

The Woman's Page of The Times-Dispatch

American Wives From the Husband's Point of View

The present relations between American wives and husbands and the present danger to the happy continuance of American homes through the ignorance and inefficiency of twentieth century housewives have inspired several writers of fiction in the production of one-sided novels from the supposedly much imposed upon and long-suffering husband's point of view.

No reader of these novels can for a moment suppose that women will not resent the injustice with which they are pictured in such books. The husband is represented as honestly loving the wife of his choice, as being a trifle overindulgent and giving money and the authority that goes with it too absolutely into her hands perhaps, of being desirous of avoiding show and ostentation, and living and working altogether to render his family happy and prosperous.

Years of Gradual Distillation.
His devotion to his wife carries him forward through years of gradual distillation, in which he tells the tale of his discomfort at home, of his wife's failure in any way to be a helper, of her inability to control her servants, of the untidiness to which she is a victim, the wretched food served upon his table, and the constant change of cooks and housemaids that emphasizes the futility of the regime from which domestics are constantly seeking relief.

The novelist ascribes the failure of the American woman to measure up to any standard of usefulness, to the manner in which she is brought up and educated, to the fact that nothing in the way of work is demanded or expected of her. On the contrary, he points out that she is permitted to be as disorderly and careless as she may when a girl. Her mother may be worn out with the burdens that fall to her lot, but she never thinks of calling on her idle young daughter for relief. Beginning of Household Troubles.
After a while this girl, who is as pretty as she is idle, becomes a wife, and then it is that the husband's troubles begin. The man is very honestly in love. The wife only enough so to fit in with her plans and ambitions. She is a social climber of the purest water, and she subordinates everything else in the world to the gratification of her personal aims. In order to furnish money she requires her husband to sacrifice his ideas of honesty and uprightness. Her daughter grows up a stranger to the husband and father. Both mother and daughter are in direct conflict with him, as to thought and action. He is represented as being naturally frank and affectionate. They incline constantly to secrecy and indirectness, and are cold and calculating to the extreme.

American Wife Severely Blamed.
And so the story goes. Certainly, as a national type, the American mother and wife is severely arraigned by these twentieth century authors, whose writings are transient in the extreme, and yet are widely read. The publication of such a book would not have been possible or probable a score of years ago. Women who know it for what it is would do well to question themselves as to the motives underlying its production. Every woman who is given to extravagance and undue self-indulgence ought to feel the harm that she is doing herself in the estimation of the world, which is becoming rightly critical in requiring women to live up to the same standards of intelligence and alertness in their household regulations, that business men take into the conduct of their business.

TO THE GIRL WHO IS ECONOMICAL.

Before putting lace away that has been ripped from a gown, pull out all the thread ends, and put it to soak over night in a bowl of tepid water and ivory soap-suds. The next day rinse it thoroughly, and before it is quite dry press it with a fairly warm iron, then roll it or wind it on cardboard and wrap in blue paper. Packing lace away with dust in it rots it.

When making a new cloth skirt, or even if making over an old one that has never been lined, it is well to put in a lining of silk to match that will reach fast. This will help to keep the saunders longer life to the material and helps to prevent that ugly line from showing where the corset stops, and which causes the best made gowns to break at that point.

When the hem of a cloth gown cuts out, take a very sharp pair of scissors, insert at the largest hole, and then cut the edge of hem through very exactly, so that there will be no jagged spots. Turn both the edges they cut in towards each other, the inner one a little more than the outer or dress edge, and baste carefully. Then slip-stitch by hand, dampen and press; remove the basting threads before the final press, cutting them frequently so that there will be no pulling. After pressing, sew on a good quality mohair skirt braid, letting it come below the edge, and be sure that this braid has been hemmed at the first wringing the hem will wrinkle.

Small bellows will be found very useful for blowing dust from bric-a-brac, Chinese dragons, Dresden china, flowers and figures, etc. Breakage and scratches may both be averted by this simple means and the objects that kept much freer from grime than by other more painstaking ways.

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RECEPTION AND RESTAURANT FROCKS.

L'Art de la Mode.

FASHION ECHOES FROM VOGUE

It is evident that eighteenth century French portraits gave a brisk vogue to the wearing of black velvet necklets. From time to time they have been welcomed back into fashion, as is being done to-day. Instead of the pretty little velvet bow of the past, or a fancy brooch of olden days, the latest ones fasten with jet clasps of great beauty, and have in front a middle jet ornament from which hangs a jet pendant. Altogether they are becoming and are far more comfortable to wear than the jet dog collar. The latter is also much worn. In this unique jet revival, in which every gold ornament has been replaced.

