

Woman and Her Work

It sometimes seems to me when I am looking over fashion journals, and the 'Woman's Corner' of the various newspapers as if the feminine portion of the world must be about equally divided between stout women who want to get thin, and thin women who are yearning to get stout, because if these two subjects were to be suddenly eliminated from the weekly bill of fare the result would be almost as disastrous as if the weather were to be suddenly tabooed as a subject of conversation. Why is it that we cannot be contented with ourselves as nature made us? Surely we must be less conceited than men, who scarcely ever wish to be other than they are. I never knew but one stout woman who did not want to be thin, and she was the happiest soul in the world honestly sorry for every scannny woman she knew, and taking solid satisfaction out of her own generous and gracious proportions. Of course she was young and pretty, which makes all the difference in the world.

I have yet to meet with the thin woman, however, who did not long to change her angles for the round curves of her fat sister, and was not bitterly envious of the fair cushion of flesh which is often such a source of grief to its owner. I suppose it is the old story of the four grapes over again, and is one more proof of that longing after the unattainable which is inherent in human nature. If I were not afraid of adding to the already heavy burden of dissatisfaction which the thin woman has to bear, I could whisper a few words into the fat one's ear which would comfort her greatly—that is if it is true that we value our good looks only because they make us attractive in the eyes of men. If the thin sister will turn her head away for a moment, I think I will whisper them anyway, and take the consequences—almost every man in the world, if he told the truth would say that he preferred too much, to too little flesh. Man insensibly derives his ideal of femininity from the picture and statues he has seen, and it is an indisputable fact that no artist has ever deliberately chosen a thin model for any of his highest conceptions. The Greek slave is perhaps the most slender of all the most celebrated female statues, but even she is exquisitely rounded, and her slenderness is that of extreme youth, the bud, only giving promise of what the blossom will be. The old masters both of painting and sculpture loved to picture woman as a magnificently developed type of what they considered most perfect, the gracious creature who was the mother of the race; and some trace of this feeling still lingers in the minds of the men of today, and impels them to admire Hogarth's line of grace and beauty—the curve—rather than the angle.

Of course the happy medium between obesity and angularity is the condition most to be desired, and it is this idyllic state that both fat and lean seem to be continually striving after, not like health, beauty, and a great many of the other good things of this life, flesh is unequally distributed, and those who have it are not continually sighing for it, while those who have a surplus would fain get rid of the excess.

I came across nine rules for beauty the other day, which are quaint enough to have been copied from old 'beauty book' of our great-grandmother's time, and as two of them have a direct bearing on the great question of the day, one being an infallible rule for getting thin, and the other an equally effectual recipe for getting fat, besides other valuable hints, I reproduce them all, and hope they may be of some use to my readers.

To Get Thin.

Eat a great deal of chopped meat without any potato in it. Drink little fluid of any kind except strong tea. Exercise a great deal without drinking and do not eat bread, butter, or candy. Lemonade, acid drinks of all kinds, and saline mineral

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To Get Fat.

Eat vegetables and sleep after each meal. Go to bed at 9 o'clock and lie in bed half an hour after you wake up. Laugh a great deal. Drink water by the pint or the quart if you can. Drink weak and sweet tea with plenty of milk in it. Take cod liver oil and sweet oil as much as you can. Eat until you feel as if you would burst at the table. Put plenty of butter on your bread, and do not be afraid of ales, lagers, and sweet wines. This will guarantee a gain of five pounds a month, and, if you can sleep a great deal, of double that amount.

To Have a White Skin

Eat no meat at all. Become a vegetarian; they always have beautiful skin. Once in six weeks or so eat a meal of fresh meat. This does away with the tendency to scurvy—that curse of the vegetarian. Drink as much water as you can, eat little grease, and touch no tea or coffee. Your breakfast may be oatmeal and oranges; your dinner fruit, nuts, fruit tea—preferably quince tea—graham muffins, cauliflower croquettes, marmalade, and dishes of stewed vegetables. The diet is not so bad when you get used to it. In large towns you will find one or two restaurants catering to such a you.

To Have Plump Hands

Rub them with sweet oil night and morning. Exercise them by rubbing together. Never wear tight sleeves or snug gloves.

To Keep One's Feet Small.

This is difficult. The first sign that one has passed youth is the tendency to wear a larger pair of shoes—and this is necessary. The feet spread and really grow. To remedy this wear shoes as long as can be managed, but not as wide as seem necessary. Never wear old slippers around the house, unless they are snug in the width, and be careful of corns. These are never necessary while the chiropodist exists.

To Become Very Muscular.

Walk a great deal, carrying something always in the hands. This develops the arms. To roll a hoop might be good if one were brave enough to do so in public. Practice a little lifting every day. Never strain or tire yourself. Eat meat, drink milk, and practice bending backward, forward, and sideways every day. At night rub about a tablespoon of brandy or rum into your skin on the under and tender part of the arm.

To Have a Smooth White Skin Without Dieting.

Bathe the face daily with buttermilk. A preparation of tincture of benzoin and rose water is excellent for whitening purposes. There are very good prepared creams, but these are never cheap. Do not go under a dollar for them if you want them compounded of fine and pure materials.

To Have a Fine Color.

