as a background for our accredited display of jewels the dinner or ball gown is now and always has been a very potent question indeed, both on that and its



TWO PRETTY CHAPEAUX.

intrinsic merits as well. One favourite temple of fashion which devotes itself with conspicuous success to the rendering of evening clothes is that of our well-known and much affected Peter Robinson's. Among many affairs of bewildering beauty and particular prettiness which are lavishly displayed for the undoing of our purse-strings and quarterly allowances, none were more admirably composed than a dinner-gown of white brocaded satin and embroidered guipure; this latter material, in a design of arabesques and foliage, being arranged in a tunic somewhat of a princesse shape, which, laid over the bodice, forms a single piece with it. The edge of this rounded apron is hemmed with a garland of small pink roses, and a coronal of the same flowers in the hair was arranged to go with the dress. Blouses, though no longer holding first place in our affections, are very useful for the hundred and one in-between occasions where neither an elaborate nor over-plain "altogether" is admissible; and of these and the useful and extremely ornamental front to wear between the coat edges of our tailor-mades, Peter Robinson's have a large selection.

Three things always grateful to the omnivorous feminine fancy for prettinesses are sweets, perfumes, and flowers. But failing the latter, which are only with us as scentless exotics at this time of year, we fall back on the less evanescent others with extreme appreciation just now; all the more when they are laid as votive offerings at our feet. The subtle scent of violets, which clings so alluringly to the laces and furs of the well-finished dame, is rendered to absolute perfection by Mülhen's Rhine Violets, whose 4711 Dépôt at 62, Bond Street, has become the notable head centre of a notable perfume since its invention. Imitation—which we are assured is the sincerest flattery, but which may be also called the penalty of success—has, of course, been brought to bear, but fruitlessly, by other makers in this connection. This queen of all violet perfumes remains, however, unapproachably the best in its delicate, natural, and lasting fragrance. Rhine

Gold is the other bright particular speciality of Mülhen's dépôt, and their Malmaison and Maréchal Niel extracts, distilled from these delicious flowers, have each as large a following as the Rhine Violet of their first fame. When put up in cut-glass crystal flagons, reposing in their satin-lined morocco cases, as illustrated here, any (or all!) of these sweet essences would indeed make especially good cause as friendship's offering for Christmas or New Year favours. The magic number (4711) which now, moreover, represents our exclusive beliefs where Eau de Cologne is concerned, is the crowning success of Mülhen's many excellences, and is as notably the achievement of classic Cologne's many "waters," as is their delicious old English lavender water, redolent of the flavour and fragrance which distinguished it as it came from the still-rooms of our domesticated ancestresses.



Scents from 4711 Dépôt,
62, New Bond Street.

Other sweets, but now of the toothsome order, come up into admiring evidence from Fry's, of the classic Bristol ilk, whose chocolates and fondants and crystallised fruits are put up this season in cases and packets and boxes so fascinating as almost to rival their contents, than which, I take it, no greater praise can be given, for since our own early days and, indeed, beyond them, the name of Fry has been a household word writ large on the school-room and holiday horizon alike, one also to which now more than ever the young imagination bent on Christmas merry-making fondly turns. And, indeed, I can imagine few households to whose Christmas or New Year's stores the goodies that come from "Fry of Bristol Town" do not materially contribute.

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“FEBRUARY FILL-DYKE” is no more the key-note of our seasonable anticipations since matters climatic have ceased to run in their ancient grooves, and a general *chassez-croisez* of the zodiac has effectually upset all our century-end calculations. There was a time, and doubtless a very good time it was, when white muslin frocks, cut low in the neck, disregarding sleeves, and supported by cotton stockings of the same snowy hue, were considered the only wear of budding maidenhood when early May came piping—I had almost said piping hot—across the meadows to the summons of summer. December in like manner announced itself with orthodox snow-drifts and the expected wintry winds that whistled o’er the moor and blustered about the house walls, while holly-berries reddened for Christmas, and the mistletoe, knowing its ultimate destination and provocative powers, berried profusely on lichened apple-branches. Then came February running in rain, and March, a peck of whose flying dust was valued by the farmer at an ounce of gold. April to follow with sunshine and cloud-spray alternately, while inevitable baa-lambs disported in green meadows, and mint grew conveniently at hand awaiting its turn for the sauce-boat. But why run the gamut of a forgotten code? The old order changeth—has changed—and we blow hot or we blow cold, as the uncontrolled and inconsequent weather fiend listeth, freezing in summer or melting in winter, as suits the grotesque humour of this satyr who hath succeeded the gentle spirit of our grandmothers’ well-ordered seasons.

