

Woman and Her Work

What a blessed thing it is that it is no longer fashionable to be young, that is to be in the first flush of extreme youth! At least it is a delightful thing for us who have left our salad days behind us and are thoroughly convinced in our own minds that there is a potent charm about maturity which youth cannot hope to possess; but I suppose it is rather hard upon the debutantes to feel that they are back numbers so to speak, until they have been set aside for a few years to ripen. But alas, and alas! that is just where the young things have the advantage of us, they are perfectly certain of obtaining the attraction which maturity brings if they only live long enough, while we have bidden good-bye to our youth forever and must make the best of what remains to us. Perhaps that is the very reason that the mature woman is attractive, she is so anxious to get the utmost out of life that she makes the best of herself, as well as of everything else, and therefore she is like a carnation which is always sweetest and fairest just before it fades. I do not know whether it is so much the custom in other countries, but in English society it is no longer either enviable or admirable to be very young; it may sound strange, but in the swiftest circles in the London of today, the fashionable age for a successful society woman is between thirty and forty. A few years ago it was a terrible thing to be thirty, while the woman of forty was looked upon as an utter mistake in society, her proper place was at home and that is where she should have sense enough to remain, seated in solid respectability with cap and spectacles, either reading, occupied with fancy work of the more decorous kind such as fancy knitting or perhaps tatting, as became her age; or else engaged in looking after her house. But the world was apace, and things change so that everyone seems to have their turn.

The women of whom we hear the most in the London of today are not by any means the buds, or even the belles in their third season, but the women who are frankly and openly middle aged, and who actually seem to glory in the fact. Of course for those whose rank is sufficiently exalted to entitle them to a place in the pages of the merciless volume known as "Debutante's Peerage," there is no such luxury as preserving a decent silence about their age, as anyone may read it who will. It is one of the drawbacks of exalted rank to live in a perpetual glare of publicity. The lovely Countess of Warwick, for instance would have been calmly dismissed from further consideration as "passee" a few years ago, but now she is one of the most conspicuous figures in London society, still a most beautiful woman, and still a power to be felt in the social world. Then there is the Dowager Countess of Dudley whom everyone knows to be a grandmother, but who cares? She is still known as the "lovely countess," and the light of her blue eyes can still attract as many moths as would satisfy the heart of the most exacting of debutantes. She is going to marry again it is said, may be already married for aught I know, and is a reigning beauty in spite of her years. Lady de Grey, known as the Tall Countess is yet another instance of the ascendancy of middle age, for she is supposed to be the most talked about, as well as the most envied woman of her time.

And it is not only our sex who profit by this curious turn of the wheel, our brethren are having their chance also, and it is said to be thoroughly appreciated in the charmed circle known as "the best set" in London may range in age from thirty-five to fifty. What a millennium it is for the men and women who have "lived." How devoutly they are hoping that their day may prove a long one, and the sunset glory be prolonged, before the inevitable twilight closes in, and leaves them nothing

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to look forward to but "the cold light of stars."

It has been rather a boast lately amongst our cousins over the border, that the time had actually come in New York itself when a man could walk into a cafe, and order a cup of tea instead of a cocktail without causing the proprietor and the waiters to look around suspiciously to see whether he had escaped from his keeper, so common had five o'clock tea drinking become amongst the well-to-do classes. But all the same a well dressed New Yorker succeeded in causing a very decided ripple in a leading hotel restaurant not long ago, just by ordering a cup of tea. He came in quietly enough and his manner indicated perfect sanity, but all the same the headwaiter, the cashier and even the customers looked at him with as much suspicion as if he had been a dangerous lunatic. He had lived in London for some years, and naturally fallen into English ways so completely that he saw nothing strange about them himself, therefore when ordering his refreshment he asked, in the most matter of fact manner imaginable to have the tea leaves brought to him dry, with a kettle of boiling water, so he might brew it for himself—hence the atmospheric disturbance which everyone noticed but the one who was responsible for it.

Sadly in Need of Help.

It was a sultry night in July. He had been sitting up with a sick friend, and with his coat on his arm and misery in his head, now followed his instinct to his suburban home on Walnut Hills. The distant whirr of the night-owl's motor and the pat pat of his unsteady footsteps were the only sounds that struck his ear. Suddenly he stopped and listened. Wasn't that a sob or moan, as if a human being in distress? Everything was silent for a few seconds, then the mysterious sound was repeated. The hair of the lonesome pedestrian evinced a peculiar tendency to stand on end, and his limbs became still shakier than they had been. He looked around, and just when the gruesome moaning once more broke the stillness of the night he espied a female figure, all clad in white, on the moonlit front steps of the residence in front of which he had stopped.

