

to the earl. There may have been something peculiar enough in the Mantuan hose for Rider to think them worth imitating, but there are strong reasons for believing knitted stockings were by no means such unfamiliar things to English eyes as Stow insinuates. 'What need a man care for a stock with a wench, when she can knit him a stock?' asks Launce, in one of Shakespeare's earliest plays. Knitted hose are mentioned in an act of parliament passed in the reign of Edward VI.; and from the Household Book of Sir Thomas l'Estrange, we find that a pair of knitted hose could be bought, in 1533, for a couple of shillings, while children's stockings of the same sort only cost sixpence a pair—too low a price, it seems to us, for anything from beyond the seas. Boethius in 1497, says of the Scotch, 'their hosen were shapen of linen or woollen, and never came higher than their knee;' and Savary does not hesitate to credit the Scots with the invention, upon the rather insufficient ground that the French stocking-knitters chose St. Fiacre as the patron of their guild. Holinshed, describing a pageant at Norwich in 1573, tells us: Upon a stage stood at the one end eight small women children spinning worsted yarn, and at the other, as many knitting of worsted yarn hose;' and in another place says the bark of the elder was used by country wives for dyeing their knit hosen black.

Cloth stockings went completely out of favour in Elizabeth's reign; worsted, jarnsey, thread, silk, and fine yarn being employed in its place. Stockings of yellow, white, red, russet, tawny and green were not deemed sufficiently elegant unless they were interlaced with gold and silver thread, or had 'quirks and clocks' about the ankle. 'And to such impudent insolency and shameful outrage it is now grown,' complains the horrified Stubbs, 'that every one, almost, though otherwise very poor, having scarcely forty shillings of wages by the year, will not stick to have two or three pairs of these silk nether-stocks, or else of the finest yarn that may be got, though the price of them be a royal, or twenty shillings, or more, as commonly it is, for how can they be less, when the very knitting of them is worth a noble or a royal, and some much more. The time hath been when one might have clothed his body well from top to toe for less than a pair of these nether-stocks will cost.' With stockings in such demand, Lee might reasonably hope his stocking-loom would receive patronage and protection; but his hopes were grievously disappointed. Elizabeth refused to grant him a patent, and he took his loom to France. The ill-fortune so common to great inventors pursued him there, and he died poor and broken-hearted. After his death, some of his workmen succeeded in establishing themselves in England, and laid the foundations of the stocking-manufacture, the importance of which may be estimated by the fact, that twenty years ago, nearly fifty thousand looms were employed in the trade, a number that has no doubt been since largely increased.

Kings have often enough condescended to borrow of meaner creatures. James I. carried this species of condescension somewhat lower than usual, in borrowing a pair of scarlet stockings with gold clocks from one of his courtiers, when he desired to impress the French ambassador with an overpowering notion of his magnificence. Had all his subjects been as economical, the stocking-makers would have fared badly; luckily for them, the extravagances of the former reign still held their own; and the rage for leg-decoration took a new form, and expended some of its zeal upon broad garters, with gold fringes and point lace, which were fastened below the knee with a large bow or rosette. Dekker, in his *Gull's Horn-book*, advises his supposed pupil, if he was ambitious, 'to fashion his legs to his silk stockings, and his proud gait to his broad garters;' to study his directions until he can walk, as others fight, by the book, and then Pauls may be proud of him, and all the Inns of Court rejoice to behold his most handsome leg. Another writer declares the fops wore spangled garters worth a copyhold, filling the ladies especially such as had good legs, with envy, because fashion would not allow them to make a similar display

The Cavaliers affected gay stockings and long dangling garters; so, of course, the Puritans patronised the opposite fashion of sombre black stockings, and tied their garters up short. In Charles II.'s reign, England supplied the foreign markets with leathern, sicken, woollen, and kersey stockings; but as regards the home consumption, Nat Lee grumbled that plain sense had grown

Despicable as plain clothes,
As English hats, bone-lace, or woollen hose.

The last were not likely to be held in high favour at a time when an English ambassador thought it necessary to appear in white silk stockings over scarlet ones of the same material; and a lady's wardrobe was considered incomplete without at least four pairs of silk stockings 'shot through with silver,' and diamond-buckled garters to keep them company. Mr. Pepys 'made himself fine' with linen stockings from the Hague, and when he went into complimentary mourning for the Duke of Gloucester, donned a pair of short black stockings over his silk ones. That ladies did not demur at receiving gear for their nether limbs from their admirers, may be inferred from Pepys choosing a pair of silk stockings as his gift to pretty Mrs. Pierce, when she was his valentine. At another time he records in his Diary: 'To my cousin Turner's where, having the last night been told by her that she had drawn me for her valentine, I did this day call at the New Exchange, and bought her a pair of green silk stockings and garters and shoe-strings.' Mr. Pepys was not singular in his fancy for green stockings. One day Lord Chesterfield met King Charles and his brother at Miss Stewart's, when the conversation turning upon the Muscovite ambassadors, then the talk of the town, 'that fool Crofts' unluckily observed that all the ladies of the said Muscovites had handsome legs. Upon this his majesty gallantly swore no woman in the world owned such a leg as their beautiful hostess; and Miss Stewart, to confound any sceptics present, 'with the greatest imaginable' ease immediately afforded the company ocular demonstration of the fact. All the gentlemen with one exception, endorsed the royal judgment. The exception was the Duke of York, who contended that the leg on view was too slender, avowed his preference for something shorter and thicker, and concluded his critical remarks by asserting that 'no leg was worth anything without green stockings!' This struck my Lord Chesterfield as irrefragable evidence that the royal duke had green stockings fresh in his recollection; and as it happened that Lady Chesterfield had short and thick legs, and was partial to green stockings, the jealous earl jumped to a jealous conclusion, and lost no time in carrying his wife into the country, to keep her out of mischief. Yellow stockings would seem to have been favoured by humbler folks, for when the queen and the duchesses of Richmond and Buckingham, bent on a graceless frolic, disguised themselves as country wenches, and mixed with the crowd at Audley End Fair, her majesty 'bought a pair of yellow stockings for her sweetheart' at one of the booths, in order to keep up her assumed character.