What to wear—the pregnant question

that is eternally asked and answered—might now with good reason be supplemented with, when to wear it; and if the fashion edicts proscribe chiffon for May or chinchilla for March it is rather with the hope than the certainty that they will be possible, for what the climate may bring forth no woman knoweth.

The hunting contingent, given that southerly wind and cloudy sky of the poet, have little reason to grumble at fate, and since Jack Frost has, so far, politely absented himself to a great extent, town and the modes have been little troubled by those who go hard five days out of seven. Meanwhile, with lengthening light and the promise of longer, an overhauling of the wardrobe becomes inevitable, and the disorder and general “hugger-mugger” of sale-time being over, good dressmakers are already beginning some very acceptable forms of the demi-saison embryo of fashion. Generally speaking, all gowns, of whatever denomination, are worn long; and the sweeping train, though in various lengths, to be sure, equally characterises morning, afternoon, or evening frocks. That we were loth to abandon the neat, tidy, and utilitarian short skirt is evidenced by the slow encroachment of the train. But it has come and is accepted, as a nosering or a pigtail would probably be did Madame Mode persistently advance their adoption. That she stops short at such very definite decoration is something for which to render much thanks, therefore; so let us take our twisting trains and our tightened hips with what gratitude we may, remembering they might have been hoops or farthingales instead.

For the *grande toilette* of dinner-parties or receptions it is literally a case of neck or nothing; for such gowns, besides being cut low, are absolutely denied sleeves, the correct thing being to substitute them by velvet bands, floral epaulettes or mere strings of pearls, or jewels cunningly contrived to "hold" by the experienced modiste. Lace sleeves are strictly relegated to demi-toilette, as are those which come half-way down to the elbow. To cover shortcomings or angularities south of the waist-line, and give those rounded outlines at both sides which the shapely *princesse* form of skirt necessitates, swan's down is being used as padding over the hips, no other material possessing its buoyancy and softness; while the fan-shaped train of the 'seventies is again revisiting the glimpses of moons in 1899, and Parisian costumiers are, I hear, reverting to all the native and imported prints of that period for their greater enlightenment on the form of a quarter-century back.

Since we are really threatened with these "mermaid tails," as they used to be called, it is to be devoutly wished that their consummation will stop short at the extreme narrowness which prevailed when our chignoned aunts disported them. I remember hearing how skirts grew gradually tighter and still more tight until walking became a trial, dancing a torture, and even going upstairs an undertaking not to be rashly entered upon.

Fashion, usually so imperative when her ukase has gone forth, gives way gracefully in that one matter of the convenient and cosy cape, which it is so easy to slip on and off as compared with the coat of our present more frequent manner. Many of the compromises which notable mode-makers have put forth seem, meanwhile, to contain the best features of both, as the latest visites, for instance, which, whether built of suave chinchilla or elegant sable, or velvet mixed with both, own that grand air of full toilette which neither neat jacket nor easily worn cape ever attains in the same degree. Meanwhile, for afternoon visiting in our capricious climate, capes remain indubitably the most

sensible garment of spring and winter ices, a quality that has doubtless kept them fashionably forward, notwithstanding the arrival of so many other forms of covering.

