

# HINTS

ON

## DRESS AND BEAUTY.

BY MRS. E. OAKES SMITH.

AUTHOR OF 'WESTERN CAPTIVE,' 'TRUE CHILD,' 'SOLENS CHILD,' 'RICHER WITHOUT WINGS,'  
'LOST ANGEL,' 'WOMAN AND HER NEEDS,' 'SHADOW LAND,' ETC., ETC.

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What's this a sleeve! 'tis like a demi-cannon;  
What I up and down, carved like an apple-tart!  
Here's snip, and nip, and cut, and shish, and slash.

SHAKESPEARE.

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New - York:  
FOWLERS AND WELLS, PUBLISHERS,  
No. 131 Nassau Street.

Boston, 132 Washington St.]

[London, No. 142 Strand.

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1852.

[London, No. 149 Strand.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1852, by  
E. OAKES SMITH,  
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

EDWARD O. JENKINS, STEREOTYPER,  
114 Nassau street.

TO

MRS. PAULINE W. DAVIS,

WHO SO HAPPILY COMBINES WOMANLY TASTE WITH ENERGY OF THOUGHT,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

Is Affectionately Inscribed,

BY HER FRIEND,

E OAKES SMITH.

Brooklyn, L. I.,  
March 22, 1859. }

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## Preface.

THE following pages are in part the substance of a Lecture given by the author in New York and elsewhere, and now offered the public more as a series of suggestions than as an elaborate essay.

The current of public opinion has been, for more than a year, tending to a reform in Dress, and hundreds of women confess to a desire for the Reform Costume, but have not the courage to assume it. I really do not see that anything very heroic is done by shortening the skirt a few inches—one would think the reverse, if drabbling in mud in rainy weather were the real test of heroism, presenting, as women thus do, an appearance utterly indelicate and unladylike. Women say they are “squeamish” at being stared at; but this inconvenience is but temporary, as the experience of hundreds can testify. If one dress

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more than another be best adapted to my convenience or my purse, I really do not see that my neighbor has anything to do in the matter. I suspect this "squeamishness," (for I quote a word often used by those who are afraid to think for themselves,) is another way of indicating a wholesale imbecility of character, by which every woman thinks she must do precisely as every other woman has done, does, or is expected to do.

It is much to be regretted that women will "wear the heart upon the sleeve for daws to peck at"—will wear the soul outside of the body, to be blown upon "by every wind of doctrine," rather than be castled within, sure and steadfast, looking from the "loop holes of retreat," and judging for themselves. My neighbor's way of thinking or acting may be very well for her—it is her concern, not mine; but her way of thinking or acting will not do for me. She eats pork and sausages—I revolt from both; what then? am I to sit in judgment upon her, and call her to account for eating pork or sausages? Again, she may wear a man's hat, while I prefer a bonnet; she may wear false hair to conceal a change in

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the circulations, while I think the gray hair preferable; what then? shall we intermeddle, be impertinent, and render each other uncomfortable on these grounds? Certainly not. It is simply a difference in taste, culture, or opinion; involves nothing vital to either of us, and indeed concerns only ourselves individually, and if either of us were so sensitive to the opinions of the other as to change our habit except upon clear conviction, we must be irretrievably imbecile.

We must aim at the highest, the best, and in so doing we shall often need cast aside the old furnishing of both our minds and bodies, as things that have survived their use, and we should no more feel regret at doing this, than we do in casting off anything else that retards our way, or has ceased to be needful to us.

It is enough to say that this reform is slowly, but surely, making its way. For travelling its benefits are so palpable that in time it will certainly be the only dress, recommended by economy, convenience, and good taste.

*Brooklyn, L. I., 1852.*



## Chapter First.

“ Give me a form, give me a face,  
That lend simplicity a grace,  
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free,—  
Such sweet neglect more taketh me  
Than all the adulteries of art  
That take mine eye but not my heart.”—BEN JONSON.

The dress should bespeak the individual.—Classical dress.—Sensitiveness of women.—Impertinencies.—Author's experience of that kind.—The *tonneur*.—Danger of padding the bust.—Instinctive sense of appropriateness.

Our brothers, desirous to give us a hint in dress, are very sure to quote the above, without much comprehension of the sentiment of the words. The ‘ form ’ and the ‘ face ’ are very well ; the poet wished that the dress and the character should harmonize ; but to say this he has described the dress of a wanton—to escape the “ adulteries of art,” he has verged to the other *extreme*, and given us not “ simplicity,” but voluptuousness. *The woman and her apparel should so belong the one to the other, that the observer would feel at once, the latter was hers and hers only.* The robe

gathered with gems upon the shoulder, and bound to the waist by a girdle, is so beautiful and classical, that every woman covets to wear it; but except in costume for a ball, it is interdicted by our matter-of-fact, commercial people. Instinctively we feel that Diana's tunic should be looped at the knee, and Niobe's robe flow in stately and massive folds, but none of us look to our own individualities and ask, What is best for me personally—best for the occasion even? but each one follows blindly the lead of Fashion.

At first sight it would seem a matter of little consequence whatever might be the cut of a woman's dress, so long as it is fresh as a rose in its cleanliness, comfortable in its texture, and adapted to times and seasons. It would seem that health, pliability and decency might be the first requisites of choice, followed by grace, and individual becomingness. It would seem that a woman might be left, like Wordsworth's brook, to follow "her own sweet will" in her costume, wearing this or that shape or color as best pleased the fancy of the hour, or the conveniences of occasion; and our brothers, busy in affairs of state, and

urgent in business, would observe its change as only making up a part of the delicate or beautiful shades of the passing tableau vivant. This is in fact nearly true, for, laying aside the petty intermeddlings of coxcombs, or the coarse brutality of rowdies, nearly all the ridicule lavished upon dress comes from women themselves. They follow the dictates of fashion without any reference to appropriateness, and frown down or sneer down all attempts at innovation.

The woman who appears in the street habited in any unusual manner, will be sure to meet from her own sex with nameless expressions of face, utterly unintelligible to a man, but understood perfectly by a woman, and felt to be not only annoying, but insulting. Now, most of us are sensitive, foolishly sensitive, in matters affecting our relation to each other—we endure but illy the covert smile, the rude stare, and the just perceptible curl of the lip. I remember myself once to have been betrayed into wearing at a small party, a sort of collarette, broader than the fashion prescribed, which, being quite becoming and handsome, I had retained, ignorant (for I was too young to worship fashion very pro-

foundly) that it had been proscribed. I can laugh now at the pain I felt at the suppressed titters and raised brows I encountered ; but I cannot forgive myself the foolish self-consciousness on this account, that threatened to paralyze all thought and expression for the time being. Enthusiasm, poetry, humor, all that might have imparted zest to the evening, vanished before the unlucky muslin, which seemed to expand enormously, till I was nothing but one great stiff colarette. I had not then learned the malice that sometimes may exist in what are called well-bred women, whose wealth is no shield to their innate vulgarity, and who, if they cannot compete with, know how to discomfort a rival in their ranks. Indeed, this petty warfare is shamefully rife in the sex, and we can only hope that time and culture will eventually suppress it, just as other evils die out as the race advances.

