

HOOPS AND AGAIN HOOPS.

They're in All the Windows and on Some of the Women.

The Fashion Has Reached New York and Is Being Adopted by Some of the Younger Women—What the Dress-makers Are Saying.

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I don't mean to limit my activities to rehearsing, every week, the erinoline situation, but really the hoop skirts the well stores are mounting in their windows with the impressive label, "the latest," are more than interesting. They deserve to be called thrilling. These new bird cages are of divers patterns. In a way they don't live up to their opportunities. There are as yet no colored ones. In this aesthetic fin de siècle period you would expect black silk or crimson silk or pink satin or shot brocade coverings to the wires to make them things of beauty in a wind; but instead the same old-time white pyramid has been resurrected, looking exactly as it did when, in despair of finding any other resting place for it, your mother sent you out to sink it in the pond along in the sixties when it went out of fashion.

But no, in one respect the new hoop skirt is different. It is smaller than its ancestors. This is no sign of physical degeneration, however, for it has not sprung, like Minerva from Jove's head, full grown from the brains of the modistes. It is a young hoop skirt, timid, deprecating, shrinking from too much attention or the too full blaze of publicity. In time it will imbibe the true American spirit and be bigger and bolder.

In its present inchoate condition it is about seventy-two inches round.

In one design it has a bustle at the top. According to another it has no wires in front, but only at back and sides. Some patterns flare evenly all the way down, others flare suddenly and with a queer effect of unexpectedness all at once at the bottom.

And are folks buying them? Yes, they have a very quick and steady sale. The manufacturers, I hear, are going into hoop-skirt wire on quite an extensive scale. At a Broadway shop where I inquired they showed me the record of sales for one day. It made me laugh to think how confidently various persons have asserted that women wouldn't wear erinoline, no matter how imperative the command of Mme. la Mode.

Why, they haven't waited for half an invitation. The dressmakers themselves are divided in opinion still. Some of them positively refuse adhesion to the new fashion, and so woman, willful woman, is giving her orders for new frocks to the costumers who are known to fit over the erinoline.

There are at least half a dozen of the Fifth avenue modistes who require their customers to invest in a hoop petticoat before they "try on," and I have seen lots of orders received through these establishments that were nothing short of astonishing.

Who wear hoop skirts? The younger women. I doubt if anybody over thirty-five has put one on yet or is likely to do so under, say, fifteen days' time. Young girls are dancing in them. They are pleased with the novelty. They



A COUPLE OF EVENING DRESSES.

like opposition. The fact that erinoline has a bustle behind it and more battles in front of it is to them the most piquant and alluring of recommendations.

The erinoline appeared in New York ballrooms about a fortnight ago. Not everybody recognized its presence because, as I have said, it is most modest in size, but everybody has been becoming conscious of a most unconscious swish and swirl about the buds and the dancing blossoms.

I will tell you about a few frocks I myself noticed at the Old Guard ball. One, which was worn by a handsome but languid sort of blonde who could not, I should have supposed, a priori, have summoned up animation enough to be the first to try a new fashion, was of cream brocade, tied at the waist in rather the empire style, with wide bands of pale yellow ribbon. Frills of old lace on the bodice fell to the waist and matched the puffed sleeves. The skirt was flounced with wide ruffles of old lace, and while it flared no more than half the frocks have done since Christmas, it had a flirt and a swing that to the observant were unmistakable. There was a hoop skirt under it, and the women eyed its wearer with looks of startled curiosity.

But the blonde was not alone in her temerity. A black lace gown was close by to keep her company. The lace had a bright green bodice and sleeves and it had its seams outlined with jet and scintillated accordingly. The erinoline was more apparent in this case than in the other. The extreme circumference was not greater, but the flare began nearer the top—that is, the waist—and was continued downward with more regularity and persistency. Also the black lace was inhabited by a more restless occupant. It was promenaded and marched and waltzed and in various ways made to take more than exercise enough to reveal its outlines and proportions. It was a businesslike hoop skirt, not afraid of itself or ashamed.

A white satin frock was displayed to me this morning as an importation from Paris by the last steamer. Its

new possessor was querying anxiously whether it would possible for her to wear it without erinoline. It was eight yards round and though it was stiffened from the knee down it was a serious question whether any amount of stiffening would carry it without steels. It was a pretty dress with a tiny blue line running through it, and with a low black velvet zouave jacket with large revers of pale blue satin turned back on the full sleeves. It had a vest of cream lace drawn across the bosom, and, as I said, it was the problem of the hour whether it was or was not to have erinoline.