Many people wait until the New Year has been well aired, so to speak, before undertaking the annual Hegira either Riviera-wards or to Cairo, which now causes such a wholesale "flight into Egypt" each spring. Women going to either sunshiny environment should not omit to equip themselves with at least half a dozen of those smart shirts made of finely tucked mull muslin, with insertions two or three inches wide, neckband and wristlets of real lace. They are in the last cry of fashion's daintinesses of the toilette, and when worn over coloured silk slips exceed in prettiness any other form of blouse. Naturally, the lace must be real, and the best of its kind—three yards is sufficient—and the owners of old Italian, Spanish, Irish, or other cherished heir-looms have here the best possible opportunity for utilising them. In Paris the price of these apparently simple shirts ranges from five guineas to five and twenty, according to the value of the lace used on them, but there is no reason why our maids or the "little dressmaker" of our daily needs should not accomplish the neat stitchery necessary to their effect at figures less excessive. The subject of lingerie leads me inevitably to descend on the stores, not of purple, but of very fine linen which Messrs. Walpole Brothers, of 89, New Bond Street, and half-a-dozen other addresses in Irish and English towns respectively, are at present setting forth so seductively. Now if there is one passion that appeals powerfully to the heart of woman, it is a daintily filled dower-chest. I will not go so far as to say that it blots out her adoration for dress, or interferes with her sufferance of flirtations, but, to put it in racing parlance, it comes in a very good second. This harmless housewifely instinct, so entirely worthy of encouragement, may now with great safety be abandoned to its own sweet will at Walpoles', who, having disposed at their January sales of



AN EVENING DRESS FOR A ST. PETERSBURG BELLE.

all soiled or imperfect articles, have at present a selection of immaculate and exquisite linen, which fastidious bride-elect or experienced matron will equally appreciate. The fineness of her handkerchiefs, ever an important detail to a lady, be she "fine" or otherwise, can always be counted on when they are purchased at Walpoles', their "clear lawn" and "Irish cambric" deservedly taking first place from among many competitors. In the more weighty matter of table damask both napkins and table-cloths, unique as to quality and design as well, will be found unexpectedly moderate in price. A few of their most successful patterns in this connection are the wisteria border with a closely filled centre of shamrocks, another bordered with thistle trails and a middle of interwoven thistles and shamrocks. A novelty is the Celtic medallion design; while the ribbon trellis in satin damask always makes a charming background for the shining glass and fragrant flowers that adorn its surface. Holly berries and sprays, with a border of Christmas roses and mistletoe, was first made for a royal table, where its seasonable design annually appears, and there are the Irish ivy leaf and the Killarney fern and fifty other quite lovely devices, not to mention the coats-of-arms and heraldic emblems which Walpole Brothers can always produce, if desired, at a few weeks' notice, and which add so much to the dignity and well-thought-out air of the well-spread board. Of linen sheets and pillow-covers, either delicately veined or elaborately embroidered, there is practically an unending variety of styles, and the same may be repeated of the toilette covers, pillow-cases, towels, and other etceteras of the linen-closet, by whose rosemary-scented contents our housewifely grandmothers set such store.

One of this month's Illustrations will be found a literal, if liberal, adaptation of a rebel Irish song, called "The Green above the Red," that used to be sung when Parnell was a power and Gladstone a Goliath—to their parties: a sable-bordered and spray-crowned toque of dark emerald velvet crowning the cheerful

crimson of a jaunty tight-fitting jacket. The scarlet coat has, by the way, died the death, and its happy despatch was, moreover, no loss, since "pink," however delightful across country, has no *raison d'être* in town and on foot. Some crimson jackets which have been recently issued by the best houses are quite another matter, however, and, like this model here set forth, with its dark sable collar and generally well-set-up air, are to be much commended. My other Illustration represents the current style amongst evening equipments, and will be found equally successful if copied in black or white, which may be done without fear of detection, as the advertisements say, since its original is at present figuring amongst the cream of St. Petersburg society.

The mere mention of pink recalls a matter of much interest to sportswomen which occupies me greatly at the moment, since it is likely to cause a revolution in the old beliefs concerning the double crutched saddle of our past and present only wear. Alexander Scott, of South Molton Street, who has probably fitted more habits than any three others of his trade, as all the hunting world knoweth, has recently invented a pneumatic pommel adjustable to any saddle, which, while replacing the two crutches of the classics, offers an all-round improvement on the present side-saddle which is bound to be adopted as soon as it is seen. It enables one to ride seven pounds lighter, it gives one such grip as to make falling all but impossible, and in the very off event of being thrown even, there are no irons to catch in one, as so often happens when a crutch snaps off. The comfort of this pneumatic pommel I can testify to besides, having tried it hard and found it soft, to be very epigrammatic, and though not given to wagers, am ready to back my opinion on its general adoption within a short time. Nor is there any danger of the pneumatic bag bursting, since it has been proved to own seven times the resisting power of the strongest football, without, it is needless to add, the inevitable vicissitudes which accompany that heroic cone of leather.

