

Woman and Her Work

That sturdy old literary woman Mrs. E. Lynn Linton, who was a writer of note when most of the literary women of the present day were in pinafores, has been talking some good common sense to the English people on the subject of art, as opposed to comfort, in modern house furnishing. If there is one thing above another for which Mrs. Linton is noted, it is her habit of speaking her mind, and if she has become slightly addicted to scolding of late years, she usually aims those pointed shafts of hers in a direction where scolding is needed, and in any case, even when she talks about something she does not understand as in her fierce condemnation of female cyclists, she never fails to be interesting and one enjoys her thorough earnestness and the vigorous English she uses as a vehicle for her always strong opinions.

It is a good and satisfying thing for a lover of comfort like myself, to read Mrs. Linton's views on the subject of the highly polished floor, slippery to a murderous degree, and embellished at intervals with rugs which slip away from the unwary foot that is placed upon them, and necessitate careful practice before one dares to trust her weight upon them if she would avoid measuring her length upon the floor. Mrs. Linton is quite willing to concede all that lovers of art is opposed to comfort can say as to the greater advantages of bare floors over carpets, and while granting that they are cleaner, healthier, and more airy than the stuffy and unwholesome carpet, she declares herself unhesitatingly in favor of a good thick Axminster which protects the feet from cold, and the limbs from danger of falls.

That cruel invention of modern times, the cosy corner which is usually the most uncomfortable spot in the house, as well as the most draughty is the object of her special aversion, while the sash curtain, and the Queen Anne window pane which breaks the landscape up into the fragments of a Chinese puzzle, come in for a large share of her attention. What the carpetless floor does for the feet and legs, says Mrs. Linton, the window protected by a few narrow strips of art muslin, does for the head and shoulders, one keeps a continual ground stream flowing over the feet and the other a perpetual circulation of freezing air around the upper part of the body, and proves far more dangerous to health than all the carpets ever laid on a floor. Old fashioned furniture with only its ugliness and lack of comfort to recommend it to the art enthusiast, the long legged and easily tilted footstool, the wall drapery of silk that soon fades, and acts as pocket for catching and holding more dust and microbes than any carpet could do, the shelves of china, often cracked, broken and hideous in color and design, which are only taken down to be washed or dusted at the spring and autumn cleaning the petticoats of silk, muslin or crepe paper which drape flower pots and lamps, and the cravats of ribbon tied round the throat of jugs and pitchers, and the stains of glasses all receive their share of contemptuous attention from the trenchant pen of Mrs. Linton, who concludes her article with this bit of solid sense—

"Wherever then we turn we find Art at loggerheads with comfort. Comfort wants space here and warmth there. Art cuts up the nobler proportions of a fine room by screens and the like and makes picturesque 'cup-board houses' of Arctic temperature in winter and stifling for want of free circulation of air in summer. Comfort wants good heavy lumbering curtains, and Art gives light and easily drawn cotton wisps. Comfort wants useful furniture in its bedroom, and Art gives color and form instead of usefulness. Comfort wants windows where it can see the whole view uninterrupted; Art chops up the space into small squares, or draws over the whole an art muslin curtain to drape the vulgarity of nature in her simplicity. Comfort likes a room to be as a box, well-lined and well upholstered. Art leaves the side open to the passage and free for all the cold wind of the outer air when ever the front door is opened. Comfort wants a chair in which it can lounge, and art says loftily. 'We have banished the feather-bed from the drawing room,' while employing only the hardest most unrestful and uncomfortable of substitutes. Comfort likes its feet to fall on thick piled carpets which do not slip and which do keep out the cold, and art gives a parcel of flimsy rugs, which it maintains to be the right thing for our climate. For Art has odd ideas about climate and fitness, and thinks itself logical when it would transplant the conditions of the south and east into our northern dwellings,

and make the rooms which have to battle against morning sunshine and oppressive heat, the models by which to regulate those whose enemy is cold and where the desideratum is warmth." It seems to me that these remarks apply with a singular aptness to the conditions of life in our own Canada as well as in England and that it would be well if we laid some of them to heart when furnishing our houses, or having them remodelled. The rug strewn skating rink for a drawing room floor, and the sitting room which has the whole side removed in order to throw it open to the hall and make the entrance direct from the street to the family gathering place and allow a free circulation of cold air every time the hall door is opened just as it is in the poorer class of houses where space is an object and the entire mansion consists of four rooms, deserve special mention, and next comes the cheerful custom of taking off all the doors, and replacing them with bright colored but flimsy portieres which look very nice, but catch and hold a woful amount of dust, and keep out very little cold. Of course if one is prepared to live in community, and never have a moment's privacy it is all very well, but there are times when one would be tempted to wish that the servant was not obliged to pass directly through the sitting room whenever she answers a ring at the front door, and also when it would be a real luxury to be able to shut the door and have a more confidential chat than will ever be possible when there is only a curtain to protect one from interruption and eavesdropping. In a country like ours where warmth is the chief consideration for nearly nine months of the year, it would seem as if good thick carpets that cover the entire floor, and keep it warm, heavy curtains and good solid dividing walls provided with solid doors, were a positive necessity under existing conditions and in spite of all the so-called art; but somehow, their claims to consideration seemed to be recognized less and less, and I should not be surprised if some bold disciple of high art were to set the fashion of taking down all the partitions in a house and supplying their places with gracefully hung portieres, or "Moorish drapings." Therefore Mrs. Linton's article is timely, and I have quoted it in the hope that Canadians who are inclined to place art first, and comfort afterwards, may perhaps do a little thinking on the subject, and conclude to give comfort at least a fair show in the conflict between the two forces which seem to be as the veteran writer says, at loggerheads. Artistic comfort is an ideal state of affairs but where we cannot manage that happy combination let us at least have the comfort, and I am sure we shall not only live longer, but be much happier and better natured in the long run.

