

Fashions of the Day.

Smaller and Neater Costumes, But no More Economical—Colors to Suit the Taste of the Wearer—Plaids, Checks, Stripes and Boots—Furs and Jeweled Belts.

Snuggness, trigness—a reduction of sail—is the watermark of the fashions for the coming season so far as shapes and models are concerned. But yesterday the tendency was all for quantity, size, the bouffant in dress; today it is just the opposite.

The sudden shrinkage of our skirts seems to my philosophic mind to be traceable to the exuberance of the all-prevailing trimmings. I heard it said, although I cannot personally vouch for the truth of the story, that one of our smart set—a clever woman, who is yet not above sensible economies—took one of her gowns of two years ago, and from the luxuriant fulness of its various parts made up two more or less complete costumes for herself in the prevailing style of the winter of 1897-1898.

I had the good fortune to examine carefully a lovely lot of imported gowns, and what struck me most of all were the remarkable color combinations which are to adorn our social leaders. A waist well worthy an extended description will bear me out in what I so insist upon. The lining was of white silk; draped over it was white crepe lisse, then over that an exquisite piece of black lace, while beneath each flower and leaf in the lace was laid deep Mazarin blue velvet, bringing out the pattern in bright relief and with an effect that could only have been conceived by the possessor of a true artistic instinct. The collar and ceinture were of the same deep blue velvet, and the sleeves—mark the combination—were of the most perfect shade of violet-hued Irish poplin.

Checks are in great favor in every variety of color and material—in poplins, satins, tilks, wool and velvets. Green and black is a smart combination, as for instance, in blouse waists of these colors. Velvets, yellow and black or pink and black, will be the correct caper; in fact, velvets in all designs, plaids, checks, dots and stripes are, so to speak, epidemic. Never in the history of fashion has velvet been so universally popular. The velvet blouse is to be almost an essential, so much so that a ruler of fashion lacking at least one of them would be a queen bereft of her sceptre. They may be so endlessly varied in style and shape that there is little likelihood of their becoming vulgar or common place, and besides, velvet is a material whose price puts it beyond the reach of the masses, and just now no imitation stuffs are tolerated; for the present at least, velvet must be velvet, and not plush or fustian of any cheaper sort. And speaking of blouses, I notice a rare beauty, one of black velvet with chinchilla collar worthy of a princess.

Evening skirts will be demi-train, ball gowns and opera gowns the same; evening waists will be elaborately trimmed and will not necessarily match the skirt, although for street costumes fashion does decree that they must be in one tone from top to toe to be in the very uppermost heights of style.

Sashes—pretty, dressy things that they are—are to be much worn by matron and maid, while the juvenile members of the family are to be decked out in gay ribbons, the Roman stripes taking precedence when a plain or solid color is not imperatively indicated.

The waistline is much in evidence and the modistes predict that ere long the old-time skirt, with its visible stitches connecting it to the waist, will be the correct thing. Tea-gowns and negligees are so constructed nowadays, and fashion microbes are as certain to spread and

reproduce as are other and less desirable ones.

In spite of the manifest improvement in business life it is still desirable to cultivate the spirit of economy, and the new sleeveless blouses will prove valuable aids in this direction. Inexpensive in itself, as requiring so little material, this blouse may be often advantageously worn over a discarded bodice, the odd-appearing sleeves being quite in style.

Fancy muffs to match the costume will be even more chic than fur. Indeed, to appear on the street a "symphony in one tone," or, to quote a recent great man, "one grand, sweet song," is to range one's self in the top-most ranks of fashion's host.

Veils are becoming important accessories to the toilet. The new scarf veils are very becoming, as well as serviceable. They are two and a half yards long, and after being properly adjusted over the hat the ends are crossed and tied in a big bow in front. The ends usually are edged with narrow black velvet and black lace ruffles.

Street costumes this year are dreadfully heavy. The proper thing is cloth, and this is a heavy fabric the costume should never be worn in the house, and besides there is decided economy in keeping the street costume for its proper use.

The furriers are looking forward to a very active season, thanks to Mistress Fashion, but they have, to use a slang term, "something up their sleeves," and it is this, that not only will fur jackets and fur blouses be almost necessities of life (and the handsomer the more necessary the garment,) but in addition they are to require very beautiful jewelled belts.

Perhaps the most striking trait of the American woman is her individuality. And in manners of fashion this trait is as striking as elsewhere, although a bit more dangerous. For individuality presupposes originality, and this latter faculty is an edged tool liable to wound unsifted handlers. But when combined with artistic taste and that indescribable something we call style, it produces a combination that is simply irresistible, and that has wrung from sister nations the confession that the American is the best-dressed woman in the world.

So, while earnestly counselling each of my compatriots to cultivate the individuality that carries with it to the minds of beholders the conviction that her clothes belong to her, not she to the clothes, yet would I advise her, if she be not endowed with an artist's eye for form and color, to ask some more gifted friend or approved modiste to supply the deficiency. The general adoption of this course would save us from those unfortunate failures, all too plentifully exhibited, wherein the wrong woman seems to have gotten into a gown which if worn by another would be a pronounced success.

Just at present certain rules in dress building must be generally observed. Skirts must hang evenly all around, just escaping the ground, and a skirt that is the least bit too short is very bad style. Circular sides to a skirt are very handsome, but there is danger of the garment sagging, and hence heavy stuffs should never be made up in this way.

Tuffleigh—Do you think it pays to advertise?

Cynicus—I know it doesn't; I advertised for a wife once.

Tuffleigh—You got one, didn't you?

Cynicus—Yes, but just look at her!

"That was a singularly unfortunate typographical error: that the paper made in speaking of those Vassar graduates." "How?" "Why, the reporter wrote 'they are all angels' and the printer got it 'they are all angles.'"

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