Velvet Hats and Fur Boas Worn With Diaphanous Frocks at Auteuil Steeplechase

WHETHER by accident or design, it is at the Auteuil Steeplechase race meet that the prettiest models appear in Parisian summer clothes. While it is a day that has not the grand elegance of the Journée des Drags nor the world-wide popularity of le Grand Prix, from the point of view of women's clothes, it is the most interesting of the races, and has been for the last decade. Indeed, the prettiest costumes are generally saved for it.

Being, as it is, the next to the last big race of the Paris season, it generally brings out the filmier type of dresses: they seem doubly attractive in the picturesque setting of the Auteuil pesage. The way cotton dresses are made up for these race meets is most unusual. In America cottons are more generally connected with the useful tub frock. In France, where cotton fabrics are less plentiful, they are made up in the same serious fashion as a nice linen or silk dress, and never get any nearer tubbing than the professional cleaners. By the time a Parisian designer has gotten through with a gauzy cotton, voile or crêpe dress it is a glorified creation that would make its homelier sister, the tub frock, hesitate to bear it company.

Lace and mousseline de soie made up with sheer net is another fabric combination this year that is masquerading as material for afternoon frocks, though it has lost nothing of the evening dress in its cut excepting the train. When you add to this a narrow line of fur around the tunic edge, or a fur stole that has been carried as a protection from the chill summer dampness of the Bois, you have the keynote of the summer afternoon fashionable robe. Vaporous, strangely décolleté, it has made fashionable France laugh and shrug amused shoulders, but scandalized others more conservative, who fear that it may prognosticate a return to the licentious dress of the Directorate. The fact remains always, however, that a well bred woman in questions of extreme style always knows where to stop in the matter of decency of dress, and always will know. Those who are to be pitied are the unfortunate ones who do not possess the sixth sense, and not only transgress the line of decency but of good taste.

Besides the diaphanous dresses of this summer, those of supple satin, charmeuse, crêpe meteor and liberty have been as popular as ever, even if they have failed to oust the crêpe and crepon gowns, plain or brocaded. There have been the new combinations of lace and tulle, which are perhaps the most popular of all, and, still newer, tunics or overdresses of lace with wrapped skirts of satin. In this case the satin is seldom seen above the high waist line, unless by folded girdles or pointed tabs of the satin that fold over the filmy blouses.

The tight trussed figure now takes on a passé and old fashioned air, and woman looks more and more like a beautiful vase, with gently rounded hips, accentuated by soft drapery folds; slender ankles that are half covered by the scant draperies that are literally wound about the feet, with convenient slashes to allow for walking. The shoulders have resumed their natural curves under the filmy or silken dress tops, the hair is flat and the hats are small, though the ornaments on them commence to be startlingly large in some of the latest models.

The striking gowns seen at the race meets always attract attention, and it is absolutely marvellous that the charming women who wear them can carry them off with such utter lack of consciousness when they are the cynosure of all eyes. One of the most effective gowns snapped by the camera at the Auteuil Steeplechase this year and reproduced here is the dernier cri of fashion. Nothing is lacking. The skirt, made of one piece of material, is draped up in folds and gives just the fashionable curved contour to the lower part of the figure. It is slashed and opened down the front under tiny satin buttons of gray charmeuse, like the gown. The corsage, almost sleeveless and as décolleté as an evening gown, is a soft unlined mass of charmeuse, tulle and lace. A tiny velvet hat posed over a simple hairdressing has the picturesque bridle string of velvet under the chin; the slippers are laced with satin ribbon. Ostensibly a race course gown, to be worn only on special occasions, it nevertheless is an exponent of all that is latest in fashionable trend, and which doubtless will be reproduced later in simpler form.

The mousseline and mousseline de soie dresses seen at this race were smartly topped off by velvet hats, and velvet sunshades bordered with tulle also helped to give the snappy note so desirable in thin fabrics.

In a group of four light dresses snapped by the cameras three are accompanied by velvet hats. Of these one is faced and bordered with straw, one adorned by a white aigrette and the other with a feather fantaisie. The two latter figures wear lace dresses, one a tunic tied in with a wide sash that has a big butterfly bow at the neck, the other a three flounced skirt, the colored sash knotted at one side of the front. The dress at the right is composed of a long tunic and a lapped and draped skirt of white satin. The fourth figure wears a crepon gown of dull pale blue, with a lace top. A long sable fur scarf is carried and the tulle hat is trimmed with a ribbon bow and aigrettes.

Another gown pictured here has an embroidered tunic of mousseline and lace belted with a silver filigree girdle and graded festoons of silver; a large jewelled clasp is placed in front. There is a wired Medici lace collar about the neck. The slender draped skirt is of white supple satin. A faille silk hat is adorned by a paradise ornament.

The three-flounced skirts have an immense amount of popularity already. A variation from those that encircle the whole skirt is seen in one here, where the flounces, made of mignon plaited tulle, are broken in front by a flat panel of tulle with lace insertions. The bolero is also of tulle and lace, with a loose rolling rever of lace. Hat, rose and shoes are of chestnut brown—the hat of velvet, the rose and shoes of satin.

Black satin, the skirt caught by a jet ornament up in front and draped, is topped off by a white appliqué lace tunic, belted with the satin. The décolleté is outlined with a double lace frill. A white plush hat adorned with a white aigrette is worn with this costume. A rose satin gown has a plaited tulle tunic, the shaped lower edge hemmed with a narrow line of brown fur. The frankly décolleté edges of the corsage are outlined with a lovely lace Medici frill. The hat has a velvet crown and a lace brim.

Venetian lace forms a part of two other gowns seen at Auteuil. One has a tunic of it, the pattern outlined with gold braid in an ochre tint posed transparently over a black satin skirt that is draped up on the front seam. Here, too, a slash makes walking possible, while preserving the correct ultra fashionable silhouette. A simple large rose is thrust in the belt. Laced slippers are worn. A large velvet tam shape is caught up at one side with an ornament.

The other gown is of black satin, the skirt folded into the waist line and draped in the usual new lines. It is almost covered with an overskirt shape of white Venetian lace. The filmy corsage is a soft vaporous mass of Venice lace and tulle. At the triangular décolleté there is a cluster of roses.

Accessories of Fashion.

Nearly all the coiffures for the evening are worn with a jewelled circlet or Grecian band in diamonds, which encircles the head in front and disappears into the shining waves of hair. Sometimes an aigrette or a paradise plume is added in front or at the side of the coiffure if this is found becoming to the wearer.

The mousseline or tulle scarf has become too popular to be worn with a really smart robe, so if the need is felt of protecting one's shoulders against a current of air one of the beautiful old fichus of Chantilly lace may be used for this purpose. They are often exquisite, and many lucky women possess such heirlooms, which have been piously preserved among the family souvenirs.

Many of the hats are showing a tulle trimming which serves to enlarge the proportions of the tiny hat. Arranged in a ruche which extends over the edge of the brim, this gives a very pleasing and softening effect to the face. The present style of low collar is responsible for the appearance of the narrow black velvet hat strings which pass under the chin and are very becoming to the possessor of a fair skin.

Extremely pretty models in crêpe de Chine are being made for more elegant toilettes. One, especially, is in a red currant shade and cut in a "soutane" shape, buttoned from top to bottom.