GENTLEWOMEN AS DRESS-MAKERS.

MONG the various and diversified occupa-
tions whereby women of the present day may earn their livelihood, there are none more interesting to the casual observer than those which appear to have thought of dressing them- selves. The employment of making, not plain sewing, but occupation peculiarly suited to a gentle-
woman. Before discussing the advan-
tages or disadvantages of such a calling, it may be as well to state distinctly that by the word "dressing-making" I mean the whole of the work incident to the making of clothes, and that the range from 10 to 100 guineas for a single gown. To compete with such persons as these would require far more capital than is at the disposal of any gentlewoman who has to work for her own living.

Setting aside, then, these highly-fashionable people on the one hand, and the village dress- makers who do not earn enough to provide for any other, let us consider for a moment the average middle-class dressmaker—the person who asks from 15s. to £2 for making an ordinary gown during the little extra time (and with such and such things), and who is, usually, though not by any means always, kind enough to say that "ladies' own materials will be made up."

Now, whatever may be the good qualities of this estimable woman, all who have had practical experience of her work will, I believe, agree that the faculty of tastefully arranging a dress is not usually one that they think of as belonging to the art and science of tailoring. In fact, the curves of the human figure are chiefly conspicuous by their absence, and that, for her to send home a really well-fitting gown, must be a matter of considerable acumen, and probably an accomplishment of which the lady who ordered it, is exceptionally the exception rather than the rule.

On this last point I would lay particular stress, Among educated, cultivated women, there are many (and the number is increasing every day) who wish that their style of dress, without being painfully "esthetic," should express, to a certain extent, their own personality, and should harmonise with their surroundings. They feel as a real hardship the difficulty of finding a dressmaker able and willing to follow out their plans, and the possibil-
ity of employing a competent gentlewoman with taste and refinement equal to their own. One who could be trusted to carry out an original idea without every other woman be-
ding to keep on the fashion-boards for assistance, would be hailed as a blessing by hundreds of cultivated women to morrow. Of course there will always be, and must be for many years—a large class of persons perfectly content to appear as imitations, more or less (usually less) exact, of the last coloured fashion plate. But there are also those who have been trained to appreciate the beauty of symmetrical lines and harmonious colouring, they are not likely to feel too much interest in the choice of the parts of those who work for them. Yet even these ladies are by no means insensible to the advantages of being well-
dressed, and if they once saw the costumes made by a lady dressmaker to be a success,