

Woman and Her Work

I wonder who we women cannot be more courteous to each other when we meet accidentally and have not been introduced? Of course we are more than polite to the elegantly dressed stranger we meet at Mrs. Haut-Ton's reception, and the fact that we do not even know her name does not make the least difference to us! She is at Mrs. Haut-Ton's house, and that is a sufficient guarantee of her respectability so she is scarcely to be classed with the stranger, one meets and passes in the electric car, the railway train, or at the counters of the large department shops—anywhere, in fact, where women chiefly congregate. But just let us meet the same elegant lady outside amongst the crowd of everyday humanity, and see how much her beautiful plumage will avail her! She will receive from her own sex just the same recognition that falls to the lot of her most shabbily dressed sister and not one whit more!

I don't think woman individually are to blame for this state of affairs, for I know many of our sex who would be only too glad to show kindness and courtesy to their fellow women, but under existing circumstances they find it impossible. It is the fault of custom I suppose, but nevertheless it is a most regrettable fact that for a woman to address a stranger of her own sex anywhere but under the protecting roof of a mutual friend, is to court and generally receive a very positive snub. It matters not whether the remark is made entirely in the interest of the one addressed or not, the mere fact of speaking to a woman one does not know, seems to be looked upon not only as a liberty, but a positive sign of ill breeding, and the well meaning person who so far forgets herself as to offer any unsought information to a member of her own sex, is made to feel that she has committed a breach of good manners, and proved herself to be very second class indeed. It is a curious fact, but a fact all the same that the woman who will thank a policeman with modest courtesy for directing her to the street or house she is trying to find, would have only a stare of cold surprise, and a frozen "thanks," for any woman even though the latter might be fully her equal socially, who hearing the query, ventured to offer to show her the way, as she was going in that direction. Sometimes, if one happens to be of an impulsive nature, it is very hard to keep out of scrapes of this nature, but a few experiences of the utter ingratitude with which such advances are met will soon teach even the dullest of us wisdom, and make us keep any little inclination towards friendliness and courtesy we may possess strictly to ourselves.

I know I started out in life with the idea that woman's harshness to her own sex was all an idea of the cynics who were always ready to disparage her, and I thought I could effect a reform, if I only tried hard enough my fate, like that of most reformers was hard for a while, but I learned my lesson in time, and profited by it.

A few years ago, I happened to be staying in a country town where the shops were scarcely so well equipped as they are in St. John, and one day when I was making a purchase in a drug shop, a party of ladies tourists who were merely passing through the town, came in. They were from Halifax and their English accent was something to marvel over, it was so perfect, and so much more English than any I had ever heard before, though all my people belong to that nationality, and I do myself. But they were unmistakably ladies, and their manners were charming, sweet and gracious, with that pretty courtesy in asking for what they wanted that is so attractive. They were in quest of a rubber hot water bottle, and as the druggist did not keep such things in stock, they wanted to know if he could tell them where to get one. Now I happened to know of just one shop in the town where such a thing was to be found, and as I had not quite learned my lesson of wisdom then, I could not resist the impulse to tell them where they could get what they wanted. I took a step forward, and opened my lips to speak, but I closed them suddenly, for the lady who had been speaking, a pretty young girl, turned quickly and met my glance with a calm, cold stare. Such a look as it was, no words could have said more plainly—"so you have been listening to what I said, you very ill bred person? Kindly attend to your own affairs, and let those of others alone!"

Of course she could not know why I was going to speak, but she left town without her hot water bottle, just because she could not believe in another woman's good intentions towards her.

It is such a pity, I think, because life

would be so much pleasanter for us if we would only be a little more friendly to each other. Why cannot he follow the example of the other sex who seem always ready to extend, and receive the most friendly consideration amongst themselves even when they may be perfect strangers. Just watch a group of men who meet on a railway journey, a steamboat, or anywhere that a group of strangers would be thrown together—What a short time it takes those genial beings to become thoroughly acquainted, and the best of friends! There is no restraint, no hesitation as to whether the other man may belong to a social set equally as good as one's own: little the man of the world cares for "sets" it is an agreeable companion he looks for, a pleasant break in the monotony of travelling, and as he knows it is not likely that he will meet his travelling companions again, it does not matter to him what their social standing may be when they are at home, so long as they are pleasant fellows when they are abroad. The travelling man reads his paper, folds it up, glances around pleasantly to see if there is anyone who would like to look at it, and then hands it across the aisle to some man who is a perfect stranger to him with the remark, "seen this week's Progress" perfectly confident of the manner in which his overture will be received. Does the other man draw himself up and freeze the one who offers the paper with a stony stare at his presumption? Not by any means, he has too much sense; he only says "Oh thanks" takes the paper quite at a matter of course, offers his "Star" or "Life" in return, says it is a fine day, and when he returns the paper, he probably takes the vacant seat beside the first traveller, says something about the political situation, or the crops, offers his cigar case, and shortly afterwards the two adjourn to the smoking car the best of friends.

And that is one reason why men have so much a better time than we do, they make it pleasant for themselves and each other, while two women would travel together alone in a parlor from St. John to New York without exchanging a word—unless there was a railway accident, when they would sob in each other's arms and pray together as if they were bosom friends. But a railway accident is a very violent remedy for feminine reserve, and some less startling method is greatly to be desired. I am not advocating the making of promiscuous acquaintance amongst perfect strangers, but a more generally courteous manner on the part of our sex towards each other which would, in my opinion, go a long way towards making life in general, and travelling in particular, smoother and pleasanter for themselves.