Long black velvet coats made quite tight-fitting, and, oh! anti-climax of extravagance, made with slight trains, will be worn this spring. They need the courage of one's convictions and one's banker's balance to boot; but given a sufficiency of both, are infinitely smart, and can never be achieved, moreover, by the ordinary well-to-do mob—a recommendation in itself to the exclusively well placed. One example of this extreme but still unostentatious fashion has been made by Paquin for a woman whose reputation among even her own sex for dressing well is almost European. This coat of black Lyons velvet is long and close-fitting, reaching well to the ground and fastened on the left side with two very large buttons of diamond and amethyst. Curved revers which go all around the neck and end in a point at the waist are of thick white satin, on which white mousseline is puffed between three narrow rows of dark Russian sable. The dainty elegance of this garment is furthermore enhanced by made sleeves of the new white velvet, which has slightly raised stripes. These, thickly embroidered with jet and black silk, give an effect that is all of the most charming to the whole. A flounced sable muff accompanies the outfit, which is, moreover, crowned with a delightful befeater hat, also in black velvet with one thickly curled white ostrich feather lying just under the brim, which, against all the classic canons of this shape, is slightly tip-tilted.

The froufrou-ing of the silk petticoat, to which, in combination with the plain short skirt, we long so fondly clung, shall, for the present at least, know us no more, fashion having ordered that, instead, highly ornamented, much-beflounced skirts of moirettes, chiffonettes, or other light but buoyant material shall replace it. Sheaves, garlands, and festoons innumerable of lace adorn the juponage meanwhile; and for evening, extravagant fashion leads us, moreover, into wearing our petticoats cut as long as the swishing skirts

that overlap them—a mode the reverse, it may be surmised, of inexpensive. How plaintive our husbands will wax, to be sure, when next quarter's bills present themselves for consideration and settlement; and what a mercy that we do not all live in America, where a man lately obtained a divorce because his wife's French laundress consumed, he vowed, half of a considerable income! For, of course, now that these extended petticoats are in vogue we shall perforce revert to washable muslin and lace, since one evening's wear will entail a week of *blanchisseuse*, owing to the dusty world we live in.

One event that may be safely predicted for our summer outdoor gowns, too, is that all the mousseline and light silks will be hand-painted, as are the best ball and dinner dresses of the present moment. Flower-painters in Paris have been, in fact, for once at a premium, and the mode-makers have been paying any price for the best painted panels and bodice pieces so exquisitely rendered in dainty devices of "carnation, lily, rose" and the rest by whilom unregarded artists.

In passing through my beloved Paris the other day I went with a chosen few to quiz the company and drink tea at Columbin's, where every modish Parisienne religiously adjourns for her "five o'clock." The slimness—I had almost said the skimpiness—of the dresses was the first thing to fly at my eyes, and another was the habit of potted meat or fish sandwiches which everyone seemed to succumb to. I tried some of wild duck, tongue, and other toothsome concoctions, finding them so good that, like Captain Cuttle of note-making memory, I proceeded to inquire the authors of this especial ambrosia, only to find, much to my amusement and patriotic satisfaction to boot, that Poulton and Noel, of Belgravian ox tongue and other potted reputations, were the true originators of all this Gallic and gastronomic sweetness and light. "Here," I thought, indeed, "even if only in the matter of pressed beef, is fame!"



"THE GREEN ABOVE THE RED."

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HERE we are in the middle of spring—at least by the calendar—for what the season may vouchsafe in the actual matter of seasonable weather only the season itself knoweth. Since winter has gone coquetting in summer's borrowed plumes, even down to late December, the months seem to have derailed themselves all along the line, and April cannons into November, or January into June, with the most beautiful disregard of all subsequent sublunary discomfords to us poor mortals.

