

WORLDLY WOMAN

I HAVE insisted to the verge of boredom—unless, indeed, I have had the misfortune to surpass it—on the things they do better in Paris. My intentions, at any rate, were excellent. Comparisons may have all the unpleasant qualities that are claimed for them, but if they spur us on to greater effort who shall deny their uses? It is a fine thing, no doubt, to be a daughter of England; it is a finer one still not to let that blessing blind one to the value of those things they do better elsewhere.

For an example we need nothing more important than an exhibition of dress in Paris, but it is typical of the temperament that designed it. I pictured how we would have done that sort of thing in London, and saw before me the rows of frigid glass cases sheltering the waxen simper of impossible dummies, the clothes that just missed being beautiful, the labels with great names carrying no conviction, and the whole show as dull and lifeless as the dust of museums. It is a mournful thing this lack of atmosphere of ours! What are our good intentions, and the most lavish expenditure without it? Atmosphere! It is a name to conjure with. At the Hôtel des Modes we cannot forget it for a moment; it surrounds us, it enchants us. By its magic, mere velvet and lace call up visions of *chic* and radiant youth; under its influence we see portraits of fascinating women in lovely gowns, and notice, without surprise, the names of great painters coupled with those of renowned *couturiers*. A beautiful actress in a Paquin frock is painted by Boldini, a woman of fashion has every justice done to her by Gaston la Touche and Worth. In the glamour of the moment, while wandering through this most original of Fashion's shows, we even feel that the credit is due almost as much to him who designed the beautiful lines of the gown as to him who painted the picture. Besides, is not *chic* an essential characteristic of the woman who owns it? Do not, in other words, "the very clothes utter voices to corroborate the story in the face"?



Cloche in mauve velvet, wreathed with many bunches of violets. Bow of purple satin ribbon. Model by Alphonsine.

THE EVER POPULAR CLOCHE HAT

This may be an unanswerable argument; nevertheless, Redfern has no Academician in England, and few of our portrait painters care about the elusive qualities of *chic*. There are pictures in plenty of fair ladies in white satin, dripping with pearls, veiled with shadowy lace; pictures that are a glorification of the eternally conventional. Certainly, their clothes "utter no voices," and I would deplore it if they did, even if I were not a mere writer of fashions.

It is true that on considering the bewildering complexity of modern dress we cannot quite blame the painter for preferring white satin. There is safety at least in its reflections of pink and green, there is none in the orgies of colour and the complication of line that have transformed yesterday's pretty frock into the all too splendid production of to-day. Six months ago we had graceful lines, a little eccentric perhaps, but charming always; we had soft, subdued shades. Now we have arrived at a degenerate Empire combined with a vague Japanese effect, a mixing of colours and a piling on of embroidery that are nothing short of marvellous. Evidently we are to be dazzled, to be astonished at all costs. Unfortunately all these glories rather overshoot the mark; not even a Queen of Sheba could win renown nowadays, we are so accustomed to magnificence. If only instead of piling splendour on splendour this winter we had returned to that much-talked-of, much-lamented simplicity, how thrilling it would have been!

Lookers-on see most of the game, the others are too busy coining money by it. That is why Fashion makes no triumphant entrances at the psychological moment. She creeps in with her novelties usually when we have ordered our new frocks and want none of her. Meanwhile it is disappointing to have no sensations to usher in with a great flourish of trumpets at a time when they would be so welcome. Nothing has changed very much so far, it has only grown more elaborate. The shoulder line is longer than ever, the Empire is still with us, and the Japanese phase has not yet run its course. Some new models have long, tight sleeves, but these, it is vaguely felt, are a disappointment; they are not half as charming as were the soft draperies and lace arrangements we have loved so long. There are still silken balls and fringes on most things, and embroideries grow more gorgeous daily; there is more silk, more gold, more spangled tulle, and more glitter about them than ever. When all this glory frizzes out like the stars of fireworks, we shall come to realise its inartistic extravagance. Meanwhile it is

our duty to admire, for a present vogue is always as charming in Fashion's philosophy as a past one is incomprehensibly hideous.

The milliners also have sworn to astonish us. With regard to hats, it was felt that nothing more in the way of size could be a nine days' wonder, so height was the only expedient left. This may be novelty, but it certainly does not make for grace. When all this enormity of crown is covered with loops of ribbon, and ruffled with feathers, the result with the present shoulder line will be sadly ridiculous. Alas, where are the pretty Gainsboroughs of last summer? If they lacked moderation, they were at least picturesque, and for the sake of those happier days I could almost forgive the weeping willow feathers that adorned them. Luckily the *cloche* hat is still left to us. Trimmed with a wreath of flowers it is quite charming, quite devoid of eccentricity, and yet quite smart. Its sanity will be our only refuge, it seems to me, in a wilderness of mountainous shapes and a sea of troubled feathers.

A graceful novelty, quite devoid of sense, by the way, is the sleeveless coat. This may be either short or long, but is always open at the sides, and has, of course, no sleeves whatever. Underneath it the indispensable lace blouse, with its short fluffy sleeves, is pretty enough, and this must be the wearer's consolation in the teeth of a bitter wind. I hear that, thanks to all these lace "aberrations" in season and out of it, many women have been obliged to turn to the doctrines of a certain religion for support. It is comforting to murmur, even when chilled to the marrow, that there is no cold. Faith, it seems, is better than flannel, and is certainly much more becoming. L. S. R.

Shem-el-Nessim means God's wonder in some Eastern tongue. It is a pretty name for a pleasant scent, one of the best that Messrs. Grossmith have invented. It is made into toilet water, powder and sachets, and in each of these capacities it cannot fail to please.



Black velvet and black net over white satin make up a *tout-ensemble* of delightful *chic* in the hands of Madame Margaine Lacroix. The becoming bodice is of white Malines, veiled by many chains in jet. Photograph by Henry Manuel.

A RESTAURANT FROCK



A long chiné sash (a creation of Leferrière) imparts a charming grace to this simple little frock. It is crossed in front, caught in at the back, and falls to the hem of the skirt, where it is edged with silk fringe. Photograph by Henri Manuel.

A NEW SASH