An amusing book might be written by any earnest woman, willing to expend her talents in whipping folly, descriptive of the curious blunders which occur at any innovation. When the bustle, that indecent and unhealthy appendage to

dress was first introduced, our country friends were often distressed at what they supposed to have been some sad mistake of arrangement, or some sudden growth of deformity. I remember well the first young lady of our circle who amazed us all in the dressing-room by appearing with this hump on the back. I, always desirous to see my friends looking their prettiest, and having only heard of, never having seen a demonstration of the style, volunteered to *flat* down the plaits of her dress. A general laugh followed of course, but as the appendage was monstrous and disfiguring, this revelation of fashion, and this outbreak of merriment at my supposed greenness, did not disturb me into discomfort.

In alluding to the *tourneur*, *bustle*, *bishop*, or whatever it is called, I cannot forbear to say a word in regard to the effect of this and kindred appendages upon health. In the first place they are of no value in concealing defects of shape. The most casual observer sees through the design at once. If the form is meagre, the back may be rounded to any extent, but we see the *lean arm* and the *lank waist*, and thus penetrate the artifice.

The wearer has to bear not only the consciousness of the falsehood, but in time, the unnatural heat produced by the weight and thickness of the dress upon organs always exposed to infirmity in civilized society, betrays itself in lassitude, inflammation, and derangements of the system, followed by years of suffering, if not death. Were my province that of the physiologist, I might give a frightful detail of diseases thus superinduced, and which one quack after another comes forward with indecent hardihood under pretence of curing, but to relieve which, no woman should allow any one to approach her person but a practitioner of her own sex. Women must look to each other for relief in sickness, and they will ere long feel the impropriety of doing otherwise.

Next to this, if not more pernicious in its effect upon health, is the practice of padding the bust. The fullness of integument causes a more rapid flow of the circulations in this region in our sex than in the other. We do not feel the cold so readily, and hence the low dress, leaving the shoulders and bust more exposed, is refreshing to us. Women speak better and sing better with

the bust uncovered, because excitement throws the blood rapidly to the part, and a sense of congestion takes place where the robe lies too heavily upon the chest. They should keep this in mind in their public ministrations.

Now, the padding of the dress increases the natural heat of the bust, and lays the foundation for a whole army of lung complaints, inflammations, tubercles, consumptions, and finally, cancer of the mammæ closes the miserable catalogue.

Nor does this artificial beauty effect its purpose. The dress may be ever so voluptuous, but the skinny neck tells the whole story of leanness. The woman who is sensitive in matters of the kind should create the illusion she desires by flowing drapery, shawls, scarfs, gauze, and whatever deludes the eye from a fact. Cotton is the very Ghost of Hamlet to Fashion, and provokes questioning.

The long bodice, too, has its evils, by crowding the organs of the body out of place, and thus producing a long array of evils, which the family physician fully understands, but which it is not for his interest to explain. Women are martyrs

to the medical profession certainly, and to how many other of the professions it is not the province of this work to particularize.

The truth is, women are afraid of each other, and dare not follow either their own individual taste or judgment in the matter of dress. Now that our railroads bring the country nearer to the centres of taste, very great solecisms in fashion need not take place with our country cousins, but this very proximity should be made instrumental in the adoption of a style better adapted to travel and exposure.

We can dress as we please, if we do it in simplicity. I am quite certain the woman who is tormented with a perpetual self-consciousness, always invites intrusion, half challenges impertinence. She who has that magnitude of character about her that *will emanate from a true or a great soul*, repels interference—the coarse, narrow observer is instinctively awed before her. Your matter-of-fact people may ridicule this, but it is not the less true.

We recognize what is apt and beautiful, by a part of our divine intuitions; accordingly, any



dress adapted to the individual is at once accepted by the observer, however at variance it may be with established rules. The child may appear half-naked before us, and we are not shocked; the girl may bare her shoulders and float in gauze, or shorten her skirts and exhibit something more than the ankle, and we do not object; the well-proportioned woman may wear trowsers and a sack fitted to her shape, and travel anywhere without molestation; while another less finely made, or with a less appropriate carriage, will meet with ridicule, perhaps with abuse, because the innate sense of the beautiful is unconsciously outraged by her; so, also, the stout elderly dame who should attempt anything of the sort, would experience the same repugnance, because we instinctively associate flowing robes and a majestic carriage with the grandeur of a Hecuba. The public sense is nearly right in these matters, and proves our position that every woman should cultivate her own taste, that she may judge in the matter of her dress; and that all should agree in a reform of costume for the purposes of labor, travel, and exercise.

If the dress be adapted to the occasion, it is of no

consequence what it may be, we at once recognize it and like it. For instance, in a rain or snow-storm, a woman may appear in sack or trowsers, and be received with approval, when perhaps the same woman might not be so received in fair weather, because somehow, we can hardly tell why, we do not like to see her so habited; but custom will do away this kind of grudgingness, and we shall not mind so much what a woman wears, but think of her as she is; growing to *discern her*, not her covering.

The greatest compliment that can be paid a woman is to forget her dress, or rather not to see it—as proving it to be so characteristic that we are not incommoded by observation, and are thus left to unalloyed companionship. We see, as it were, face to face, and not through whalebone and starch. The rose in her hair is a portion of her womanhood, and the robe in hue and shape is so a part of her mould that we do not see it, but her. All is in harmony—she is the genius to which everything else has become subordinate—just as the color and the form of all sylvan creatures harmonize with their surroundings; the moss dap-

pling the stone with beauty, the bird blending with foliage, the lizard with the shrub, and the sky with the water. Nature does not molest us with disproportions or discords, but so adapts all things that we do not see how they could be otherwise. We shall show hereafter how color, shape, and sentiment, in nature, are all in keeping—all true to our own sense of truth.

## Chapter Second.

"COME, pensive Nun ! devout and pure,  
Sober, steadfast, and demure ;  
All in a robe of darkest grain,  
Flowing with majestic train,  
And sable stole of cypress lawn,  
Over thy decent shoulders drawn."—MILTON.

*Independence in dress recommended.—Long robes and idiocy.—Turkish women, and Swiss contrast.—Dripping Uadines.—Broadway walkers.—Long Robes for the parlor.—Democratic simplicity.*

THE present costume of our sex is at war with health, comfort and beauty ; we are disposed to a reform, and the whole country from Dan even unto Beersheba, or rather from Maine to Florida, is alive with ridicule and abuse ; but this ridicule is hardly worth the attention we give it, and our sensitiveness only helps to prolong the laugh. Men dress as pleases them best—wear whiskers and moustache, one or both, or go without either, and we say not a word, though I do not see why they should not wear both, if Nature is bountiful

to them in the matter. They adopt any costume, and we trouble ourselves very little in the matter, simply acknowledging that it is generally from bad to worse ; but we leave them to their own taste ; and we have a right to the same tolerance on their part, and indeed I think we receive it. Ridicule and sarcasm are provoked by violations of taste, or by innovations upon established usage ; if we are deficient in the nicer perceptions of beauty, we must run the hazard of disapproval in large as well as in small matters, dress amongst others ;— but if we are innovating upon hoary error, and are in earnest in our work, we shall regard these pop-guns of prejudice very little—we shall go on in our career undisturbed by their report.

Abuse from the other sex in regard to the reform which is being made in dress, comes with a poor grace, when women bear in mind the wry faces of their husbands and fathers when called to meet extravagant bills. Women must be aided to earn money and clothe themselves, or learn to dress in their own way and in better economy, that they may be able to do something in the great movements for human good. At present, they do not

earn, but they like to spend, and now that they are planning a little common-sense, beginning to think it might be well to have a dress above the mud of the pavement, and fitted to rapid or laborious movement, husbands and fathers are terrified lest some coxcomb should make comments upon their wives' robes or daughters' ankles.

