IN THE DOMAIN OF WOMAN.

FASHION'S DECREES.

Tight Lacing, Spangled Net Gowns, Spring and Summer Hats.

NEW YORK, Feb. 10.—The first and the most stringent commandment of the modistes now is, you must be well corseted. If you are not and if you have principles against reducing your waist measure by means of a long, steady pull on your stay strings, then don't for good looks' sake, attempt to have your spring gowns cut on the new mode. A large waist is not to be tolerated with the shape of a skirt and basque we are new wearing and every woman who still nourishes the ancient belief of her sex that comfort and health ought to be invariably sacrificed to beauty is banting and lacing with the vigor of fifty years ago.

This is woeful, but we are all panting after a small round zone, a sweeping hip arch and a perfectly flat obdomen, which are only to be got by means of the new canvas silk and linen stays, with their tough silk laces. Most of the new corsets are, to begin with, absolutely plain; their only ornamentation is a little decorative needlework about their tips. They are heavily boned, but the best of them are not made of the clumsy coutille, by the strength of which much store used to be laid.

Coutille, it is agreed, gives the figure a stiff, hard expression and nowadays the desire is to be closely laced without losing supple grace of aspect. The truly well-cut corsets are made very short in the back, curved out under the shoulder blade and on the hip proper they are short and boneless, while the steel and whalebone are brought to the front. By this simple device it is wonderful the way useful curves are thrown out and humpish superfluity crushed in and a woman whose stays are very tight moves about with the apparent elasticity of a skirt dancer.

Now, we won't raise any hygienic questions here, but rest on the assertion that from a modish point of view the new corset accomplishes wonders and if you happen to be as thin as the proverbial fence rail,

A SEQUINED GOWN.

so thin, indeed, that no amount of lacing could produce hips or bust, then you can easily buy a pair of prepared stays that will produce them for you. These will be made of a linen net, having aerated pads in the right places. The pads, by the way, are so prepared as not to heat the body and so diminish the flesh, as clumsy cotton pads do. Next summer such delicately built women as need neither to lace nor to pad will popularize the sweetest little corsets made all of a tough, flat linen lace, while already for home wear the corset makers are showing pretty things made of horizontal rows of linen beading, through which broad satin ribbons run to form the walls of the stay.

Spangled Gowns.

Next after corsets and their vagaries and cruelties, the topic of most burning interest among fashionable feminines is jetted net. Who is so poor, or so hopelessly conservative that a jetted net is not possible or needed in her wardrobe? Every one who assumes to have a social place possesses one, and it is safe to say that the cost of a pretty costume of this material, in black net of course, illuminated with black sequins and hung over black lace silk, can be reckoned at $50 and up. The economy of this species of toilet is that it is assured to be eminently smart for the next twelve months, and it is appropriate for every occasion.

Like the good wine that needs no bush, a sequined net requires no trimming, and the more severely simple its build, the more absolute is its claim to be called fashionable. Very few of these toilets but are made up high in the throat and long in the sleeve, with an under waist of silk so contrived that the arms and shoulders can be swathed in or denuded of the silk linings at the wearer's will, or as occasion seems to demand, a high or decollete effect beneath her net waist. The skirt must be very long in front and boasting some train behind and the highest authorities do not counsel the wearing of colored neck bands or girdles with such a brilliant black toilet.

En passant, let it be advised that you who care to be abreast of fashion do not buy anything more in turquoise blue. Wear out whatever you have of this or lay it away and make your bows and neck bands and fresh hat crowns of velvet or satin in mauve. If, however, blue is essentially your color, adopt Sevres or ash blue. They are both tender, lovely tones and very much in demand. Antique or uncut velvet is a material that has had just one winter of vogue and was never a very useful goods.

The dressmakers no longer countenance the use of ribbon girdles and collars on their new toilets. They insist that it is neither tidy nor becoming to finish off a dress so and that the collar especially should be a fixed and rather elaborate detail of a costume. They are opening a spring of collars that are high as ever, with ruffs and lappets back of the ears and often very big bows in front. A crush velvet stock is not good taste; it has been superseded by a stiffened band of silk laid in tiny perpendicular tucks, having pointed projecting bits set on and resting directly behind the ears.

All the girdles are narrow folds of velvet drawn to a slight point in front, often through a tiny bright buckle or just folded over at the ends and made fast with invisible pins.