Most patiently we women waited until the New Year had lost its newness in the faint yet ardent hope of wearing our smart furs and exposing our expensive effects in sable, broadtail, or seal to admiration, but the opportunities were meagre, and scarcely warranted the considerable outlay with which we had made ready for coy Jack Frost. As a matter of fact, those who long to refresh themselves with the sight of ice and snow have now to go far afield for the purpose, and seek the snowy heights of Switzerland in which to recruit their jaded beings. Even there the climate has modified its original rigorous manners, and in the high-perched Grindelwald, where I have been lately "takin' notes" as well as some severe and unforgotten lessons on the ice, the very glaciers which have long been the pride of the district have begun to recede, and mountaineering authorities assure me that both these weird blue heights have almost imperceptibly declined for the past fourteen years. All of which leads one to fear that this present "eider-down generation," as some lady has called us, is being slowly trained by initial stages for the inevitable warmth

which its demeanour or misdemeanours call for in the *Ewigkeit*. Meanwhile we remain in that intermediate *status quo* of the *demi-saison* which renders decidedly wintry or decidedly spring-like garments equally inappropriate to our immediate needs—a juncture which one always, somehow, finds an awkward one in England, but which the Parisienne is an adept in meeting satisfactorily, suitably, and becomingly. Spring sunshine has a searching way all its own of finding out the weak spots in garments that have stood a winter siege and repeated brushings from London mud, which is, by the way, of that constant clinging quality that never entirely brushes off.

Meanwhile, cloth still continues to be one of the most popular possible wearables for both afternoon and evening; a soft bright make, called *peau de gant*, being especially adapted to the garments "clinging like cerements" of our present mode. "Embroidery, and still more embroidery," would seem to be the clan-cry of every dressmaker, judging by the lavish embellishments which show on each freshly issued creation. Cut-out designs of plush or velvet overlaid with beads piped with cord and chenille are the most frequent, while thick guipures in *bise* (string-colour) and ivory appear on the more elaborately arranged costumes, but always supplemented with the inevitable embroidery of our extravagant habit.

In Paris the lately developed fondness for evening gowns made of pale-coloured cloths still continues; but they are made of lighter, finer, and, if possible, more highly polished texture than before. One just done by Bur for a Spanish royalty is

of cream-colour with a surface like new ivory; the pinafore-shaped polonaise is laid over a lisse bodice thickly oversewn with pearls. The ivory silk underskirt treated in the same manner has two pearl-sewn flounces of Mechlin lace. Shoulder-straps of light green velvet embroidered with emeralds and turquoises make the only spot of colour on this recklessly beautiful frock, with which are to be worn the Infanta's historical emeralds.

A week in Paris—and I have just returned from that combination of acute delight and despair—always fills me with joy in Lutetia's accomplishments, and corresponding sorrow in being unable to emulate them—this more particularly perhaps in the matter of millinery. The chapeau of our dreams and desire can only, indeed, be fashioned by deft French fingers inspired by the quick French brain, composed by the artistic French intelligence, for nothing in the world is more elusive, more difficult, more alluring than the Paris hat.

Every girl fancies she has a taste for millinery—save the mark!—and many achieve results more than possible for self or admiring and grateful acquaintances. Two days in the capital of France must reduce even the most self-sufficient of these artistic amateurs to a humbler frame of mind, however, as shop-window or salon discloses the apparently simple masterpieces whose equivalents range from fifty francs to two hundred, or even more, but whose *chic* and skill are—like another rare possession—far above rubies.

There is no doubt whatever that for general use the automobile is coming, and when a little, or, preferably, a good deal, less expensive than at present, we shall "mote" as eagerly as we erstwhile bicycled. Already Frenchwomen have adopted a distinct costume to meet the somewhat dusty, oily exigencies of their last toy. Putty-coloured draperies are accepted as resisting the inroads of both these accompanying facts of the motor as it is at present understood, but no doubt when the inevitable improvements begin to arrive we shall be able to ruffle it in muslins and silks successfully. Another new colour—a cross between purple and ruby—is called auto-

mobile, and on that account and its dark serviceable colour, obtains a measure of recognition with the fair motists whom I admiringly watched steering their vehicles in and out of the crowded Bois last week with that ease and elegance which in any situation remains with a Parisienne. Lord Carnarvon is one of those who have taken the motor up at home, and during the hunting his geeless drags brought many a batch of fair onlookers or pink sportsmen to the meets around Newbury.