But women are tired to death of their petty details in dress, of the innumerable petticoats, (remember, I quote Shakspeare, than which his "fringe upon a petticoat," nothing can be prettier.) A woman who conceals a meagre form under fourteen of these articles, as I have known them to do, or even five, is hardly in a fit state for locomotion. We are impeded by the length of drapery, and fatigued by the weight, even without labor. Women are esteemed as infants and idiots in law, and our long robes make us well nigh such in fact; indeed, I do not know but we might form a pretty sure estimate of the amount of freedom allowed the women of a country, by the length of drapery in which they are cased. The Turkish woman, it is true, wears the trowsers, but she is folded in robe and shawl till she is nearly helpless;

while the Swiss peasant in her brief skirt climbs the hills of her country unimpeded, and thus inhales life and freedom, to be reinfused into the veins of her children. Liberty of limb is the first essential to liberty of thought.

Disease, in its manifold shapes, has followed many of the unnatural usages of the last few years, as any physician will testify, and every artist will affirm that our dress is false to all the essentials of human proportion. The beautiful sweep of outline is lost amid the trappings of the milliner. The head is a head by itself, the feet are not at all, and the arms have as many parts as the ropes of a ship, which require an adroit sailor to master.

The tyranny of Fashion is more oppressive than that of Procrustes, for he stretched his victims upon but one bed, while the rack of fashion is a new importation every month. It is as if there were a conspiracy between Ladies and Milliners, for the express purpose of tormenting the masculines, in the way of heavy drafts for laces and silks and muslins to be made into street sweeps.

Health, beauty, and economy all cry aloud for

a reform. There can be no beauty without health, for whoever thought of a sickly Venus, or a Juno with a cold? Women are now only creatures of the sunshine, and to be tolerable it must be sunshine without dust, or they are nauseous from the sweepings of the streets.

The rain renders them as crestfallen as poor Chanticleer after a heavy shower. Nothing is more pitiful than the sight of a woman thus overtaken by "the melting mood" of the skies—starch all wilted down, ribbons adhering, and the ankles anything but dainty looking. She is a dripping Undine, but not the water-spirit joyous in her own element, but forlorn, draggled, miserable; uncomfortable to herself, and pitiful in the eyes of others. She dreads the rain because her dress is not adapted to it.

Look at the women who walk Broadway after a rain. Their shoulders are raised nearly to the ears—the face has an expression made up of anxiety and disgust; both hands are in play to keep the dress from the mud, which still escapes in loops, hitting the pavement, and trailing a streak of impurity, dabbling the ankles, and soiling the



nice cambric beneath. Besides this, the dress is often raised to an indecent height, far more indelicate in exposing the sacred muslin and lace, or the limb, than any association arising from the plain trowsers worn with a shorter robe could possibly be. They all look like slatterns, to say the least, on such occasions, and I do not see that any innovation could make matters worse than they now are. I do not see why the New-York woman, walking superbly, as she confessedly does, in fair weather, should be willing to be so transformed in foul.

Who of us does not recollect how joyously in childhood we dashed amid the wild fall of an April rain; how the very sound of the north wind was an exultation; and how we brought home health, and oceans of life and beauty from the May morning walk, with scarcely a flower to reward our toil? but the result was in the health, the freedom, and the life of unfettered limbs and lightly draped shoulders.

Look at the school-girl, with her gazelle-like tread, and clear eye and ringing laugh, and contrast her with the woman of fashion in her cum-

brous robes, listless, vapid, jaundiced, and unlovely. I know that a certain melancholy weight is regarded as dignified—a solemn, stand-thou-aside aspect, pious and respectable. But let us not believe in this flimsy show ; these are too often the hidings of hypocrisy and inward corruption. Spontaneity belongs to the innocent, and mannerism to the full of guile. We should distrust ourselves, when we find that we look to appearances instead of realities. It is easy for the practiced woman of fashion to stare and frown down the impulses which she at least envies, but which she knows to be too attractive for her to countenance, therefore she determines that all shall be coerced into the dull formalities of conventionalism, the laws of which, if they sometimes protect the innocent, quite as readily screen the guilty.

Soon or late the world is too much with us, and we lose the spontaneous and freewill offerings of our nature, to make broad phylacteries, and challenge greetings by the weight of our hypocrisy.

Why should it be thus with us ? why should we recede from the frankness, and faith, and joyfulness of our early life ? why should not the rain

and the sunshine of to-day fill us with emotions identical with the rain and the sunshine of our childhood? Nature has not changed, but we have receded farther from the true, and nearer to what is false and conventional.

There is no reason why a woman should not be in the open air as freely as the other sex. She bears an encounter of wind and rain quite as well, if as properly prepared for it. She is neither sugar nor salt, to be melted, and her powers of endurance are a counterpart to those of men. Notwithstanding this she does not pass more than a quarter part so much time abroad as her male companion, and this solely on account of the disabilities of dress. She has been for ages growing into the bondage of masses of useless and cumbersome drapery, till she is as helpless as the China woman with her distorted feet.

Let her literally shake herself from the dust, and move in the "white heights of her womanhood." Let her

Walk in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,  
And all that's best of good and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes,

as she will do when dressed in robes, light, and adapted to health and locomotion.

Let her take a hint from Nature as to the best means of meeting the elements. The huma, with its long pensile plumes, never touches the ground, while the duck, with her substantial pedals, has a plumage as close fitting as that of a Broadway Dandy. There is a philosophy in that kind of dress which shall best subserve the purposes of walking in all kinds of weather. Whatever may be our indoor adorning, we need a dress that custom shall recognize as especially adapted to out of door purposes. Let our women reserve their long robes for the parlor, where the length of train may not be unbecoming, but let us devise a costume for the open air, light, convenient, and unexpensive, by which the distinctions of society will be less painfully apparent, and by which our sphere of activity and usefulness may be enlarged. Let us do this for the sake of our health, our comfort, and our humanity.

Here, in a country like ours, if anywhere, both men and women should feel themselves disenthralled from the bondage of foreign custom.

Here, where our watchword is freedom, and where radicalism prevails from the highest to the lowest, we should dare think for ourselves, and ask no sanction from abroad.

Why should we care what is the style prevailing in profligate courts, or what is the mode in the corrupt circles of Paris?

We should lead, not be led; and we, the daughters of a republic, should spurn this ape-like subserviency, this subordinate bowing down to foreign usages; and with a spirit akin to our institutions, reject what is transatlantic and useless to us, and step forth in the more than regal pride of democratic simplicity. We lead the van of nations in the great sentiment of human freedom, why should we be led, either as men or women, in the ordering of our persons? Why should we stand forth with the law and gospel of political rights in one hand, and then in a pitiful whisper ask what we shall put on?

How incongruous it must seem to the brave exile of Rome and Hungary to witness our subserviency to foreign fashions! we, with all our glorious religious and political rights, clinging so

tenaciously to the drapery, while we spurn the substance of a throne? Is it not like the weak wife of the Patriarch, who could abandon friends and kindred, yea, her father's house and country, but not the images of worship? It must be that the colonial taint still lingers in our blood.

## Chapter Third.

"A cap of flowers, and a kirtle  
Embroidered all with leaves of *myrtle*;  
A gown made of the finest wool,  
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;  
Slippers lined *choicely* for the cold,  
With buckles of the purest gold;  
A belt of straw, and ivy buds,  
With coral clasps and amber studs."—MARLOWE.