Make ready, say the milliners, for a spring of small hats raised off the face and in shape but slight departures from the toques in velvet that have prevailed all winter. One feature of the straw hats is already budding forth, and that is delicate tulle trimming. By this is not implied the gilded tulle toques that very smart personages are already wearing, but simple straw shapes showing pretty big rosettes of tulle with hearts of small flowers. Many sensible souls are ripping off dusty ribbons from their faithful winter headgear and furbishing up with these sweet, clean tulle ornaments, in deep rose tulle, for instance, with dull red carnation hearts; lilac tulle with violet centers, or white net with buttercup hearts.

Spring Silks.

The silks for the new season are flaunting their glories in every shop, and some of them are old friends with novel names. A goodly showing, though, is made of genuine recruits, and among them are surahs and foulards that are guaranteed to wash and concerning whose popularity there need be no question.

The newest color in foulards is orchard bloom and it is noticeable that crisp silks have somehow crept out of sight. In the place of the once dearly loved taffeta we have Tricotrine, Marchalette and miorette and pongee up to date, showing a soft fineness and beauty of decoration that is beyond anything ever seen before. Bengaline silk poplin and light wool goods with a strong infusion of silk command even more interest than the silks themselves.

French cashmere with a velvet surface and an almost transparent nuns veiling, spotted or striped with silk, is the sort of thing that claims every shopper's attention just now. We all want airy cloths to drape over colored silk skirts and we are getting very deep in checks. That which is not checked is quite sure to be striped, such for example as the pongee lawns and the fancy lusters and Canton cloths. A book full of flowery language might easily be devoted to a description of these latest fruits of the loom, but one pleasant truth all shoppers now bear in mind, that it requires less material than ever before to make a gown, in spite of trains having come for a good long visit.

MARY DEAN.

STARS AT WOMAN'S COLLEGES.

Girl Students Who Have Won Distinction as Histrionic Artists.

The drama plays a much more important part in the college girl's career than might be supposed by the uninitiated. It has passed through many stages of evolution in the last twenty-five years since its first introduction in the classic halls by the timid young pioneer in the field of the higher education for women. Then some unambitious little play was undertaken and presented in the gymnasium or college parlor without any particular drill or preparation on the part of the performers. Today Shakespeare is the most popular playwright, a bona fide theater occasionally the scene of action, the acting excellent, the dressing and scenic effects artistic and perfect in detail.

It is astonishing how universal has become this playing at all the women's colleges. Even Mount Holyoke has its "senior dramatics"—to assume the college vernacular—and the Women's college of Baltimore, which is so conservative as to forbid dancing, card playing and attendance at the theater of its women students, yet sanctions theatricals among these latter, regarding the study and performance of the drama as a potent educator.

The case of a collegebred woman becoming an actress after taking her bachelor's degree is almost, if not quite unknown, which goes to prove that amateur indulgence at her alma mater does not tend to make her stagestruck.

The heads of the English departments at all the feminine seats of learning believe that constant and active familiarity with plays and playing by the students broadens their culture, sharpens and strengthens their faculties of perception and judgment and aids better than almost any other manner of training in producing an all-around development of mental poise, graceful bearing and ease of address.

Smith's Stars.

Smith college is one of the leaders in college theatricals and undoubtedly the annual play presented by the seniors in June, the week preceding commencement, is the most finished and scholarly performance given regularly by any of the women's colleges.

For this occasion the Academy of Music at Northampton is hired and three consecutive presentations afford opportunity to all the college world and its guests to witness the "senior dramatics." The price of seats is 50 and 75 cents and so precious are the tickets that each freshman and sophomore is only allowed her individual one. The two underclasses attend on Thursday night, when the performance is really the dress rehearsal; on Friday the juniors and their friends form the audience, while Saturday is the night of nights for which the seniors have sent out formal invitations and when the crush occurs, bringing with it as brilliant and notable an assemblage of men and women as may be found at any of America's most representative or state functions.

The class of '95 introduced the Shakespearean era with "Midsummer Night's Dream." Often as many as twenty students will be in training for one character, trials being given to see which is the best for the part, the committee deciding and the trainer, Alfred Young of New York, giving the final decision, and the cast settled upon by the end of February.

These plays have produced a number of genuine stars, although the aim is to have every part so well played as to debar starring. As Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice," Miss Gertrude Dyer manifested such force and such comprehension of the character's subtleties as to astonish her auditors. Miss Cornelia Sherman Harter's impersonation of Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing" was compared to that of Ada Rehan, losing nothing by it, and it has been said of her that she took hold of the part with no uncertain amateur's grasp. Miss Grace E. Blanchard is another of Smith's shining lights, making her mark in masculine roles as the comedian. Miss Ruth H. Duncan and her sister, Alice, with a long list of others, have made reputations as stars.