A very considerable proportion of the imported costumes now being received are designed to be worn with steels, and women who object to hoops are considerably puzzled to know how they can conveniently and comfortably wear the latest elegancies that they have



A PRETTY TEA JACKET.

come into possession of without them. Some frocks have been put into dress-makers' hands within a few days past to alter, but the most are worn as yet with stiffenings, which make them so heavy as to point to hoops for relief, if for no other reason.

Altogether the situation is painfully interesting. A steel colored silk dress which was finished a day or two ago is ten yards in circumference at the bottom. It is flounced with pale yellow and silver brocade ruches and these set it out yet more emphatically. Yellow roses are tied with ribbon bows upon each seam and all in all its richness and its demand for erinoline could not be more pronounced if they set themselves to the task industriously.

Some of the new millinery is very pretty. A black velvet bonnet drifted across my line of vision this morning with stiff black satin rosette and black velvet bows. Very simple, you would say, from the description, but it was one of the bonnets you can't describe because the effect is in the bow, not the what, and so you can't tell the why.

A small hat in apple green velvet was my neighbor at one of those things they call a dramatic delineation last evening. It had huge flat bows of green ribbon in front and glittered with the radiance of an enormous paste buckle.

I don't know why, but there begin to be straw hats already. I saw one yesterday of a fine black netted straw lace with bows of black velvet lined with green.

Bridesmaid's hats are of lace drawn on gold wires. But then it's almost Lent and there won't be many brides before Easter now.

Lent means tea; tea means jackets, and jackets mean velvet and silk gauze. Sometimes, too, they mean striped silk or brocade, but one I was looking at this afternoon meant pale pink cloth, with a vest of white mull and an embroidery of delicate silver stitchery. But they mean velvet mostly, for velvet is meant this winter wherever velvet is possible. And velvet gets daily heavier and richer, so much so that given a small woman and a long train, the weight she has to carry about and the strength she has to carry it with are not altogether comfortably in proportion.

Trains remind me to say in stopping that hoops will not be worn with short skirts, but with long ones. They have been worn with both in the past, you know. They are heavier the one way and awkward the other; there's little choice, but history decided that Mary Queen of Scots wore erinoline to best advantage of all her sex, and Mary wore her skirts long.

Anti-erinoline leagues are springing up in New York and elsewhere. Much good may they do, but everybody knows they'll do no good at all.

It's a queer world, my mistresses. ELLEN OSBORN.

One of the Incurribles.

A mission school teacher caught one of her small boy scholars in a fib and she brought him up with a round turn.

"Don't you know," she said, "that it is wicked to tell a lie?"

"I s'pose so," he replied, with indifference.

"Why did you do it then?"

"I dunno."

"George Washington never told a lie."

"Who's George Washington? I guess he don't live in Detroit, does he?"

The teacher was astonished and pained.

"Why," she said, very impressively, "George Washington was the greatest man that ever lived."

The youngster never flickered.

"Well, I guess he wuzn't when he wuzn't no bigger'n me," he said, with supreme confidence, and the teacher referred the incurrible to the superintendent.—Detroit Free Press.

THE PIANO AND THE PLAYER.

How rich was the sound of sweetness  
That flowed from the silent keys  
At the touch of the gentle fingers  
That moved with a quivering ease  
Till the hearers strangely wondered  
Where the royal sounds could come  
For without the gifted player  
The notes had been mute and dumb

But at her touch there was music  
And harmony fill the soul  
Was born by the rising pinions  
Where the wings of melody roll  
It was not the piano only  
It was not the moving keys,  
It was all in the young musician—  
Her fingers—all came from these

And yet the old notes were needed,  
And all that was hid within  
'Twas not only the player's fingers—  
They could not the sweetness win,  
If there had not been sweet responses  
And yielding to her touch  
So the instrument needed playing,  
And she needed it as much.

Alone we are mute and silent;  
But if the great Master's hand  
Is laid on the idle keyboard,  
What music may cheer the land!  
The praise must be all the player's,  
For music must be our part,  
And his skill will not bleed sweetness  
From every yielded heart.  
—William Luff, in Golden Days.

ON APPROVAL.

Why Lady Loddington Is Civil to a Common Man.

"What on earth do you call that thing?" I asked, poking with my stick at a bunch of grapes poised airily upon a brass stand.

"That thing," replied my cousin, proudly, "is the very latest Parisian fashion in bonnets."