Study the Poets.—Disguises adopted from sentiment.—Penalties attached to dress.—Primitive costumes.—Sense of the beautiful.—Vanity a vice in men.—Ugliness preferable to prettiness.—Love and Beauty.—Dimpled shoulders.

THIS is certainly a dainty picture of the poet's, studious of comfort as well as beauty, and suggestive of love from the "leaves of myrtle," and modesty from the "coral clasps and amber studs." Now that women are determined to shake off a portion of this bondage to foreign fashionable dictation, it would be well to study the poets for appropriate hints in dress—the question being now not as to change, but, wherein shall the change consist? Shall we assume the coat and trowsers of the other sex, which we are so often accused of

coveting? No; we pity them as much as ourselves, for their unbecoming garments. Perhaps they will hereafter, from the slouched hat, the frock and girdle of the hunter, and the Roman toga, devise something that will leave them less with the appearance of Plato's man, than they now present. The advent of Kossuth has done our people good in more ways than one; it has shown us that we have not yet evolved the full sentiment of liberty; it has awakened within us a new enthusiasm; and it has also modified the dress of our people. A year ago a man would have been considered insane, who should have appeared with feather in cap, unless at a military parade; now the feather is worn or not worn, without attracting comment. Had the wife of Kossuth been a woman of marked individuality, she might also have had her influence. But she was like most of others, who when asked as to an abstract question, will give their own experience, rather than an expression of truth.

Some have contended that there should be no difference in the dress of the sexes. I think a moment's reflection will convince us that this is



a mistaken taste. As a general rule we are shorter than the other sex, and I am sure we do not wish to seem only a poorer sort of man. Then there is a womanly consciousness by which we reject the imputation of mannishness. True, women have assumed the not unbecoming dress of a page, and have endured the privations and toils of a camp; have rocked upon the giddy mast in the garb of a sailor, and in each have preserved the secret of their womanhood beyond suspicion, and songs and ballads have done homage to the chasteness of their devotion. But this is not the way of the sex; women like to be known as women; they do not care to cast suspicion upon the privileges of their creation, and only the greatness of some beautiful sentiment has induced them to these disguises. I will not affirm that this is the higher truth, but as dress belongs to the sphere of taste, I speak from my own consciousness.

It would be curious to search into that state of the public mind, which resulted in the passage of laws by which it became penal for a woman to appear in coat and pantaloons—old laws which have countenanced many an outrage upon the embittered or

miserable of our sex, who in this way shrank from public scrutiny. Oh! it is the scourge of vice, and sometimes the penalty of misfortune, that it takes its victim from the protection of respect, and leaves it open to brute force. God shield the miserable and the wicked, for man has no mercy for such.

But to these laws, it would seem as if a woman might be allowed to wear any garments that pleased her best, and indeed she is generally left somewhat to her own discretion in the matter, unless she assume the "round and top of sovereignty," a pair of trowsers; in that case she is liable to fine and imprisonment.

Since the agitation of the Dress question in the country, these laws have actually been put in force, manifestly unjust as the case must have been—for the dress adopted by the most bizarre woman has not been a man's dress, and therefore did not make her liable to the law. Women are ridiculed even by the friends of reform, for shrinking from the observation of the crowd while wearing the reform dress; but when it is recollected that they are exposed to the warrant of a police-officer, it is not so much to be wondered at.

These laws seem both weak and cowardly, and must have been passed in some convulsion of jealous and vindictive husbands, who found their wives more than a match for them. There must have been a period when women were in the habit of parading the streets with, perhaps, sword on thigh, or cane in hand, casting impudent glances into the very eyes of their liege lords, who, not knowing them under their disguise, were not over careful to conceal their peccadilloes, which might have led to many an unhappy Caudle Lecture. They grew indignant, and having the law in their own hands, enacted such as should protect themselves from unhappy family mistakes.

I shall not attempt a history of past ages, and cite the monstrous perversities of taste which have prevailed at various eras, for such a history would quite exceed the limits of our little work. According to the testimony of Moses, and the authority of Milton, when the first pair had finished their Eden mission, they went forth clad in garments of the same construction; and amongst all rude people the dress of both sexes has been nearly identical. It is in countries the most enlightened

and civilized, that they have diverged most in the nature of costume ; and this divergency, growing out of the natural progress of taste, and the higher developments of the human mind, has, I think, its foundation in a higher truth. The shorter stature, the greater delicacy of frame, the fuller and more rounded outline, the absence of beard, superadded to that wavy grace that springs from the mental as well as physical organization of woman as compared to man, all indicate a propriety in the distinctions of dress.

There is an element in every mind that finds itself gratified by brilliant colors and harmonious arrangement, whether of form or sound—we call this the sense of the beautiful, which is more or less powerful in all minds in proportion to the fineness of the organization. It is essential to the poet, the architect, the musician and the painter ; it is the ideal for which genius yearns in prophetic vision, and that for which the Divine essence wrought, when He first spoke light into being. He made the blossom and the bird harmonious types of it, the rainbow to girdle the heavens with a zone, and man to be its recipient and its wor-

shipper. I know not, it may be that man is shorn of his beams, that woman is less lovely, and less majestic than when the first pair stood in Paradise, bearing in their bosoms the germs of all subsequent creations—the latent beauty and thought of our thousands of generations—swayed with the grandeur, and lofty with the aspiring of all coming forms of genius and worship—this may be all true, that we are but endwarfed Adams, and diluted Eves, yet this great sentiment of the true, the beautiful is left us to gladden and uphold, and it becomes us to treat it reverently. We have no right to distort and mar God's handiwork, either for ourselves or those that shall come after us, and we as women have a right to our protest against whatever has this effect, in spite of ridicule or abuse. Let it not be supposed that I claim too much for this external grace—I mean it is a great good in the human form—the outward sign of integrity of being, of perfection of health and freedom of the faculties. Man or woman so endowed in its largest sense, is God's living, breathing word; the literature of the eternal it may be—an epic as was Milton, sermons and tragedies

as were the martyrs—odes, lyrics all distinct and harmonious. True, this great good may be perverted, but the abuse is no plea against the good itself. That may be excellent which has fallen to an ill recipient; the toad hath yet a precious jewel in his head, and a pearl is a pearl, though in an Ethiop's ear. I am a worshipper of beauty, and that of my own sex fills me with delight, not envy. We must believe the Creator joyous in its many aspects, or he would not have been so lavish in its bestowal; robing the flowers more gorgeously than crowned heads, and looping back the garments of the night with a star.

An ugly woman runs much hazard in loving. When I say ugly, I use the word in the English sense, applied to the external appearance only, not to moral qualities, as the word is now mostly used in New England, where the idioms of Milton still hold the ground. There, a person is morally ugly, physically homely; according to the divine bard—

" It is for *homely* features to keep *home* ;  
They had their name hence."

My position may sound very oddly in the face

of the whole tribe of twaddlers who fill our magazines with stories going to show that mental beauty is the only thing really lovable in this world ; which may be a pretty philosophic illusion to the very large class of plain people who go to fill up the common clay of this common world, but the fact is substantially true, that ugly women are not loved. Womanhood in all its shades is loved, and beauty is one of the elements of womanhood. What are such to do, then ? exclaims ugliness in every possible variety, and in every possible expression of ugliness.

Why, recognise it as a fact, and meet it accordingly.