Wellesley and Vassar also rank high for the quality of their theatrical performances, Vassar calling the attention and approval of even the professional critics to its Greek play, "Antigone," given in the town of Poughkeepsie some five years ago. Miss Emeline Bartlett, who portrayed the leading Greek, graduated head of her class and took the University of Chicago fellowship.

But long before the days of "Antigone" the Vassar girls were attempting ambitious dramatic flights and in George Eliot's "The Spanish Gypsy," Hattie Stanton, now Mrs. Harriet Stanton Blatch, the eminent lecturer and student of economics and daughter of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, gained laurels for herself as the velvet-clad Spanish cavalier.

The four chapters that compose Philalethels give little plays, usually of the burlesque type, at their chapter meetings, and these are excellent, the character work often indicating real genius on the part of the gay young actors. Among some of the recent stars are Miss Eleanor Belknap, Emma Lester Baker, Eleanor K. Ray, Marie Reimer and Anna G. Richey, Miss Baker holding the office of president of "Phil" during her senior year.

The affiliated colleges, Radcliffe and Barnard, are especially fond of "the play" and seem to take pleasure in writing their own productions. Recently the so-called Glee club theatricals in the auditorium of Fay house, Radcliffe's main structure, consisted of the opera, "The Orientals," the music by Miss Josephine Sherwood, '99, was voted charming, the libretto by Miss Kate Berry, '98, clever and piquant.

At Barnard the freshman play written by Miss Florence Sauville and Miss Cordelia Wendt made these two college maids the heroines of the hour. The sophomores were not to be outdone and one of their number wrote "A Sense of Propriety," acted with much zest by her classmates.

At all of the co-educational seats of learning the drama is also regarded as a part of a liberal education and the co-eds" join forces with their confreres of the opposite

SPRING WALKING COSTUME.

persuasion, thus being enabled to give the most truthful and artistic phase of college dramatics.

FAMOUS AT TWENTY-FIVE.

Career of Bessie Potter, Noted Sculptress of Chicago.

Bessie Potter is all the rage in Chicago. It is the correct thing to have a portrait statuette fashioned by the deft fingers of this diminutive woman. But as the demand exceeds Bessie Potter's power to supply, the less favored ones are glad to content themselves with a cup of tea at the little table in one corner of her studio if they are lucky enough to be invited. And finally, as there is a limit to the capacity of the tea table, there is a still larger class which can do no more than read what the newspapers have to say about the young artist and envy the more fortunate ones.

Now the studio is deserted, the tea table is in storage and its owner is in Europe, partly for a season of recreation and partly to have more important recent productions put into marble under personal supervision.

It used to distress Lorado Taft to find his young pupil bent on undertaking tasks entirely too ambitious for a pupil. But when Bessie surmounted the difficulties and accomplished the tasks he ceased to worry on that account and devoted the time to admiring her astonishing capacity for work.

Genius is sometimes described as unlimited capacity for work. Measured by this definition, Bessie Potter is a genius; for no one ever saw her idle and the number of her productions is something phenomenal. When it is added that besides the virtue of industry she has love of art and good taste, her success so early in life is not surprising.

The first of her work that attracted attention was a bust of Prof. David Swing. She gave expression to his picturesque personality as it had never been done before. That was her starting point. She soon mastered the knack of hitting off the prominent characteristics of her subject in a happy manner without making her work over-elaborate. Her special line took the form of sketchy little statuettes. Her statuette of Susan B. Anthony is pronounced by critics the best portrait of Miss Anthony extant.

Bessie Potter is seen at her best in figures of young women and girls. She gets on famously with the little folk and has done some delightful portraits of babies. There is an individuality about here work that is so often lacking in the production of other sculptors and artists and she means to retain it. She has pronounced opinions on the subject of American artists who "go to Europe, settle down there and copy year after year until they lose all individuality." She thinks it well enough to be informed on what Europe has produced and is producing, but that is all. No copying for her.

It is pleasant to be able to say that while society has made her a fad her work is appreciated by artists. Raffaelli went wild over her statuettes. Vonnoh is an enthusiast on the same subject. Taft is very proud of the fact that he was once her teacher and the rest of the Chicago art colony seems to feel a proprietary interest in Bessie. The consensus of opinion in every studio was summed up by Lorado Taft when he said:

"Bessie Potter is destined to take a very high place in American art."

DECAY OF FEMALE BEAUTY.

An English Portrait Painter Scouts the Charms of American Women.

"Is physical beauty in women on the decline?" was a question propounded the other day to Sir Edward Poynter, the president of the Royal Academy.