Perhaps the New Woman might take the subject up, and amongst the many reforms she is so eager to bring about, devote a little attention to cultivating the many virtues of friendliness and courtesy to strangers of her own sex.

The influence of the early Victorian era, becomes more and more evident in the fashions, as the Jubilee year grows older! The latest burden we are asked to bear in the shape of Victorian modes is the revival of the poke bonnet, and not the dainty little affair of a year ago, but a real bonnet almost identical in shape with the one Queen Victoria wore the year she ascended the throne. It is an actual fact that the best English milliners have a number of such bonnets in preparation for the coming summer, and we are assured by authorities on such matters, that a poke bonnet in the hands of a modern artist in millinery, is really a thing of beauty instead of the horror that old pictures proclaim it to have been sixty years ago. One which has been described is of fine black straw—I wonder if they will call it "double Danstable"?—with a wreath of pink roses around the face inside the brim, and an aigrette of white ostrich feathers trimming one side. White moire ribbon passes around the crown, where it is fastened with rhinestone buckles, and tie in a large bow under the chin. It may be very pretty, and very becoming but I cannot help thinking it would require a prettier face than one often meets in a day's ride to look well in such a headgear, and though I am one of her Majesty's

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most loyal subjects who would like to do her all possible honor this year, I think I shall have a small toque or a big hat for the summer, as being better suited to accentuate my peculiar style of beauty.

In spite of all predictions to the contrary the small cape is still very much in evidence amongst the newest fashions, and seems likely to remain so throughout the summer. I must admit that it can scarcely be described as a wrap, or indeed a useful garment at all, as it is very short, very full and fluffy, and most elaborately trimmed with lace, chiffon and ribbon, but it is not in any sense intended to be a protection against the cold. Sometimes it has long scarf ends falling nearly to the ground and sometimes it is in dolman form, but all the same it is a cape, and every indication of holding its own.

I am afraid the downfall of the plain skirt is not far off! All the indications point that way from the gradual narrowing of the skirts themselves to the introduction of those soft clinging fabrics like cashmere, and chamois which invariably herald the return of drapery. But as yet the plain skirt possibly trimmed a little around the foot, but, smooth and plain around the hips, and hanging in folds at the back, is the favorite model for wool goods; there is less and less fulness however in every way, and sometimes the new style of leaving the skirt loose from the lining at the bottom is adopted.

Checks are much worn this spring, and one sees them in brown, blue, green, and of course black with white in wool goods, trimmed with rows of braid to match the dark check on the skirt, and worn with a plain cloth jacket in the same color, making a very useful and pretty gown. Some of the new dress skirts are provided with a small bustle, as a substitute for the decrease of fulness in the back, and though it is still so small as to be scarcely noticeable, it assumes gigantic proportions when received as an indication of things to come!

Amongst the checked goods that I mentioned black and white are the most conspicuous, and by far the most popular. They are seen not only in the newest wool goods, but also in silks, for blouses, and fancy bodices. In wool goods the black and white is often made up into costumes without the cloth coat. One very stylish gown has a black silk bodice with yoke and slashes of red silk, and the skirt has very narrow red plaitings of red and black silk, one of each peeping from underneath the edge, at the bottom. The sleeves are check made almost tight fitting and have plaited frills of the red and black at the top.

Nun's veilings, cashmeres and serges will be greatly worn during the summer, and transparent materials of all kinds will take the lead. Of course they are expensive because they require such dainty linings, but they are so lovely that those who can afford to gratify their taste for beauty, will not complain of the cost.

Some of the very newest skirt trimmings are odd beyond expression, at least they look so, to eyes accustomed for so long to the severe lines of the untrimmed skirt. For example—a gown of black cloth has graduated rows of black velvet ribbon sewn across the front breadth, for nearly the whole length, and these rows terminate at



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the side seam in rosettes of the velvet. Braid is sometimes substituted for velvet and one dress of navy blue canvas has six rows of narrow black braid all around the skirt, set on fully three inches apart. Another very new skirt trimming is shown in a dress of black and white checked silk canvas, which is made up over silk of a bright grass green. Very small knife plaited frills of the green silk outline all the seams of the skirt, and are sewn on the bodice in perpendicular rows. Other skirts open in redingote fashion over a front breadth of a different color, at least they seem to open but all really sewn very firmly in place, to prevent disarrangement.

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NOT IMPRESSED.

A Man Who Cares Very Little for the Rank of Others.

President Kruger of the Transvaal is a man not easily impressed by rank, title, or worldly splendor of any kind, and not in the least ashamed of his own plain origin and rough upbringing. Sir James Sive-wright, upon whom once devolved the duty of taking an important and rather pompous English duke to call upon the President, told an American about the conversation which ensued. It was of course, carried on through an interpreter, and ran about like this:

Duke: 'Tell the President that I am the Duke of—' and have come to pay my respects to him.'

Kruger gives a grunt, signifying welcome.

Duke, after a long pause: 'Ah! tell him that I am a member of the English Parliament.'

Kruger gives another grunt, and puffs his pipe.

Duke, after a still longer pause: 'And—you might tell him that I am—a member of the House of Lords—a lord—you know.'

Kruger puffs as before, and nods his head, with another grunt.

Duke, after a still more awkward pause, during which his grace appears to have entertained doubts as to whether he had as yet been sufficiently identified: 'Er—it might interest the President to know that I was a viceroy?'

Kruger: 'Eh! What's that—a viceroy?'

Duke: 'Oh, a viceroy—that is a sort of a king, you know.'

Kruger continued puffing in silence for some moments, obviously weary of this form of conversation. Then, turning to the interpreter, he said, gruffly: 'Tell the Englishman that I was a cattleherd.'

This closed the interview.

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