I would say still farther, beautiful women are rarely, if ever, vain ; ugly women and plain women are always more or less so. Beauty is favorable to self-esteem, plainness to vanity. The beautiful woman may have a very high standard, but she looks about her, and finds she has the advantage of most whom she encounters, and her glass sends back a reflection which if not faultless, is far, very far from being repugnant to the principles of beauty. She meets her own personal attractions as a fact,

to be no more cared for, and the looks of admiration bent upon her, are a natural and every-day occurrence, which in no way affects her.

Not so the plain woman. Her glass gives back a reflection by no means satisfactory to her own standard. She finds herself passed over in social gatherings, and she grows nervous and uncomfortable under a position which she is unwilling to fill. She tries to make amends by particular charms; she will with the frankness, but, alas! rarely with the true magnanimity of Madame Roland, be compelled to own that she has "ungloved a fair and slender hand," to do away the impression of very unattractive features; she will flash out expressive eyes, pout a pretty lip, smile to show even teeth, half violate decorum for the sake of a bust, or with the egregious vanity of Madame de Staël, go with the arms bare, because, as she said, it was all the beauty nature had given her, and she would make the most of it.

All this is exceedingly external, appealing to the sense of others, in the weak hope that we may be less ugly in their eyes than we are in our own, which, depend upon it, we never are. This is the



action of vanity, a continual reference to others in an estimate of ourselves,—a reference which the beautiful woman is protected from making by the existence of unquestionable charms.

Men pay homage to beauty, but there is no doubt their conquests are oftenest made with plain women, for vanity is far more obliging than self-esteem—and the dear creature, who finds her one only charm the subject of admiration, is overwhelmed with love—gratitude!—oh, no! with vanity, which answers the same purpose.

The beautiful woman “knows her worthiness,” as Shakspeare says, and is unmoved at a whole artillery of the kind; consequently, her emotions are likely to be the more genuine, earnest, and unadulterated. She is less likely to make compromises and mistakes. She is like a queen in her own castle, or like the fabled sleeping beauty, only to be waked when the true and destined knight shall take her by the hand.

What, then, is beauty the great and much to be desired gift? Certainly, if received as a holy gift. It rarely brings happiness to its possessor, but it brings something higher,—reverence, con-

stancy. Such, if loved, never cease to be loved. Even in the rude physical age of Homer, the old warriors look with awe upon the frail beauty whom the poet, in this way, has contrived to invest with a mournful and tender dignity. Tasso and Petrarch grew into immortality through their love of such ; and Heloise, Mary Stuart, and Josephine, each with their several qualities, have brought the beings of their devotion into the foremost ranks of humanity, to be instinctively approved or condemned. Nobody cares for the learning of Abelard ; he is remembered only as the lover of Heloise ; Mary—the unqueenly Mary—but the fascinating and beautiful woman, we try to forgive because of her thorough genuineness, a fullness of heart that made her life a long inglorious martyrdom. The loving and unselfish Josephine is too sacred for words. We care little for portraits of women like these. We feel in our hearts they were beautiful, in voice, eye, motion ; grace and soul-pervading beauty must have been instinct with them.

Such are the beings who unconsciously challenge love, because they become to the observer impersonations of loveliness. They realize to the nice

eye the dreams of the imagination—they are the ideals of grace, of poetry, and they care as little for their own marvellous power as does the statue which chills while it sets the heart astir.

But what are the ugly ones to do? Must they live without love? Certainly, without the poetry of love. They may have esteem, respect, friendship, and many approximations to love, and if they will be rid of vanity, and live content in a great *fact*, in company with the larger part of those about them, they may have—what to most persons is more desirable than the romance of love—they may have every-day content, which is a very respectable and enviable position to be placed in; and with no tendency to flirtiness, which vanity is very apt to produce, they may be thoroughly praiseworthy and respectable, and being the majority they have it in their power to stare down and put down every beautiful woman who may appear like a vision in their path. It is true, by such a course of frowning they gain nothing from the other sex but a double dose of flattery, which they would not dare to expend upon the really beautiful; and they will find themselves at every moment likely to be deserted of their seeming

admirers who flatter them in order to do homage to their more favored sisters.

But a truce to sarcasm. There is certainly enough to do in the world, great human needs enough to occupy every magnanimous mind, without reference to the beauty of the missionary. Once in her life even an ugly woman may be pardoned for yielding to her little romance, her domestic heart-break; but, after that, let her give her vanity its "quietus with a bare bodkin," and her life will be little stirring of events, and her real womanhood of ten times the sacredness and value; indeed, she will please in spite of her plainness, those only whom she should desire to please.

Women are called vain by the more sober part of the community, by even a moderate attention to dress, if it take the form of ornament. Admitting it is vanity, which is the abuse of a fine quality, that of a desire to please, inherent in every mind, and I do not see that it is so very objectionable, as thus the internal and external sentiment are both operative. Men err very greatly when they accuse us of holding a monopoly of this foible. They are quite as vain as ourselves, with this difference, that women rarely harm any one but

themselves in the matter, while vanity is apt to be not only an unmanly characteristic, but a very dangerous one in the other sex. In woman it is a *foible*, very near to the threshold of a grace; in man, it is a vice.

Even in dress the vanity of a woman is no more conspicuous than the same thing in the morning agony of the dandy over the tie of a cravat, and its full effervescence in the color of a waistcoat. Indeed it would seem that men expend all their vagaries of taste upon this article, as we do upon our bonnets. This intuitive love of ornament deserves a better name than that of vanity, and the little freaks of fancy which we sometimes exhibit in this way, proceed less from vanity than an uneducated sense of the beautiful, an instinctive, womanly desire for what is fresh, graceful, or artistic. A woman has always this delicate conservatism about her, that she adorns less to please the eyes of others than her own.

She should be beautiful as her right, and she should also be artistic. It is allowable in her to reject whatever mars her beauty, as an evil that may strike inward upon her soul. Indeed, noth-

ing is more painful to her, than to be thought growing old, and the moment she admits the fact to her mind, from that moment the joy of her existence is over; and ten to one she grows hard and censorious, and inflicts pain upon others only because she is alone, and stung with discontent.

Now, a woman deprived of the freshness and freedom of air and exercise grows prematurely old, and the present costume being nearly the same for girls of fifteen and matrons of sixty, must place the latter in a false aspect; whereas dress should be so ordered, that every period of life should have its appropriate interest. It would be well if women were more indifferent in regard to their degrees of personal comeliness, regarding their shape as a fact not to be solicitous about. There may be a choice of facts, but as wishing will not add one cubit to the stature, we should be less sensitive about it. The owner of any style is rarely a good judge of its effects. I have seen large, stern-featured women pass for ugly ones, who would have filled a Michael Angelo with delight; and fragile, pretty women who affected me disagreeably, as an Albino or a dwarf would do.

Every one has some peculiar attraction which may be enhanced or diminished by dress, and if women were unbiassed by fashion, they would intuitively show off this to the best advantage. I have seen a low-browed dark woman, with an angular face and incipient moustache, dressed in a style befitting the most delicate blond, only because fashion required it of her. Why, I would not say to such an one, as Hotspur said to the gentle Kate, "Swear a round mouth-filling oath in proof you are a lady;" but I would say, follow the hint of nature, and don nearly a masculine garb, and recognize the dash and daring that lurk in your veins, but which you hold back by two mincing steps, and an affected Cordelia-toned voice. Be what nature designed you to be, and you will be a better type of one aspect of the sex, than anything you can devise yourself will make you. Do not study to see how other women look, or dress, or move, but be entirely yourself and you will be noble; it may be, attractive. One thing is in your favor, it is better to be ugly than pretty, merely—though in saying this, I admit it is a pity that a woman should ever be ugly, but

better that, than stop at common-place prettiness, when to be *handsome* or beautiful is the desirable standard.