I sank back into the little lounge that ran along the side of the room—you couldn't insult anything so daintily with the name of "shop"—and gazed upon its owner with an exclamation more profane than appropriate.

It must at once be confessed that she was a charming object to gaze at. There was an expression of wicked amusement in her large gray eyes, and the black gown she still wore in mourning for her husband—poor Jack Henderson, who was killed in the Sudan—set off the lines of her slender young figure and threw her golden hair and fair skin prettily into relief.

"Pull yourself together, my dear boy," she continued, opening the door of an old carved oak cabinet, "and I will show you something that even your crude male intellect will appreciate. I don't want to say it's lovely I'll never let you inside the shop again. You may fatten your nose against the window or stroll disconsolately up and down the street in vain! No more chats, no more teas in the back room, Ronald!"

So saying, she lifted gingerly from the shelf a large hat, and, placing it upon her pretty head, turned triumphantly toward me.

It was lovely—quite lovely—a sort of arrangement in amethyst velvet and feathers to match. Being only a miserable and ignorant male, of course I can't describe it; but it was uncommonly becoming and made Nina look like a Gainsborough picture. I told her so and gushed over it sufficiently to satisfy her.

"It's my own idea, shape and all, and there isn't another like it in the world. I may possibly copy it, but I'm not sure. It depends upon who buys it. How I wish you were a woman, Ronald!" she sighed, regretfully. "I would make you buy it for Ascot to-morrow."

"I wish I were, my dear. But why don't you go and wear it yourself?"

"Gracious! and leave the shop for a whole day at this early stage of its existence! You guardians have no more idea of business than a baby. No, I can't go; but I hope you'll have a lucky day and a good time, and Ronald, dear, if you were nice you'd just look in one day soon and tell me what sort of day you had. Oh, and be sure you don't forget to notice what hats and bonnets people wear."

I promised to do my best and took my leave reluctantly as a large and portly matron, gorgeously arrayed, and whose features unmistakably betrayed her Semitic origin, sailed in and demanded a small "flower bonnet."

"That woman in a flower bonnet! I hope, poor soul, that Nina saved her from herself."

"What are you going to do this afternoon, Ronald?" asked my mother three days later. "I wish you to come and call with me on the Vanderdeekens."

"Can't, my dear mother. Promised to go and see Nina."

Visions of Miss Vanderdeeken, rich as Croesus, but oh, so deadly dull! hastened my movements, and I was half way to Oxford street before my mother could call me back. I found Mme. Destrier, as my cousin calls herself, just parting with a customer. The hat was in her hand.

"I've sold it," she cried, gleefully; "just sold it to that nice girl for five guineas."

dressed and asked to see some hats. I saw who she was, though I've never met her. I don't want to meet her," savagely. "One sees quite enough of her in all the shop windows."

"One does," I remarked, sotto voce. "She wanted a hat the color of this one, so I brought it out and showed it to her and told her the price and explained why it was so expensive. 'Oh, I don't mind giving that for the hat,' she said; 'it is well worth it. I am quite in love with it, Mme. Destrier, but I dare not buy it without letting my husband see it. He is so very particular about what I wear. Could I have it sent round to-night for him to look at? I would let you know some time to-morrow whether I would take it or not.' Of course I said I should be glad to send it, and she gave me the address, and the hat went round there that evening. Last night she sent it back and said she was very sorry, but Lord Loddington didn't think it suited her. I thought it looked a little tumbled, but one has to run those risks when one sends goods on approval. She had determined to have that hat just to wear for the one day, and she was too mean to get it honestly."

"Of course you'll have it out with her—you'll expose her?" I said.

I was as angry and disgusted as Nina, who stood opposite me, with her pretty eyes and cheeks flaming with honest indignation.

"My dear boy, I would if I dared, but I can't afford to. It would drive half my customers away from me, and I must think of Hugo and Giles. They don't cost much while they are tines, but I want to give them every advantage, the darlings, and I was left so badly off, and the business is just beginning to pay so well. I dare not run the risk of exposing Lady Loddington's meanness."

"I had forgotten your children. No, it would not do. Trust me to give her a mauvais quart d'heure, if I get the chance."

"Promise you'll be careful. Think of the little boys."

"I won't injure the dear chaps, you best of mothers."

"Well, in that case, I only hope fortune may favor you."

