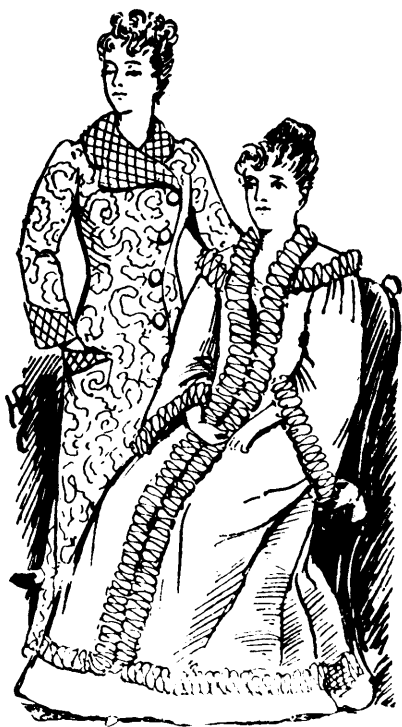




Warm Dressing Gowns—Coiffures for Elderly Ladies—Christmas Presents—Have You Made Your Mincemeat?



WARM dressing gowns are most necessary for winter nights and mornings, and I think, for those who can afford them, that it is quite the best plan to have one for summer and another for winter, as a mediumly thick one serves well for neither. It is too cold and thin for bitter winter days, and too thick for warm summer ones. I have very strongly the English ideas of being comfortable, for which I have often been ridiculed by my foreign friends, but, between you and me, I think no continental nation understands *real comfort* as we do. If one has a wrap, dress mantle, or dressing gown, why should it not be as *comfortable* as it can be made? It hardly costs a shilling more. Apropos of dressing-gowns, I have the very strongest objection to those that look what I call "bedroomy." Do you understand what I mean?



Very little will prevent that, and it is as well to exercise one's ingenuity in devising a becoming gown as well as a dowdy-looking frumpy one. The standing figure in my illustration wears a loose princess kind of garment of any figured material you like. I have often seen the common brocades used for furniture look extremely well when used

for this purpose. With very little trouble, any one who can work the sewing machine deftly can make a quilted lining of silk, satin, or even sateen, which wears nicely also, and will wash if necessary. This quilted lining appears as you perceive on the collar, cuffs, and pocket of the dress, much after the fashion of a gentleman's smoking coat. To strengthen and finish off the edge, a little silk cord should be sewn round, and the double-breasted front fastened by large buttons. The other is a loose dress of flannel in any pretty shade. Personally, I dislike flannel for the outside of a dressing-gown, as it catches (and keeps) hairs, and looks so quickly dirty. Serge is nearly as bad, but alpaca is far better and wears well. So suppose this in my second figure is of alpaca of a pretty crushed strawberry tinge, or of a soft grey—in fact the hue is a matter of individual taste. It is made with a flat, cape-shaped yoke on the shoulders, and the rest of the dress plainly set into it and gored, so as to be wide and full round the feet. It may be lined with that thick flannel called Bath coating, or—what is preferable in my opinion—quilting. A full ruche of the same material (alpaca), if you do not like to go to the expense of ribbon, will form the trimming round the dress and sleeves, and down the fronts and yoke. I think I may safely recommend these two to you as really "comfortable" dressing-gowns.

Coiffures for elderly ladies are the subjects for my second illustration. I fear that whilst we are young we think little enough about getting old, and without taking the matter much into consideration we grow up from childhood with those around us, tacitly accepting the facts of their age as if they had always been old, because we who have



come later into the world have thus found them so. We forget that our "dear granny" could ever have been young, or that our aunt was as fresh and young as ourselves once. To get old is a very universal complaint, but to do it gracefully is not at all a common thing. There is not the very slightest need that because wrinkles come and one's hair is full of silver lines that women should get panic-stricken, and rush after the people who make the preservation of beauty a trade, whether it takes the form of puffing out the skin or dyeing the hair. Nature is never unsuitable; therefore, when you dye your hair golden and have a wrinkled face, the result is a horrible anomaly, for one contradicts the other, which results in being ludicrous. Never forget there is a beauty of age, as there is a beauty of youth. "Mutton dressed lamb fashion," which is a rather irreverent adage for those old ladies who are inclined to attire themselves too youthfully, is very true, for it strikes the right nail on the head. When ill-health or time turns the hair and makes some artificial head covering necessary, it is as well to have it as dainty and elegant as possible. I must say that I prefer black lace well arranged and fastened by pretty gold or jewelled pins, to any formally made cap. One of those wide lace lappets or neck fichus lend themselves very well to this manner of dressing the