One of the smartest women I know, with whom the art of always looking perfectly dressed seems a sixth sense, is wont to declare that one's hair is the most important part of one's altogether; so with her excellent example and wise precept in mind, I paid some attention to the coiffeur's art as practised in Paris at the moment. Highly perched arrangements are *de rigueur*, the low style not having caught on, and with a halo of loosely waved locks many eccentricities of garniture are in evidence for evening wear. Louis Quinze bows of stiffened ribbon have lost their vogue, and are replaced by jewelled winds of upright bows of silver or gold tinsel oversewn with sequins. Rosettes of coloured gauze surmounted by fancy feathers are smart, and an immense dragon-fly done in green gauze and jewels for fair or silver for dark hair is a *haute nouveauté*. One brilliantly coloured ostrich feather turning back from the fringe and of contrasting tone to the dress is also in the present form, while small flowers mounted on long stiff stems are worn with a tuft of foliage lying on the hair. Another new and an excellent innovation—which may the gods inspire every *matinée-goer* to wear—is the theatre toque, composed of some well-wired folds of brightly hued velvet, wider at back than front, where they are met with an upright bow of tinsel ribbon wired and edged with pearls or other stones. The hair, dressed high, comes up through this toque with charming effect, and the ensemble will, it may safely be averred, meet the admiration rather than the objurgation of anyone sitting behind it. All neck-trimmings

continue to be made very high, but plain and shaped to the neck; so high, indeed, that they have been appositely called "enclosures." The fashion was brought in by a well-known mondaine, who, though by the aid of certain helps has kept her complexion, yet cannot smooth out the tell-tale neck wrinkles of six-and-forty seasons. A clever dressmaker has for some years cut her neck-bands in high points behind the ears, and this winter the fashion came over to us—hence our satin stocks and "enclosures." As for jewellery, chains, pendants, crosses, locketts, bangles, earrings, and large jewelled corsage ornaments are separately and together everywhere evident on the fashionable dame, while pearl collars clasped with diamonds and sometimes emeralds or turquoise are never absent from the *grande tenue* of a well-dressed woman, whose jewel-box, when not filled with real stones, is, as in the case of our illustrated demoiselle, no less artistically catered for by the renowned creations of the Parisian Diamond Company.

Next, perhaps, to her wardrobe and her jewel-safe, the affectionate attention of a modern madam is given to her daintily filled linen-presses, which not even in the housewifely annals of our grandmothers contained more lace, embroidery, or drawn-thread work than now. Irish linen holds pre-eminently first place for purity and excellence; but, as in the case of a Holloway tradesman who was lately fined for selling mixed cotton and flax for pure Irish linen, it seems that we must be careful where we buy when about to supplement our dower-chests. When the magistrate fined this tradesman heavily for palming off a "union" of flax and cotton for Irish linen, Mr. Grain, counsel for defence, humorously remarked that another injustice to Ireland had been righted. One hopes so, but is meanwhile not oblivious of the fact that these tricks of trade may be practised again by others than high-class traders. So, in buying Irish linen, it is as well to make assurance doubly sure by going to the fountain-head, or, otherwise, to Irish manufacturers whose bona fides are above suspicion, and in this connection Hanna

and Co., of Bedford Street, Belfast, are on all counts to be commended for the purity and excellence of their manufactures, which include all kinds of linen from the delicate cobwebby cambric and grass-lawn handkerchief to elaborately embroidered sheets, all of which are woven and bleached at Messrs. Hanna's old-established factory at Lurgan, and sent on from there to their firm in Belfast. Drawn work being one of their specialities, it is quite worth while to send for a catalogue, if only for the purpose of seeing the exquisite designs set forth, and equally applicable to sheets, pillow-covers, tray-cloths, or other articles variously. Some decorative church linen, just accomplished by Messrs. Hanna, is going to France, the land of fine embroidery—and is as beautiful as any ever made there. Handkerchiefs of fine cambric and delicately drawn thread borders are surprising, by reason of their worth and low price, as anyone sending for a dozen of their No. 19 at 6s. 9d. can forthwith amply testify—while their double damask table-linen is of a particular fineness and durability, combined with prices surprisingly low as compared to its actual value and beauty of design. In a word, when about to buy linen, the Irish manufacturer is advisedly the man to apply to, as the before-mentioned recent case in our law courts has entirely proved, for at this fountain-head, as in all others, there can be no adulteration.

