

"FOR LADIES ONLY."

SINCE I last addressed you, my dear children, the seasons have shifted the scene. When you read these lines the Winter will be fairly throned. You will not be sorry for the change in all the varied amusement the Ice-King gathers in his train. Moccasins, however clumsy they may feel at the first moment of transition—the moment of the grand transformation tableau we are just witnessing, when, in the phrase of pantomime advertisement, the Stalactite Splendours of the Home of the Hyperborean Houris are first gleaming gorgeous on our view,—are not unbecoming, and it is very doubtful whether the easy gliding grace they carry with them can find its equal in sunny Andalusia. It seems to my old-fashioned fancy, that you are inclined to set just a little too much value upon Balmoral *chaussure*. Ask the opinion of any of the Great Masters on the subject. They whose souls were steeped in beauty, and whose simplest line could show none other than the curve of loveliness, pictured to themselves no image of semi-Chinese pedal fashion. Take that glorious Rubens that hangs upon the National Gallery wall of Trafalgar Square, and ask yourselves which of the three grand goddesses, among whom Paris adjudicates, resembles most remotely Cinderella. Or, in the gallery of the Louvre, pause before the magic canvas that presents Corregio's conception of the mild Egerian nymph, from whose sweet lips

"Stayed the Ausonian King to hear
Of wisdom and of law,"

and confess that the anatomical canon of the Italian confutes the empiricism of your bootmaker. Nay, do not go so far as Europe at all. Ask yourselves of what mould was Pocahontas, or was Miami, huntress of the Mississippi. You can easily find its anti-type among the Indian girls of to-day, who wear moccasins all the year round, whose gait is so easy and unrestrained, and who scarcely need the beads and porcupine to set off the beauty to which they challenge attention:

Snow-shoes are more cumbersome, but they are wonderfully comfortable and independent. And you will have skating too, in which to display the most charming *abandon* of all, and to leave deeper impression upon the hearts of those who watch you than your light weight can print on the face of rink or river. You have before you all the merry madness of inkling sleigh-rides, and all the long happiness of the pleasant parties by which the cold stern season is beguiled. You are by no means to be pitied: except, indeed, in the Shakspearian sense, which makes such sentiment the precursor to the feeling you more deserve.

Your costume will perhaps be the most effective you can ever wear. An arbitrary dogma, which has lived too long unchallenged, almost interdicts brilliancy of colour from your normal toilette. There are many of you who, confident in its becomingness, assume a pink bonnet, with a certain hesitancy of doubt as to its propriety. And there are many who can never look their best except in brilliancy; but whom a vague unwritten code condemns all but perpetually to the retirement of neutral tint. We cannot reform such injustice in a day; but we can at least protest against it on opportunity, and the occasion is here, when Nature demands, and we all so gladly yield, a bright warm glow of fashion.

One of the most attractive Winter costumes I have ever seen I met the other day in Lower Canada. It was all contrast, and the soft white snow made the proper carpet for its wearer. There was a petticoat of scarlet opera cloth, heavily trimmed with black braiding, under a black lustre—*robe courte*—and a short black velvet jacket. Over all a tiny velvet hat and sweeping scarlet feather, and a long soft scarlet cloud that clung lovingly round the neck and drooped its glowing trail over either shoulder. The *ensemble* was perfectly simple and perfectly fitting. There were but the two colours throughout, even in the lips and eyes. One of the most winning faces of the Capital could not have been more effectively arrayed.

I am not singular in my admiration of colour, as you will see from the extract which I subjoin from the latest Paris correspondence of one of the leading American journals, not often misinformed upon subjects of such nature:—

"Toilettes de promenade are usually in velvets, Irish and other poplins, serge, and plaids of every description, including well nigh every possible brilliant combination of color—so that for the coming season motley literally promises to be the only wear. Sashes, with large bows behind, but with shorter ends than usual, are as much in favor as ever. Chapeaux, it would seem, will be no less brilliant in appearance than robes, for the former will be chiefly of bright colored velvets, and trimmed with lace and feathers, bouquets, and wreaths of fruits or flowers, with usually a coronal in front formed of a ruche of lace velvet; the strings being of velvet bordered either with lace or satin. The Hungarian 'talpack,' a cap about four inches high, usually in black astrakan, and with a plume of heron's feathers immediately in front, is likely to be much worn during the coming winter."

