

"FOR LADIES ONLY."

MY DEARS,—Within which term I embrace (alas! but metaphorically) all to whom this page is dedicated. I salute you with profound consideration, and congratulate myself that it has been given me to "crown the edifice" of the CRAFTSMAN in my homage to those whom Craftsmen love. An old man, whom death and exile have left childless and widowed, I present myself to talk to you of the lighter business of your sunny youth, and in your bright company to gather fancifully round my lonely chair the loving daughters whose golden seats are high in Heaven.

Do not fear that, because I have passed my prime, I have any project of preaching sermons; even they who are commissioned for the task find it no such easy one. Those who are non-commun- sioned, or who at best bear *Saturday Review* letters of marque, have not succeeded so signally as to encourage competitors. To such I am content to leave their lawless trade. They have my best wishes for their failure—whatever harm it may do them.

You are talked to a great deal now-a-days through the news- papers. You are occasionally thus addressed impertinently, and usually sillily. You are found fault with upon all sides by men who know very little about you. You are scolded if you dress well, and sneered at if you make yourselves attractive; but if you could forget to do either—which you and we, old fellows, know that you never can—the very censors who upbraid you for your accomplishments would be the first to complain about your want of taste.

As I am not one of these, neither do I belong to the school who hold that you are peerless under any guise. I have known you for many years and under many suns, and I never yet found any of you charming who did not take some pains to make herself so. But I have known many of you whose faces were not lovely, but whose grace and elegance could win admirers from their sisters to whom nature had been more lavish; and many, many, thank God, whose earnest womanly purpose, and clear well-trained judgment, could do what is far more difficult and more valuable—hold forever the admiration they had so won.

On the point upon which you are oftenest flippantly assailed—your mode of dress—there is room especially for careful attention. It is your mission in the world to beautify it, physically as well as morally, and there is beauty of all kinds, and of Art as well as Nature. Now it has been said by an observer who had lived much in the great world, that an Englishwoman reared in France, was the truest type of her sex's ideal perfection. For the obvious reason that she (theoretically) combines the healthy Saxon grace with the polished Latin ornament. Both elements are equally indispensable. The first is especially so. The foundation of all beauty is robust power. Every one of you knows how to preserve, and even to acquire it, but I fear that some of you sadly misuse your knowledge. You would scarcely do so if you were to reflect seriously, that each call of the doctor, and, indeed, each nervous headache, robs you sensibly of a fraction of your attractions, or if you were to remember what you have so often read, that perfect physical energy has been, in every age and in every country, the surest cosmetic for your beauty. When, this winter, you are taking long, bracing walks in the crisp, crackling air, the snow sparkling as your snow-shoes scatter it, and the sunshine laughing through the bare net-work of the trees, to know that the deadness of the season is cold but on dull plants alone—you are doing more for your permanent adornment than ever Madame Rachel even promised to poor Mrs. Borradaile. When, next summer, you spend hours together on the croquet ground, you are winning something more than the *part* with each straight shot that marks your prowess as a rover. It was, you will remember, by exercises such as these—sterner perhaps as became the sterner time—that the ladies of old Rome wove for themselves the spell that mastered the masters of the world. Cleopatra might never have vanquished Anthony if she had not gone in for boating and held a straight and steady cue at billiards. And at the present moment who are the most queenly and most enthralling of the world's women? Any traveller will tell you without a moment's hesitation. If he is of the old school he will put it politely and give the first palm to yourselves—that is only courtesy—but the second to a far distant race with which his whole fraternity will agree. He will name for you the Hungarian women, and tell you that the Grand Tier of the Pesth Opera shows such *culture* of radiant loveliness as is to be matched in no other gathering on either hemisphere. Ask him why—and you won't find whether he knows if they have black eyes or blue, or if their hair be brown or golden. But he is prompt to tell you that their shapes are the most comely, their arms the roundest, their shoulders of the clearest glow, and their mien the most stately and, at the same time, the most joyous he has ever seen. And he

knows the reason too, for in the Slave races health is esteemed above everything, a pale cheek is a deformity, and a pinched up waist an absurdity almost too serious for ridicule. Freely coursing blood alone gives you sparkling eyes, capacity for enjoyment, brilliancy of animation and consequent vigor of conversation; it alone makes yourselves companionable, and your society a happiness ever fresh and ever charming. My dear young ladies, you are always good. Do, I beg of you, be healthy also.

A young lady wrote, the other day, to a newspaper, for a recipe for turning the hair gray. It is very seldom that we hear of any such desire. But it is not in the least more absurd than the wish to turn gray hair into brown, or than that horrible mania in vogue three years ago for artificial gold or auburn. To dye the hair is a supreme mistake. Nature knows best the color that suits the temperament and complexion. You cannot improve upon her without improving her away altogether. Nor need you be anxious to try. Gray hair can be very beautiful. The most beautiful face I know, or that I shall ever see till I touch the faces of the angels, is shined in gray hair. The lady, who is still young, was not nearly so lovely as a bright blonde ten years ago. Her *chere-luce* is the halo of patient, solemn suffering, refining to ethereal sweetness the beauty that had been so exuberant in its dawn. And, my dear young ladies, the *beaute du diable* is not always the most winning; and, when the years have ravished it, cease to pray for its return. It is not at all necessary that you should be *passées* when you have reached forty. Some of the most attractive women in the world are ten and fifteen years older. There are gray streaks in plenty upon the Empress' queenly head, and do you think she has fewer worshippers now than when a girl?

But it is time to me to turn to some lighter chatter. If one be aged one need not necessarily be prosy also. I have been reading lately the essay of an accomplished critic, who admires quietness of dress, but draws some neat distinctions between the quietness of severity, which in dress means cold and hard colours, such as steel grey, black, dark brown; and the quietness of simplicity, represented by the use of primary or very delicate colours—for instance, pure blue, white, or clear soft grey—and the quietness of a balanced and self-controlled character, which seems to me to indicate the fitness of deep full colours, such as violet, deep blue, maroon, or crimson.

There is to be gorgeous winter colouring through Paris. Imagine petticoats of *gros grain* as thick in quality as the richest ribbons, and striped horizontally with the most vivid hues. Though the colouring is brilliant, it is a most harmonious blending of Smyrna green, bright scarlet, orange, Imperial, violet, white, and China blue. These petticoats are to be worn with self-colored silk dresses.

The Queen, in telling us of two new Parisian colors which become *brunes*, and are not unbecoming to *blondes*, remarks thus:

A woman with golden hair is the ideal type of beauty, and every color should become her. Poppies and corn flowers are very effective, with waving corn. The two fashionable colors are ruby of all shades, from the light *rubis balai*, as it is called, to the dark garnet, named *macassa*; the second favourite is yellow, from the marigold shade, up to the dye called Aurora, which is a very pale tint.

We hear also from Paris, that crinolines are still worn by all ladies who study grace in the fall of the dress. The indispensable increase at the top of the skirt, through the paniers, compels the underskirt to be sustained, otherwise the very ungraceful appearance sometimes seen of the lower part of the skirt clinging round the feet is unavoidable. Of course the size is greatly modified, and the sign of good taste is discovered in the proper proportions of the crinoline to the height and size of the wearer.

Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales paid a visit lately to the Children's Hospital, Bloomsbury. The wards contained nearly seventy children, other children being in the fever wards, which are isolated, and not open to visitors. Her Royal Highness remained some time in the hospital, and previous to her departure expressed her satisfaction at the arrangements made for the comfort and care of the children, the means adopted for their restoration to health, and for their amusement and instruction during the brief period they remain as convalescents.

G. RAION.

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