Sir Edward, who has put as many fair feminine faces on canvas as any artist of his time, rapped out an uncompromising yes. The painter undoubtedly spoke for his own country and within the range of his own experience; nevertheless it is obvious that a similar assertion may be made concerning women in America.

"The United States, in the last hundred years, has certainly produced a greater number of handsome women than any other civilized country, but, unfortunately, since feminine beauty defies statistics, we have no figures to compare on the subject, for all that the standard of beauty among our women grows lower every year," said a New York portrait painter, whose work is known from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

"There are a number of reasons to be cited as responsible for the existence of this condition," he said. "One of the most potent reasons, I think, is the absolute indifference of the nineteenth century, and especially the American man, to physical perfection in womankind.

"Even fifty years ago they were vastly more senskive to its influence and interested in its phases. Young fellows a half a century back read poetry, nourished romantic dreams, wore their hair about their ears and indited verses, in imitation of Byron, to dark-eyed Inez and golden-haired Helen. Fairy forms, clustering ringlets, azure orbs, etc., flitted through their dreams and the woman whose appearance tallied in a measure with these standards was reverenced and adored as the ideal sweetheart and wife.

"He did not care a rap whether Inez could read Greek or not, or understood a word of parliamentary law, but he did delight over her blushes, her swan throat and alabaster shoulders, and the portrait painters of that day prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that she possessed most of these charms in an abundance we don't see any longer.

"An ugly girl was in rather hard lines then, good-tempered and witty as she might be, for the young man was romantic, and it was the Sweet Alice, with no great intellectual force, but lots of brown hair, dewy freshness and timid admiration of him, who inflamed his sentimental heart. Her beauty was her stock in trade, she and her mother knew its value and everybody envied and worshiped it.

"Today, if a woman must have admiration, she either goes in for athletics, or learning, or she dresses her daring vivacious little self up in Paris gowns and thus earns her belleship. Whether she does this because she prefers to be athletic, and learned and what not else, to her old power beauty, or whether she has grasped at them as substitutes for her lost and irretrievable loveliness, I don't vouch. It is enough to say that they are bound to suffice and everyone is apparently happy, except the artists and sculptors who find it harder and harder every year to secure proper models.

"All these, however, are not the prime reasons for the decay of beauty. Men are philosophic and have learned to estimate mental over physical charm, chiefly because the new woman has not much beauty to offer. There is a notion prevalent among the gentler sex that it is very foolish to waste time nourishing her bodily charms, that there are more important callings in this world. Having decided to underestimate this great gift she is as busy as possible destroying it.

"She is doing it by over study for one thing. In payment for her book learning she is contracting her chest, extinguishing the limpid light in her eyes and bleaching her cheeks. In payment for her tremendous athletics she is growing horny-palmed with heavy muscles, ruining the contours of her limbs, her complexion is weather beaten and her hair is rough. In society she overwhelms her strength with so many duties and pleasures and such extravagant rich food that she is the victim of gout, nerves, neuralgia and dyspepsia, and ill health has sapped her color, spoiled her figure and aged her before her time.

"To sum up my argument I would conclude that the whole course of our civilization is against the growth of feminine beauty. Men no longer care for it, and women no longer nourish it. The typical American girl, if she is pretty, has every generation a shorter period of bloom. By the time she is thirty, when really she should be in all the vital splendor of ripe loveliness, she is growing either very thin or very fat, her hair is getting dry, harsh and scant, her skin pale and wrinkled; in face she is fading, and by forty she is resigned to appear like an old woman.

"Her daughters naturally will enjoy a shorter period of bloom and earlier succumb to the blight that our elaborate modern food, close hot houses, sedentary way of life and mental exertions invariably bring. There may be some stern souls who are quite content to see our women's beauty take wings, but in the long run not higher education nor golf championships will repay the sweethearts and wives of the future for the loss of nature's glorious gift, and the world is going to be a colder and harder place to live in for the loss of the pretty woman."

Feminine Personals.

The dowager empress of China is still engaged in giving her representation of the star part in "How One Woman Has Her Own Way."

Mrs. Charlotte Roulez Charlier of Roselle, N. J., left an estate worth about $20,000, practically all of which, it is said, was made by telling fortunes.

Mrs. Julia Dent Grant, widow of General Grant, is now more than 70 years old, and, having grown quite feeble, rarely leaves her Washington home. Her sight is rapidly failing.

Mrs. M. Fleming, recently appointed curator of astronomical photographs, is the first woman whose name has ever appeared in the catalogue of Harvard university among the officers of the institution.