Costly Fashion in Jewels.
It is surprising to see what enormous round pearls, white or black, are set singly in finger rings. The sides of these rings glisten with fine diamonds brilliantly. In the same category of fashion jewelry of the aggrandized sort has risen out of the old moderation entirely. Bar pins now measure five and six inches in length and are set with large stones, and diamond discs, worn the size of a silver dollar and larger. A diamond necklace is no longer the long-winded row of solitaires, but it combines three or more diamond strings covering the neck. Diamonds have also been set into every fine gold link of the latest gold purses—a dazzling blaze resulting. It is considered in Europe that exclusive good taste now demands the carriage of very small gold purses only. The large ones are tabooed by smart women.

Ribbon chains of black double-faced satin or moire, one-quarter to one-half inch in width, are more beautifully ornamented with slides wrought in gold, steel or so-called diamonds than ever before. The same character of ornaments set with real jewels and of gold workmanship finds an equally large number of purchasers, so popular has the fashion become. Originated by Worth.
The gorgeously brilliant trimming that gleams from so many handsome ball gowns for this winter was originated by Worth, and consists of genuine rhinestones sewn each by itself on a net foundation. It is too showy a garniture to be used with good taste except very sparsely.

THE NATURALLY PUGNACIOUS AND ARGUMENTATIVE

There are some good people who invariably look at the other side of every question presented to them. They are often unconscious that they do this. Perhaps they are naturally pugnacious or argumentative. Certain it is that when a scheme is suggested to them they look at once for the cons before glancing at the pro.
"I am thinking of having that chair upholstered in green," remarks the wife.
"Why not in red?" queries the husband.
Now, he does not really prefer red in this case, but he has simply voiced his attitude of mind with regard to all subjects. If his wife takes a certain view, there must be another which he can take, just for the sake of argument. After he has "talked it out" he will probably acknowledge that he "doesn't care a hang," and simply wanted "to look at both sides of the matter."

There are times when it is our duty to argue, to weigh both sides of a question, even to disapprove. And when such occasion arises our judgment will carry more weight if we have not contested every small point that has heretofore been presented to us.
The fact that a wife and mother is "fussy" is not a big evil, but it is certainly an annoyance. I heard a nervous woman ask her son four times in one evening if he were sure he had put coal on the furnace fire after dinner. This same woman would awaken her invalid husband at night to inquire if he were sleeping comfortably. I sometimes wonder if it must not seem good to him to lie peacefully in Greenwood Cemetery, where there is over his shoulders, or to fall him that his head is too low for his health.
Exasperating Interruptions.
Another of the family habits that cause irritation is that of interrupting. People who would not interrupt those whom they meet in society break ruthlessly into the conversation of their own family without so much as an "Excuse me!" I regret to say that in a fun-loving household the interrupting is often made by some one wanting to utter some jest or pleasantry.
Now, I approve thoroughly of fun, and I have myself a sense of humor that enables me to laugh at the worst kind of a joke—namely, one on myself. But I do claim that a good thing can be carried to excess, and the joke-making instinct may become almost a vice. I know one family in which most of the members are alert and whom they have a chance to make a joke. May I give an illustration of the kind of thing that goes on in that delightful but exasperating household when one of the group relates, or attempts to relate, at the dinner table her experiences of the day?
She begins bravely:
"When I left my room this morning..."
"Why didn't you take it with you?" from her brother.
"Oh, I thought I had just time to to

have a cup of coffee and a roll—" "Where did you roll?" from a younger sister.
"But I found it was so late that I had to go downtown on an empty stomach—" "Why didn't you go down on a car instead?" from another member.
"I just caught the car—" "Did you let it go to keep it for future use?" again from the brother.
And so on until in sheer exasperation one may laugh, or cry, but certainly not talk uninterruptedly for two consecutive minutes. Such things, no matter how funny they may be, are rude.—Virginia Terhune Van de Water, in New Idea Magazine.

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VOGUE POINTS FOR FAIR READERS

The tendency is again towards very high-lusted satins, whether of all silk for evening wear, or those with wool backs for the gorgeous daytime gowns to be worn at large functions. A lovely new fabric for many occasions is a satin-figured silk crepon, which finish gives the soft-toned delicacy of great beauty against the soft, dull background and makes it appear almost a shade lighter. All the satins and silks most used are very soft and clinging, even though the quality may be heavy.
A charming frock for a young girl or young matron is made of brocaded white mousseline de soie, the design quite little wreaths of wee pink flowers. At knee length there is an insertion made of lovely white silk novelty lace resembling the old-time blonde lace; heading this is a plaiting of narrow pink velvet ribbon. Below the insertion is a deep band of soft ivory-white satin. The bodice, which is very youthful in effect, is gathered from a lace band and held by a crush girde; the sleeves are puff up to a band of wide lace with the velvet quilting at edges. Against the neck are the folds in pink and white and the princess slit beneath in pink satin.

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Black satin evening wraps and cloaks for daytime wear are quite the latest thing, covering the wearer from neck to heels and even trailing slightly at back. The satin used is of a lustrous quality, not over-lustrous, but with a rich, subdued sheen, and is very pliable; many of the wraps showing drapery, and all without even a touch of color. This being reserved for the lining, which is usually a brocade or some captivating design.