Like little Bo Peep of distressful memory, or rather her wandering charges, we shall all very shortly bring our tails behind us wherever we appear, for the Parisian ukase hath it that the trainless woman cannot now be received as one of fashion's elect, and accordingly the dress-makers are busily ringing the changes on this new order of things for the benefit of obedient customers, to whom the modish order is as that of the laws of the Medes and Persians—not to be questioned, but accepted with enthusiasm, and in that degree, moreover, which the exigencies of their pin-money will permit.

A slim sheath-like polonaise of one material is now shaped shawl-fashion, and



A HANDSOME EVENING DRESS.

made to hang with its pointed ends front and back over a *jupon* of either velvet or silk in another tone of the same, or a contrasting colour. At Monte Carlo, where versions of the more pronounced new fashions are wont to disport themselves before negotiating their particular points at home, a fascinating example of this shawl tunic has been worn by Mademoiselle Batourine, daughter of the Russian Consul-General, whose taste and *chic* uphold the classic reputation of her countrywomen. The *jupon* of marguerite-yellow velvet, made long and narrow, is worn under a polonaise, shawl-shaped, of thin ivory cloth with a highly polished surface; a four-inch border of delightful chenille embroidery done in mauves and pale green, like the Neapolitan violet and its leaves, edges this dainty tunic. The bodice matches style of skirt—a pointed velvet yoke surrounded by embroidery meets the upper part of tunic, while a hat of velvet violets tilted high on one side completes this spring-like toilette.

Even the smart Newmarket coats which are to be the only form of our outdoor occasions and spring race meetings, partake of the generally long-drawn character of this season's clothes, and the redingote, cloak or coat, are all elongated to their utmost possible possibility. To distinguish this last Newmarket from those that have gone before is easy, as the rounded fronts and a shortened centre are now *de rigueur*, and have, besides, the advantage of indicating the smart frock worn underneath.

Naturally there will be a great uplifting of skirts if not of spirit with all this trailing drapery, so an added attention is being paid to the dainty decoration of stocking, shoe, and petticoat. Many of the first are now treated to panels of real lace, which is either carried round the—must I say leg?—in the form of insertion or inlet, panel-fashion, over the instep. The price of these lace inlet stockings is, therefore, the reverse of modest; but what of that "if one looks nicer," as the ingenuous young lady from New York explains in her classic quatrain. It is a curious psychological fact, however, that an

Englishwoman has never really arrived at holding up her frock gracefully. This generation sees her booted sufficiently well, and our *pieds Anglais* are no more the elephantine reproach of past times. That other little idiosyncrasy of untidily held up trains is one, though, that might advantageously be got rid of by a course of practising before a mirror, when many well-meaning dames who now either exhibit undue proportions of their altogether in a pardonable zeal to evade the ever ready caresses of London mud, or else abandon one side of their draperies entirely to its clinging attentions, though laboriously grasping the other side, and ankle high, or even higher, might then go gracefully. The last French Ambassador used to say that you never saw the top of a Frenchwoman's boot, nor ever escaped that view in the case of her Anglo-Saxon sister, which just describes a matter that we must certainly forthwith set ourselves to remedy.

It may seem early days to talk of linen gowns while March winds are blowing, but the new material, heavy as sail-cloth, and glossy as ivory, has just arrived, and is to figure largely in spring costumes. A new model in cerise linen has a trained skirt with one graduated flounce deep in front, narrowing to about six inches behind. The coat, built tailor-fashion, is cut away in front, and has a deep rounded basque. A yoke and shoulder collar of the same linen, covered with large white embroidered spots, finishes a very smart dress.

Ball dresses made up entirely of wide coloured ribbon joined by insertions of needle-point, which is the favourite lace of the season, are another novelty. Extremely handsome effects are possible to this combination, and one just sent to a representative society leader across the Atlantic is made of grey ribbon and string-coloured lace, a very *chic* duet of colour. Both lace and ribbon taper from the waist, widening gradually until a wide flounce of lace is reached. The front of the skirt is grey mousseline over string-coloured satin, crimson roses are worn on the bodice, and the shoulder bands are cerise velvet bands in a lighter shade.