In Dutch William's reign, the gentlemen wore their long stockings rolled up over the knee. With the square-cut coats and long flapped waistcoats of the days of Anne, it was the fashion to wear scarlet or blue silk stockings, ornamented with gold or silver stocks, drawn over the knee, but gartered below it. The beaux of the beginning of the Georgian era voted scarlet and blue vulgar, relegating such vivid colours to second-rate dancing-masters, and affected pearl-coloured stockings, the tops of which were hidden by their knee-breeches. From a memorandum of Lady Suffolk's, we learn that one dozen pair of thread stockings, at seven-and-sixpence per pair, was considered a sufficient supply to last a princess of England a couple of years. In 1753, the fair sex were reproached for making

Their petticoats short, that a hoop eight yards wide Might decently show how their garters were tied—

(a couplet not altogether inapplicable to the ladies of our own time) and for being generally

too fond of displaying their white stockings. In 1778, Walpole's friend, Mrs. Damer, brought black silk stockings in vogue for a while, white having been hitherto worn even for mourning. English cotton stockings were in great request abroad, so much so, indeed, that when all trade between England and France was prohibited, the Empress Josephine actually applied to parliament for permission to purchase half-a-dozen pair for her own use, a request that was of course once complied with. When knee-breeches went out of use, the stocking went out of view, and ceased to become a noticeable item in male attire; and as to the leg-gear of the ladies, we have no further changes to chronicle, except the marked revival, of late years, of coloured stockings,

A WIFE WITHOUT A WEDDING.

"FRESH fish! fine fresh fish! caller haddies! Buy a fish, ma lamb?" and the speaker put down her creel on the pavement of the High Street, Portobello, holding up a "caller haddie" for Mrs. Sutton's inspection, who, saying mildly "Thank you, I don't want any," tried to pass on.

"Do buy a haddie, ma lamb, fresh an' loupin oot o' the sea, amais! as bonnie as yersel: come, Captain—" this to Mrs. Sutton's husband—"gie me a hansom; I ha' walked every step frae Musselburgh, and deil a bawbee ha' I taken."

Such persuasion had its success; "the Captain" saw no easier way of escape than that of buying a couple of haddies.

"What a pretty girl that was with Nancy," said Mrs. Sutton; "did you notice her Charley?"

"Of course I did; do you think, because you made me marry you, that I am to be blind as well as dumb? She's the prettiest girl I've seen in Scotland, and that's saying a good deal. What eyes she had, and such ankles!"

And then Charley, by way of proving that his eyes could see, descanted for the rest of the way upon the girl's beauty, and until Mrs. Sutton remarked,—

"I declare you've fallen in love with the girl; I'll grow jealous if you say any more; and Charley laughed, but held his tongue.

Next day, as he was smoking a pipe in company with a brother officer, a great chunk of his, and a right good fellow—Harry Tremayne—they walked as far as Musselburgh, and, reaching the shore just after the fishing boats had come in, almost the first person they saw was the girl that Charley had been raving about.

"There she is, Harry," he said, "sitting on the rock there;" and there indeed she was; her creel well filled by her side; her little brown hands crossed on her lap, and her great grey eyes looking far away across the blue water.

She was dressed in the pretty picturesque costume worn by the fisher girls, and, like most of them, as clean and trim as if she had come out of a bandbox ready for a fancy ball: her dark auburn hair was glowing in the sunlight, and rippled loosely away from the broad white forehead, across which dark pencilled eyebrows arched themselves over thickly fringed grey eyes. Eyes that came back suddenly from their wanderings over the sea, and looked up in Harry's face with a recognition which startled his friend just a little, and showed him this was not the first time the two had seen each other.

For an instant surprise and pleasure only looked out from the eyes; then the lashes drooped, a hot flush crimsoned the girl's face. She turned abruptly away, addressing herself to Charley.

"Buy a cod, sir?" but Tremayne answered, "Why don't you ask me, Effie? What have I done to make you look so angry? I promised you a fairin' from Dunbar, and I've walked all this way to bring it; just look, what a smart brooch to pin that red neckerchief!" Effie shook her head, and kept her eyes away, and Charley, seeing that he was *de trop*, walked on to the boats.

When he looked again, Effie's red neckerchief was pinned with a glittering true lover's knot, and the fair face was sparkling with dimpling smiles.