"Will you please help me?" the woman spoke in a sad and pleading voice that at once awakened all the accumulated gallantry in our hero. As rapidly as his slightly paralyzed extremities permitted he crossed the front yard and said to the fair suppliant: "What can I do for you, madam?"

"I have been locked out since 10 o'clock, and have been waiting here ever since. Would you please go into the house and open the front door which a sudden draught must have shut?"

"But how can I get into the house?"

"Why, the back door is wide open."

"But if that is the case, why in heaven did you sit out here for more than three hours?"

"Oh, please do not ask. Can't you guess?"

He guessed when he reached the front door from the inside and found about one-third of the girl's garments in the hall, separated from the rest by the tight-fitting door.

They say that that the value of contrast as a means of giving character and effect to a gown, has been a matter of actual study amongst dress designers this season, and, certainly the result of their labors is sometimes rather startling. Not only is contrast of color sought after but of material as well, and from an economical point of view it is very useful.

If you want to show that you are thoroughly up in the law of contrasts be sure to have a purple collar on your blue gown. Of course you will have to exercise a little care in your choice of shades, because if you happened to select the wrong ones, the result would be disastrous, for one will utterly eclipse the other, but all the same it is purple and blue without any mistake, and the most surprising thing about it is the fact that instead of thinking how hideous it is when your eye first lights on it, you are wondering why no one ever

tried it before. The variety in shades of blue is something to be wondered at, and the way three or four different tints are made to harmonize in one costume, is a very striking example of the modern disposition of colors. It is the right touch which gives one's gown the perfect finish and proclaims it the work of an artist, while the wrong touch would be fatal.

Black or white or oftener than not both, are distinct factors in every scheme of decoration this season, whether it be in gowns or hats. Black and white costumes are also very popular, especially in the transparent materials. Black mousseline de soie with Chantilly lace sprayed scattered over it, made up over white forms a very elegant costume, and pretty effects are wrought with plain black mousseline by using colored chiffon underneath. Those to whom dollars and cents are a matter of comparative indifference add to the effect by having two skirts of chiffon in pale shades, or contrasting colors between the silk foundation which is still another color, and the simple black mousseline shirred down closely around the hips. The effect is prismatic, and must I should imagine remind one of the celebrated Lois Fuller.

White gowns of all kinds will be very popular this season, and here again is room for extravagance of the mildest description for there are gauzes of the daintiest kind, and the organdies batistes and India muslins trimmed with exquisite embroideries, frills and insertions of lace, and appliques of needlework which offer opportunities for lavish expenditure. Another white material is a decided novelty to be seen, in flowered ribbon stripes, with lace designs between each stripe. This lovely fabric also comes in colored designs and makes exquisite blouses. White silk veiling and crepe de chine make beautiful summer dresses, and all these thin materials are shirred, tucked and corded in the most elaborate manner. Some of the skirts are trimmed with graduated flounces embroidered on the edge.

It would be an endless task to attempt to describe the different styles of skirt trimming, but ruffles seem to be amongst the most popular, and they are made of every imaginable material, ribbon, chiffon, silk and satin, but to be fully up-to-date they must be narrow. Very pretty ruffles for a black dress are made of narrow black and white lace edging shirred together in one. The guimpe waist is the prevailing feature of all the summer dresses, and though it is not new by any means, as it was worn all winter, there are variations which give it the appearance of novelty. The chief difference between the winter gowns and those of today being the depth of the yoke. The bodice proper is cut lower to show more guimpe, and thus give the effect of one bodice over another. This can be very prettily carried out by slashes at each side and in the sleeves showing the under bodice, or else with a vest. Half low cut bodices for occasions when full dress is not required are often made in this way, with the second bodice showing above the outer one, and again through the sleeves. The blouse effect seems to be another prevailing feature, but the back is close and plain, or arranged in tiny plaits in the centre of the belt.

Amongst the new importations of foulard gowns is one of blue and white with a dark blue mousseline de soie front in the blouse and skirt. This is shirred into puffs, and a frill of the silk with black satin ribbon on the edge finishes each side forming a sort of jabot which is caught down here and there with a bow. Another new costume of blue foulard is made with a full flounce, narrow in front and carried high at the back. The bodice is full in front, has a yoke of Irish lace, and is completed with a Swiss belt and red silk sash. A costume of heliotrope cashmere

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