Miss Reed, daughter of the speaker, and Miss Talmage, daughter of the noted preacher, are regular attendants at the sessions of congress—the former in the house and the latter in the senate.

Hobson's sister is now shown to be as cool and brave as her brother. A horse ran away with her the other day, but by her coolness and self-possession she succeeded, after a time, in controlling the animal. And she did not faint after it was over.

Miss Nancy Reeves, a well known society girl of Baltimore, has applied for the first vacancy at the Johns Hopkins training school, and will fit herself for the duties of a trained nurse. It is her intention to use the experience thus gained in caring for sick persons who are unable to pay for such service.

Helen Kellar, the famous deaf, blind and dumb girl who has been so highly educated, visited the Boston museum art room a few days ago and "saw" the statues. By passing her wonderfully sensitive fingers over the figures she was able to get a correct idea of their proportions and discoursed most interestingly of her experience.

It is reported that Miss Lutie A. Lytle of Topeka, Kan., has been appointed a member of the faculty of the law department of Central Tennessee college, Nashville. Miss Lytle is the young negro woman who was graduated with honors from the Central Tennessee College in 1897, and was admitted to the bar of Tennessee at Memphis in September of that year.

A correspondent of Collier's Weekly says of the Philippine women: "For all their dark faces, they have figures the grace of which is accentuated by the very garments they wear. They have lustrous dark eyes and luxuriant black hair, in which they take great pride; it is long, thick and glossy, anointed with cocoanut oil, combed and washed with lime juice and usually worn in a coil or knot held by a golden comb or ornamented pins. Hats and bonnets are unknown among the Filipinos, so no doubt many an American husband wishes he lived here. The native women have fine shaped feet that never knew a stocking; they wear low slippers of an Oriental pattern, sometimes wooden shoes. The dress of a Filipino woman usually consists of a single garment with wide sleeves; a Pina cloth handkerchief is generally worn around the neck, and every one wears a rosary or a crucifix. Housekeeping in the native section is quite primitive in its details. Love-making, courtship and marriage are here conducted in the manner common in Oriental lands, the lover serving the father of his future wife. Fifteen years is the customary age for marriage here in the Philippines."

Frills of Fashion.

Round waists and Eton jackets of fur are worn with cloth skirts.

Fancy handkerchiefs with colored hemstitched borders and colored embroidery are revived again.

Drap decuir is one name for the new dull-finished cloth which is coming in to fill the place of faced cloths.

A novelty in skating gowns is made entirely of black caracul with rosettes of rose-colored velvet on the bodice to brighten the effect.

Accordion plaited materials are still in very great favor in the making of skirts, waists and overdresses and gowns designed for both women and children.

Bengaline in any pretty color is very popular for separate waists, but if you want the smartest thing get white and make it with a narrow round yoke of lace.

A prevailing feature of dress which can be made great use of in renovating partly worn dresses is the addition of a guimpe of different material from the rest of the gown.

The best dressed, most up-to-date women have discarded jewelry almost entirely for day wear, but gems of all kinds and grades of magnificence glitter in profusion in the evening.

A high-necked lace bolero cut with little epaulettes over the shoulders, the lace forming scallops on the edge, is a pretty addition to a white chiffon bodice made with elbow sleeves.

White cloth vests, revers and others accessories impart an appearance of daintiness and distinction to the tailor costumes they decorate. The gowns so finished this spring will be especially attractive.

Street jackets for the coming season are either buttoned close down the front or turned back in revers to the waist line, made double breasted, fastened from shoulder down on the left side.

Long, close-fitting Newmarkets, that cover the wearer from neck to feet, will be very popular for useful wear during the spring for shopping and traveling. They are double-breasted with revers collar, and are cut without crossing seams on the hips.

A stunning muff to carry with your black cloth gown is made of black chiffon, ruched into tucks, and white Persian lamb. The chiffon forms the wide band around the center and the fur is the lining which extends over the edge in two white ends at the ends.

The prevailing tendency in skirts just at the moment is to abolish seams as nearly as possible. One new model has no seam in the back, and is carried out in each with silk introduced at each side in plaits or a sort of stole end effect.

The dressskirt bids fair to hide the bodice in excess of elaboration of its lower half, and the elegant simplicity which not long ago was conspicuous in gown's attire has now almost vanished will be less and less in evidence as the warm days return.

Chiffonette, which resembles liberty satin in texture and gloss, is one of the pretty dress materials which tempt the shopper. It is figured in two three colors or quite plain, in pretty, light shades, relieved only by the fine cord which stripe them up and down.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR SUMMER TOILETS.

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