It is dangerous for these women to attempt any of the little coquetries native to the sex—they do not sit well upon them; they were designed for a certain grandeur of manner and life, and should cast about them to see how they can best carry out this design. Many of the fashions to which women of every style are willing to submit, have had their origin in their adaptation to peculiarities of make in the leaders of the ton. Thus the short waists worn at the commencement of this century, were devised to conceal a hump in the back of one of the ladies of the Orleans family, and others have had a similar origin. Now, a dress may be very proper to conceal a hump, but it certainly is absurd for a woman with beautiful and dimpled shoulders to adopt the same costume. She need not deform herself because others are deformed—she need not undervalue her own beauty, and cast contempt upon it because others have been less bountifully cared for.

I lately heard a most exquisite compliment be-



stowed upon a lady's shoulders. "What beautiful shoulders Mrs. — has!" said an observer. "Yes," replied his friend; "*dimpled* shoulders—*she is an angel, and there is where her wings are to be stepped.*" It may be well to explain that the placing the mast of a sail boat into the *socket* is called by sailors "stepping it," so the dimples were poetically for the stepping of the wings. It is something to elicit such elegant turns of thought. A sailor once exhibited his taste for poetic imagery in regard to the same lady. She was out on a fishing excursion, when, in drawing in a line her sleeve became entangled and slipped above the elbow. "Why, your arm is as round as a mackerel!" he unconsciously ejaculated. "Och, let me light my pipe by the fire of your eye," exclaimed a pavier, to the beautiful duchess of Devonshire, as she passed by. She said this was the finest compliment that she ever received.

Madame De Stael declared she would give all her great intellect for beauty—the more shame to her, if beauty is to be defined by external rules. "That is the highest beauty, which relieves us

most from the material," was the remark of the pure-minded Channing, and a beautiful soul must always create the illusion of beauty even to the senses.

Matter of fact people sneer at these little departures from ordinary tones of speaking, as if they were objectionable or foolish; but they relieve life of much of its dull common-place, and are always pure and harmless to the pure in heart.

## Chapter Fourth.

“FOR them the Ceylon diver held his breath,  
And went all naked to the hungry shark ;  
For them his ears gushed blood ; for them in death  
*The seal on the cold ice*, with piteous bark,  
Lay full of darts ; for them alone did see the  
A thousand men in troubles wide and dark.”—KRAUS.

Past absurdities.—Indian's blanket.—The Reform Dress.—Milton in a tight bodice.—The Satirist is likely to be petty.—Aim at a thorough humanity.

At first sight we might affirm that the fashions in dress of the present day are less absurd than in times past. We are not subjected to the hoop, which our grandames were obliged to tip upon one side, in order to enter their pews of a Sunday—when, to see a stately dame castled, as it were, in the very battlements of virtue, might have led one to exclaim, “how awful goodness is !” nor to the head-dress, towering three-quarters of a yard, which must have challenged circumspection, and have made any little coquetries dangerous, if not

terrific ; nor to corsets, by which the form represented an hour-glass ; these each and all are spared us ; all these have sunk under the ban of the satirist. Thanks to the poverty of invention, those that followed, bad as they have been, hardly equalled these in ridiculousness ; yet we all remember when a woman used to sail down before the wind, with a dress distended nearly to a hoop, and a balloon upon each arm. The wadding, padding, and starching of a few years back are nearly extinct, but not so the diseases they superinduced—not the distorted spines, and fevered membranes, and sallow cheeks, nor, alas ! the falseness of life which they did not fail to sanction. We might be almost content with the present mode, were it not for the bondage of so many skirts, and the length of drapery, by which we are little better than babies in long robes. But we have no assurance that even this will last—the next importation from France may place us in a worse position than was the poor Indian with a blanket too short to cover his feet, and he was obliged to cut it off at the shoulders in order to lengthen it below.

We need a national costume, simple, appropri-

ate, and permanent, as we believe our institutions are destined to become.

We need—aye, both men and women need—a new declaration of human rights, a new Runnymede and '76, to free us from bondage in a thousand petty forms, and from one so mean we are ashamed to name it, even that of the despotism of Fashion, the whims and caprices of milliners and tailors. We need an earnest, joyous grasp of entire human freedom. Custom and prejudice are too much upon us, and our life, nay, our very souls are withered by the pressure. We need a nobler grasp of beauty in its manifold shapes, whether in Nature or Art. We need a truer standard of it in the human form—the beauty of the Greek statue, which is God's beauty—not that of the tailor or the milliner.

By a national independence as to Fashion, each woman could devise what was best adapted to her peculiarities, while the simplicity of our reform dress would be adapted to all. A woman should never be old—never unlovely. I do not see why people should be sick, and stupid, and old, and unloving and unloved. Every period of life is

full of beauty, from that of the bread and butter girl, to that of the staid matron of seventy summers; and as for the other sex, who look so incongruous, dressing as they do, padded and tightened, how shallow is their aspect as they advance in life, compared with the godlike dignity of the Patriarchs in their flowing beards, and oriental robes, unscathed by either tailor or barber.

Let us adopt a dress, that shall be light, convenient, and easy of adjustment—one which a lady can put on without calling in her neighbors for help—one in which we can move freely, nor fear the dust, nor the rain; in which we can work, if we will, without the trouble of gathering up an acre of skirt. We see what the Quakers have done by simple permanency, the drab and the broad brim having become a passport for respectability—but this dress, having been adopted at a period when severity and sanctity were the great aim, and not elegance of form or beauty of color, would be ill adapted to our present needs.

Let us have a simple Grecian jacket, or sack reaching below the knee, with pockets upon each side, buttoning from the throat downward. Trow-

sers, of the same material for the street, the Turkish form seems most approved, but is less convenient I apprehend, and less becoming than the simple plain trowsers form. A small snug covering for the head, perhaps a gipsy hat; and boots such as are worn by ladies of rank in Russia, which can be put on without the trouble of lacing. This would be perfectly feminine, need not alarm the other sex with suspicion that we mean to usurp their prerogatives, and would be at once comfortable and inexpensive. Health, cleanliness and beauty would be promoted by its adoption, whereas now we grow wrinkled, and sallow, and meagre from insufficient air and exercise, and by unnatural compressions. We should escape the bondage of so much drapery, and lift our hands to the zenith without endangering hooks and eyes. We could breath freely as great spirits need to breathe, for I believe a compressed bust is fatal to all magnanimous achievement. Napoleon could never have conquered empires cased in whalebone, nor Milton have written his Paradise Lost in a tight bodice. Pope could not rise from his bed till laced in corsets—and his strictures are *narrow* and *peevish* accordingly.

American women are far too small and thin, and care-worn in aspect. They have less independence of opinion, notwithstanding their intellectuality, than their transatlantic sisters. They are vain of their delicacy. "Your women are very handsome," I heard Frederika Bremer say, "but they are too white; they look as if they grew in the shade." And so they do, forgetting that the bright sun paints with rich golden hues, more attractive than the blanched, half-vitalized look. "I am black but comely, for the sun hath looked upon me," is as beautiful in thought as expression.