A paragraph has for some time back been going the round of the papers, announcing that a conference of German women, lately held at Stuttgart, passed a resolution declaring the necessity of modifying ladies' toilettes, in order to put a curb on the extrava-

gance, bad taste, and incessant changes in female garments; and the intimation has been hailed with joyous satisfaction by a great many writers who know more of politics than fashion. To me it seems that the Stuttgart ladies are somewhat late in the day in making their protest, and that, if it had come eight or ten years ago, it might have laid claim to higher consideration. It would be very difficult to "modify" present out-door toilettes to any advantage, and, for my part, I can safely tell you that, through all my lustres, I never met on all sides so sensible, comfortable, and useful a *mode* as the short narrow skirt invented at Biarritz some three years since. Besides, Germany is the wrong quarter from which to accept such dictation. German women are notoriously incompetent to dress tastefully, and both *frau* and *fraulein* are at once recognizable in any foreign European city by the frightful garments in which they shroud themselves. A critic who agrees with me upon this point has, however, some sensible supplementary suggestions to offer, and would like to see a Society started that would interest itself in the subject of dress for children, and, in the lady's own words, "That would make fashionable mummies understand that the present 'Black Crook' style of dressing children for parties, is as absurd as it is injurious; that would cover up the little shoulders and limbs, which are exposed every few nights to cold and draughts of air. Such a society would confer a blessing upon the present and upon the rising generation."

Talking of children, I think that it is one of the most cheering signs of the growing tenderness and wisdom of the Age, that such fast increasing care should be bestowed day by day upon the delights of our little ones. One of the pleasantest instances of this that I have noticed lately, is in the genius, skill, and enterprise which are being brought to bear upon the illustration of nursery literature. Messrs. Deane & Co., (not without competitors) have published a three and six-penny edition of the old familiar fairy-tales, that is perfectly enchanting. The pictures of the fabulous splendours of Beauty and the Beast, or the romance of Aladdin, are as gorgeous as a Drury Lane transformation scene. The legend of the Princess, whose century's sleep it took but a kiss to break, is produced in design and colour almost worthy of Mr. Tennyson's graceful paraphrase. The "perfect form in perfect rest," is drawn upon the page, from which our babies are to take their conception of it, with the firm delicate touches of a master hand. While not even the laureate himself—and, for the benefit of the juveniles, his is of course out of court—has called up a grander phantom of the golden prime of good Haroun Almaschid, of the gardens where to breathe was rapture, or of the colonnades at which to glance was awe. And, still better perhaps, the simple rhymes of earlier years carry with them in their novel form a novel significance. I had no idea that there were such depths both of humour and of pathos in the Cock Robin tragedy, until I saw it thus "restored." And even an old grave man may find a fresh regret for the bright childhood that has slipped away from him, when he is introduced to the rollicking fun of those small unhappy cats, who were so careless as to mislay their gauntlets. So that I ask you all to join with me in an invocation to the good Santa Claus—truest saint of all the Calendar—that, when, ten days hence, his dear old beaming face hovers round the smooth pillows of our darlings' innocence, he may graciously remember how the great book-men of the Strand and of St. Paul's have been toiling in his genial service.

His name can fittest close my page. It carries with it, through the whole broad Christian world, its message of truest ladyhood—of charity, kindness and thoughtful affection. In the bright happy smiles of childhood which it summons round our knees it teaches us the most solemn gratitude to the Power Who has known best how to make the lives of His creatures happy. And, in that impulse of thanksgiving, it reminds all of us to whom the years are bountiful that, beyond the ruddy glow of our firesides—out in the frozen streets, or shivering in damp chill cellars—there are other little children equally dear to the Master as our own, but whom He has thus left in our charge to prove hereafter of what judgment we shall be deemed worthy. And, as we deal with these and their pitiful necessities, and bring earnest sustained efforts to dry the tears of the orphans whose wail is hourly in our ears, and of the poor whom we have away with us, even those among us, to whom Christmas can bring no grasp of kindred nor embrace of love, may not be quite unconscious of the rustle of the wings of approving angels, and may catch a brighter vision of the glorious welcome awaiting the loneliest here among the dear ones who have gone before.

There is but another line. To all who read it the writer earnestly wishes, in the trite old phrase that never can grow feeble, a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year. G. RAION.

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