Wash the face with the juice of preserved strawberries in the winter, and in summer rub a ripe berry on the face.

Excuse me from washing my face to any extent with preserved strawberries; but everyone to her taste. Evidently the author of these rules thought himself that the beauty who chose the indifferent complexion to the awful alternative of becoming a vegetarian, might find that she had made too great a demand on powers of endurance, so he relents towards the end adds a sort of consolation prize in the shape of a receipt to attain the result without dieting. Kind soul, he had a feeling heart for our little weaknesses, and we should be duly grateful!

It is said by those who should know, that never in the history of dress has there been such lavish expenditure, or such evidence of luxurious taste as at the present time. I doubt it myself, as I think our richest brocades and most gorgeous embroideries would fall to compare favorably with the brocade and cloth of gold of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but still, if it is any satisfaction to the fad de siècle

belles of the beau monde to think they are rivaling not only the lovely court dames of the time of Louis the fourteenth, but Cleopatra herself, in the wicked extravagance with which they array themselves, why they may as well enjoy the delusion in peace. Certainly the silks and embroideries used this season are very handsome, and the quantity of rich furs used for trimming add to the general appearance of almost reckless extravagance in dress. Nevertheless, very charming effects can be secured in return for a small outlay, and it is not always the most richly arrayed woman who is the best dressed by any means.

One very popular trimming which threatens to reach the distinction of a rage, is the inexpensive machine stitching which is used not only in countless rows, but innumerable patterns. We may have hands of elegant velvet in our costumes, but that is not enough to satisfy the demands of fashion, and they must be covered with rows of stitching, even though the velvet may cost five dollars a yard. Those fashionable dames who consider stitching too cheap a form of adornment, prefer to have their velvet folds embroidered with spangles and jewels. Stain folds, which somehow have an old fashioned and not very attractive sound, are very much used as trappings; they are stitched on the garment in the most artistic manner, and are especially popular on gowns which have the main portion almost covered with braid. Whoever invents the fashions must have a busy time of it, as there is so little material difference between the moles of the current year, and those of 1896-7, that new ideas in the shape of trimming are an absolute necessity and scarcely a week goes by without some new design, or daring experiment in the shape of decoration, being given to the world. One of the latest ideas in this line is black satin baby ribbon gathered on one edge, and sewn on the scalloped edge of a very narrow black lace. This forms two little trills—the lace being sewn on plain—set close together, and coiled into rings at intervals down each side of the skirt. Another fancy in the trimming of cloth gowns is a frill of white silk stitched with black in several rows, the width of a seam apart. Cloth dresses are also made very pretty by embroidering the part to be used as a bodice, with black silk dots, or tiny crosses of silver and gold braid and chenille. Bands of cloth covered with rows of stitching are a very effective and stylish trimming especially for the skirts, and if you would have your cloth costume quite up to date, the collar must be a plain band of velvet lapping over with a point where it hooks in the back. Whether this collar is of velvet or satin, it is very much improved by rows of stitching on each edge, or covering it entirely, with a tiny space between the rows. The tucked collar is very much worn, with very small points of velvet at the back. A very pretty addition to the stitched velvet collar is a turnover collar a little more than an inch wide, of the same stitched velvet. It is made to flare a little, and in two parts, which do not meet either in the front or the back.

Cloth gowns trimmed with velvet bands, matching the cloth in color, or in some

pretty contrast are amongst the latest models. One wide band of velvet all around the bottom of the skirt with fur on each edge, makes a very elegant trimming, but of course the fur adds greatly to the expense of such decoration, and narrower bands without the fur, are almost as pretty, and much less costly. Three bands an inch and a half wide around the skirt a little below the hips, rounding down in front where they meet with a fancy ruche, are very effective, while one pretty model has three bands up and down each side of the front, turning with round corners at the bottom and continuing on around the skirt. Another use for velvet bands is shown on the lace covered yokes and bands so much worn. These bands are so narrow as to be nothing more than a piping, and they encircle the yoke in rows, leaving a good space between to show the lace and are finished with tiny bow knots, made of the same bands, where the gown fastens. Three bands around a lace covered collar, with little bows at the back, make a very pretty addition to any dress.

Ribbon embroidery is another of the newest fancies in dress decoration, and it is used to great advantage on evening dresses of light satin. The ribbon used is so narrow, that it is threaded into a needle and sewn through the satin, as if it were thread, forming tiny flowers and leaves in pretty designs, which are made more effective with gold, silver, or jet spangles. The centre of each flower is sometimes filled in with tiny beads, or French knots of silk, and by gathering the ribbon and fastening it into place with fine sewing silk the raised effect can be produced. This ribbon work is very pretty for yoke and collar bands of white satin, or cloth gowns.

White satin is more used than ever, on cloth dresses, and one of the prettiest new gowns of the season, has a skirt of plum colored cloth, and an entire blouse bodices of velvet in the same shade, with cream white satin revers braided all around with gold.

It is stated with authority, that in Paris diamond rings and jewelled bracelets have entirely superseded gloves for theatre wear and that the most fashionable women appear with their hands and arms bare, but for the brilliant gems which decorate them. A Velour gros grain is a new silk highly recommended for skirts to wear with fancy bodices. It is very rich and soft, with a finish like velvet.

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