head. My first head in the second illustration shows a tasteful way of draping the lace. The pins might with advantage be put a little lower down on each side, but the lace effectually covers the back of the head and nape of the neck, which last is not always so pretty as a woman passes the meridian of life. Lace is always dressy, and is good always in fashion. If a cap must be worn, then a simple little thing like the second sketch is sufficient with bows of ribbon or black ribbon velvet. You cannot do better than copy some of the caps worn in the time when Sir Joshua Reynolds and Romney painted beautiful women, for the smaller examples are always picturesque. I think that people may really wear almost anything so long as it becomes them and is spotlessly clean and fresh; but a dirty cap—oh! *can* there be anything that looks more slovenly?

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Regarding Christmas presents I cannot possibly find space in one paragraph for all the pretty things I ought to describe to you. The shops here in London are more attractive I think than ever, and though it would be hopeless to attempt to chronicle all I see, I may yet describe a few of the things that are specially useful. Matchboxes for our gentleman friends follow all kinds of shapes, some with hunting scenes on their silver surfaces, others like an envelope that have a postmark and miniature stamp on them, and yet again those that puzzle people with a little false slide like a conjuror's trick. Then there are dear little travelling clocks of every variety of size, from quite tiny up to quite large. Delicious pencils, with three different colours in them, and others with enamelled outsides, some coming out of eggs, or little tops, to hang on a watchchain. Lunch cases for lady or gentleman hunters, containing a tin for sandwiches and cake and a flask, the whole thing securely shut and made to fasten with straps to the saddle. Then what can I say of the gifts in jewellery that may be had for the wonderfully reasonable prices? Dainty little watches that wind up at the handle and are some of them arranged with chains to hang from the waistbelt in chatelaine fashion, to which they are fastened by a straight bar brooch. Pins with little birds and other devices in diamonds; lucky brooches of moonstones, and other gems. In furniture there are all sorts of pretty knick-knacks. Fireside screens of which one side is draped with drawn silk, and the other of pleated silk or plush, in which one may stick the photographs of one's friends, whilst half way down is a little shelf on which one's cup of afternoon tea may rest quite comfortably. Little silver bowl or vases are amongst some of the newest Christmas gifts in which to place the ferns that adorn our winter dinner tables. They are large enough to hold a small pot if it is not advisable to plant out the fern into its silver case. Cases for holding stationery are very tasteful now, and have in addition to the receptacle for paper a miniature clock and a calendar which can be moved on by just touching a little knob. I think I mentioned to you some time ago the carriage case for cards and directory books. These are now fitted with a little clock and a writing case, so that a letter may be answered in a hurry if needs be. This would be an invaluable present I should think for a medical man. Then there are all kinds of new games in tasteful cases, but the one of all others that has become the most modern form of mild gambling is the Rubicon bésique.

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Have you made your mincemeat? Because if you have not, the less time you lose the better. Will you try my recipe, and tell me how you like it? Originally I used to put real meat into it, but I have come to prefer it without that addition, as I hope you also will. Take two pounds of suet after it has been carefully picked and chopped, three pounds of currants nicely washed and dried, one and a-half pounds of raisins stoned and chopped (to save trouble you may use Sultanas), one and a-half pounds of chopped apple, the grated peel and juice of one lemon, half a nutmeg grated, quarter of an ounce each of cloves, mace and cinnamon finely pounded, half a pound each of chopped candied orange, lemon and citron peel, half a pint of white wine, and quarter of a pint of good brandy. Mix all well together and keep in a jar closely covered. Stir it from time to time, as the wine and brandy will soak to the bottom, and add a little more brandy if it looks dry. When you have filled your mince pies lay a few slices of citron and orange peel on the top of each before you put on the crust.