Public opinion has been improving in our behalf this many years. Even magazine writers will allow a woman now a silvery laugh—formerly she was allowed only a faint smile. Let us take heart! in the good time coming we may be enfranchised to a whole outbreak of joy, free as the song of the bird. Now a woman may weigh very much over a hundred pounds and yet be quite comely—formerly a Lydia Languish must be within the quintal. We need not die now of a rose in aromatic pain, but be quite active and buoyant. The sarcasms of Pope have nearly sur-



vived their uses. No one would dare to say of us now—

“Narcissa’s nature tolerably mild,  
To make a wash, would hardly stew a child,”

for happily we are growing too enlightened to fill the skin with powders and paint. Our whole sphere has improved and enlarged. Honor to whom honor is due, tribute to whom tribute. The stage and the opera have been interdicted places, and their members were styled vagrants in law, yet it is to the triumphs of woman in that sphere, that our sex owes much of its emancipation. The public has become used to a woman’s voice, and a woman’s triumph through them. It has learned to recognize our talent in that way sooner than any other, because it has been so broadcast and unmistakable, that to deny it would argue an inveterate obtuseness. The self-denying labor, the study, the power, the genius of a Siddons, a Fanny Kemble, a Malibran, and a Jenny Lind, have taught the world a better estimate of us intellectually and physically. They have shown what we can do, and what we can endure.

They have achieved victories such as were partially open to us at the Olympiads, and have been crowned by the undying benedictions of thousands who have strewn their footsteps with flowers. Is not genius a fruit to be desired, when thus made the voice of human joy, and human emotion? the medium between the rich and the poor, and the Lord's almoner? It is a miserable cant that would represent any full use of God's freely imparted gifts as out of a woman's sphere. The talent would never have been imparted had not God designed it for use—the fact that it is given, is his own command, go forth to labor—to joy, to triumph, or to peril and suffering, for lo! I am with you.

But a work nobler than the works of these artistic women is now going on in our midst. Women are lifting themselves to a beautiful and thorough philanthropy, learning what is due to themselves, and teaching it to each other, followed by ridicule, it may be now, but they can well bide their time, for truth is of God and will prevail.

Let us fix our eyes upon those who have achieved greatness in any path as an help to our

own enlargement. We grow compressed in mind and body, narrowed in soul and life, by the pettiness of our cavillings, and the pettiness of our fashions. Could we go forth more freely into the great heart of nature, dared we look steadfastly into her clear honest eyes, how a new glory would grow upon our pathway ! We should learn how pleasing effects are produced by contrast and harmony, and learn thus new analogies, see how the crimson contrasts with the green, how the purple melts into gold ! and how the blue atmosphere warms and deepens all, as if the divine spirit of beauty had lavished itself in every shape and hue, and finally caused the very air we breathe to lend its last touch of enchantment. Nature is always true. There is a fitness in all her surroundings, in all her costuming ; the external shape answering to the internal sentiment, a witness without to that which is within. The tender dove is denied the gorgeous plumes of the coarse peacock, the lamb wears not the mane of the lion, and the sleek serpent is devoid both of fur and feathers.

Would that I could say something to awaken in the minds of my readers, a deeper and holier

sympathy for that large class of our sex, whose lives are one long dull fact, with little or no perception of that which is holiest and best, folded away in their own bosoms never to come to the light. Crushed by toil, stooping like Issachar between two burdens, reft of their beauty, denied the freshness and hopefulness of life, we turn from them with much of sorrow, and God forgive us, with sometimes loathing. They are turned astray from the designs of the good Father—they are out of place and pitiful.

There is that within our shallow natures which leads us to heap contempt upon that which is misplaced. We despise the object because circumstance is against it. The rose amid its companions flushed with beauty, and bright with the dews of the morning, fills us with delight, but the same rose fallen by the wayside, faded and bespattered fills us with disgust.

Would to God my lips were touched as with a coal from His own altar, that I might say something in behalf of our sisters, who toil and spin that we may be adorned beyond the lilies of the field; who weep, and suffer, and die that we may be

daintily cared for; and who, by the abundance of our adorning grow weak, and emulous, and finally depraved and lost. It does seem to me, that out of the depths of our womanhood we might do something to take the sword out of the souls of these bruised ones, for every wrong inflicted upon one of our kind, is a wrong inflicted upon ourselves. Wo to the woman whose selfish vanity leads her to pay scantily for the labor of such, who exacts much, and pays little, and who carelessly withholds the pay when due, and thus compels the sewing woman to lose time and strength in collecting her small dues. It is not well to shut ourselves in our gorgeous saloons, with adornings such as a Cleopatra might have envied, and which might have lent new graces to an Aspasia—it is not well to go forth conquering and to conquer in all the pomp of exclusiveness and wealth, while the rude laugh, and the coarse jest, and the depravings of vanity are converting our kind from beings little lower than the angels, into shapes of darkness so lost and so miserable, that the hells that receive them might weep over the melancholy ruins.

Differences in taste, in culture, and moral sense

will long exist; but no one with the least magnanimity will arrogate anything even on these grounds, far less upon the possession of dollars and cents. The poor ye have always with you, said the great Teacher, but Me, the true, the beautiful, ye have not always. The woman of wealth, lapped in the Elysium of the senses, does not need to go abroad like,

“Troy's proud dames, whose garments sweep the ground,”

in proof that the good Father has dealt bountifully with her, and hence she should rather screen these advantages from the otherwise too envious eyes of those less tenderly cared for.

I do not undervalue wealth—it is the great sign and tribute to labor somewhere, and therefore honorable; but inasmuch as there is no intrinsic nobleness in a stamped coin, I cannot do it homage, while the slightest claim of our humanity is tenfold more important. Let us, then, as we go forth amongst our kind, so appear *that the purse shall not be lifted up as the sign of worship instead of the Cross.*

A lady is such by the very construction of her

bones and muscles, by the nerves of her body, and the texture of her mind; she does not need the touch of the dress-maker, nor the stamp of a coin to distinguish her as such. She does not need to flaunt her advantages abroad on the highway, she does not need to claim immunities because of her beauty even. Prettiness is so common that it ceases to please; while the deep sentiment of a higher manifestation is so subtle and so all-pervading, that no woman need be vain over even a large endowment. The red cheek and full outline of an Audrey finds a Touchstone to admire, and as it goes onward from grace of form to nobleness of feature, still onward to where the soul breathes in the face, and we feel ourselves nearest the Divine, in every stage there are beings prepared to recognize it, and to grow into love and worship.

Let us look the absurdities of the prevailing mode full in the face, and challenge a reform. Let us look our own mean ambition in the face, and grow more true to our humanity. Let us reject the cumbersome and the petty articles of dress that make us listless and uncomfortable, and

fret our tempers and impair our beauty. Hooks and eyes and pigmy buttons for especial torment. Let us discard them in heaps; they belittle and annoy us, and heaven knows we do not need the aid of such things in life to give us discomfort. If we must be martyrs, let us be so in a great cause, and not for tape and buttons.



## Chapter Fifth.

"In the dear fashions of her youth she dressed,  
*A pea-green joseph* was her favorite vest—  
Erect she stood, she walked with stately mien,  
*Tight was her length of stays*, and she was tall and lean."—CRABBE.

"And from her own pure self no joy dissembling,  
Wraps round her *ample* robe with happy trembling."—KEATS.

"Her feet, beneath her petticoat,  
Like little mice steal in and out,  
As if they feared the light."—SUCKLING.

"Came vested all in white pure as her mind."—MILTON.