Of course we must talk millinery just now or we should never feel it was really Easter week! Once upon a time it was Easter eggs, then a little later Easter cards, and now it is the Easter hat and bonnet that holds the floor to the exclusion of all other subjects. It really looks as if this was going to be the last year that the Easter hat would reign unless the church's great festival should come much earlier than it has ever done yet, because if the millinery openings keep on getting earlier and earlier in the season the spring hats and bonnets will be quite passe by Easter. I know lots of girls who were wearing their spring hats the last week in March this year, and I suppose we shall soon be following the example set by American milliners and having our regular openings in February.

To return to the Easter hat, however, its chief characteristic is color, or rather colors, for it would seem as if the rainbow itself could scarcely supply the variety of tints that the new hats and bonnets display. The sample millinery that reached New York from Paris last month contained the wildest assortment of colors that ever reached these shores. With very few exceptions the Paris hats and bonnets were composed of dazzling, blazing shades of scarlet, cardinal, red vivid rose, and still more vivid vermillion. Straw, ribbons, flounces, and feathers all partook of these startling tints and though they were com-

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bined with the artistic hand and eye that only a Parisian seems to possess, and in some cases were really lovely, they proved too startling for American taste, and in nearly every case the New York milliners were obliged to copy the French hats in more subdued colors, preserving as far as possible the incomparable style of the Parisian hat but toning down the colors. The American woman is usually gifted with excellent taste in dress and a mere fact that a bonnet is the creation of a high-priced Parisian milliner, is not sufficient inducement for her to make herself conspicuous by wearing headgear that she well knows will excite smiles and comment whenever she appears in public.

The Rembrandt shape is by far the prettiest and most becoming, its brim is frequently composed of violets, hyacinths, or "shattered roses" as they are called, merely crushed roses that look as if they had been torn apart and used piecemeal: the crown is of brightly sequined straw.

The preference is decidedly for large flowers and the tiny forget-me-nots and daisies of last year are quite out of style even the violets come in an enormously magnificent size. Roses are the favorite flowers, and they are shown in every possible and impossible tint from a salmon pink speckled with green, such as never grew on living rose bush, to an equally impossible shade of green. In fact it is a rose carnival this season, and to be in the fashion at all you must wear plenty of them. Don't make the mistake of imagining that you must stick to one shade, or even color in your roses, as you once did, such a proceeding would at once stamp you as behind the times, if not hopelessly countrified. You want a group of roses at one side of your hat showing as many colors as it you had just gathered them haphazard in the garden, there will be a pale blush rose a vivid pink one two salmon colored, and one or two of a shade of magenta never seen on earth or sea, massed in clusters of foliage in half a dozen shades of green, and then at the other side is a close bunch of green roses, shading from olive to palest Nile green, or there may even be a black rose of enormous size tipped with yellow.

Green is another of the favorite colors this spring, and the milliners are showing numbers of hat and bonnet shapes in all shades of green straw and fancy braid and these are trimmed either in different tones of green or with a choice selection of other colors. Indeed so fashionable is green that fully eight out of every twelve Easter bonnets this year will be green, and the woman who can afford to pay a small fortune for her spring bonnet, and who very likely has done so, will appear at Easter in a creation that looks as if it might be bought for a very few dollars consisting, as it does of a cluster of green leaves with a knot of fragile looking flowers that look as if a puff of wind would send them flying in all directions, standing directly up in front. There is very little else to such a bonnet, but there is nothing insignificant about the price its wearer paid for it, if it came from Paris.

I saw one lovely picture hat of bright red chiffon relieved with a very little black and white, it was quite large, though large hats are rather the exception this season, and as it had come straight from Paris, of

course it was very chic indeed. Another imported hat of lilac fancy straw was trimmed entirely with ribbon of exactly the same shade and a few violets, and it was about as dainty and pretty a thing as I have seen this spring. It is really wonderful how the violet seems to hold its own through all the vicissitudes of fashion! In spite of the long reign the "modest violet" has enjoyed, no one seems to tire of it, and it is equally as a trimming for the grandmother's bonnet, and the debutante's hat; it is the only flower this season that can be said to share the popularity of the rose, and even when large flowers came in, so great a hold had it upon public favor that there was no prospect of displacing it, so the manufacturers were obliged to meet the exigencies of the case by enlarging the violet in order to conform to the fashion, and now it has a firmer hold than ever.

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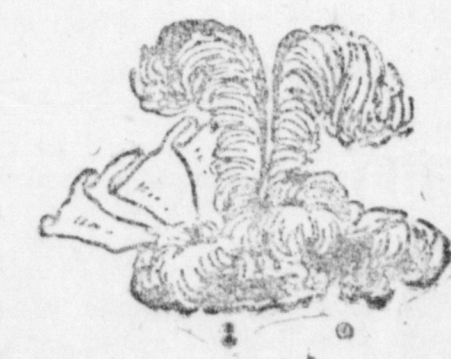
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