

LITERATURE.

POETRY.

"Nothing to Wear."

AN EPISODE OF CITY LIFE.

Miss Flora M'Flimsey, of Madison square,
Has made three separate journeys to Paris,
And her father assures me, each time she was there,
That she and her friend Mrs. Harris
Spent six consecutive weeks without stopping,
In one continuous round of shopping;
Shopping alone, and shopping together,
At all hours of the day, and in all sorts of weather;
For all manner of things that a woman can put
On the crown of her head or the sole of her foot,
Or wrap round her shoulders, or fit round her waist,
Or that can be sewed on, or pinned on, or laced,
Or tied on with a string, or stitched on with a bow,
In front or behind, above or below:
For bonnets, mantillas, capes, collars, and shawls;
Dresses for breakfasts, and dinners, and balls;
Dresses to sit in, and stand in, and walk in;
Dresses to dance in, and flirt in, and talk in;
Dresses in which to do nothing at all;
Dresses for winter, spring, summer, and fall;
All of them different in colour and pattern,
Silk, muslin, and lace, crape, velvet, and satin,
Brocade, and broadcloth, and other material,
Quite as expensive and much more ethereal;
In short, for all things that could ever be thought of,
Or milliner, modiste, or tradesman, be bought of,
From ten-thousand francs robes to twenty-souls frills;
In all quarters of Paris, and to every store,
While M'Flimsey in vain stormed, scolded, and swore,
They footed the streets, and he footed the bills.

The last trip, their goods shipped by the steamer 'Arago,'
Formed, M'Flimsey declares, the bulk of her cargo,
Not to mention the quantity kept from the rest,
Sufficient to fill the largest-sized chest,
Which did not appear on the ship's manifest,
But for which the ladies themselves manifested
Such particular interest that they invested
Their own proper persons in layers and rows
Of muslins, embroideries, worked under-clothes,
Gloves, handkerchiefs, scarfs, and such trifles as those;
Then wrapped in great shawls like Circassian beauties,
Gave good-bye to the ship, and good-bye to the duties.
Her relations at home all marvelled, no doubt,
Miss Flora had grown so enormously stout

For an actual belle and a possible bride;
But the miracle ceased when she turned inside out,
And the truth came to light, and the dry goods beside,
Which, in spite of collector and Custom-house sentry,
Had entered the port without any entry.

And yet, though scarce three months have passed since the day
This merchandize went, on twelve carts, up Broadway,
This same Miss M'Flimsey, of Madison-square,
The last time we met was in utter despair,
Because she had nothing whatever to wear!

I should mention just here, that out of Miss Flora's
Two hundred and fifty or sixty adorers,
I had just been selected as he who should throw all
The rest in the shade, by the gracious bestowal
On myself, after twenty or thirty rejections,
Of those fossil remains which she called 'her affections,'
And that rather decayed, but well-known work of art,
Which Miss Flora persisted in styling 'her heart.'

Well, having thus wooed Miss M'Flimsey, and gained her,
With the silks, crinolines, and hoops that contained her,
I had, I thought, a contingent remainder,
At least, in the property, and the best right
To appear as its escort by day and by night:
And it being the week of the *Struckurs'* grand ball—
Their cards had been out a fortnight or so,

And set all the Avenue on the tiptoe—
I considered it only my duty to call,
And see if Miss Flora intended to go.
I found her—as ladies are apt to be found,
When the time intervening between the first sound
Of the bell and the visitor's entry is shorter
Than usual—I found—I went say I caught—her
Intent on the pier-glass, undoubtedly meaning
To see if perhaps it didn't need cleaning.
She turned as I entered—'Why, Harry, you sinner,
I thought you went to the *Flashers'* to dinner!'—
'So I did,' I replied, 'but the dinner is swallowed,
And digested, I trust, for 'tis now nine or more,
So being relieved from that duty, I followed
Inclination, which led me, you see, to your door.
And now will your ladyship so condescend,
As just to inform me if you intend
Your beauty, and graces, and presence to lend
(All which, when I own, I hope no one will borrow)
To the *Struckurs'*, whose party, you know, is to-morrow?'—

The fair Flora looked up with a pitiful air,
And answered quite promptly, 'Why Harry, *mon cher*,
I should like above all things to go with you there;
But really and truly—I've nothing to wear.'

'Nothing to wear! Go just as you are;
Wear the dress you have on, and you'll be by far,
I engage, the most bright and particular star
On the *Stuckup* horizon'—I stopped, for her eye,
Notwithstanding this delicate onset of flattery,
Opened on me at once a most terrible battery
Of scorn and amazement. She made no reply,
But gave a slight turn to the end of her nose,
(That pure Grecian feature), as much as to say,
'How absurd that any sane man should suppose,
That a lady would go to a ball in the clothes,
No matter how fine, that she wears every day!'

So I ventured again—'Wear your crimson brocade,'
(Second turn up of nose)—'That's too dark by a shade.'
'Your blue silk'—'That's too heavy'; 'Your pink'—'That's
too light.'

'Wear tulle over satin'—'I can't endure white.'
'Your rose-coloured, then, the best of the batch'—
'I haven't a thread of point lace to match.'
'Your brown moire antique'—'Yes, and look like a Quaker';
'The pearl-coloured'—'I would, but that plaguey dress-maker
Has had it a week.'—'Then that exquisite lilac,
In which you would melt the heart of a Shyllock'—
(Here the nose took the same elevation)

'I wouldn't wear that for the whole of creation.'
'Why not? It's my fancy, there's nothing could strike it,
As more *comme il faut*—' 'Yes, but, dear me, that lean

Sophronia *Stuckup* has got one just like it,
And I won't appear dressed like a child of sixteen.'
'Then that splendid purple, that sweet Mazarine;
That superb point d'aiguille, that imperial green,
That zephyr-like tarlatan, that rich grenadine'—
'Not one of all which is fit to be seen.'

Said the lady, becoming excited and flushed.
'Then wear, I exclaimed, in a tone which quite crushed
Opposition, 'That gorgeous toilette which you sported
In Paris last spring, at the grand presentation,
When you quite turned the head of the head of the nation,
And by all the grand court were so very much courted.'

The end of the nose was portentously tipped up,
And both the bright eyes shot forth indignation,
As she burst upon me with the fierce exclamation,
'I have it three times at the least calculation,
And that and the most of my dresses are ripped up!'

Here I ripped out something, perhaps rather rash,
Quite innocent, though; but, to use an expression,
More striking than classic, 'it settled my hash.'

And proved very soon the last act of our session.
'Fiddlesticks, is it, sir? I wonder the ceiling
Doesn't fall down and crush you—oh, you men have no feeling,
You selfish, unnatural, illiberal creatures,
Who set yourselves up as patterns and preachers.

Your silly pretence—why what a mere guess it is!
Pray, what do you know of a woman's necessities?
I have told you and shown you I've nothing to wear,