Invidious distinctions to be avoided.—Natural inference of the Turkish women.—Gives the patent of nobility.—Full rich natures.—Beautiful in every stage of life.

Dress has its full effect upon character, and how much falseness is engendered by knots that fasten nothing, buttons and bands that hold nothing, it is impossible to foretell. Who shall deny that the mind is narrowed by the minuteness of detail; by the little cuffs, by the bits of bows, the dots of jewels, and ends of laces. We can calculate shrewdly a woman's mood by the arrangement of her dress. I have seen a stately dame

grow tenfold more repulsive in a new satin, a demure one become well nigh flippant by a gay colored silk; and a volatile one subdued well nigh to dullness by a neutral shade. It would be something gained, even if we could escape the nonsense of half the embroidery and ribbon that make us all of a flutter without either grace or elegance. By these things we excite the envy and emulation of the poor—we are like Joseph in his coat of many colors, blasted by the malice of the household, not the same Joseph in his princely robes, when his brethren, and his father even, did him homage.

By adopting a dress such as we recommend, the invidious distinctions of society would be less apparent, and we might walk in the seclusion of our womanhood, and cease to be pointed out as Mrs. Brown by the hat, Mrs. Jones by the robe, or Mrs. Smith by the shawl. I think we have suffered so much discomfort, that we are quite prepared for the change ourselves; and I am sure that the other sex, who have so long ridiculed us for our absurdities, are not the ones to raise the cry of

dissent. Husbands who have not only looked glum, but absolutely savage, at seeing rich dresses converted into street brooms, must hail the change with delight. Lady Montague says the women of Turkey looked upon herself, laced in her corsets, with much of pitiful interest, supposing it an invention of her husband; but we can make no such charge in justification of our arrangements, and therefore the reform must come from ourselves.

I do not see the need of any great change of costume at home, though the one proposed would have its advantages, except upon festive occasions, when a woman would give greater scope to fancy and expense. It may be objected that the change is desirable for those in the medium or lower ranks of life, but will hardly apply to the higher. *I recognise no higher and no lower*—no upper tondom—if by that is meant the tondoms of mere money. There is an intrinsic nobleness in our humanity, which is beyond these distinctions. There are those whom poverty cannot touch, though their worldly goods might be compressed into a very

small pocket; who have neither houses nor lands, but who walk with the godlike of earth, whose companionship no money can purchase. Do we see through a glass so very darkly? are men to us like trees walking, that we cannot discern the true majesty of our nature; that we cannot see that wealth is of no value except as a means; that it is of value as a testimony to labor *only*; that the spoiled and pampered child of luxury, borne on in her dainty robes, may be in soul pitiful and dwarfed, while the woman of labor and of forethought, from the very health-giving, life-imparting energy it creates, expands into a majesty proportioned to her efforts, and challenges homage in proportion to the magnitude of her achievements!

Why is it that the aristocracy of Europe are turning their attention to literature and art, but because Genius feels now its God-given regality, and will not stoop to patronage as heretofore? therefore do the sisters of kings become artists, and dames with coronets write books. They may be poor, it is true, but

"'Tis pleasant, sure, to see one's self in print,  
A book's a book, although there's nothing in 't."

The time will come, when Genius will create the only patent of nobility, and a man or a woman will blush to be so poor a steward of God's bounties as to hoard it in coffers, while ignorance and want, and consequent infamy, sit in rags by the wayside. No, my sisters! this change is not for the poor and the laborer only, but for all, because its benefits will be to all. Let us discern the signs of the times—we, who predict the fair morrow because the day-god brightened in the footsteps of the glowing west. This era, when the girdle of commerce has spanned the world almost in forty seconds, by the aid of telegraph and steamer, when the great circle of empire has been completed, and the predictions of prophecy have been so nearly realized that we look for a new revelation. Does not the age go down glorious in its closing day, foreshadowing a morrow full of promise? Shall not we awake to the glow of a new impulse, a freer life, and spurn from us the cant of exclusiveness, the meanness of our vanity, the pettiness of our pride, and stretch forth

our hands in ownership of a nobler brotherhood?

I repeat it, wealth does not ennoble; on the contrary, it vulgarizes quite as surely as poverty. Does it not? Look at the rude elbowing—the impertinent sneers which women encounter from each other—the coarse stare, and the foolish estimate attached to wealth and show. Is not this as weak as it is vulgar?

Let it not be said the proposed change of costume, from a mongrel one borrowed from abroad, into one which shall be national, American,—it may be world wide—is one for the higher classes only. The world is henceforth to be *democratic*. The nations of the whole earth are hereafter to stand under the rotunda of the eternal heavens, subject to one great and beautiful system, the germ of which was planted by the fathers of '76. Shall we, the women of the republic, be clogs upon this onward march, with our puny, miserable cant of exclusiveness?

I have before said that dress, if unbiassed by fashion, would naturally characterize the individual. How beautiful, how truthful, how harmo-

nious we should seem if left thus to the natural action of the laws of our being. There are some of us totally indifferent to ornament—Doric in character, and a stern simplicity best befits such ; we imagine Cornelia to have been one of these in her plain Roman tunic, and Elizabeth Fry in her stern Quaker garb. Others are nun-like, as was Madame Guyon, rejoicing over the loss of that beauty which left her to her pure spiritualisms, and to be the guide and the friend of a Fenelon.

Others demand a different sphere. Nature abhors to repeat herself, as much as she abhors a vacuum ; there are no two leaves of a tree alike, and no two human beings identical in character. There is the rich, full woman, whose affluent nature delights in a sort of oriental magnificence ; she is joyous in bright hues and splendid adornings. Why should she not be indulged in these promptings at home ? It is the place for lavish beauty, and the surprise of elegant contrast. To a nature such as I have described, these things are essential. The eye becomes a second palate, and gorgeous hues affect it like the luscious fruits of the tropics ; and woofs from India, and gems

and pearls feed her imagination, till she is not only more beautiful, but happier in such a medium.

I have more than once said every period of life has its beauty, a beauty in which we should repose, contentedly. That of the girl is symbolized by the bud, the lily—it is in the nature of a promise. It is youth, and health, and dormant energies—it wears an onward and upward look, touching to the eye, and lovely and most sacred to the heart. Nothing in the shape of costume is amiss at this period, for it converts all things into prettiness.

The chaste Madonna half-veils her loveliness, as did Penelope when choosing between the conjugal and the paternal altar.

“The violet, dim, but fair as the lids of Juno’s eyes,”

symbolizes the grace and seclusion of this period. As we recede from the Eden of our lives, and become scorched by passion, dimmed by grief, or made holy by suffering, our habiliments should follow the experience of our lives. The great mystic has said, that the angels know to which



sphere we belong by the intonations of our voice; and so should the observer know in what sphere we move by the tone of our dress. There then would be a majestic consistency in our external and internal lives. A Niobe, massive and grand, would fold her ample robe about her, beautiful and impressive to the last. The austere matron would not affect the gossamer of the coquette; and old age, with its lines fallen in pleasant places, would become august.

Finally, by that attention to air and exercise which the new costume would not only admit but challenge, we might go on beautiful and attractive to the very close—softening gently from the girl into the woman—ripening, and reposing in the full, rich, and harmonious being, from youth to mature life, and thence to the magnanimity of age. I see no need of decay and dotage, of unloveliness and neglect, but each sphere well filled; each period beautiful in its completeness. As the purposes of this life recede from us, we should grow sublime in the opening halos of the eternal world, till we finally depart,

“Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

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