

The Ladies' Column.

London Society has come to be such a heterogeneous mass that, as a class, it takes little or no notice of Lent, but dances and sings, eats and drinks, and generally makes merry, while the select few are wearing their most sombre (and truth compels me to add, their oldest) dresses and assisting at those interminable services which practically culminate with the "Tenebræ," which I am bound to say I like immensely, because of Lord Beaconsfield's splendid description in "Lothair"—you will remember the chapter wherein he speaks of "the rushing noise, as of a wind," the darkness, the knocking, and so on. Here in London, we have no Pere Monsabre to caution us about our *mignons peches*, and so it happens that the Forty Days come and go pretty much as the other parts of the year; indeed, the violins have been going of late almost as merrily as prior to Shrove Tuesday.

But, as I do not (nor, I am sure, would you) wish my *causerie* to take the form, however remotely, of a Lenten homily, I will pass from the atmosphere of reflection and memories to that of fact and mundane gossip. *In primis*, let me tell you, on high authority, that gold and jet will be universally employed this spring; gold especially is the favorite of the moment. Most of the black tulle and nets destined for evening gowns and trimmings are beaded with gold and put over gold tinsel; the effect is perfectly charming. What an exquisite ball dress clouds of black net and chiffon, powdered or streaked with gold, would make a fair woman, to whom very light shades would be hardly necessary.

While on the subject of gold, and fully appreciating it in the right place, let me warn you against those gold cloth—they look more like paper—shoes. I saw some the other day, and I assure you they struck me as being dreadfully vulgar. If you want gold-colored shoes, have them in satin, or better still, in morocco. By the way, I see that some of the evening shoes are being gorgeously embroidered with gold and stones; though I do not think ladies will take to them, as they will soon find out that these absurdly over-ornamented shoes enlarge their dainty feet. There is nothing like the plain satin or morocco shoe, with a tiny bow or a single stone, to give a pretty shape to the foot.

I notice with great satisfaction that for day dresses the former vogue for neutral tints, so gratifying to the eye, is gradually being revived. During the last few years we have grown so accustomed to these dark, dull, indefinable shades that we very reluctantly took to the crude, glaring colours which were introduced at the beginning of the winter as a change, though they soon threatened to become a permanent innovation. Dame Fashion, however, capricious as she is represented to be, wills it at present that we shall do as we please, and only wear what is beautiful and becoming, and the great majority of the worshippers at her shrine have declared that we can return to the old blue, *vieux rose*, old copper and the undecided hues, with the certainty of being what our Gallic sisters would call "*dernier genre*."

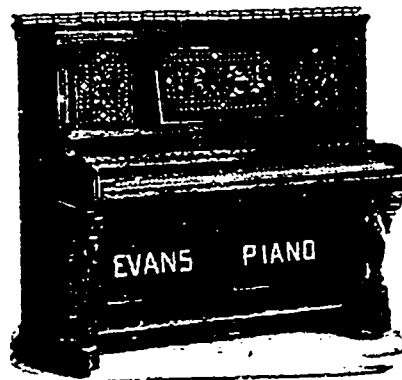
You must not suppose, however, that bright colours are altogether banished from our toilettes; on the contrary, it is very *chic* and tasteful to give one's costume a gay note by the discreet introduction of some contrasting shade in the hat; only, do not fail to remember that the principal tint thereof must be dark, for too much brilliancy would ruin the effect. What could be prettier for bonnets and hats than the combination of electric blue, or of eglantine, or of any of the new shades of pink and red velvet, with a good brown; or of mauve with deep violet or yellow? While amber and every shade of yellow, bright blue, pink, and red, with black is not less beautiful. As I told you last week, black predominates in millinery, and quite the prettiest hats I have seen either in London or elsewhere were in black, very sparsely trimmed with one of the modish hues of velvet. Bonnets continue to be small and becoming. The newest are made of net, sprinkled indiscriminately with gold.

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