Social Reforms Matters of Gradual Growth

It has been frequently said in a half-jocular, half-contemptuous way of reforms advocated by women, that they were meaningless and not worthy of being taken seriously into account, because women do not in earnest and did not even realize what they were attempting to do.
This assertion has had enough truth in it to arrest attention, because the obstructors of movements have not been the open opponents in the ranks of masculinity, but the secret realists among their own sex. The women who are devoted to the careful and methodical of existence. Reform means to them the uprooting of the established order of affairs and their having to recognize and deal openly with evils that they have ignored, because it was easier for them to float with, rather than against, the current of popular opinion.
Woman's Method of Opposition.
In all important questions dealing with social and economic questions men take opposite sides. But they do it frankly and with an avowed purpose. Women work by undermining and destroying confidence. For those of their number inspired with a serious hope and purpose in an enterprise that spells effort and self-sacrifice, they profess a great pity, such as one might feel for a misguided child of willful and mistaken inclinations, a type scarcely to be censured, but only, except in the light of restraint from intended mischief. Such an attitude as this is calculated to more effectively destroy the force of any projected reform than outspoken argument against it could be made. It brings ridicule on the movement. Onlookers who have borne no part in it come to believe that it is led only by impractical enthusiasts, who have lost sight of realities in their dreaming dreams and beholding visions that can never come to pass.

Outgrowth of Thought and Effort.
The history of the world's civilization includes within it the history of reform, each one of which has been the outgrowth of years of thought and effort. Many of the movements preceding reform have been marked with bloodshed and stained with cruelty. Eternal vigilance, patience and unending firmness of purpose have gone into the making of statutes that stand for freedom and progress. To all else that they have learned women must add the virtue of knowing how to wait. They sow in hope, but the harvest is long in coming. Discouragements, like tares, grow apace. Before the fruition of hope there are the work, hard and unremitting. The secret antagonism, although to be reckoned with, the criticism to be answered, the misrepresentation to be disproved. Comparatively untrained to independence and resourcefulness, women often find themselves uncertain and confused, and lose opportunities through a lack of boldness in not knowing how and when to grasp them.

Recompense Comes at Last.
But however long and weary the waiting, steady and persistent and united effort will be met with recompense, if only the effort continues long enough. Work of this kind is bound to command respect on account of the purpose behind it and the faith which holds the purpose true.
Reforms are bound to be matters of slow growth, because even when their necessity has been demonstrated, part of the narrow-minded and the ignorant has to be met and overborne. Results have to be shown as evidence of claims presented and in the making good of these claims, and results require time.

Women Must Not Turn Back.
The education and training of women as distinctive entities and forces of influence on the world around them has, when comparison of time is reckoned, but recently begun. No woman having put her hand to the plow need think of turning back because the answer to her prayer has not yet come. To the watcher of the night the dawn may be still distant, but the sun will gild the hills when the night is past.
Only women must be steadfast and untiring. They must be faithful to each other and the end they have in view. If they are, they will have already taken a long and forward step in the reform march that will eventually make of women an irresistible and wonderful sisterhood.

TO THE GIRL WHO IS REALLY UP-TO-DATE

Short neck-ribbons of black moire in half-inch width are now worn for carrying the longbow, which is considered more convenient for use when it hangs only to the bust. These are furnished with ornamental slides of gold, silver (either in the natural, gray or the oxidized finish), or of any other metal or rhinestone, and are cut, steel, jet or utilitarian. Sometimes the ribbon is separated at the slides, and obtains an added beauty by means of linked ornaments which cannot be displaced, as can the movable slides.

A charming style of collar for wearing with a Dutch neck, when necessity requires it, consists of folds of white net laid softly and held at the middle back by an upright band of lace insertion. The folds are turned out and then added as the outside border on each side and graduated towards each end. These dainty collarettes are extremely convenient and give a blouse or one-piece gown when a coat is to be worn, by those who allure the low style of collar arrangement for the street.
Earrings have become so re-established in favor that the fashion is no longer content with those who have held their long drops in reserve are now bringing them to light. Circlets of precious stones hung pendant from a single contrasting jewel, such as emeralds with pearls, or turquoises with diamonds are commended by the latest fashions of fashion and the low-set hats. It appears that something brilliant and noticeable is necessary to offset the effect of extinguishment which current millinery suggests.
A trailing skirt, two seasons old, that has been common from the front and circular darning sides with a panel back, and points of stitching above the neck, has just been easily remodeled. It was first made to be laid flat with the ground, and the material at the top cut off, then the panel was made narrow and the sides drawn round to fit without tucks over the stitching. The lower edge bordered with some narrow fur stripes cut from an old astrakhan muff and scarf, enough was left to trim the coat with at collar and cuffs. To have the fur properly cut it must be laid flat with the pelt side up, and a very sharp knife used to sever the strips, which may be kept straight by cutting by the side cut as accurately as the knife will cut a ruler. Sew the pieces of fur together in overhand stitch with wax thread.