Fortune did favor me at last, but she kept me waiting till the autumn, like the fickle jade she always is. My chance came in this wise: My uncle asked me up to his place in Scotland for shooting, and I went. The old gentleman is a very connoisseur of beauty, and every pretty woman of note is bound to be asked up to D— sooner or later. I got there in time to dress hurriedly and appear in the drawing room just as my uncle was telling everyone whom he was to take in. I was introduced to some girl—I have not a notion who she was, but I gave her my arm and took her down to dinner, murmuring commonplaces on the way. The truth is, I was half famished with my journey, and my one idea was dinner. It was not until I was well on with the fish: age that I looked at my left-hand neighbor. It was Lady Loddington herself.

"I haven't seen you since we met at Ascot," she remarked, pleasantly.

"She certainly is a most lovely woman, by the way. I stared blankly, and she went on with an air of well acted approach:

"I believe you have forgotten we ever met there."

"Here was my chance; I seized it. 'Forgotten! Why, I remember every word you said, the color of your gown and even the very hat you wore—the loveliest and most becoming hat I ever saw in my life.'"

"The compliment told. 'I don't believe you do,' she pouted. 'Upon my word I do. It was a sort of big affair of amethyst velvet, and feathers to match. I remember it with double force because I made a cousin of mine quite angry with the mere description of it. I don't know if you ever met her? She has gone into millinery, like everybody else. She calls herself 'Mme. Destrier.'"

I looked Lady Loddington full in the face and laid a peculiar emphasis on the name. I never saw anyone so thoroughly caught in my life. I saw in a moment that she knew I knew. She turned perfectly scarlet to the roots of her hair, and then quite white, and didn't speak for at least a moment. Then she pulled herself together, as only a woman can, and adroitly changed the subject. But she has been very civil to me ever since, much to the surprise of my friends. I am plain and uninteresting; I am not a personage; I haven't a farthing—not even expectations—and they can't make out where the attraction lies. They had better ask Mme. Destrier, of Oxford street, to enlighten them.—London Paper.

"Pickpocket—hang it! Here I've been following that swell chap for the last half hour, expecting him every minute to unbutton his coat so that I could get at his watch; and I'll be jiggered if he isn't going into the pawnshop with it."—Wattenscheider Zeitung.

Acquired Wisdom.

Mrs. Spatts (reproachfully)—You loved me, Henry, when we were married.

Mr. Spatts—Well, we live to learn. Do you think a man isn't likely to grow wiser in seven years?—Chicago New Record.

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Encouragement. "I suppose you know," said the indulgent parent to the anxious suitor, "that my daughter has been reared in the lap of luxury?"

"Yes, sir, I know that. Still, I am glad you mentioned it, for it convinces me that you realize the importance of making us a liberal allowance to live upon."—Detroit Free Press.

Preparatory Discipline. "No, I'll not marry. I think I'll become a Sister of Charity."

"You don't know what that means."

"Don't I? Haven't I sat up with you every night from eight to one for three months?"—Life.

A Disagreeable Player. "Schmazer is the most disagreeable fellow at cards I ever came across."

"How's that? Does he turn rusty when he loses?"

"He never loses. That's just where it is!"—Deutscher Wespener.

The Only Reason. The small boy with his little sled  
Now sits on the icy hill  
And if he isn't picked up dead  
It's 'cause he's hard to kill. —Judge.

EASY ENOUGH.



Mrs. Goodson—Oh, don't thank me! It makes me only too happy to know that I can be of service to an unfortunate fellow-being.

Wanderer (eagerly)—Lady, say th' word, and you can be happy three times a day the year round.—Puck.

That Boy Will Be Rich Some Day. Small Boy—Papa, will you lend me your knife?

Papa—Lend you my knife? It isn't a week since I bought you a new one. What have you done with it? Lost it?

"Oh, no, I've got it yet."

"Then why don't you use it?"

"You said I must take care of it, and I want to take up some tacks."—Boston Globe.

Why He Left. Big Sister—I don't see why Mr. Nice-fellow should have left so early this evening.

Little Brother—I guess he went home to count his money.

"Count his money?"

"Of course. I told him you was wondering how much he had."—Good News

Purely Disinterested. Uncle Mose—I want to swah out a warrant agin de man nex' do' to me fer cruelty to animals.

Squire Lawless—What's he been doing?

Uncle Mose—He keeps his bulldog an' his chickens locked up together in one coop, suh.—Indianapolis Journal.

Von Blumer—Come over and take dinner with me at my house, old man.

Tutter—Much obliged; but really, don't look well enough in these old togs.

Von Blumer—Of course you do. Why there's no one there but my wife.—Brooklyn Life.

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